

Introduction

After completing residency, pediatric dentists have a wide variety of career options to pursue, varying from academia and research to corporate or private practice (3, 5). Over recent years, there has been a noted shift in popularity amongst the younger generations of dentists from practice ownership to employment (1, 3). While some believe this may be the result of increasing student debt (1,2), others might argue that a lacking factor is adequate training in practice management (1).

Besides providing clinical experience, all programs must have a didactics portion (4) as required by the Commission of Dental Accreditation (CODA 4-20 points a.,b.). Including lectures on practice management topics (e.g. financial education/literacy, accounting, practical legal comprehension, etc.) may be useful in enhancing residents' preparation and business skills for both employment and practice ownership.

Little research has been done on the practice management training and resources that pediatric dental residency programs offer, and what residents feel would be beneficial. The purpose of this cross-sectional, prospective study was to determine whether pediatric dental residency programs provide sufficient training and resources in business and legal aspects of practice management. It also aims to shed light on what aspects of practice management, if any, pediatric dental residency programs provide training and resources on, and whether there is a generational difference in preparation in and pursuit of careers in private practice.

Methods

A cross-sectional, prospective study was conducted via survey sent by email to 8,475 active members of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) who are currently enrolled in or fully completed a pediatric dental residency in the United States. The survey consisted of 12 questions assessing participants' training and preparation in financial and legal aspects of private practice management during their pediatric dental residency programs. The survey was hosted by SurveyMonkey to meet security standards for the transmission of online data; transport layer security protocol is used to encrypt and transmit data which are frequently backed up in an encrypted storage. Frequency and statistical analyses were conducted for all study variables. Data collected and analyzed was maintained on password protected computer with encrypted storage.

The collected data was analyzed by a statistician. Frequencies for each of the 12 questions were collected and summarized into relevant bars graphs. Specific analyses were recorded for questions focusing on how many years participants have practiced pediatric dentistry, how many financial or legal/malpractice seminars participants received during their pediatric dental residency programs, and which specific areas they received training on. Cross tabulation and statistical significance were calculated in comparison of two questions to compare years practicing pediatric dentistry and whether participants believe a incorporating a CODA-mandated curriculum on financial and legal aspects of private practice would be a beneficial addition to pediatric residency programs.

Results

The total number of responses received for the 12-question survey was 36. Majority of participants responded that they were still in residency (n=14), followed by 1-5 years practicing (n=10), 5-10 years practicing (n=7), over 10 years practicing (n=4), and only one participant having never practiced. Majority of the participants responded that they had received between 1-3 financial seminars during their residency program (n=22), followed by those who said they received no financial seminars at all (n=12). Similarly, most stated that regarding legal/malpractice seminars during residency, most received 1-3 seminars (n=22), followed by the rest responding that they received no malpractice/legal seminars during their programs (n=14).

When asked to select which relevant areas participants received training on regarding practice management, the three most selected areas were Patient Management (n=24), Legal (n=16), and Insurance/Billing (n=13); the options receiving the fewest responses were HR (n=2) followed by three tied options: IT (n=3), Location Analytics (n=3), and None of the Above (n=3). When asked which of the same areas participants would have liked to receive training on, the three highest frequency answers were: Taxes (n=26), Legal (n=23), and Basic Analytics and Insurance/Billing (n=22). Only two participants replied "None of the Above" to the same question.

A chi-square test was run cross-tabulating survey question one ("How many years have you been practicing pediatric dentistry") with question twelve ("Do you believe that incorporating a CODA-mandated curriculum on the business and legal aspect of private practice would be beneficial addition to pediatric residency programs?"), divided into two categories each (chi square = 4.82). The result was statistically significant with p value <.05 (p=.028).

