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BACKGROUND

- Critical shortage of dental care professionals in the US has resulted in ~10% decrease in dental practice capacity, affecting the quality and quantity of dental care services^{1,2}
- High job satisfaction reduces burnout and turnover intention, and improves job performance and quality³

STUDY OBJECTIVE

- Identify workplace characteristics associated with job satisfaction among US dental hygienists (DHs)

METHODS

- Cross-sectional study conducted using an online survey of DHs that was administered by the Health Policy Institute, American Dental Association, and American Dental Hygiene Association in 2022
- Of the 5,122 DHs from 50 states and DC that responded to the survey (7% response rate), 4,078 who reported current employment were included in the study
- Descriptive statistics and multivariable logistic regressions (odds ratio [OR], 95% confidence interval [CI]) were employed using SAS 9.4
 - **Outcome:** “On a scale of 1 to 10, how satisfied are you in your current role? (1=Not at all satisfied, 10=extremely satisfied)”
 - Job satisfaction: very satisfied (scores=8-10) vs somewhat satisfied (scores=6-7)
 - Job dissatisfaction: very dissatisfied (scores=1-3) vs somewhat dissatisfied (scores=4-5)
 - **Independent variables of interest:** 12 workplace factors
 - Pay (salary)
 - Benefits (eg, health insurance, paid leave)
 - Work-life balance
 - Opportunity for growth and advancement
 - Workload
 - Workplace culture (eg, leadership style, values, coworkers)
 - Communication in the practice
 - Work schedule flexibility
 - Practice philosophy
 - Pleasant patients
 - Safety protocols (eg, COVID-19 protocols)
 - Helping patients improve oral health
 - **Independent variables:** Age, race/ethnicity, employment status, tenure, primary practice setting, location, and geographic region



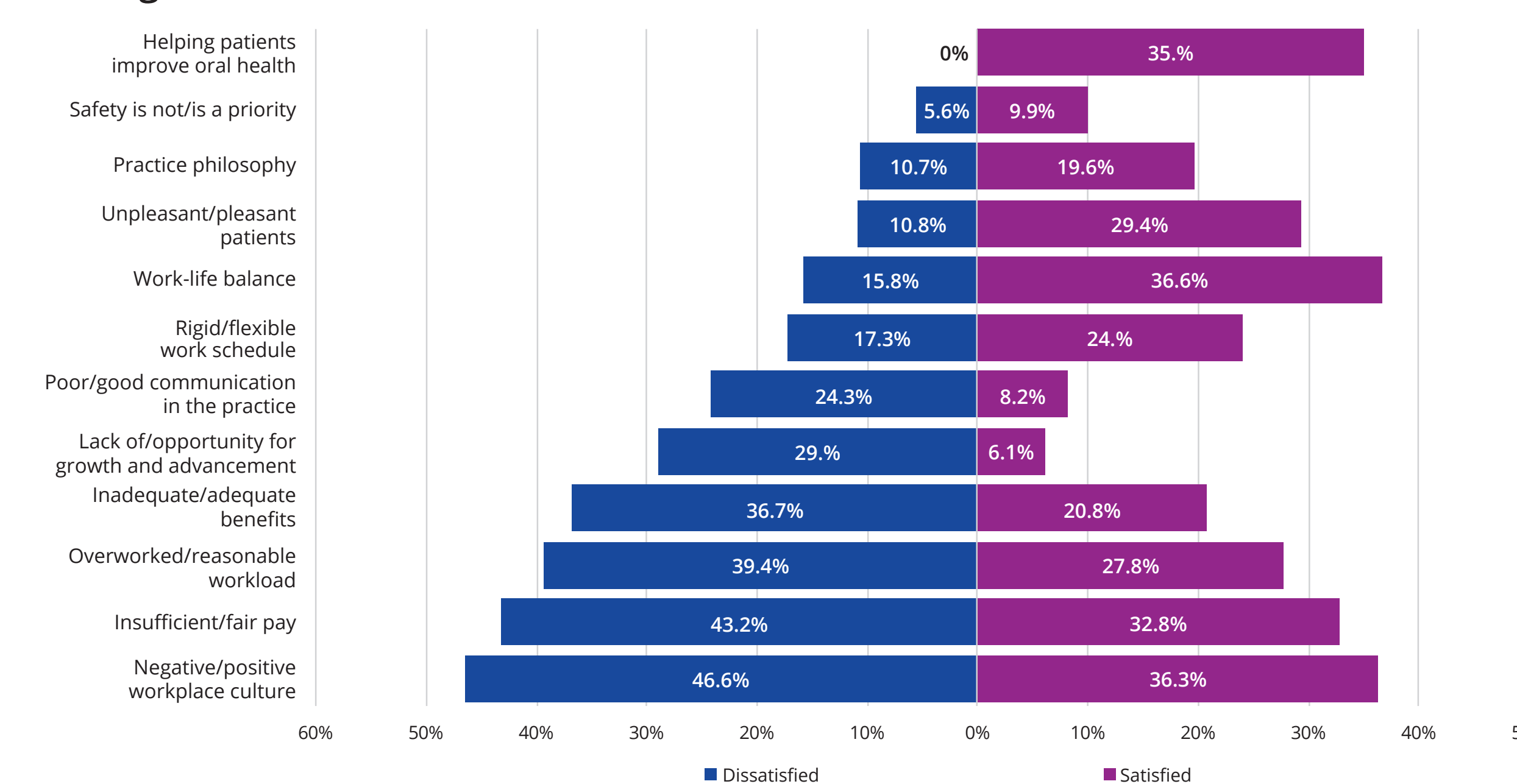
Workplace factors such as positive workplace culture, practice philosophy, and growth opportunities were associated with job satisfaction and may contribute to dental hygienists’ job performance and well-being.



