

Professional and academic profile of graduates of the Graduate Program in Dentistry at Universidade Federal Fluminense

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Abstract This study aimed to analyze the professional and academic profiles of graduates of master's and doctoral programs in dentistry at the Fluminense Federal University, as well as their perceptions about the program. A total of 327 graduates with degrees obtained between 2011 and 2023 were evaluated. Data collection was conducted through an online questionnaire sent via email by using Google Forms. The resulting data were organized in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and analysis was performed by using descriptive statistical techniques. As for the master's degree, most of the participating graduates were women, aged between 30 and 39 years, living in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and graduated from a public university. Most completed the course between 2012 and 2022 in the concentration area of dental clinic, and 46.3% work in the private sector. As for the doctorate degree, most of the participants were also women, aged between 35 and 44 years, residing in the city of Niterói, and graduated from a public university. Most completed their doctorate in the concentration area of dental clinic and they teach at public, federal (50.9%) or state (5.5%) universities, whereas 29.1% work in the private sector. For the vast majority of graduates (98.2%), the course was considered essential for their professional and academic insertion. The acquired learning has been used for both teaching and practicing in the private sector.

Descriptors: Educational Measurement. Health Postgraduate Programs. Education, Dental, Graduate.

Perfil profesional y académico de los egresados del Programa de Posgrado en Odontología de la Universidade Federal Fluminense

Resumen Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar los perfiles profesionales y académicos de los egresados de los cursos de maestría y doctorado del Programa de Posgrado en Odontología de la Universidad Federal Fluminense (PPGO-UFF), así como sus percepciones sobre el Programa. Se evaluaron 327 graduados con títulos de 2011 a 2023. La recolección de datos se realizó a través de un cuestionario puesto a disposición por correo electrónico, utilizando el formulario de Google. Los datos se organizaron con la ayuda de la herramienta Microsoft Excel y el análisis se realizó mediante técnicas de estadística descriptiva. En cuanto a la maestría, la mayoría de los graduados participantes del PPGO-UFF eran mujeres, con edades entre 30 y 39 años, residentes en la ciudad de Río de Janeiro, egresadas de una Universidad Pública. La mayoría realizó el curso entre 2012 y 2022, en el área de concentración en Clínica Odontológica, y el 46,3% trabaja en la práctica privada. Con respecto al doctorado, la mayoría de los participantes también son mujeres, con edades comprendidas entre los 35 y 44 años, residentes en la ciudad de Niterói, egresadas de una Universidad Pública. La mayoría realizó su doctorado en el área de concentración en Clínica Odontológica y enseña en una universidad pública, federal (50,9%) o estatal (5,5%), mientras que el 29,1% está en una universidad privada. Para la gran mayoría de los egresados participantes, el curso fue considerado fundamental para su inserción profesional y académica. Los aprendizajes adquiridos han sido utilizados, tanto para la docencia como para el sector privado.

Descriptores: Evaluación Educativa. Programas de Posgrado en Salud. Educación de Posgrado en Odontología.

Perfil profissional e acadêmico dos egressos do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Odontologia da Universidade Federal Fluminense

Resumo Esta pesquisa teve como objetivo analisar o perfil dos egressos dos cursos de mestrado e doutorado do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Odontologia da Universidade Federal Fluminense (PPGO-UFF) quanto à inserção profissional e acadêmica, e verificar suas características de atuação profissional e de percepção sobre o PPGO. Foram avaliados 122 egressos (67 do mestrado e 55 do doutorado)