Results

Figure 1: Years Practicing Pediatric Dentistry

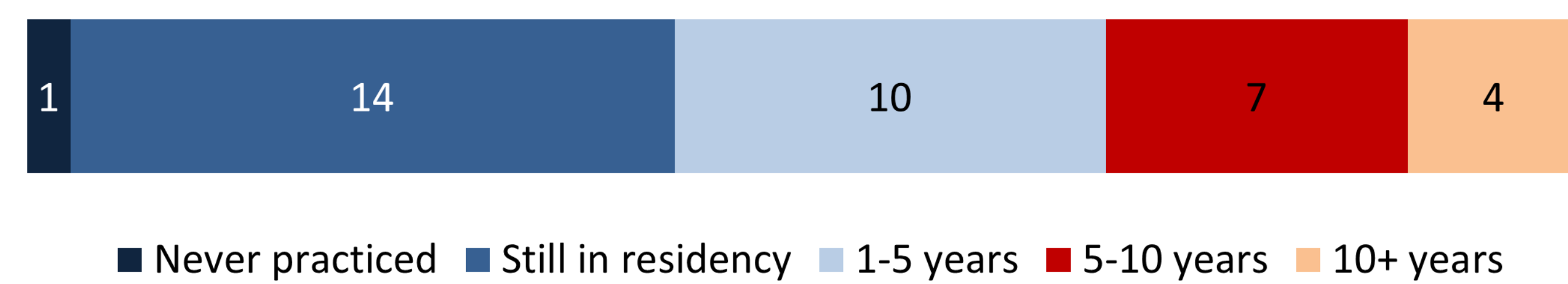


Figure 2: Number of