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## **Job satisfaction of dental professionals in Asnani school oral health program**

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### **Abstract**

Job satisfaction among health care professionals has been linked to various aspects of patient care and health system outcomes as well as to general life satisfaction and job performance. It is of immense significance for any organization to have complete awareness of the level of job satisfaction of its workforce. The objectives of this study were to assess job satisfaction of dental professionals in Asnani School Oral Health Program and to evaluate the attitude of the Asnani dental professionals towards their work.

Majority of the dental professionals expressed their satisfaction about being a part of Asnani School Oral Health Program. More than half of respondents rated high work load at both the schools and Health Centers. Only about one third of them perceived that the work load was almost right. 81% reported good work-life balance and 88% felt connected to their team.

**Keywords:** Job satisfaction, Dental professionals, School Oral Health Program, Oral Health, Qatar.

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### **Introduction**

In general terms, job satisfaction can be defined as an individual's general attitude towards his or her job [1]. Job satisfaction among health care professionals has been linked to various aspects of patient care and health system outcomes as well as to general life satisfaction and job performance [2]. It is of immense significance for any organization to have complete awareness of the level of job satisfaction of its workforce.

The career progression, working practices and job satisfaction of dental healthcare professionals has received increasing attention in the published literature [3,4,5]. Nonetheless there is very little published research on job satisfaction of dental professionals in Qatar. Research studies have reported positive relation between job satisfaction and work performance. However, as stated by Cameron, job satisfaction is not a single entity but a complex set of inter relationship of tasks, roles, responsibilities, interaction, incentives and rewards [6].

Asnani School Oral Health Program was initiated in November 2018 by Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), Qatar, as a novel initiative to provide dental screening services, preventive treatments like fluoride varnish applications and pit and fissure sealants along with treatment referrals for school children in Qatar employing bipartite strategy i.e. at schools and at Health Centers (HC). This program is delivered by a team of dental professionals comprising of Dentists, Dental Hygienists and Dental Assistants, who have accomplished the orientation and training program for School Oral Health. At schools, Oral Health Education is delivered to the students and school faculty in lecture halls and Mobile dental Units are set up for dental screening and preventive treatments. Students requiring other definitive treatment are booked an appointment electronically through Cerner and are referred to receive treatment in their

registered Health Centers. Kindergarten children accompanied by their teachers visit the Health centers in small batches and receive health education and fluoride varnish application. Referrals for other essential treatments are conveyed to the parents after booking the electronic appointment.

The earlier model of School Oral Health Services in Qatar was operating only at the Health Center premises. In light of the implementation of the new Asnani program over a period of one year, remodeling the delivery of preventive oral health services and the scope of work necessitating quotidian management of anxious children and effective communication with administrative faculty at PHCC headquarters, Health Centers, school managements as well as school nurses, it was deemed pertinent to evaluate job satisfaction of the dental professionals in Asnani School Oral Health Program.

### **Objectives**

- a. To assess job satisfaction of dental professionals in Asnani School Oral Health Program.
- b. To evaluate the attitude of the Asnani dental professionals towards their work.

### **2. Materials and Methods**

An exploratory questionnaire survey of job satisfaction of all dental professionals engaged in Asnani School Oral Health Program was carried out in January 2020.

Online survey questionnaire tool was designed to assess the job satisfaction of 23 dental professionals (7 Dentists, 4 Dental Hygienists and 12 Dental Assistants). The questionnaire included myriad dimensions of their work covering the following areas: overall job satisfaction, current working practice in HCs and at

school (including work load and job responsibilities), interaction with Asnani management at PHCC Head Quarters and with Schools as well as their work life balance. The questionnaire was checked by a pretest prior to starting of study. Test/retest analysis on the items in the final version of the questionnaire indicated a reasonably high level of reliability.

This research was conducted in full accordance with the World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous.

The link to access the survey was shared to all the dental professionals in the Asnani program through email and whats app messenger. Follow up mailing was planned only if the response rate achieved after the initial invitation to participate in survey was below 60%. However, as the response rate from the initial invitation was judged to be sufficient to ensure the representativeness of the sample, no reminder mails or messages were sent. Data was analyzed and presented as frequency distribution and percentages.

