

Perceptions of Psychological Safety Among AAPD Member Pediatric Dentists

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Purpose

- Understand how psychological safety (PS) presents among practicing American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) member pediatric dentists.
- Determine how demographic variables are associated with PS and perceived organizational support (POS).
- The correlation between PS and POS.

Background

- Psychological safety (PS) is the shared belief that individuals are free to express concerns, questions, mistakes, or ideas without fear of humiliation or other negative consequences.^{1,2}
- Organizational support theory, assumes that employees form general beliefs about how much the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being.³
- Research has shown that healthcare professionals attribute their experience of psychological safety to several variables, including past experiences and beliefs about whether they are valued.⁴

Methods

- Inclusion criteria: pediatric dentists, AAPD members, and practicing in the U.S. or any U.S. territory.
- A 31-item questionnaire was distributed anonymously via electronic mail with monthly reminders for 5 months after initial contact.
- Two validated instruments were used; both surveys were modified for this study. In Edmondson's Psychological Safety Scale (PSS), the words 'this team' were modified to 'this practice' and in Eisenberger's Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS), the word 'organization' was modified to 'workplace'.
- PS and POS were scored based on the instrument guidelines.
- ANOVA models were utilized to test for difference in mean score based on the provider and practice characteristics.
- Post hoc pairwise comparisons were conducted with Tukey's adjustment.

Results

- Total analyzed sample size was 397, response rate of 6%.
- Most respondents were female (56%), White (69%), and completed residency training in a hybrid hospital/university-based setting (58%).
- 26% of respondents reported having left a job since residency due to lack of well-being in the workplace (Figure 1).

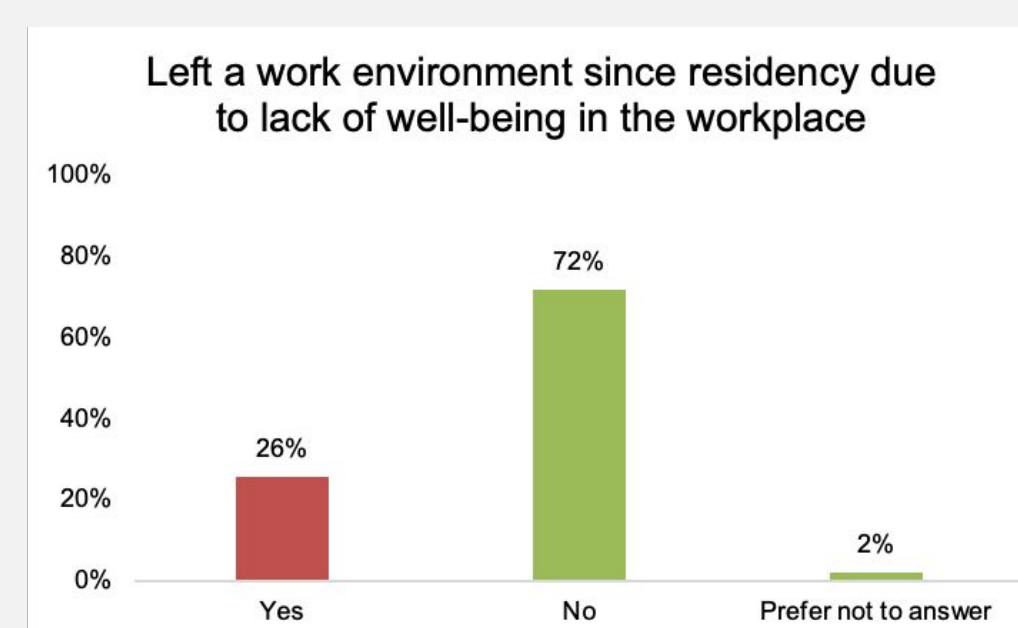


Figure 1: Summary of Respondents Reporting Leaving a Job Due to Workplace Well-Being Concerns

- There was a significant, positive correlation between POS and PS of 0.77 (95% CI: 0.73, 0.81), depicted in Figure 2.