Seminars Attended During Residency

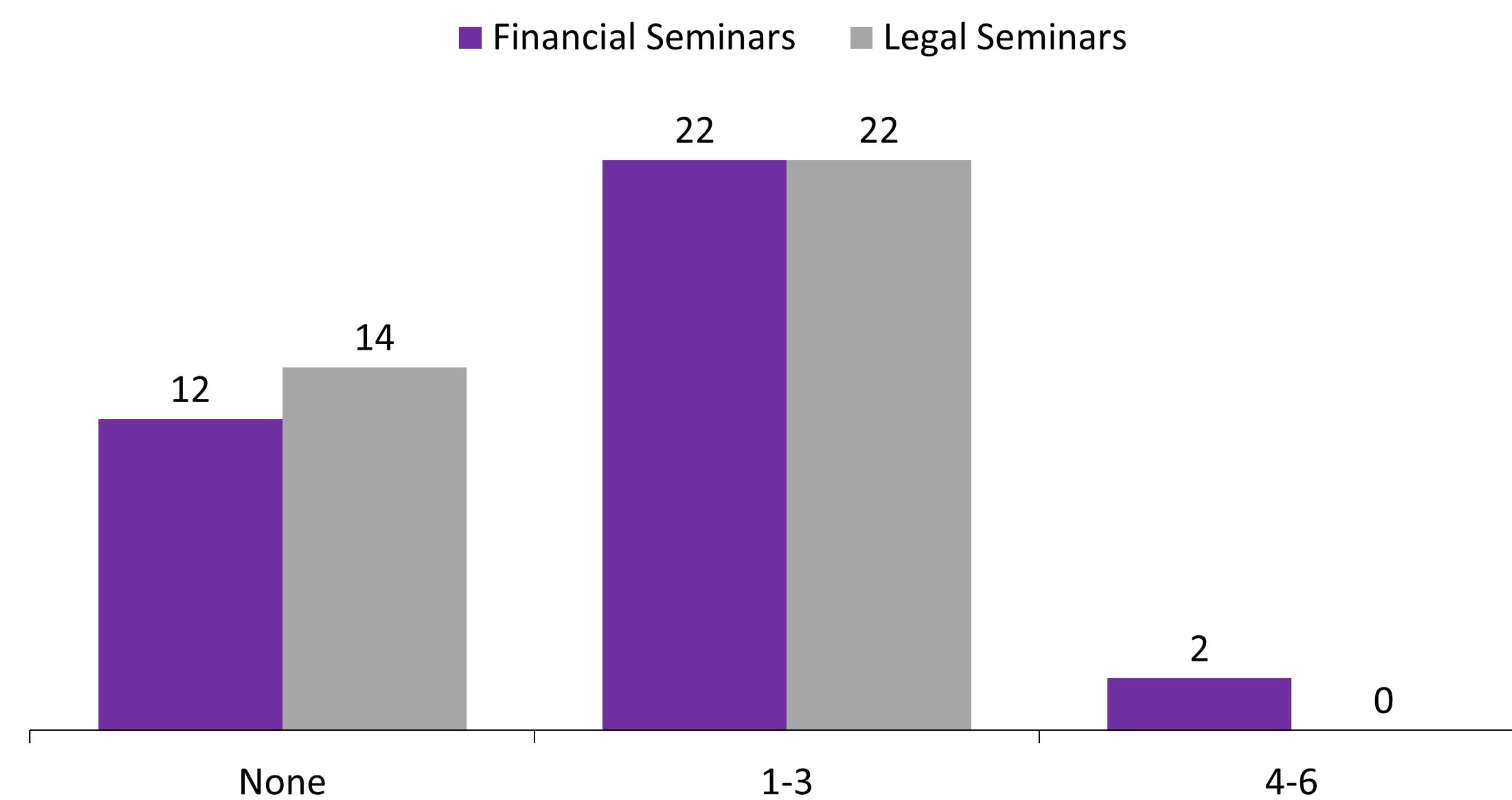
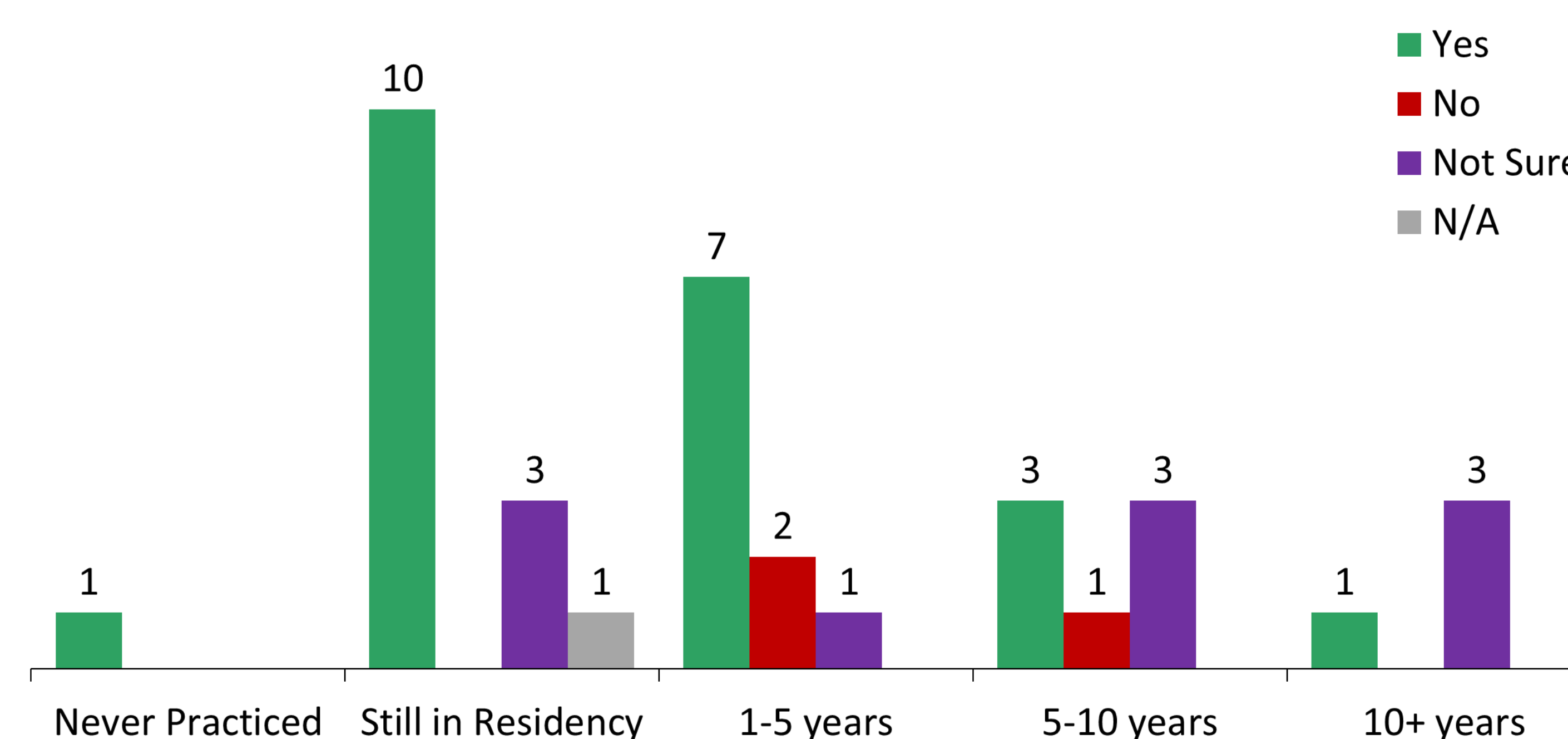


