

INTRODUCTION

Studies have found children with ASD have greater unmet dental health care needs than the national pediatric average.¹ The salient factors promoting or inhibiting access to routine dental care have been identified,^{1,2,3} however, the relative importance of each factor has not. This study illuminates which factors may be most influential, so dentists can most efficiently make changes to their practice to increase access to care for children with ASD.

METHODS & MATERIAL

Retrospective, cross-sectional data collection using a Likert scale survey as well as open ended questions to measure the importance of factors that increase or decrease access to dental care.

Subjects were recruited using public Facebook groups catered to caregivers of children with Autism in the tristate area (NY, NJ, PA).

Quantitative responses were analyzed using excel. A thematic analysis of qualitative data was implemented.

Number of total respondents	71
Number of participants that met criteria	38
Number of participants who had access to routine care	18
Number of participants who did not have access to routine care	20

OBJECTIVES

Goal: To assist providers in prioritizing the most impactful changes to make to their practice to make dental care more accessible for children with Autism.

QUANTITATIVE

Aim: To understand caregivers' perspectives on the impactfulness of promoting factors and barriers to routine dental care.

Approach: Survey caregivers of children with ASD to better understand how much each factor affects access to routine dental care.

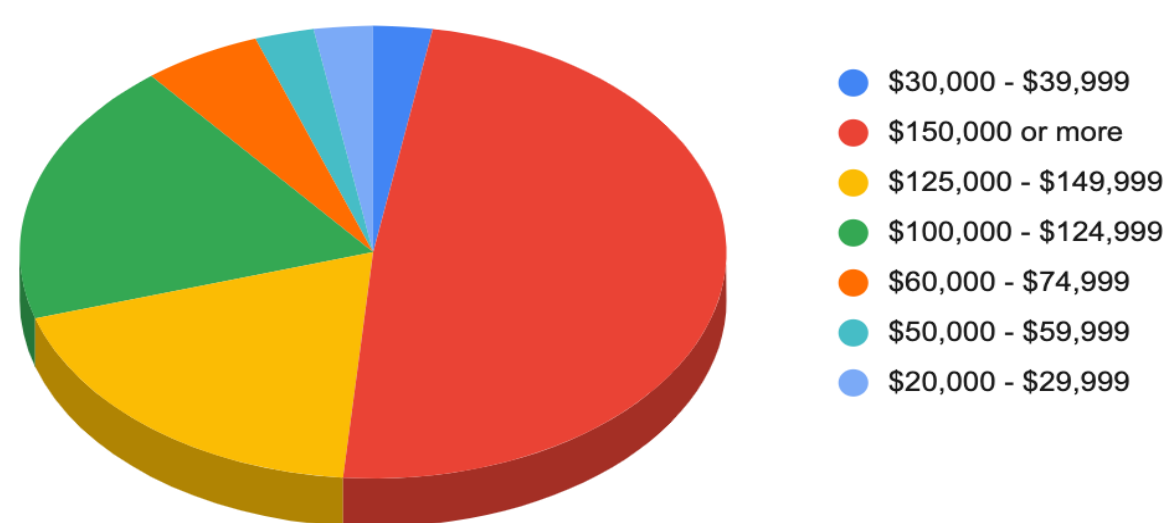
QUALITATIVE

Aim: To understand caregivers' perspectives on what dentists could do to promote access to and remove barriers to care.

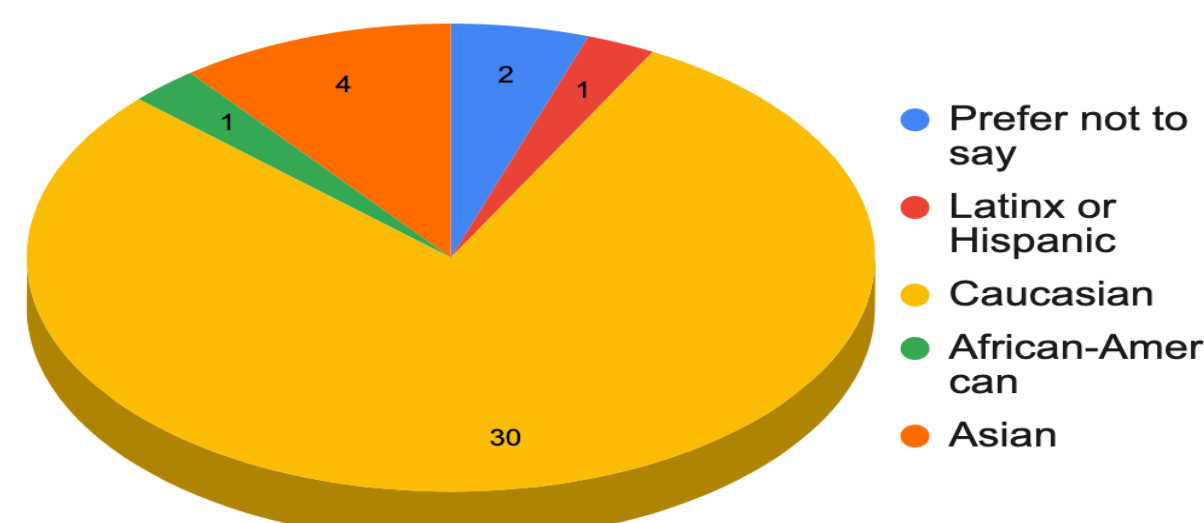
Approach: Survey caregivers about how dentists positively and negatively impact access to routine dental care.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