Data availability statement: The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author, Najat Abdrabbo AlYafei. The data are not publicly available as it contains information that could compromise the privacy of research participants.

### 3. Results

18 out of 23 dental professionals in Asnani program responded to the survey. Response rate was 78.2%. Result of the survey indicate that majority (61%) of the dental professionals in the Asnani Program expressed their satisfaction about being a part of Asnani School Oral Health Program (Chart 1). Although 70% of the respondents reported that their job descriptions were clearly defined, 24% were either unaware or not sure. Another 6% reported that they were occasionally required to take up additional job responsibilities. (Graph 2)

Respondents were asked to indicate their perceived work load at Schools and Health Centers respectively. Graph 3 indicates that more than half of respondents rated high work load at both the settings. Only about one third of them perceived that the work load was almost right.

Graph 4 lists the diverse factors associated with job satisfaction. While trying to evaluate the intrinsic factors affecting job satisfaction, we found that 69% of the respondents were happy with the work they perform. This proportion is parallel to the respondents who were satisfied being affiliated to the Asnani School Oral Health Program. Enthralingly, 81% reported good work-life balance and majority of the respondents (88%) felt connected to their team.

When the extrinsic predictors of job satisfaction were analyzed, results reflect that 82% expressed that the work environment maintains mutual respect among the dental professionals and majority of the them felt valued for their contribution. Greater proportion of respondents (88%) reported positive reciprocation from Asnani program management team at the PHCC headquarters in their solving issues or problems. Hence, 75% felt comfortable voicing their concerns and 87% believed the management team valued their feedback.

The proportion of responses to various facets relating to their work and interpersonal communication and cooperation are shown in Graph 7. It was startling to note that the dental

professionals in Asnani team were receiving sub optimal cooperation from the other dental staff in the Health center with regard to understanding the scope of services provided by the Asnani program and meager cooperation from transportation department for arranging the school visits. Responses from Health Center logistics for requests of supplies and restocking of the materials were very supportive. With regard to working conditions, although around 70% of the respondents felt competent about following fastidious and rigorous infections control guidelines in school premises and ease of fluoride varnish application at schools, 38% reported lack of ease in operating with the Mobile Dental Unit at schools. Though the cooperation from school administration was fair, the cooperation from the school nurses and facilities at schools for delivering oral Health Education lectures to students and staff were reported to be more satisfactory.

### 4. Discussion

The main objectives of this study were to assess the job satisfaction of dental professionals in Asnani School Oral Health Program and to elucidate the underlying factors which may impact their job satisfaction, so as to address the grievances and improve the efficiency of the Asnani Program.

In recent years, the health professionals' well- being at work has received intense attention and has been described as a missing Quality Indicator, which may have substantial effect on the patient's health.<sup>7</sup> Undeniably, the combination of unpleasant working conditions and work- related stress for health professionals can lead to poor quality of care and concurrently affect patient safety<sup>8</sup>.

Long term accomplishments of the envisaged Asnani Oral Health Program is significantly dependent on the attitude of the partaking dental professionals towards their job, which is a direct indicator of their job satisfaction. The response rate for our study was found to be 78.2%, which is higher than 60% as reported in an Australian study<sup>2</sup> and barely 35.2% in another German study<sup>13</sup>. The better response rate in our study may potentially be attributed to the eagerness of dental professionals to express their perceived job satisfaction, upon the completion of one year of the Asnani program, in a hope that necessary measures would be initiated to address various components of their job, which in turn would improve their working practices for the forthcoming years of the program.

Our results show that majority of the dental professionals in Asnani School Oral Health Program expressed satisfaction with their job. Surveys conducted outside Qatar among dentists and dental auxiliaries also report similar findings. 60% in Iowa<sup>9</sup>, 50% in California <sup>[10]</sup>, 81% in Australia<sup>2</sup> and 80% of dental professionals in Canada <sup>[11]</sup> expressed high level of job satisfaction. Contrastingly, in Egypt only 35.6% <sup>[12]</sup> and in South Korea 36% of dental professionals were found to be satisfied with their job <sup>[13]</sup>.