Figure 3: Training Received vs. Wanted



Figure 4: Years Practicing vs. belief that a CODA-mandated curriculum will be beneficial



Discussion & Conclusion

This study shows a very current representation of the type of practice and business management training in pediatric dental residency programs, given that majority of participants were either current residents or recent graduates having less than five years of experience (Figure 1). Figure 2 shows that approximately 40% of the participants did not receive any seminars, with nearly the rest receiving no more than one to three seminars in financial and/or legal topics.

Figure 3 highlights the discrepancies between what the participants received training in versus what they would have liked to receive training in during their residency programs. The four most common topics that participants had received training on were Patient Management, Insurance/Billing, Legal, and Investment/Loans. In comparison, the four most desired topics of training were Taxes, Legal, Basic Accounting, and Insurance/Billing. While it seems residency programs may provide more training on day-to-day operations (e.g. Patient Management, Insurance/Billing, Legal), there may be a lack of preparation in building skill sets needed for practice ownership and/or employment. The biggest deficits are in Taxes, Basic Accounting, HR, Location Analytics, Marketing, and Investment/Loans.

Only three participants stated that they had not received training in any of the eleven topics listed. This shows that the vast majority of residents are receiving some sort of training in practice management; however, Figure 3 seems to depict that this training may be insufficient and very limited, as residents are interested in a broader range of private practice management topics. Only two participants responded that they would not have been interested in receiving training in any of the eleven topics.

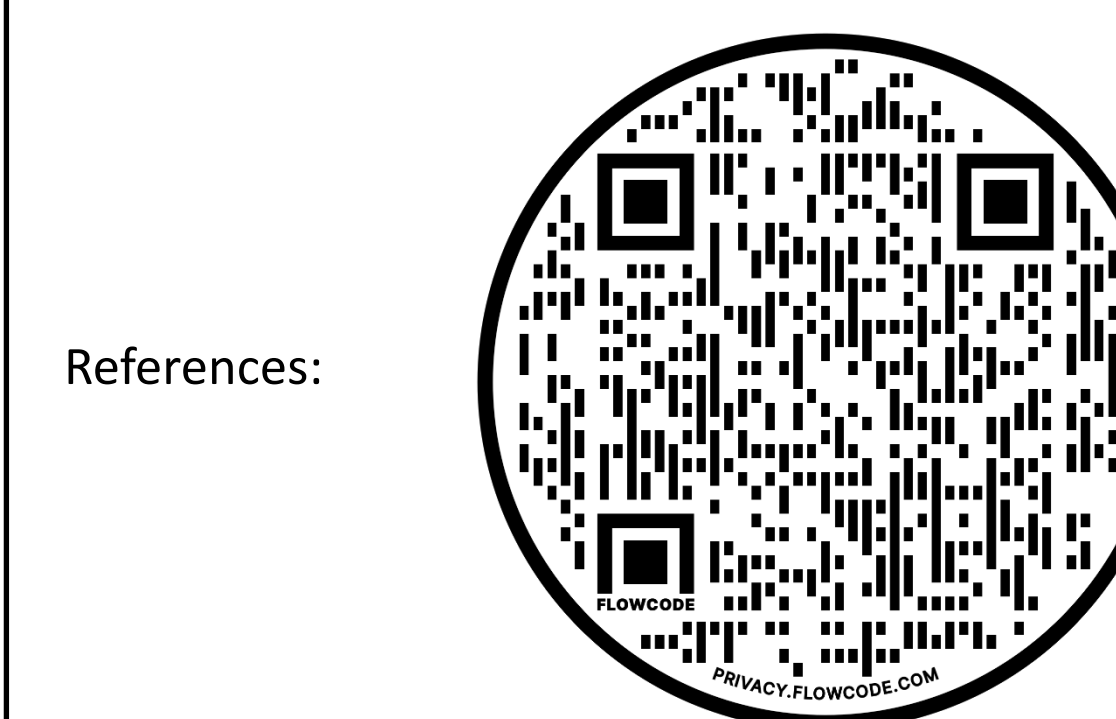
Figure 4 depicts the number of participants who believe that a CODA-mandated curriculum in private practice management would be beneficial to residency programs in relation to their years in practice. The results from this cross-tabulation showed statistical significance, with a p-value of .028. This means that those with fewer than 5 years of practice favored incorporating such a curriculum, while those with more than 5 years of practice did not. This may be due to the lack of experience of recent graduates in private practice, as those with more years of experience have had more time to learn and work outside of residency with different types of financial and legal matters concerning private practices.

