

Entering the labor market and the Recife School of Dentistry graduates profile

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this work was to analyze the insertion in the labor market and the graduate profile of the Recife School of Dentistry. The sample comprised 107 graduates who graduated from 2012 to 2018 and the data were collected from August to October 2020, through the application of an *online* survey on Google Forms. The average age of the respondents was 29.5 years old, and over half (55.1%) of the participants were female. The expressive majority (90.7%) had attended private high school institutions and the most cited income, working as a dental surgeon, was 6 to 10 minimum wages (38.3%). The majority (64.5%) has settled professionally in the Greater Recife area and most are self-employed (75.7%). Orthodontics was the most cited field of specialization (22.2%), followed by Prosthesis (21.1%) and Endodontics (20%). Most (94.4%) of the graduates considered themselves able to start their professional practice soon after graduating, mentioning curricular internships (74.3%) and professors (74.3%) as the main contributing factors for this ability. The graduates deemed the knowledge acquired in the undergraduate course as sufficient and suitable for the labor market requirements (40.2%) and would study again in the same institution (83.2%). 73.8% of the graduates believe that the labor market will grow and that they feel prepared. It can be concluded that the graduate profile is predominantly young adults, female, working in the Greater Recife area, self-employed, holding graduate degrees, and satisfied with the institution they chose for professional education.

Descriptors: Dentistry. Labor Market. Education, Higher.

1 INTRODUCTION

The graduate of a higher education institution is the individual who has already completed his academic activities and is authorized to enter the labor market. The assessment of this group and the collected information are crucial for guiding institutions and public policies, also serving as a reference for students who intend to join higher education institutions¹.

There was a time when the predominant

characteristic of the dentistry field was individual work, focused on technique and diseases, with emphasis on curativism, through an eminently liberal and elitist practice². However, in 2002, new National Curriculum Guidelines (DCN) were established by the Ministry of Education for undergraduate courses in Dentistry, promoting curricular changes in several Brazilian institutions, with the goal of training dental surgeons to meet the social needs of the population³.

With the implementation of the National Oral Health Policy and the consequent increase of 60% in the number of dentists working in the Unified Health System (SUS)⁴, it became increasingly imperative, the need for a generalist education, while focusing on the development of personal skills and human relationships, which would facilitate teamwork, access to the community and facing its challenges, and furthering the understanding of the social, political, cultural and economic logic of the population⁵.

In this context, the Recife School of Dentistry (FOR), which served as basis for this study and is one of the private institutions in Recife, redesigns its curriculum in order to meet the new social and health care demands, as well as the legal and market requirements to train Human Resources in Dentistry, committed to scientific advances and aimed at prevention and improvement of health. However, a communication channel between the graduate and the institution is not yet consolidated, a fact that might generate inconsistencies in the proposed teaching-learning methodology.

Due to their knowledge about their degree, graduates can provide contextualized information that helps assess the acquired qualification. Thus, by utilizing strategies for monitoring and assessing the respective group, institutions will be able to reformulate their pedagogical project and improve the quality of education for students and future professionals^{5,7}.

Considering the scarcity of scientific research related to this matter in the institution and the state of Pernambuco, this study was carried out with the aim of analyzing the insertion in the labor market and the profile of the graduates of the Recife School of Dentistry, based on the reformulated curriculum in line with the DCN.

2 METHOD

This is a descriptive, observational, cross-sectional study whose population consisted of the Recife School of Dentistry students who graduated from 2012 to 2018. After obtaining consent from the institution, 236 professionals who graduated within this time frame were contacted by e-mail. 107 (45.34%) of these professionals responded and agreed to participate, signing the Informed Consent Form.

The data were collected via a survey adapted from Melo Jr *et al.* (2018), conducted on the *online* platform Google Forms. The survey was sent via e-mail to each participant. The data were collected and organized in an Excel spreadsheet and analyzed through SPSS v.23. Descriptive analysis was used: absolute and relative frequencies for the categorical variables and calculation of mean, standard deviation and median for the age variable.