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titulados no período de 2011 a 2023. A coleta de dados foi feita por meio de questionário *on-line* disponibilizado via e-mail a uma população de 327 egressos (202 do mestrado e 125 do doutorado). Os dados foram organizados em planilha e analisados por meio de técnicas de estatística descritiva. Constatou-se que 33% dos egressos do mestrado e 44% dos egressos do doutorado responderam ao questionário. Com relação ao mestrado, a maioria dos egressos eram mulheres, com faixa etária entre 30 e 39 anos, residentes na cidade do Rio de Janeiro, graduadas em universidade pública. A maioria concluiu o curso na área de concentração em Clínica Odontológica, e 46,3% atuam em clínica particular. Com respeito ao doutorado, a maioria é constituída também por mulheres, com faixa etária entre 35 e 44 anos, residentes na cidade do Niterói, graduadas em universidade pública. A maioria concluiu o doutorado na área de concentração em Clínica Odontológica e exerce a docência em universidade pública federal (50,9%), enquanto 29,1% estão em instituição privada. Para a maioria dos egressos (98,2%) o curso foi considerado fundamental para a sua inserção profissional e acadêmica. O aprendizado adquirido vem sendo utilizado tanto para a docência, como para a atuação na iniciativa privada.

Descritores: Avaliação Educacional. Programas de Pós-Graduação em Saúde. Educação de Pós-Graduação em Odontologia.

INTRODUCTION

The educational system is a strategic factor in the socioeconomic and cultural development process of the Brazilian society, representing an institutional reference necessary for training of highly qualified human resources, which reinforces the national scientific-technological potential. Graduate education (GE) is aimed at preparing professionals to work in different sectors of society and to contribute to the country's modernization process based on their training¹.

The efficiency of GE is associated with continuous mobilization of the national academic community as well as with an ongoing process of integration with the international scientific community supported by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) and by the National Council of Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq)¹. CAPES is a foundation of the Ministry of Education committed to the consolidation and expansion of the *strict sensu* graduate education in Brazil. Among its actions, the evaluation of graduate programs (GPs) stands out, approaching different aspects of scientific production and demonstrating the importance of the self-evaluation process, including analysis of the insertion of graduates in the labor market².

The evaluation form proposed by CAPES guides *strict sensu* GPs in the four-year evaluation process based on three aspects as follows: program, training, and impact on society. About this last aspect, the impacts generated by human resource training and knowledge production are evaluated, including destination, performance, and graduates' evaluation of the GP regarding the training received³. The professional performance of graduates reveals the importance of monitoring the professional activities of egresses and addressing the relation between education and labor reality⁴.

The Graduate Program in Dentistry at the Fluminense Federal University (PPGO-UFF) was created in 2002 with only one concentration area (dental clinic) at the master's level. In 2011, two other concentration areas began operating (restorative dentistry and orthodontics), in addition to the doctoral course approved the previous year. From 2020, the program started offering four concentration areas for both master's and doctoral degrees: 1. Restorative dentistry; 2. Orthodontics and Pediatric dentistry; 3. Endodontics; 4. Oral and maxillofacial surgery, traumatology and periodontics. However, until now, a more detailed monitoring of graduates has not been conducted.

Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the professional and academic profiles of graduates of the PPGO-UFF master's and doctoral courses from 2011 to 2023, in addition to their perceptions about the program and aspects of their professional performance.

METHOD

This is a cross-sectional observational study with a quantitative descriptive approach conducted with graduates of the PPGO-UFF master's and doctoral programs. This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the UFF School of Medicine according to protocol number 6.119.717. The target population consisted of graduates who

completed their GE between 2011 and 2023. Due to the inclusion of other concentration areas and the beginning of the doctoral course, the period after 2011 was considered more relevant for initiating the study because a considerably larger number of students had been admitted.

The list of former students containing enrollment year, emails, and phone numbers was provided by the PPGO-UFF office, with prior authorization from the coordination and confidentiality commitment from the authors of this study. Data were organized in Excel spreadsheet, separated into two groups (master's and doctoral degrees), and arranged within the study period before sending the questionnaire via email. Besides, participants who obtained both master's and doctoral degrees at the institution responded to the doctoral questionnaire only.

This study used the following inclusion criteria: participants should have completed the PPGO-UFF master's and/or doctoral program between 2011 and 2023, without distinction of gender, age group, or geographic location. Graduates who did not have an email address or phone number on record and were not found on social networks were excluded.