RESULTS

- Most DH survey respondents were Non-Hispanic White (79.2%), full-time clinicians (65.0%), working in private settings (50.4%), and practicing in metropolitan areas (87.2%)
- Most DHs reported being satisfied with their job, somewhat (26.0%) or very (54.3%) satisfied, while 19.7% of hygienists were dissatisfied
- Top 3 workplace factors contributing to job satisfaction/dissatisfaction (**Figure 1**):
 - Job satisfaction: work-life balance, positive workplace culture, ability to help patients, fair pay
 - Job dissatisfaction: negative workplace culture, insufficient pay, being overworked, inadequate benefits

FIGURE 1. Workplace Factors Contributing to Job Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction Among DHs



- Most frequent combinations of the top 3 workplace factors contributing to job satisfaction/dissatisfaction:
 - Respondents who were satisfied with their jobs valued the fair pay, adequate work-life balance, and positive workplace culture
 - Respondents dissatisfied with their job reported insufficient pay, inadequate benefits, and negative workplace culture

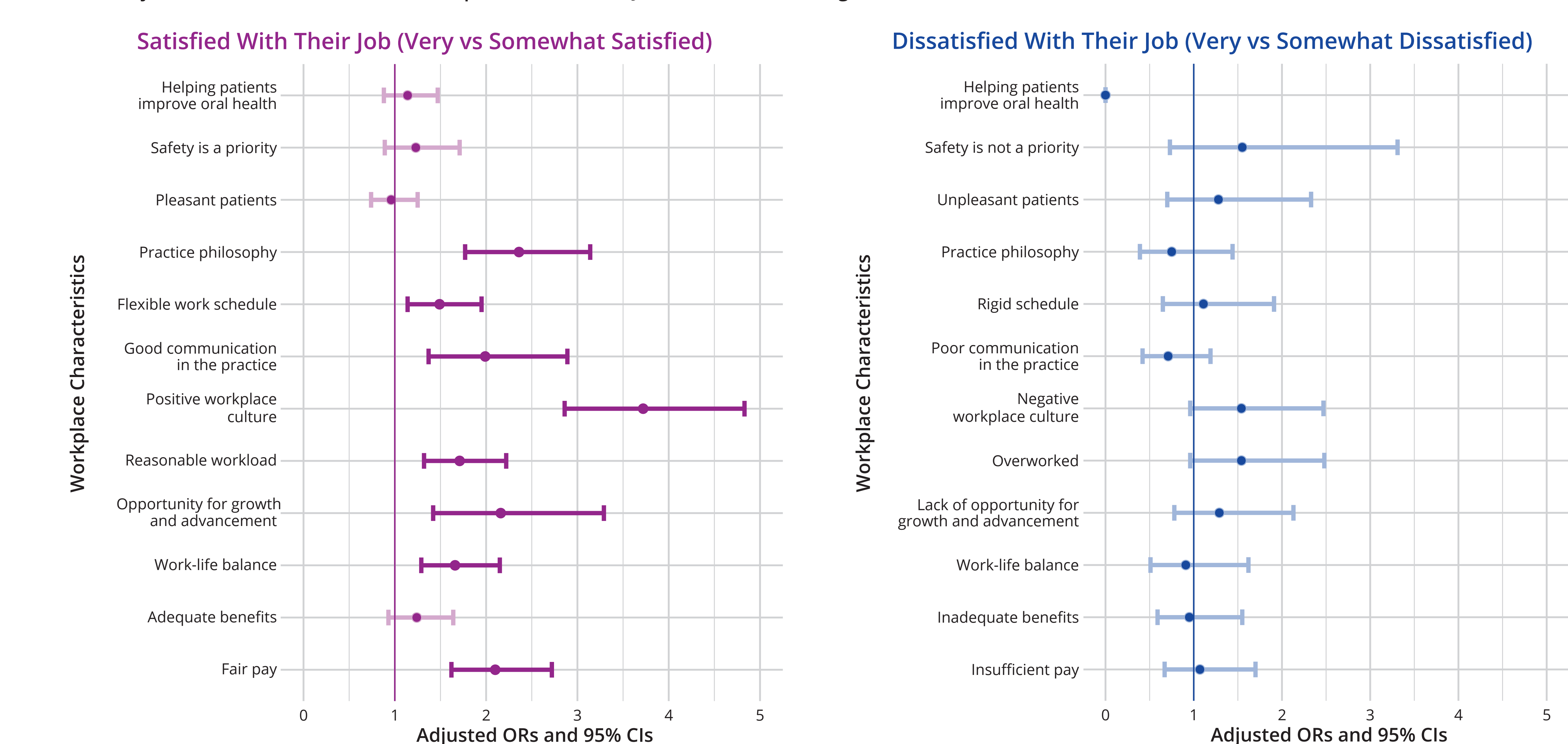
RESULTS

- Regression analysis found positive and statistically significant associations of high levels of job satisfaction with:
 - Positive workplace culture (OR=3.72, 95% CI=2.86-4.83)
 - Practice philosophy (OR=2.36, 95% CI=1.77-3.14)