The project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Pernambuco School of Health (CEP-FPS), registration no. CAAE 35021820. 2.0000.5569.

3 RESULTS

One hundred and seven graduates participated in the study, aged between 23 and 48 years old, with a mean of 29.5 ± 5.9 years old and a median of 27 years old.

Table 1 presents results related to the characteristics of the sample. The majority (63.6%) are 23 to 29 years old, more than half (55.1%) are female, predominantly single (75.7%) and white/caucasian (73.8%). The expressive majority (90.7%) attended high school in a private institution and the two most frequent income ranges were: 6 to 10 minimum wages (38.3%) and 2 to 5 minimum wages (33.6%).

When asked about the main reason for having chosen Dentistry as a profession, 29.0%

answered 'Vocation' and 21.5% 'Family Influence'.

Table 1. Sample characteristic (n=107)

Variable	n	%
<i>Age group (years old)</i>		
23 to 29	68	63,6
30 to 48	39	36,4
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	48	44,9
Female	59	55,1
<i>Marital status</i>		
Single	81	75,7
Married	24	22,4
Divorced	2	1,9
<i>Color or race</i>		
White Brazilian	79	73,8
Mixed (pardo/mulatto)	21	19,6
Black	6	5,6
Asian	1	0,9
<i>Type of school attended during high school</i>		
Attended public school only	6	5,6
Attended private school only	97	90,7
Attended a public school for the most part	1	0,9
Attended a private school for the most part	3	2,8
<i>Income (minimum wages)</i>		
Up to 2	13	12,1
3 to 5	36	33,6
6 to 10	41	38,3
11 to 20	14	13,1
Over 20	3	2,8

From participants, 31.8% said they had “Other reasons”. The main place where they established themselves professionally was the Greater Recife area (40.2%) and approximately one third (33.6%) answered that, at the time of graduation, there was someone from their family practicing dentistry (table 2).

The results in table 3 show that the most prevalent type of professional practice was “Self-employed” (75.7%), followed by “Private business” (44.9%). As for graduate studies, the

majority (84.1%) reported that they have already done or are pursuing professional specialization (83.3%) and development (53.3%). The main fields the graduates chose to pursue in their graduate studies were Orthodontics (22.2%), Prosthesis (21.1%), Endodontics (20.0%), Implantology (16.7%), Oral surgery (13.3%) and Periodontics (10.0%). Regarding the questions about the ability to begin professional practice after graduating, table 4 shows that the expressive majority (94.4%) answered that they considered themselves

prepared to start working soon after graduating, and the main contributing factors to this ability were the curricular internships (74.3%) and the faculty (74.3%), curriculum (69.3%) and personal interest (68.3%). The factors "Development courses during undergraduate studies" and "Tutoring" were mentioned by 17.8% and 15.8%, respectively.

Table 2. Distribution of graduates regarding the choice of studying Dentistry, location of professional practice and family member working in the area (n=107)

Variable	n	%
<i>What is the main reason you chose Dentistry?</i>		
Insertion in the labor market	9	8,4
Family Influence	23	21,5
Professional appreciation	8	7,5
Social prestige	2	1,9
Vocation	31	29,0
Other reasons	34	31,8
<i>Where have you established your professional practice?</i>		
Metropolitan Region of Recife	43	40,2
Metropolitan Region of Recife, also active in the countryside	26	24,3
Countryside	30	28,0
Countryside, also active in the Metropolitan Region of Recife	4	3,7
State of São Paulo	1	0,9
State of Ceará	1	0,9
State of Piauí	1	0,9
Other countries	1	0,9
<i>By the time you graduated, was there anyone in your family practicing dentistry?</i>		
Yes	36	33,6
No	71	66,4

Of the 6 (5.6%) who stated that they did not consider themselves ready to start practicing soon after graduating, 3 did not know or did not want to answer, 2 considered that the reason was a poor curriculum/poor internship experiences, and 1 informed that it was poor internship experiences.