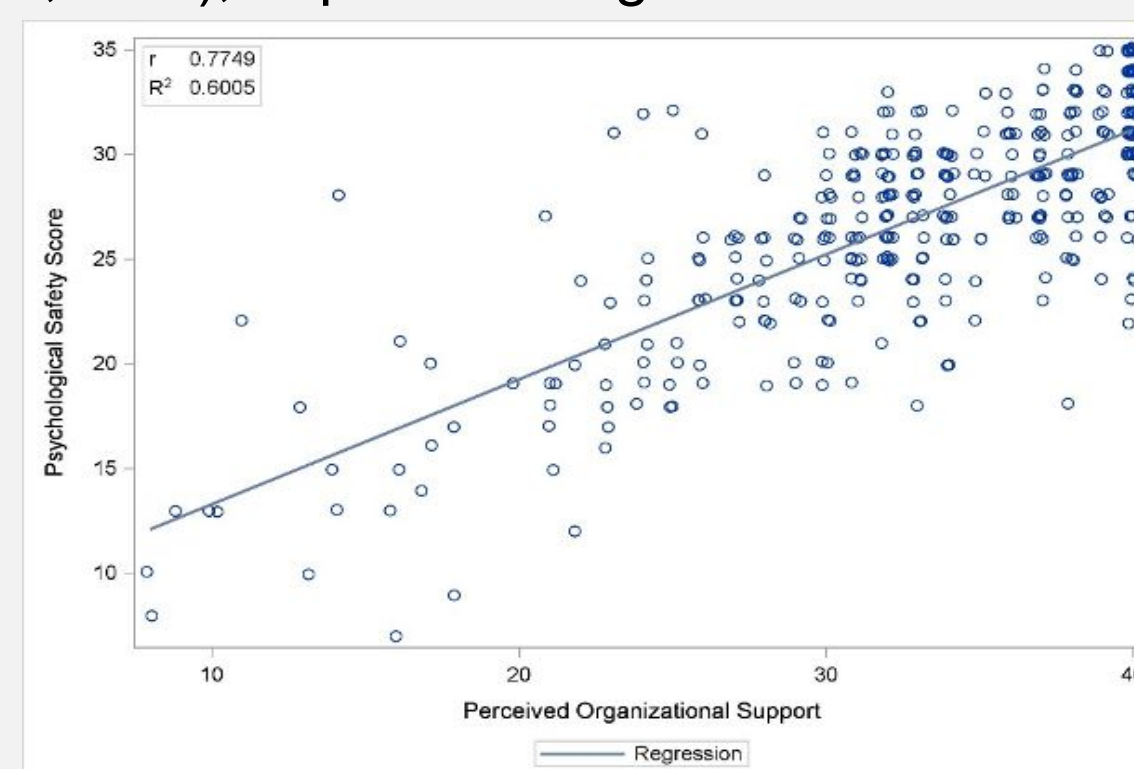


Figure 2: Association between Perceived Organizational Support and Psychological Safety