Data were collected through a questionnaire adapted for online research by using the Google Forms (Google, Mountain View, CA, USA), with multiple-choice questions and one open-ended question elaborated based on the literature^{5,6} and adjusted to contemplate specific characteristics of the PPGO-UFF master's and doctoral programs. The study also analyzes the graduates' perceptions about the program by using a Likert-type survey in which individuals indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement for statements with responses ranging from 1 to 5, where 5 corresponds to "contributed greatly or fully agree", and 1 corresponds to "no contribution or strongly disagree."

The questionnaire was organized into two sections. The first section presented an invitation to participate in the study through a free informed consent form, according to Resolution 466/12 of the National Health Council (CNS), which deals with guidelines and regulatory norms for research involving human beings. The participants should indicate whether they accepted or not to participate in the study. The second section included questions on sociodemographic characteristics (i.e. age, gender, race, place of residence), academic trajectory (i.e. location of undergraduate degree, GE level, year of completion, concentration area), professional insertion (i.e. professional, teaching, and administrative activities), publication of the dissertation or thesis, and Qualis of the journal. Also, an open-ended question on the initial perspective for seeking the course was included. Five questions, constructed in Likert-type scale format, were included to understand the graduates' perceptions about the program.

A pilot test was previously conducted with 10 volunteers, all students of master's and doctoral programs representative of the eligible study population, to verify the understanding of the questions formulated. None of the volunteers had doubts about the questionnaire.

The study's eligible population consisted of 327 graduates who obtained degrees between 2011 and 2023. For the finite population (202 master's graduates and 125 doctoral graduates), considering an estimated proportion of 50%, two sample calculations were performed with 95% confidence interval and 10% error due to difficulties in conducting data collection. To fulfill the statistical validity requirement, sample sizes of 66 for the master's program and of 55 for the doctoral program were obtained.

Up to five contacts were made via email within a 15-day interval. After this period, the next contact occurred through social networks (i.e. Facebook or Instagram) or by phone. Finally, the last attempt was made via email forwarded to the graduates' advisors. A total of 122 graduates (67 of the master's program and 55 of the doctoral program) responded to the questionnaires.

Data obtained from the online questionnaire were tabulated in a spreadsheet and descriptive data analysis was performed by using absolute and relative frequencies, mean and percentage, according to a similar study⁷. The open-ended question was analyzed according to the frequency of appearance of keywords.

RESULTS

With regard to the master's program, 67 (33%) of the 202 eligible graduates responded to the questionnaire, whereas as for the doctoral program, 55 (44%) of the 125 eligible graduates participated in the research. In both cases, the statistical validity requirement was respected.

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic data of the participants, with information on gender, age group, and place of residence. Women constituted the majority, with 36 graduates (53.7%) in the master's program and 30 (54.5%) in the doctoral program. In both programs, the age group of 35 to 39 years was predominant (24 in the master's program, corresponding to 35.8%; 17 in the doctoral program, corresponding to 30.9%). With regard to skin color, the majority self-declared as white, being 57 (85.1%) in the master's program and 47 (85.5%) in the doctoral program.

The majority of the participants reside in the cities of Niterói (RJ) and Rio de Janeiro (RJ), located a few kilometers apart from each other (77.5% in the master's program and 85.5% in the doctoral program). About the academic trajectory, most graduates obtained their undergraduate degree from public universities, being 48 (71.6%) in the master's program and 36 (65.5%) in the doctoral program.

When master's graduates were asked about the doctoral program, 70.1% responded that they did not complete it, but 48.9% of them are interested in pursuing it. Of those who completed the doctoral program, 52.6% did so at the *PPGO-UFF*.

According to the results shown in Table 2, dental clinic was the concentration area achieved by 47.8% of the master's graduates and 65.5% of the doctoral graduates. The majority (67.16%) of the masters completed the master's program by 2018. The majority (60.0%) of the doctors completed the master's program between 2011 and 2020, and 49.09% completed the doctoral program between 2019 and 2022 (Table 2).

