

BACKGROUND

Diversity and inclusion in healthcare are important components of patient-centered care and may influence patient experiences. A diverse healthcare workforce has been associated with improved communication, trust, and satisfaction, particularly among minority populations. Prior studies suggest that patient-provider racial and ethnic concordance can enhance trust, although its impact on overall outcomes remains mixed¹.

In pediatric settings, parent or guardian perceptions are critical in evaluating care and influencing future healthcare utilization³. However, limited research has examined how diversity within dental teams (i.e., providers and auxiliary staff) affects parent reported experiences. This study explores the relationship between perceived diversity and satisfaction in pediatric dental clinic.

PURPOSE

To understand the role and value of diverse providers in clinical settings for children being treated in a hospital based dental clinic and its relation to guardian satisfaction

METHODS

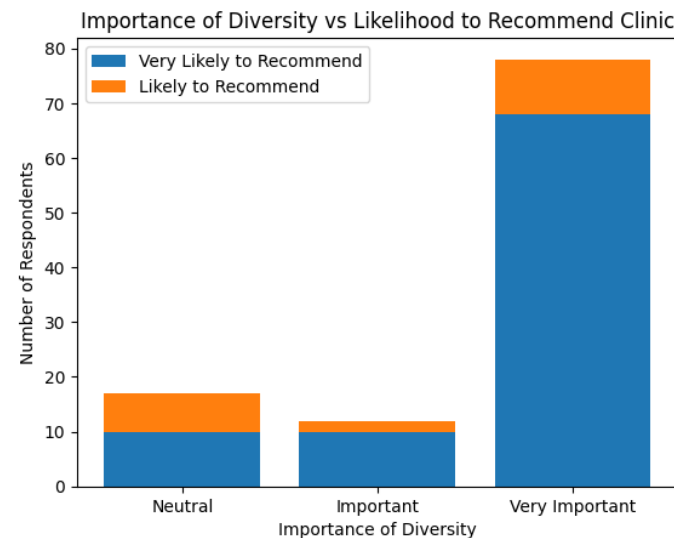
Patient data, including age, language preference, guardian reported race/ethnicity, and reason for dental visit, was extracted from individual charts before their upcoming scheduled appointment. A parent survey accompanied the chart review. Descriptive statistics were completed.

RESULTS

- One hundred two respondents completed the survey. No racial differences were observed in perception of safety, feeling welcomed, or the belief that diverse providers and team members improve quality of care (all $p > 0.05$).
- Feeling welcomed was strongly associated with perceived safety of the clinical environment ($p < 0.001$). Neither appointment type nor child age showed associations with feeling welcomed, perceived safety, likelihood to recommend the clinic, or whether parents felt listened to (all $p > 0.05$).
- Higher overall satisfaction scores combining perceptions of welcome, listening, openness, and safety were significantly associated with increased likelihood of recommending the clinic ($p = 0.020$). Parents who rated diversity as very important were also more likely to recommend the clinic ($p = 0.003$). No associations were observed between appointment type and safety, or between diversity importance and feeling welcomed or emergency versus recall visits (all $p > 0.05$).

Figure:

Relationship Between Importance of Diversity and Likelihood to Recommend the Clinic



Parents who rated diversity as "very important" were more likely to report being "very likely" to recommend the clinic ($p = 0.003$)

DISCUSSION

- This study suggests that overall patient experience in a pediatric dental clinic is largely positive, with consistently high ratings of safety, feeling welcomed, and satisfaction across demographic and visit-related factors.
- The strong association between feeling welcomed and perceived safety highlights the importance of clinic environment and interpersonal interactions, suggesting these constructs may reflect a shared perception of comfort and trust¹.
- While race was not associated with perceptions of care quality, safety, or welcoming, the finding that parents who value diversity more highly are more likely to recommend the clinic indicates that diversity may influence perceptions of care at a values-based level rather than through direct experience².
- Higher overall satisfaction was associated with increased likelihood of recommending the clinic, reinforcing the importance of communication, listening, and patient-centered care in shaping parent endorsement³.
- The lack of association between appointment type or child age and patient experience suggests consistency in care delivery across clinical contexts.
- Limitations include small sample sizes within subgroups, potential response bias, and use of self-reported survey data, which may limit generalizability and the ability to detect subtle differences.

CONCLUSIONS

Perceived welcoming and safety were strongly interconnected. Higher overall satisfaction and stronger valuing of diverse clinical environments were both associated with an increased likelihood of recommending the clinic.

REFERENCES