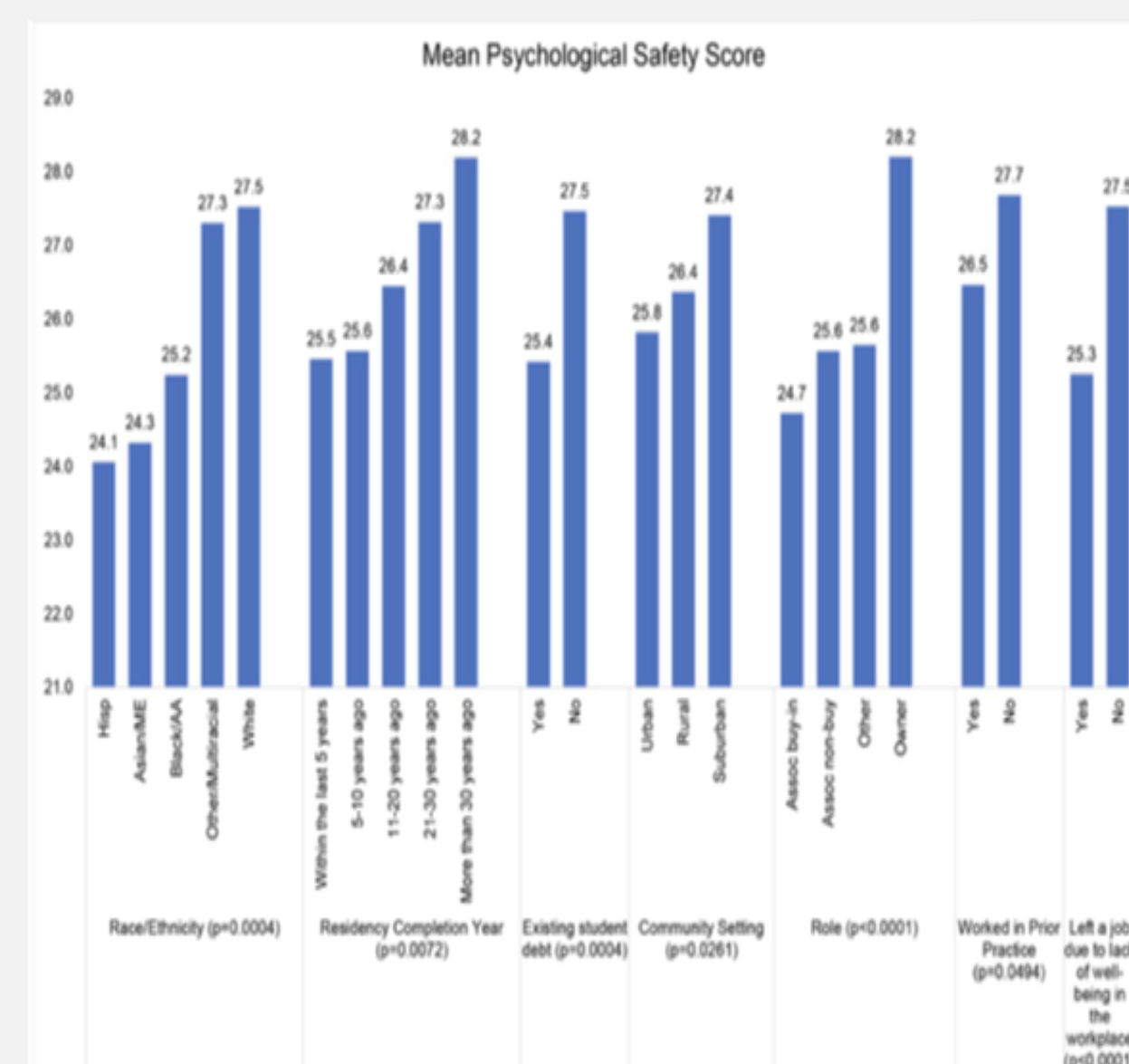


Figure 3: Factors Associated with Psychological Safety

	Estimate (SE)	P-value
Intercept	26.2 (0.76)	<0.0001
Race/Ethnicity		0.0006
Asian/ME	-3.0 (0.91)	*
Black/AA	-1.6 (0.84)	
Hispanic	-3.5 (1.19)	*
Other/Multiracial	-0.5 (1)	
White	Reference	
Existing Student Debt		0.0062
Yes	-1.5 (0.56)	*
No	Reference	
Role		0.0414
Owner	Reference	
Associate (Buy-in)	-1.9 (1.22)	
Associate (Non-buy-in)	-1.3 (0.60)	*
Other	-1.5 (0.68)	*
Left a job due to lack of well-being in the workplace		0.0060
No	1.6 (0.57)	*
Yes	Reference	

Table 1: Adjusted Model for Psychological Safety

	Estimate (SE)	P-value
Intercept	32.2 (1.28)	<0.0001
Race/Ethnicity		0.0057
Asian/ME	-3.6 (1.15)	*
Black/AA	-2.2 (1.03)	*
Hispanic	-2.6 (1.53)	
Other/Multiracial	0.1 (1.29)	
White	Reference	
Role		<0.0001
Owner	Reference	
Associate (Buy-in)	-3.2 (1.53)	*
Associate (Non-buy-in)	-3.9 (0.80)	*
Other	-4.2 (0.89)	*
Graduated Residency		0.0313
Over 5 years	-2.2 (1.01)	*
Within 5 years	Reference	
Left a job due to lack of well-being in the workplace		0.0106
No	1.9 (0.73)	*
Yes	Reference	

Table 2: Adjusted Model for Perceived Organizational Support

- Variables that demonstrated a significant association with PS are depicted in Figure 3.
- Adjusted PS model: Asian/Middle Eastern respondents had significantly lower reported PS than White respondents by an estimated 3.0 points (95% CI: 1.2, 4.8) and Hispanic respondents by a reported 3.5-point lower PS score (95% CI: 1.4, 5.8). Complete results in Table 1.
- Adjusted POS model: White respondents had significantly higher POS than those who identified as Asian/Middle Eastern (95% CI: 1.30, 5.83), Black/African American (95% CI: 0.19, 4.25). Complete results in Table 2.

Conclusions

Based on this study's results, the following conclusions can be made:

- Factors like role in the practice, race/ethnicity, and student loan debt status greatly affect psychological safety and perceived organizational support.
- There is a positive correlation between perceived organizational support and psychological safety, thus PS is not incidental; it emerges only when organizations actively and consistently demonstrate meaningful support for their clinicians.

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Acknowledgements

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