The main professional activity (46.3%) of the master's graduates is the private initiative, with 23.9% combining private practice with another activity at a public institution. On the other hand, 41.9% of the doctoral graduates work at public institutions (Table 3).

The data shown in Table 3 reveal that 46.3% of the master's graduates responding to the questionnaire do not work as teachers, whereas only 9.1% of the doctoral graduates do not practice such activity. In fact, most of them teach at public universities, either federal (50.9%) or state (5.5%), whereas 29.1% are at private universities.

It was important to investigate in which higher education institutions the doctoral graduates reported working as teachers. It was found that 23 of them perform this activity at the UFF. Three graduates work at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (*UFRJ*) and another three at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (*UERJ*). Two graduates work at the following private institutions: Estácio de Sá University (*UNESA*), Salgado de Oliveira University (*UNIVERSO*), Veiga de Almeida University (*UVA*), and São Leopoldo Mandic Dental School (*SLMANDIC*). One graduate works at each of the following institutions: Grande Rio University (*UNIGRANRIO*), Nova Friburgo Institute of Health of the Fluminense Federal University (*ISNF-UFF*), Higher Education Institute of Brasília (*IESB*), Federal University of Ceará (*UFC*), United Faculties of the North of Minas (*FUNORTE*), São Jose University Center (*UniSãoJosé*), Augusto Motta University (*UNISUAM*), Iguazu University (*UNIG*), Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences (*SUPREMA*), Tufts University (Boston, USA), Rothier Institute, and Oral Health Assistant (OHA) Training Course of the Brazilian Air Force (*FAB*).

Most graduates of both master's (89.6%) and doctoral (58.2%) programs reported not performing administrative activities, according to data shown in Table 3. However, six (8.9%) master's graduates and four (7.3%) doctoral graduates are coordinators of specialization courses. Some graduates perform other types of administrative activities, such as head of department, GE coordination, laboratory coordination, undergraduate course coordination, update course coordination, undergraduate course coordination, subject coordination, monitoring coordination, and oral health assistant (OHA) training course coordination.

Graduates were asked (open-ended question) about their initial perspective in seeking master's and doctoral programs. Textual analysis of the responses showed the frequency of the following words: teaching (53.7%), curriculum (40.3%), not declared (4.5%), and research (1%) for master's graduates, and teaching (40%), curriculum (38.2%), research (18.2%), and not declared (3.6%) for doctoral graduates.

The study also sought to identify the graduates' perceptions about *PPGO-UFF* through a Likert-type survey. Both master's and doctoral graduates mainly responded "5" (contributed greatly or fully agree) for all items (Table 4).

Table 1. Distribution of graduates according to gender, age group, and place of residence.

Variables	Master's		Doctorate	
	n	%	n	%
<i>Gender</i>				
Female	36	53.70	30	54.50
Male	31	46.30	25	45.50
<i>Age group</i>				
25-29	7	10.40	-	-
30-34	13	19.40	6	10.90
35-39	24	35.80	17	30.90
40-44	10	14.90	8	14.50
45-49	4	6.00	6	10.90
50-54	3	4.50	6	10.90
60-64	5	7.50	5	9.20
65-69	-	-	2	3.60
70-75	-	-	2	3.60
Not declared	1	1.50	3	5.50
<i>Place of residence</i>				
Rio de Janeiro/RJ/Brazil	35	52.20	22	40.00
Niterói/RJ/Brazil	17	25.30	25	45.50
São Gonçalo/RJ/Brazil	2	3.00	-	-
Belo Horizonte/MG/Brazil	2	3.00	-	-
São Paulo/SP/Brazil	1	1.50	1	1.80
Juiz de Fora/MG/Brazil	1	1.50	1	1.80
Cachoeiras de Macacu/RJ/Brazil	1	1.50	-	-
Castanhal/PA/Brazil	1	1.50	-	-
Nova Friburgo/RJ/Brazil	1	1.50	-	-
Vassouras/RJ/Brazil	1	1.50	-	-
Belém/PA/Brazil	1	1.50	-	-
Itaguaí/RJ/Brazil	1	1.50	-	-
Maceió/AL/Brazil	1	1.50	-	-
Rio das Ostras/RJ/Brazil	-	-	1	1.80
Sobral/CE/Brazil	-	-	1	1.80
Miami/FL/USA	1	1.50	-	-
Boston/MA/USA	-	-	1	1.80
Not declared	1	1.50	3	5.50

Table 2. Distribution of graduates according to concentration area, year of completion, publication of dissertation or thesis, and journal Qualis.

