

Perceived Work Experience of Dutch Young Professional Dental Hygienist

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Abstract

Aim: This pilot study examined the perceived work experience, in the work situation of Dutch young professional dental hygienists. **Methods:** An online questionnaire was provided via social media (Facebook and LinkedIn) to Dutch dental hygienists, who just graduated or work as a clinical practitioner for a maximum of five years. Perceived work experience was measured using two scales: the Utrecht Burnout Scale (UBOS-C), and a short form Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9). The UBOS-C includes three dimensions of burnout: Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA). The UWES-9 is a hypothesized three-factor structure of work engagement with the factors Vigor (VI), Dedication (DE) and Absorption (AB). For both scales, statements about how one feels at work were answered on a 7-point rating scale (0 = never to 6 = always). **Results:** In total 73 young professional dental hygienists (8% male) with a mean age of 26.5 years (SD = 3.4) and an average weekly working period of 32.9 hours (SD = 5.9) responded. Three-quarters are employed and most of them work in a team of dental professionals in a clinical practice. The internal consistency of all scales was in line with both manuals of the UBOS-C and UWES-9 (.65 and .93). The mean level of burnout was $M = 1.53$ (SD = .79) and for work engagement the mean level was $M = 4.30$ (SD = 1.14). The mean scores of the UBOS-C dimensions were as follows: EE: $M = 1.98$ (SD = 1.27), DP: $M = 1.17$ (SD = .85), and for PA: $M = 4.72$ (SD = .78). The burnout levels for the dimensions EE and DP were low, and for PA it was very high as compared to the manual norms. Furthermore, the mean scores of the UWES-9 dimensions were for VI: $M = 4.14$ (SD = 1.27), for DE: $M = 4.61$ (SD = 1.30), and for AB: $M = 4.14$ (SD = 1.15), indicating a moderate level of work engagement. A significant negative correlation was found between work engagement and burnout ($r = -.792$, $p < .001$). Compared to part time workers, significantly higher scores on DP and lower scores on PA were given by fulltime workers. Conversely, part time workers experienced a significant higher mean level of work engagement on the full scale and on the dimensions DE and AB compared to full time workers. One out of six (16.4%) reported to have had prior experience with burnout and scored significantly higher on the mean level of burnout and EE, than dental hygienist who did not have this experience. **Conclusions:** These exploratory findings show that Dutch young professional dental hygienists are not at risk for burnout, and appear to have a moderate level of work engagement. Working part time seems to be related to a significantly higher level of PA and VI than working full time. Prior burnout experience leads to a "high" level of burn out and especially a "high" level of EE. A high level of work engagement coincides with a low level of symptoms related to burnout. We would like to thank Kim Marinussen and Mandy Rosenbrand for their support in the data collection.

Keywords: dental, hygienist, work, professional, work engagement, burnout