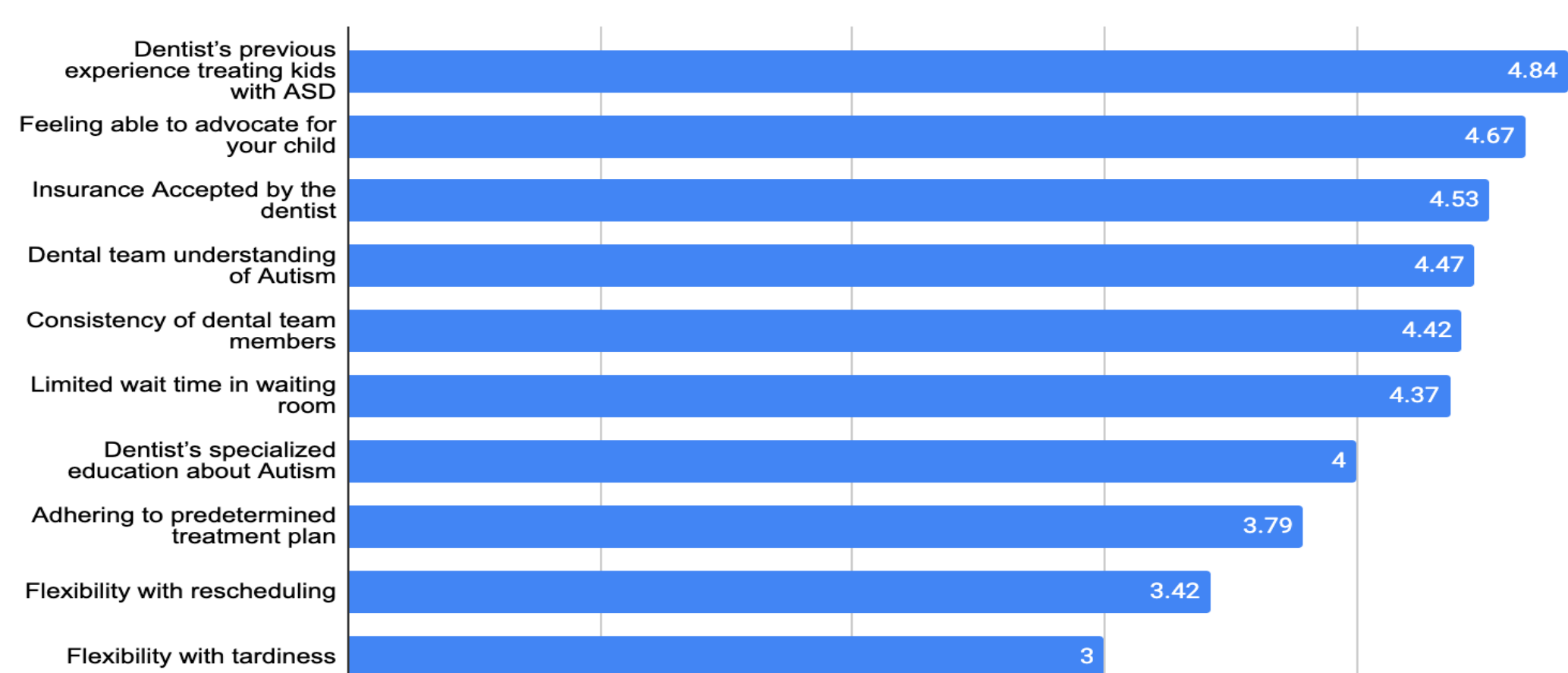
Participant Income



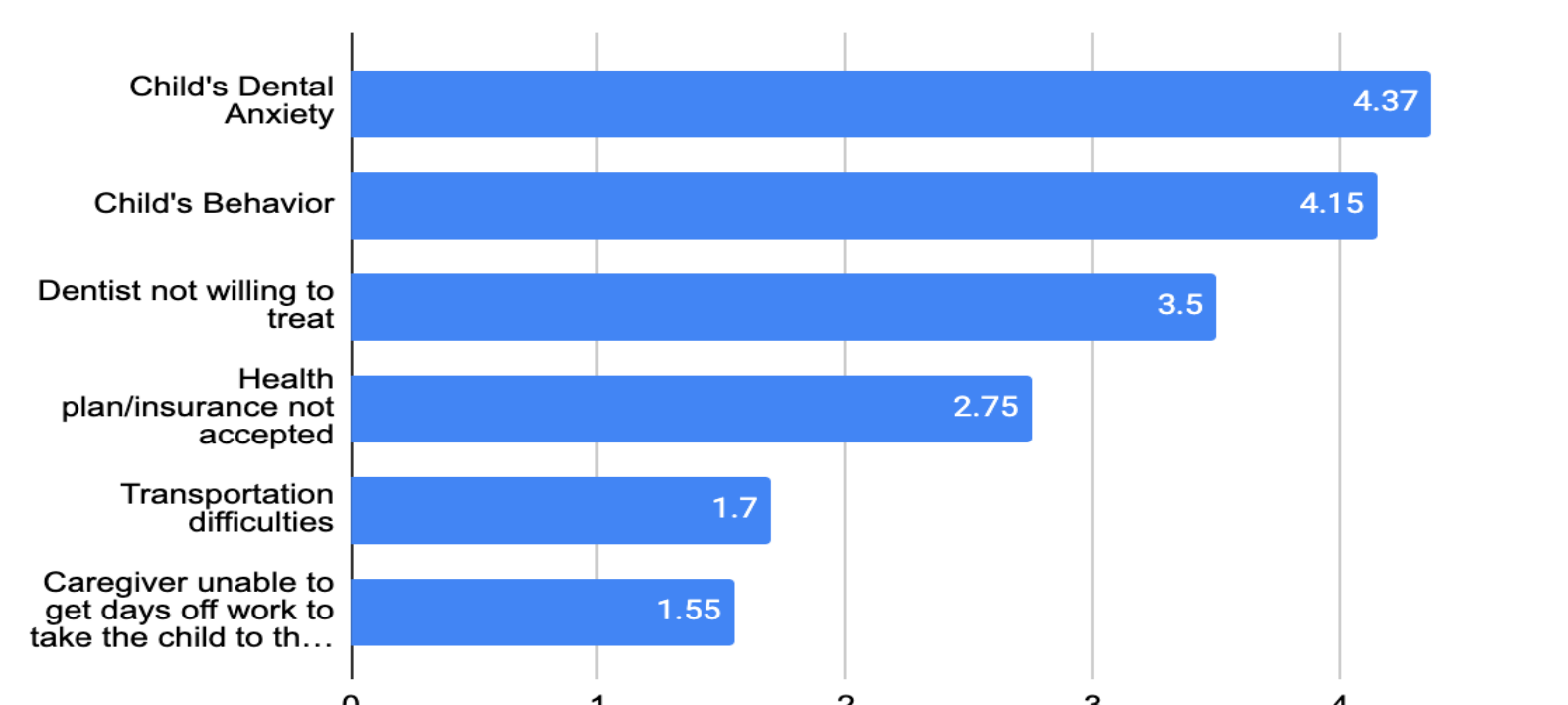
Parental Ethnicity



Rated Factors Promoting Access to Routine Dental Care



Rated Barriers to Routine Dental Care



QUALITATIVE RESULTS

What do you feel your dentist does to cater to your child's needs?

"Has his favorite toys ready, very patient, has a sensory room waiting area. All nurses are trained to be especially kind and have treats and prizes ready"

"Follows his lead, does not push him to sit a certain way or force his mouth open."

What could your dentist do better to cater to your child's needs?

"Address the major issues she's having. Realize that children on the spectrum have a different tolerance of pain and how they are able to express themselves. Just because a child doesn't cry or make any facial expressions does not mean they're not suffering!"

"Maybe weighted blanket or something to hold (fidget toy) during the appointment. But those things I can probably supply and bring to the appointment."

DISCUSSION

- The major factors inhibiting access to routine dental care were the child's **dental anxiety**, child's **behavior**, and the dentist's **unwillingness to treat**.
- The major factors promoting access to routine dental care were dentist's **experience** treating children with autism, the caregiver's **comfortability** advocating for their child, and **insurance acceptance** by the dentist.
- Both groups expressed the importance of the dentist's **experience with problem behavior** which could indicate the need for **further education** and **exposure** of dentists to patients with Autism in their training.
- Significant factors which would improve and promote access to care was found to be dentist's **exposure**, **experience**, and **behavior** treating patients with Autism.
- All the participants that met criteria were female caregivers.

CONCLUSIONS

- This study found that caregivers felt the most impactful changes surround the dentists themselves, and their expertise and willingness to work with children with Autism and their parents.
- Individualizing treatment for children with Autism was indicated as an important need by caregivers.
- Preferentially ranking the factors instead of rating them may have established a more definitive order of importance of each factor.
- Future studies would better diversify the sample population by surveying participants in addition to the Facebook source.
- Limitations of this study include its small sample size, and a homogenous population in gender and race.

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