Table 5 showed that the two most common answers to the question "How do you rate the content and the knowledge acquired during your studies?", were "Sufficient and meet the labor market demands" (40.2%) and "Sufficient, but the labor market demands more" (38.3%). When assessing the Professional Orientation course, 45.8% deemed it as "Good", followed by "Average" (27.1%). Regarding the knowledge acquired in the area of Public Health/Collective

Health, a good portion of participants (37.4%) said "Sufficient", followed by "Average" (30.8%). The question "How do you describe the School's encouragement of professionals to work in the field of Public Health?" was also asked, and the most common response was "Sufficient, balanced encouragement to work in the public and private sector" (45.8%), followed by "Moderate, it encourages acting in the private sector more than in public health" (32.7%).

In rating their satisfaction with the course, the vast majority (83.2%) said that "I would study Dentistry again at the same institution", and concerning their expectations of the labor market, 73.8% evaluate that it will improve and that they feel prepared.

Table 3. Distribution of graduates by professional practice, insertion, type and field of graduate studies (n=107)

Variable	n	%
<i>What is your type of professional practice? ⁽¹⁾</i>		
Public health	32	29,9
Private company	48	44,9
Professor	11	10,3
Self-employed	81	75,7
<i>Have you or are you pursuing graduate studies?</i>		
Yes	90	84,1
No	17	15,9
<i>Which graduate type? ^(1, 2, 3)</i>		
Postdoctoral degree	2	2,2
Internship	5	5,6
Master's degree	1	1,1
Specialization	75	83,3
Professional Development	48	53,3
<i>In which area are you doing your graduate studies? ^(*,2)</i>		
Orthodontics	20	22,2
Prosthesis	19	21,1
Endodontics	18	20,0
Implantology	15	16,7
Oral surgery	12	13,3
Periodontics	9	10,0
Face harmonization	8	8,9
Dentistry	7	7,8
Pediatric dentistry	4	4,4
Cancer and Palliative Care	2	2,2
Collective health	2	2,2
Bucomaxilofacial surgery	1	1,1
Stomatology	1	1,1
Molecular genetics	1	1,1
Occupational and Hospital Dentistry	1	1,1
Patients with Special Needs	1	1,1
Radiology	1	1,1
Family Health	1	1,1

(1) Considering that the same research subject could mention more than one option, the sum of the occurrences is higher than the total (2) Percentage is based on the answers of the 90 participants who said yes to the question (Did you do or are you pursuing graduate education?) (3) Null alternatives were not added to the table.

Table 4. Assessment of the ability to begin professional practice right after graduating (n=107)

Variable	n	%
<i>Did you consider yourself able, soon after graduating, to begin professional practice?</i>		
Yes	101	94,4
No	6	5,6
<i>What is the main factor that you think contributed to your aptitude? ⁽¹⁾</i>		
Curricular Internships	75	74,3
Professors	75	74,3
School curriculum	70	69,3
Personal interest	69	68,3
Development courses during undergraduate studies	18	17,8
Tutoring	16	15,8
<i>What do you believe is the reason for not being able to start working as soon as you graduate? ⁽²⁾</i>		
Poor curriculum and internship experience	2	33,3
Poor internship experience	1	16,7
Did not know /did not want to give an opinion	3	50,0

(1) Percentage is based on the answers of the 101 participants who said yes to the question "Did you consider yourself prepared to begin professional practice soon after graduating?"

(2) Percentage is based on the answers of the 6 participants who said no to the question 'Did you consider yourself prepared to begin professional practice soon after graduating?'

4. DISCUSSION

The predominance of female graduates is aligned with the rise in the number of women working in Dentistry observed in recent decades^{8,9}. This process is common among young professionals¹⁰. The growing number of women in the labor market is associated with increased access to education, transforming a scenario of inequality and consolidating a new direction in women's careers. In a country with significant contrasts regarding the insertion of men and women in the labor market, the female presence in the profession presents itself as a promising point, allowing that new and fair relations of power can be established.

