Burnout among teachers: A side effect of teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic

Victor Flores, Eric Long, Abigail Sanchez, Makayla Sinness, Dr. Nancy Binkin, MD, MPH

Bachelor's of Science in Public Health Honors Practicum | University of California, San Diego | Wertheim School of Public Health

Introduction

- Local SD County school district continued in-person instruction for 2020-2021 school year despite nationwide online learning
- District leadership requested survey to examine stress and burnout, perceived safety, and mask attitudes among district teachers and staff

Methods

- Mixed methods Qualtrics survey emailed to current teaching staff within the district
- Survey duration: March 2, 2022 – March 12, 2022
- Quantitative data analyzed using SPSS and OpenEpi
- Qualitative data coded and common themes identified

Results

- Teacher response rate: 27% (72/273)
- 68% felt stressed/burned out most/every day
- Greatest challenges to student learning:
  - Dealing with student behavioral issues (45%)
  - Masking impairs verbal communication/social cues (49%)
  - Catching up students who have fallen behind (42%)
- 72% believed eliminating California's mask mandate would be more beneficial than harmful
- Main qualitative themes: Difficulties/frustration with COVID protocols, student concerns, teachers undervalued, lack of communication, removing extra responsibilities

Conclusions

- Teachers stressed and burned out from working in the pandemic
- COVID-19 mitigation strategies perceived as barriers to academic success

Removing nonessential responsibilities and providing counseling services may address teacher burnout
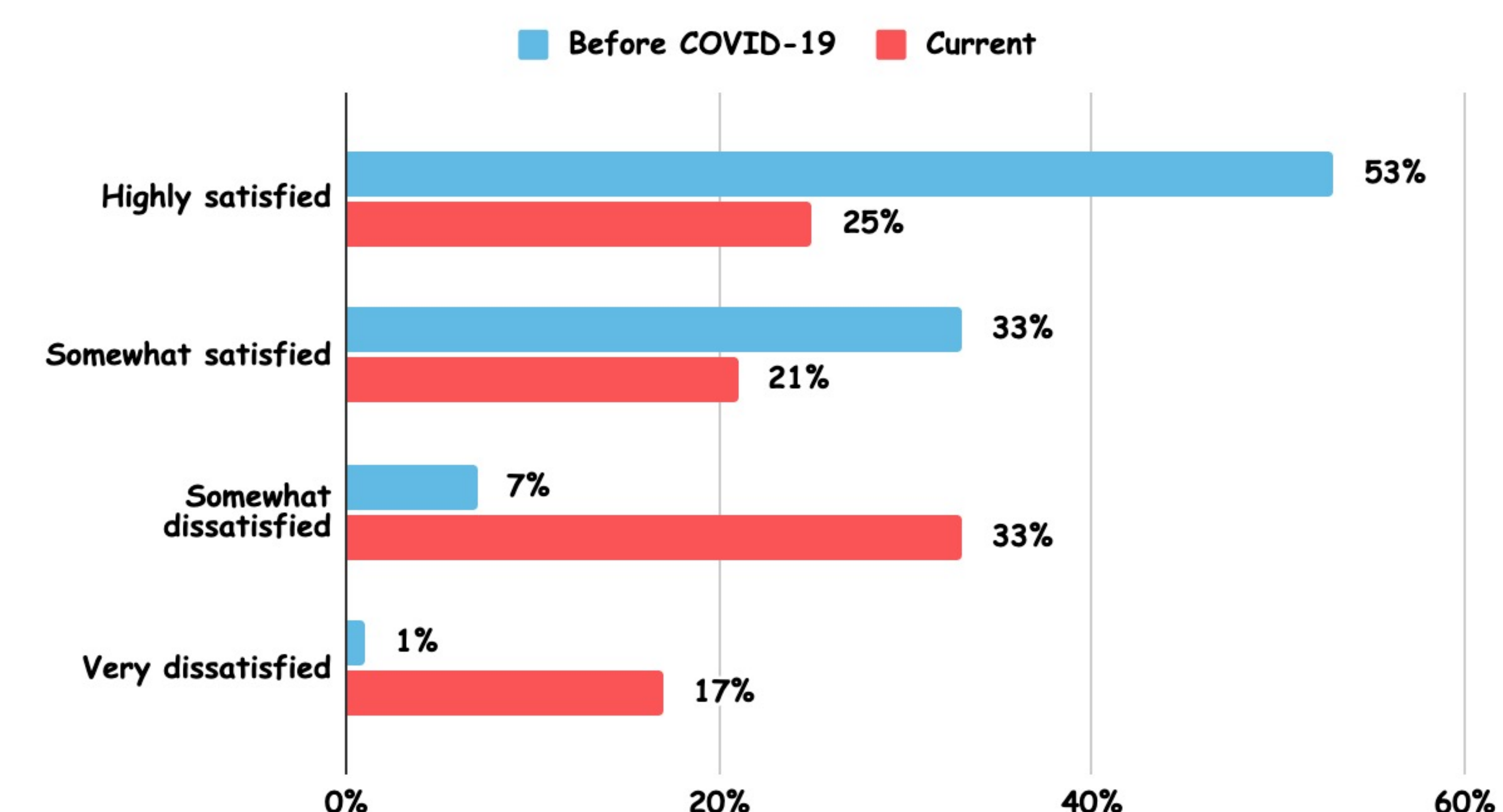
Presentation

Abstract

Figures and Findings

Current Satisfaction of Teachers Compared to Before the Pandemic

Legend: Before COVID-19 | Current

- Highly satisfied: 53% (Before COVID-19), 25% (Current)
- Somewhat satisfied: 33% (Before COVID-19), 21% (Current)
- Somewhat dissatisfied: 7% (Before COVID-19), 33% (Current)
- Very dissatisfied: 1% (Before COVID-19), 17% (Current)

Teachers 5.9 × more likely to be dissatisfied currently than before the pandemic ($p<0.0000001$)

Qualitative Findings

"Most days I spend about 75% of my workday dealing with COVID related staff issues. It's been extremely difficult to get the regular work done"

"Student absences, working in a mask, trying to hear kids that are in masks, trying to fill gaps from the last two years, & supporting students emotionally during the transition back to the classroom"

"Staffing cuts, forced demotion, huge pay cut, limited staff help, greater job stress and physical demand"

"We don't want to be heroes - we just want to do what's best for kids while at the same time do what's best for our mental health and overall morale."

"Students came to us with learning deficits due to the pandemic. Additionally, they've come to us lacking social skills and having mental health issues and anxieties we didn't see before"