Variables	Master's		Doctorate	
	n	%	n	%
<i>Concentration area</i>				
Dental Clinic	32	47.80	36	65.50
Orthodontics	14	20.90	3	5.50
Restorative Dentistry	12	17.90	8	14.50
Orthodontics and Pediatric Dentistry	4	6.00	3	5.50
Oro-maxillofacial Surgery, Traumatology and Periodontics	3	4.50	1	1.80
Endodontics	2	3.00	2	3.60
Not declared	-	-	2	3.60
<i>Year of completion</i>				
Until 2018	45	67.16	23	41.82
From 2019 to 2022	11	16.42	27	49.09
2023 onwards	11	16.42	5	9.09
<i>Publication of dissertation/thesis</i>				
Yes	28	41.80	39	70.90
No	37	55.20	16	29.10
Not declared	2	3.00	-	-
<i>Journal Qualis</i>				
A1	16	23.90	20	36.40
A2	3	4.50	11	20.00
B1	5	7.50	5	9.10
B2	4	6.00	2	3.60
C	-	-	1	1.80
Not declared	2	3.00	6	10.90
Not published	37	55.10	10	18.20

Table 3. Distribution of graduates according to professional, teaching, and administrative activities.

Variables	Master's		Doctorate	
	n	%	n	%
<i>Professional activity</i>				
Private clinic	31	46.30	16	29.10
Private clinic and public institution	16	23.90	10	18.20
Private clinic and private institution	8	11.80	2	3.60
Public institution	6	9.00	23	41.90
Private institution	3	4.50	2	3.60
Graduate	3	4.50	1	1.80
Not declared	-	-	1	1.80
<i>Teaching activity</i>				
Yes	36	53.70	49	89.10
No	31	46.30	5	9.10
Federal public university	3	4.50	28	50.90
State public university	1	1.50	3	5.50
Private university	13	19.30	16	29.10
Other educational institutions	16	23.90	1	1.80
Other non-educational institutions	3	4.50	1	1.80
Not declared	-	-	1	1.80
<i>Administrative activity</i>				
Yes	60	89.60	32	58.20
No	7	10.40	20	36.30
Specialization course coordination	6	8.90	4	7.30
Head of department	1	1.50	3	5.50
Subject coordination	-	-	5	9.10
GE coordination	-	-	2	3.60
Laboratory coordination	-	-	2	3.60
Update course coordination	-	-	1	1.80
OHA training course coordination	-	-	1	1.80
Monitoring coordination	-	-	1	1.80
Undergraduate course coordination	-	-	1	1.80
Not declared	-	-	3	5.50

Table 4. Percentage distribution of the graduates' responses about the program. Likert-type scale ("1" corresponding to no contribution or strongly disagree; "5" corresponding to contributed greatly or fully agree).

Variables		1	2	3	4	5
Contributed to your professional and academic integration	M	11.90%	6.00%	20.90%	16.40%	44.80%
	D	0.00%	0.00%	1.80%	16.40%	81.80%
Contributed to the development of your knowledge and acquisition of new skills	M	3.00%	4.50%	20.90%	10.40%	61.20%
	D	3.60%	3.60%	5.50%	20.00%	67.30%
Strengthened your professional practice and encouraged you to seek new training	M	4.50%	6.00%	16.40%	22.40%	50.70%
	D	1.80%	5.50%	12.70%	12.70%	67.30%
Offered training to work as a teacher	M	0.00%	4.50%	10.40%	26.90%	58.20%
	D	0.00%	1.80%	7.30%	14.50%	76.40%
Met expectations regarding your training	M	3.00%	11.90%	11.90%	32.80%	40.30%
	D	0.00%	1.80%	12.70%	16.40%	69.10%