The preference for the Greater Recife area (RMR) as a location for professional establishment was presented as a predictable result and similar to that found in literature. Predictable due to the social and elitist nature of the profession, which presents an opportunity to raise the *status quo* in major economic centers. Also, the choice to remain in the

same location where they studied may be related to the pursuit of professional and financial security, mainly among younger graduates and newly graduated, a fact that ends up contributing to the poor geographical distribution of dentistry professionals¹¹.

The majority of the participants stated that they were self-employed. Unarguably, recent studies have reported a greater insertion of recent graduates in the private sector^{5,8,9}. More than half of the participants agreed that the Recife School of Dentistry encourages professional activity in Public Health. Although curricular internships are carried out in basic and medium complexity health care facilities, and six nonoptional courses focused on the study of the Unified Health System - SUS are part of the curriculum, the results show that Public Health was not the main focus of their professional practice. These findings indicate an incongruity with the NCG goal of educating health care professionals who seek to work in public health care^{3,4,5,8,12,13}.

Table 5. Satisfaction survey related to studying Dentistry at the Recife School of Dentistry (n=107)

Variable	n	%
<i>How do you rate the content and the knowledge acquired during your studies?</i>		
Sufficient and suitable for the labor market demands	43	40,2
Sufficient and more than suitable to meet the labor market demands	21	19,6
Sufficient, but do not meet the labor market demands	41	38,3
Insufficient and unsuitable to meet the labor market demands	2	1,9
<i>How do you rate the Professional Orientation course in your undergraduate studies?</i>		
Good	49	45,8
Average	29	27,1
Bad	13	12,1
Did not take the course	14	13,1
Did not know /did not want to give an opinion	2	1,9
<i>How do you rate the knowledge you acquired on Public Health/Collective Health in your undergraduate studies?</i>		
More than sufficient	28	26,2
Sufficient	40	37,4
Average	33	30,8
Insufficient	6	5,6
<i>How do you describe the School's encouragement of professionals to work in the field of Public Health?</i>		
Strongly encourages acting in Public Health more than in the private sector	13	12,1
Sufficient, balanced encouragement to work in the public and private sector	49	45,8
Moderate, it encourages acting in the private sector more than in public health	35	32,7
Insufficient, it only encourages working in the private sector	8	7,5
Did not know /did not want to give an opinion	2	1,9
<i>How do you describe your satisfaction with your undergraduate degree?</i>		
I would do it again at the same institution	89	83,2
I would do it again at another institution	3	2,8
I would do it again at any institution	2	1,9
I would not do it again	8	7,5
Did not know /did not want to give an opinion	5	4,7
<i>What do you expect from the labor market?</i>		
It will get better and I feel prepared	79	73,8
It will get better, but I do not feel prepared	3	2,8
It will not change	5	4,7
It will get worse	12	11,2
Did not know /did not want to give an opinion	8	7,5

The vast majority of the graduates have concluded or are doing undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Concerning the qualification types, the most mentioned were professional specialization and development. Similar data can be found in the reference section^{2,9}. Due to graduates' focus on clinical practice and technique, it is likely that most graduates seek the qualification types mentioned above, in order to improve

techniques that were learned in their undergraduate studies and also make themselves noticeable in a saturated labor market, especially in large economic centers.

Clinical specialties, such as Orthodontics, Prosthodontics and Endodontics, were the most often cited, suggesting a relevant connection to the graduates' choice of acting in the private labor market to build a larger portfolio of patients, thus

generating profits and financial stability for the professional. Collective and Family Health were rarely mentioned. Low salary, the low appreciation for professionals in temporary contracts, and the lack of interesting and consistent selection processes and are presented as potential corroborating factors for this result.