It was evident from our study that the dental professionals had a good work-life balance, supportive relationship with their colleagues and the Asnani program management. Work load was perceived to be high, both at the schools and HCs. This may be attributed to the time limitation during working hours of school and cooperation from school administration to permit the students to participate in the Asnani program in accordance with

the determined schedule and time-frame. At the HCs the dental professionals might have perceive increased work load due to other administrative responsibilities. Though the mutual relationship between dental professionals engaged in the Asnani program was very favorable, other dental professionals in the Health centers lacked awareness about the scope of Asnani School Oral health program.

We found that different extrinsic factors like mutual respect among colleagues, supportive management and feeling valued for their contribution impacted the job satisfaction. Our findings coincide closely to the results of another study conducted by Goetz *et al* [14]. Higher job satisfaction was reported when there was recognition and appreciation for the work and better interpersonal relations within the team.

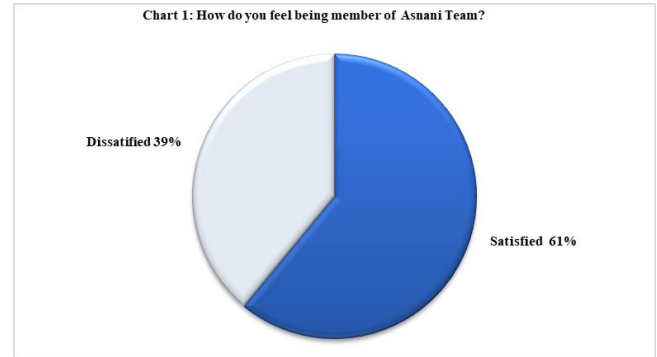
In the German research, unlike our results, it was found that dental nurses showed a higher level of job satisfaction for the item ‘responsibilities within the practice team are clear’ and a lower level of satisfaction for ‘suggestions for improvement is taken seriously’. [14] It can be speculated from our study, that despite some dental professionals stating that their job responsibilities were not clearly defined, their overall high level of job satisfaction can be attributed to the robust support and cooperation from the Asnani Program management, who routinely seek feedback, value the responses and are proactive in addressing any problems or issues.

Effective communication describing the scope of the Asnani Program to the dental professionals at HCs and clear appraisal of the transportation department and school administrators about their obligations towards Asnani program can alleviate some of the determinants influencing the job satisfaction in our study.

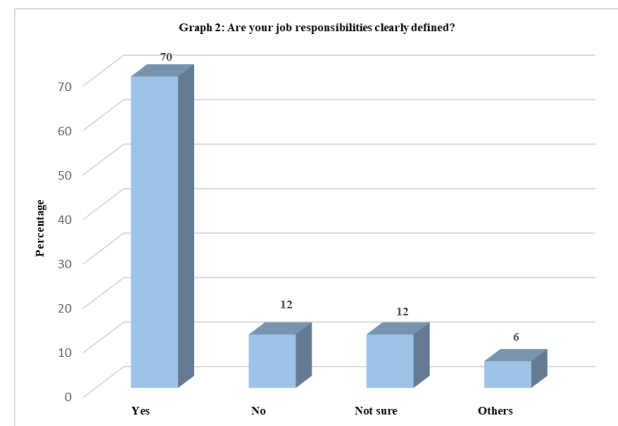
In the context of escalation of the Asnani program over the coming years, there is expeditious need to recruit more dental professionals and train them concretely for the School Oral Health program. Our results also provide implications for planning better communication and quality of interaction with the personnel working in health centers and school administrators.

The key to enhance the job satisfaction of dental professionals in Asnani school Oral Health Program is understanding the multi-faceted dimensions influencing it, which encompass a range of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. In our study we assessed a few of these factors. It is evidenced that job satisfaction among dental professionals is inversely related to the experienced work stress and increasingly those who yield to it, suffer from early burnout [15]. Quality of life, physical and emotional wellbeing, patient interactions, duration of working hours, work load, autonomy, remuneration and opportunities for professional development are some other factors which may influence the job satisfaction. Future studies are recommended to take these parameters into

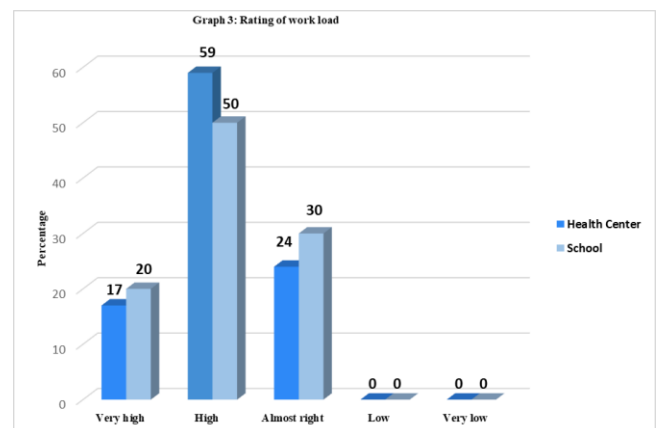
consideration while assessing the job satisfaction.



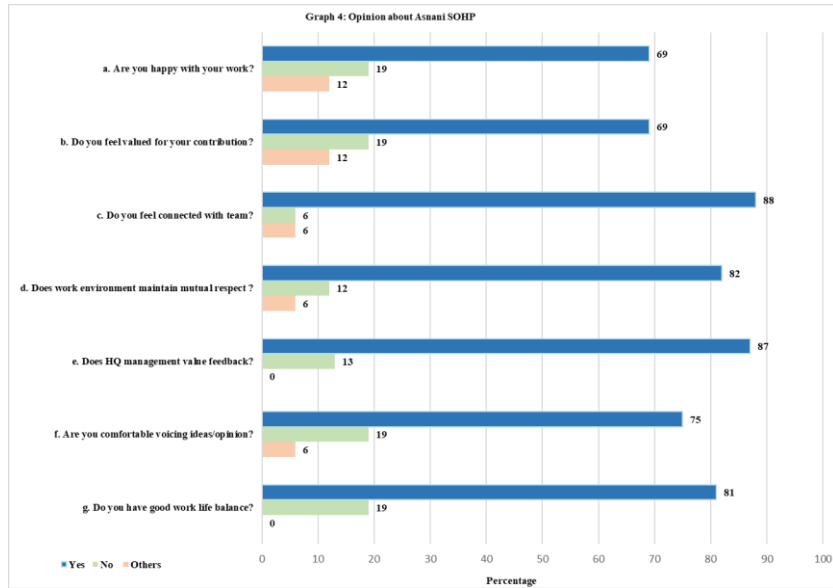
**Chart 1:** How do you feel being member of Asnani Team?



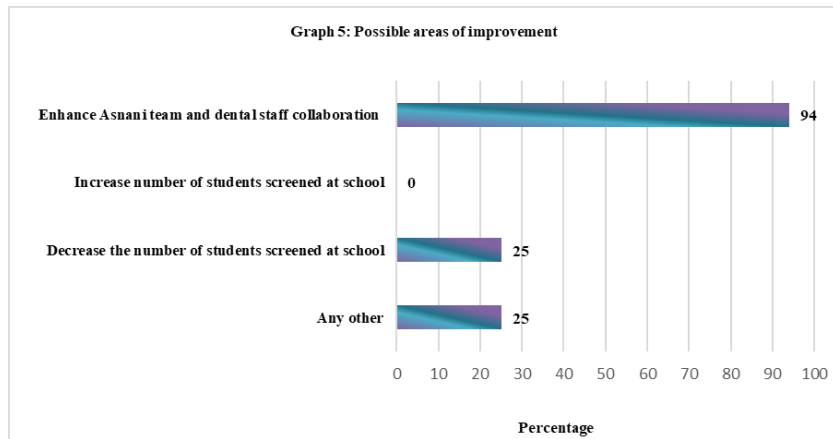
**Graph 2:** Are your job responsibilities clearly defined?