DISCUSSION

The monitoring of the activities of graduates of a graduate program is an important parameter for measuring its quality, thus being used as a criterion for evaluating the process promoted by CAPES. Therefore, performing studies on the educational field on a constant basis for analysis of the egresses' professional and academic performance is essential to generate new knowledge and develop more critical thinking about the training and qualification promoted by these programs. Research results should be used to improve the training of teachers, researchers and professionals, making them more capable of adapting their knowledge for the advancement of science and improvement of the population's quality of life.

Although the questionnaires were developed based on literature data^{5,6} interacting with the object of study, some adjustments were made for the execution of this study so that the specific characteristics of *PPGO-UFF* could be contemplated. From the sociodemographic data, it was observed that the graduates participating in this study were predominantly white women residing in the State of Rio de Janeiro. The prevalence of women in dentistry courses is a phenomenon observed in several studies, with a proportion of 60.0% reported by a study with graduates of the Piracicaba Dental School⁸. Similarly, in a study conducted at a higher education institute in the Northeast region⁹, it was observed that 68.4% of the dental students were female. This proportion is even higher (73.5%) in the dentistry course at a public university¹⁰ in the state of São Paulo. Thus, it is possible to consider that GE follows the same trend. The predominance of white graduates reveals that more recent policies, such as the Graduate Development Program, Affirmative and Diversity Policies, and Quota Law, are extremely necessary. These measures were created by CAPES in 2023 with the purpose of promoting the inclusion of black, brown and indigenous people, including *quilombolas* and the handicapped, in *strict sensu* courses¹¹. Public policies like this may reduce these inequalities.

With regard to age group, the highest prevalence was between 35 and 39 years for both master's and doctoral programs. This result differs from the findings by Navarro (2020)⁴, who reported an age group prevalence between 21 and 25 years. However, this is consistent with studies by Mendes et al. (2010)¹² and Ferreira & Morraye (2013)¹³, who observed a mean age greater than 30 years. In fact, funding agencies argue that doctoral students should complete their course at the age of 30, since age is a relevant factor in training a future researcher as the earlier the student enters the course, the more promising will be the results¹². On the other hand, the age group between 35 and 39 years suggests that the students' level of maturity and experience is greater when they decide to start the course, a finding also reported by Ferreira & Moraye (2013)¹³.

Similar to other studies^{2,4} it was found that most graduates remained in the region where they completed their GE. In fact, among those completing their master's program, most reside in the cities of Rio de Janeiro (52.2%) and Niterói

(25.3%). As for the doctoral program, most graduates reside in the cities of Niterói (45.5%) and Rio de Janeiro (40.0%). In this context, the analysis of the geographic distribution of graduates demonstrated a greater concentration of professionals in the Southeast region, following the asymmetric distribution of GPs in dentistry. According to data from the Sucupira Platform (2022)¹⁴, there is a strong concentration of programs in the Southeast region (55%), followed by the South (18%), Northeast (16%), Central-West (6%), and North (3%) regions. This factor may influence graduates from regions with a few higher education institutions who are interested in working in GPs or research centers of excellence by causing them not to return to their origin region after course completion. Consequently, this scenario of inequality may persist in the country's regions, representing an adversity to be solved through strategic policies of scientific and technological development by CAPES and government education agencies.

It was observed that most graduates of *strict sensu* courses (71.6% in the master's program and 65.5% in the doctoral program) completed their undergraduate degree at public universities, a finding similar to that by Santos (2021)⁶. This result reinforces the important contribution of public institutions to the country's social, economic, and cultural development.