Both clinical Internships and Master's degrees were rarely cited. The importance of continuing education through these qualification types should be clear from the beginning of the undergraduate journey, since the preparation of the student for the respective selection processes requires the proper structuring of the curriculum in regards to teaching and research activities carried out at the undergraduate level. This vocation can be encouraged by the institution through extracurricular activities (CA) with the purpose of enriching the teaching-learning process, favoring social and professional training. Moreover, CA facilitates the development of integrated content, professional improvement, as well as the interaction of the student with the community and the market^{14,15}.

When asked about the ability to work in the profession soon after graduation, the vast majority answered that they consider themselves prepared, a result similar to the one found in reference^{7,8}. The reformulation of the pedagogical project of the undergraduate degree conducted by the educational institution, in line with the DCN, was based on the regional, social, economic and educational contexts, and sought to articulate teaching, scientific research and extension/assistance, promoting and increase in the practice hours and curriculum integration of clinical and theoretical components.

Additionally, students already begin clinical practice in the fourth semester, polishing, from this opportunity, their professional practice for another six semesters until graduation. The Dentistry programs have organized their curricular structure

focusing on skills required by the labor market and by generalist and specialized professional practice.

As in other findings in reference^{7,9}, most participants would take the course at the same educational institution. Such factors may be due to a more dynamic curricular structure and committed to the theoretical-practical articulation in real learning scenarios, within the school clinic and the Unified Health System (SUS); and investment in teacher qualification and student-centered learning strategies, such as the opening of a class per year with an average number of thirty students.

It should be considered that simply making changes in the DCN and reformulations of institutional curricula are not sufficient for the profile of the professional working in SUS. More than that, policies are needed to promote the creation of new jobs, encouraging the dental surgeon to seek and feel safe to insert himself continuously and longitudinally in the public initiative, directly increasing the coverage of the population assisted by oral health.

5 CONCLUSION

It is concluded that the profile of the graduates is predominantly of female young adults, white Brazilians, who hold undergraduate degrees and who attended high school in a private institution. The preference for working in the Greater Recife area and for working in the private sector prevailed. The graduates showed satisfaction with the institution they chose for professional education and considered it capable of preparing professionals for the labor market, citing as main factors the curriculum, internships and professors.

RESUMO

O objetivo deste trabalho foi analisar a inserção no mercado de trabalho e o perfil de egressos da Faculdade de Odontologia do Recife. A amostra foi composta por 107 egressos que se formaram no período de 2012 a 2018 e os dados foram

coletados no período de agosto a outubro de 2020, por meio da aplicação de um questionário *online* na plataforma Google Forms. A idade dos participantes teve média de 29,5 anos e mais da metade (55,1%) era do sexo feminino. A maioria expressiva (90,7%) tinha cursado o ensino médio em escola particular e a renda mais citada, trabalhando como cirurgião-dentista, foi de 6 a 10 salários mínimos (38,3%). A maior parte (64,5%) se estabeleceu profissionalmente na Região Metropolitana do Recife e a maioria atua como profissional liberal (75,7%). A Ortodontia foi a especialização mais citada (22,2%), seguida pela Prótese (21,1%) e pela Endodontia (20%). A maior parte (94,4%) dos egressos se consideraram aptos a exercer a profissão logo após se formar, citando os estágios (74,3%) e os professores (74,3%) como principais fatores para essa aptidão. Os egressos classificaram o conhecimento adquirido na graduação como suficiente e adequado ao mercado de trabalho (40,2%) e fariam o curso novamente na mesma faculdade (83,2%). Dos egressos, 73,8% acreditam que o mercado irá melhorar e que se sente preparado. Conclui-se que o perfil dos egressos é predominantemente de jovens adultos, do sexo feminino, atuantes na Região Metropolitana do Recife, profissionais liberais, pós graduados e satisfeitos com a instituição que escolheram para formação profissional.

Descritores: Odontologia. Mercado de Trabalho. Educação Superior.

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