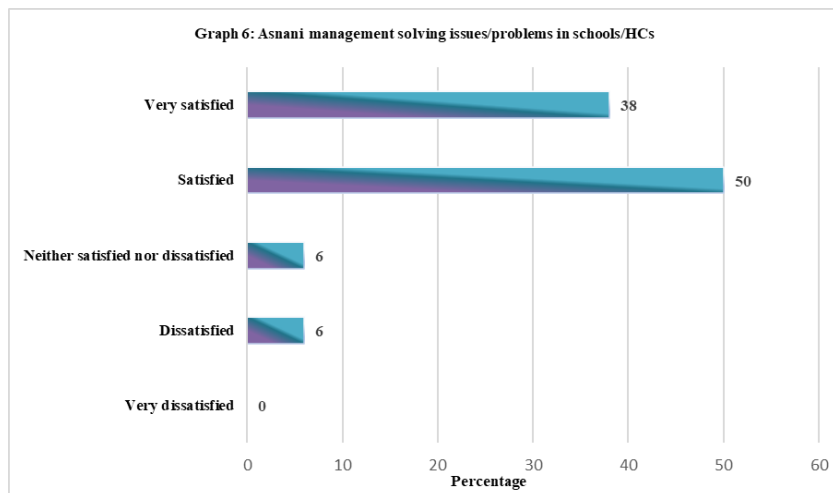
**Graph 3:** Rating of work load



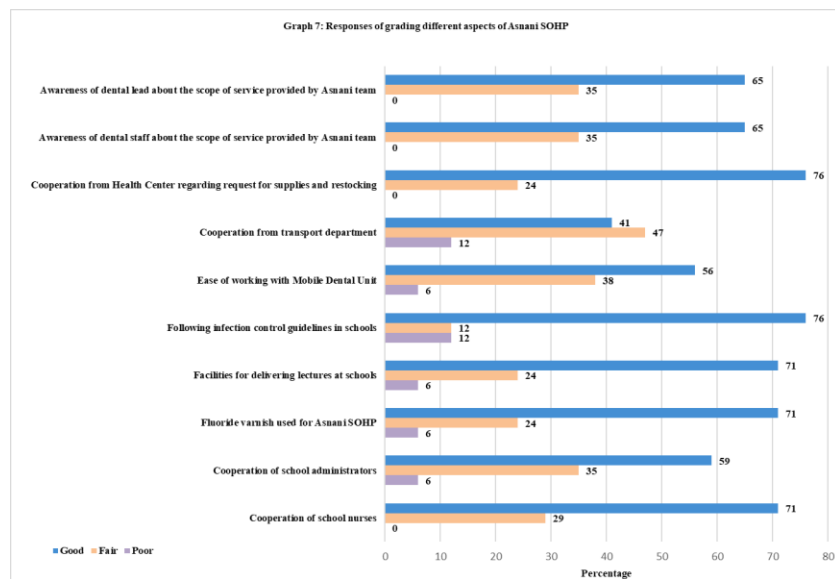
**Graph 4: Opinion about Asnani SOHP**



**Graph 5: Possible areas of improvement**



**Graph 6: Asnani management solving issues/problems in schools/HCs**



**Graph 7:** Responses of grading different aspects of Asnani SOHP

## 6. Conclusion

Overall job satisfaction was judged to be good among majority of the dental professionals in Asnani School Oral Health Program and they had a positive attitude towards their work. With the expansion of the program, it is essential to recruit more dental professionals, train them proficiently and clearly define the job responsibilities to the Dentists, Dental Hygienists and Dental Assistants. It is also recommended to enhance Health Center dental staff and school administrations' collaboration, together with consistent transportation amenities to reduce the effect of these factors on the perceived job satisfaction and improve the efficiency of the Asnani School Oral Health Program.

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