With regard to the master's program, it can be verified that most graduates (67.16%) completed the course by 2018, whereas in the doctoral program, most (49.09%) completed it between 2019 and 2022. This result is associated with changes occurring in the PPGO-UFF over time. Until 2010, the master's program had only the concentration area of dental clinic, but other ones were created in 2011, such as restorative dentistry and orthodontics. In 2020, pediatric dentistry, endodontics, and oro-maxillofacial surgery, traumatology and periodontics were the other concentration areas created. The doctoral program was approved in 2010 and started the following year, with only one concentration area (i.e. dental clinic). In 2019, the concentration areas of orthodontics and restorative dentistry were created. From 2020 on onwards, the course was consolidated by offering positions in the current four concentration areas: 1. Restorative dentistry, 2. Orthodontics and pediatric dentistry, 3. Endodontics, and 4. Oro-maxillofacial surgery, traumatology and periodontics. These data explain why graduates who participated in the research are mainly from the areas of dental clinic (47.8%), orthodontics (20.9%), and restorative dentistry (17.9%).

When master's graduates were asked about the doctoral program, 70.1% responded they had not completed it, a finding similar to that reported by Ferreira & Morraye¹³ (2013). Rolim et al. (2004)¹⁵ cited several factors for the this discontinuity of research, such as lack of encouragement from the origin institution in conducting research, lack of personal interest in developing research, shortage of funding from research support agencies, applicability of results in practice, extensive work hours, and difficulty of publishing articles in journals. Mendes et al. (2010)¹² stated that this discontinuity in GE is due to the lower number of doctoral-level programs compared to master's level ones. However, in the present study, it is worth noting that 48.9% of the respondents are still interested in starting the course, which indicates the desire to continue their studies. For those who completed the doctoral program, most did so at the same institution where they obtained their master's degree. The search for a doctoral program is beneficial for the country, as history shows that societies with better economic and social indices have greater technological capacity, good level of science, and knowledge advancement. Countries with high levels of social and economic development are concerned with the quality of GE courses and with the individual's choice regarding a research career¹⁶.

With regard to the master's program, it can be verified that graduates are inserted in the labor market. In this study, it was found that 46.3% of them work in private practice, and 23.9% combine private practice with another activity at a public institution. This result is similar to that found by Navarro (2020)⁴ and is in accordance with a study by Velloso (2004)¹⁷, who reported that most masters practice liberal activity and that doctors are more present in universities. As for the professional insertion of doctoral graduates, 41.9% work in public institutions, a finding similar to that verified in the study by Mendes et al. (2010)¹².

With regard to teaching and administrative activities, 46.3% and 89.6% of the master's graduates, respectively, responded that they do not work in these areas. The number of graduates engaged in teaching is in accordance with results reported by Navarro (2020)⁴. However, this figure is lower than that found by other studies, which showed that 90.6%¹² and 80.2%¹³, respectively, were engaged in teaching activities. It should be noted that 23.9% of the graduates practice teaching activities in other educational institutions, such as private GE programs, whereas 19.4% work in private universities. However, it is important to consider that, in general, the minimum degree required for a teaching career in the public sector is a doctorate, which could justify this result.

Considering that most master's graduates (89.6%) do not perform administrative activities, it would be interesting to rethink the training of students in this course. Administration is essential for the functioning of any organization. Within the university environment, planning, organizing and controlling resources is necessary to optimize teaching, research, and extension strategies.

Most (58.2%) participants who are doctoral graduates also do not perform administrative activities. However, some hold many positions in this sector, such as head of department, subject coordination, monitoring coordination, undergraduate coordination, update coordination, specialization coordination, GE coordination, laboratory coordination, and OHA course coordination. The variety of administrative activities performed by 36.3% of these graduates demonstrates that the training offered in the doctoral program was capable of forming individuals with leadership capacity, in addition to teachers and professional specialists in their areas.

Most (50.9%) doctoral graduates responded that they work as teachers in federal public universities. The study by Moimaz et al. (2022)² presented a similar result, revealing greater performance of GP graduates in the area of collective health dentistry in public higher education institutions. According to Martin et al. (2018)¹⁸, in 2017 there were 220 undergraduate dentistry courses in the country, with 75% taught in private institutions.