 - Opportunity for growth and advancement (OR=2.16, 95% CI=1.42-3.29)
 - Fair payment (OR=2.10, 95% CI=1.62-2.72)

RESULTS

- Good communication in the practice (OR=1.99, 95% CI=1.37-2.89)
- Reasonable workload (OR=1.71, 95% CI=1.32-2.22)
- Work-life balance (OR=1.66, 95% CI=1.29-2.15)
- Flexible schedules (OR=1.49, 95% CI=1.14-1.95)
- No significant associations were found among DHs dissatisfied with their job

FIGURE 2. Adjusted Associations Between Workplace Factors and Job Satisfaction Among DHs^a



^a Multivariable logistic regression estimates (odds ratio [OR] and 95% confidence interval [CI]) were adjusted for age, race and ethnicity, employment status, tenure, primary practice settings and location, and geographic region.

IMPLICATIONS

- Workplace factors, including positive workplace culture, practice philosophy, growth opportunities, fair compensation, and effective communication within practices, contributed to higher job satisfaction among DHs
- Dental practices can support positive workplace environments by ensuring fair compensation and benefits, offering flexible working hours for work-life balance, and providing professional development opportunities to enhance job satisfaction
- These approaches are essential for addressing workforce shortages, maintaining a resilient oral health workforce, and enhancing the quality and delivery of dental services

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