Limitations of the study include a small sample size of just 36 responses, with fewer respondents having practiced longer. Future studies may want to include a larger sample size with more equal responses from different practice experience cohorts. Additionally, future studies could include cross-tabulations that compare years practicing and what kind of practice management training participants received based on their age groups. Some studies may also specifically ask about interest in practice ownership versus employment. This could specifically highlight any generational differences.

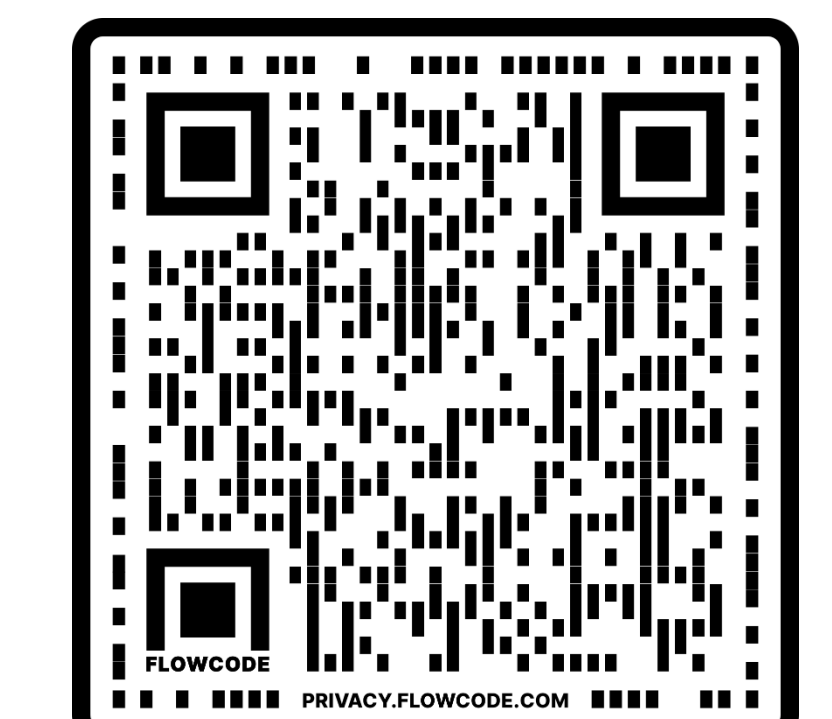
Based on the results of this study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- 1) Recent pediatric dental residency graduates believe that implementing a CODA-mandated curriculum would be beneficial to pediatric dental residents.
- 2) Those who have been practicing for a longer amount of time may not view a CODA-mandated curriculum to be beneficial to pediatric dental residents.
- 3) Current training is focused on more day-to-day operations, while residents may seem to want a broader array of topics covered.
- 4) The biggest discrepancies between training received versus training wanted seem to revolve around skill sets needed for practice ownership, including Taxes, Basic Accounting, HR, Marketing, and Location Analytics.

References



References:



Survey Questionnaire: