

# Burnout and Fulfillment Amongst California Pediatric Dentists and Dental Residents

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## BACKGROUND

For dental professionals, chronic occupational stress can lead to professional burnout, which is characterized by a triad of personal emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low personal achievement.<sup>1-3</sup> A consequence of burnout could be substandard quality of care for patients due to chronic mental and emotional exhaustion, as well as negative attitude towards self, patients and colleagues.<sup>1, 3-4</sup> Pediatric dentists may be at higher risk for occupational burnout due to providing treatment to a highly anxious population.<sup>1,4</sup> The Professional Fulfillment Index (PFI) has been used to assess professional fulfillment and burnout in physicians, and has demonstrated valid and reliable results.<sup>5</sup> This index has not been used in dentistry to measure professional fulfillment and occupational burnout.

## PURPOSE

To investigate the prevalence of professional fulfillment and its relation to occupational burnout in California pediatric dentists and residents utilizing the Professional Fulfillment Index.

## METHODS

IRB Approval was obtained from Children's Hospital Los Angeles. The survey questionnaire was distributed to approximately 650 pediatric dentists and dental residents through the California Society of Pediatric Dentistry (CSPD). Data was analyzed to assess the association between overall burnout and professional fulfillment. The differences in demographic and dental practice characteristics distribution between professional fulfillment were examined using Chi-Squared test and Fisher's Exact test as appropriate. Multivariate firth logistic regression model is used to further assess the association between overall burnout and professional fulfillment, while adjusting for work hours per week and practice years.

## RESULTS

Overall Burnout of Survey Participants

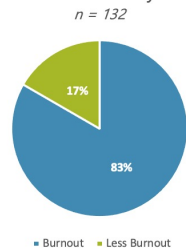


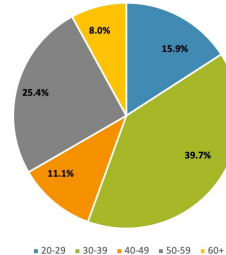
Figure 1. Overall Burnout

From the surveys sent to the 650 active pediatric dentists and pediatric dental residents, 132 responses were received. More than 50% of respondents were female. The more common age group was 30-39. The most common years of practice was 0-10 years, with majority of clinicians practicing in Southern California and in the private practice setting.

Total occupational burnout was detected in 110 out of the total 132 responses, which translated to 83% (Figure 1). Positive professional fulfillment was detected in 69 out of 132 responses (52%). Sixty-three responses out of a total of 63 negative professional fulfillment had burnout (100%). Forty-seven of the 69 positive professional fulfillment reported had burnout, which translates to 68%. Figures 2-5 compared how age group, years of practice, practice setting and work hours per week differed between negative professional fulfillment and positive professional fulfillment, respectively.

Positive professional fulfillment is less likely to have burnout after adjusting for work hours per week and practice years (OR=0.02, 95% CI=0.001 – 0.33, p=0.006).

Negative Professional Fulfillment  
Age Group



Positive Professional Fulfillment  
Age Group

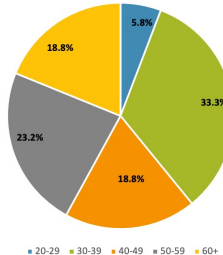
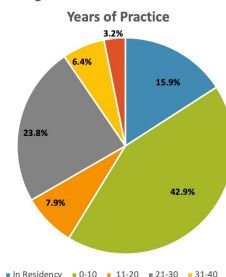


Figure 2. Professional fulfillment within age group

Negative Professional Fulfillment  
Years of Practice



Positive Professional Fulfillment  
Years of Practice

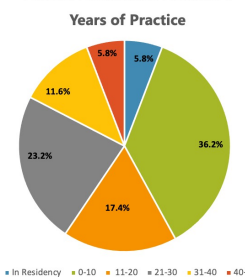


Figure 3. Professional fulfillment within years of practice

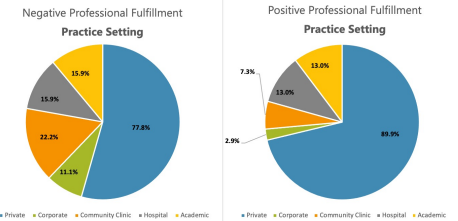


Figure 4. Professional fulfillment within practice setting

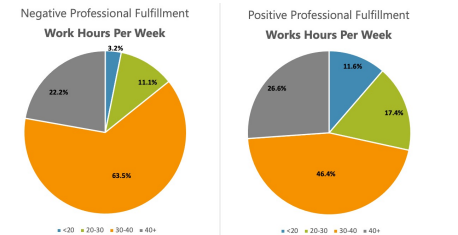


Figure 5. Professional fulfillment within work hours per week

## CONCLUSIONS

The majority of the CSPD members surveyed are experiencing some level of occupational burnout. Pediatric dentists and dental residents in California who have positive professional fulfillment are shown to be less likely to experience occupational burnout compared to those who had negative professional fulfillment.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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