Although most courses are taught in private universities, the expansion of this higher education model could indicate an expansion of employment opportunities in this sector. However, the graduates evaluated in this study work mainly in public universities, whereas 29.1% are teachers in private institutions. This significant participation of graduates in universities was already expected, since one of the objectives of GE is to train teachers for the country's higher education institutions.

When asked in which educational institution they work as teachers, 41.8% of the doctoral graduates responded that they teach at the UFF School of Dentistry. In fact, a graduate program that includes master's and doctoral courses is an important source of human resources for the institution to which it is linked. For instance, seven of these graduates also participate as teachers in the *PPGO-UFF*, thus closing the cycle.

Some graduates from both master's and doctoral programs work as teachers and clinical practitioners concomitantly. Considering that dentistry is mostly a clinical profession, this is a positive factor when only the teaching-learning aspect is evaluated. On the other hand, this simultaneity generates management obstacles, both of time and resources. Reconciling these two activities is not always an easy task. A possible solution would be to practice clinically in the own institution, which would require structural reforms in most cases.

Among the master's graduates participating in the study, 41.9% published an article from their dissertation. Although this percentage is below expected, 23.9% published in Qualis A1 journal. The qualification of scientific production by teacher and student is one of the main evaluation criteria for GPs conducted by CAPES, being essential to encourage students to constantly improve their intellectual production to achieve the quality standards established in this assessment.

Most (70.9%) doctoral graduates managed to publish their research articles. Among these, 36.4% indicated the journal's Qualis as A1. This significant publication rate fulfills one of the GE's objectives, which is to stimulate studies and scientific research through researcher training, thus contributing to the country's scientific development.

It was also considered important to identify the graduates' perceptions about the *PPGO-UFF*. When responses "4" and "5" of the questionnaire were computed, one can notice that former students consider that the course met their expectations, both regarding the master's (73.1%) and doctoral (85.5%) programs. In fact, 85.1% of the master's and 90.9% of the doctoral graduates consider themselves qualified to work as teachers. Furthermore, 61.2% of the master's and 98.2% of the doctoral graduates consider that the course contributed to their professional and academic insertion. In the study conducted by Ferreira & Morraye (2013)¹³, only 62.8% of the graduates stated their expectations regarding the course were met.

When asked if the course contributed to the development of their knowledge and acquisition of new skills, 71.6% of the master's and 87.3% of the doctoral graduates responded affirmatively. Similarly, 73.1% of the master's and 80.0% of

the doctoral graduates understood that the course consolidated their professional practice and encouraged them to seek new qualifications.

The present study has some limitations though. Because the database of the *PPGO-UFF* had outdated contacts, there was a great difficulty in contacting the graduates. Therefore, a 10% error was considered valid for sample calculation, when ideally it should be an error of up to 5%.

Another factor that should be taken into consideration is that, despite existing since 2002, the *PPGO-UFF* was only consolidated in 2020 with the introduction of several new disciplines in the curriculum of master's and doctoral programs. It is possible that the collected data do not fully reflect this new reality.

It is important that new studies be conducted. A more comprehensive sampling will allow expanding and deepening the analysis of these findings.

CONCLUSION

This study traced the profile of *PPGO-UFF* graduates, revealing important aspects about their professional and academic insertion.

With regard to the master's program, most graduates consisted of women aged between 30 and 39 years residing in the city of Rio de Janeiro and graduated from public institutions. Most completed the course between 2012 and 2022 in the concentration area of dental clinic, and 46.3% work in the private sector.

With regard to the doctoral program, the majority also consisted of women aged between 35 and 44 years residing in the city of Niterói and graduated from public institutions. Most completed the doctorate in the concentration area of dental clinic and teach in federal public universities (50.9%), whereas 29.1% work in private institutions.

It is concluded that the *PPGO-UFF* contributed to the professional and academic insertion of graduates, according to the perception of the majority (98.2%). The acquired learning has been used for teaching, administrative, and clinical activities.

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