

# Sociodemographic profiles and professional interests of Patos University Center undergraduate dentistry students

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## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to evaluate the sociodemographic profiles of undergraduate dentistry students at the Patos University Center (UNIFIP), and to learn their interests and expectations in relation to training and professional practice. The study included 414 students enrolled in the second semester of 2017. A questionnaire containing objective and subjective questions, and statistical tests were used to associate sociodemographic variables with the school shift attended. The undergraduates were mostly female (68.1%), aged up to 29 years (93%) and single (84.1%). The main reason given for choosing the course was vocation (47.8%). The areas of greatest interest were surgery and traumatology (28.8%), followed by orthodontics (19.8%). Comparative analysis revealed a predominance of male students ( $p = 0.041$ ) attending the night school shift, aged 30 or over ( $p = 0.001$ ), married or divorced ( $p < 0.003$ ), who lived with spouses and/or children ( $p < 0.001$ ), with income and contributing to the support of their families ( $p < 0.001$ ), working more than 20 hours per week ( $p < 0.001$ ), exclusively attending public high schools ( $p = 0.001$ ) and residing in other municipalities ( $p < 0.001$ ). For the short term, 70% of respondents intended to attend postgraduate courses and work within the Family Health Strategy (FHS) (44%). For the medium and long term, 68.6% intended to work in a private clinic, presenting less interest in working with the FHS (19.3%). In conclusion, significant differences were revealed in the profiles of day and night dentistry course students at the Patos University Center. **Descriptors:** Higher Education. Dentistry students. Labor market. Dentistry Education.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Dentistry has undergone constant change, especially recently, giving society a unique view of the profession. This is also seen in professional dentistry training and its adaptation to the labor market, which changes frequently<sup>1</sup>.

The number of higher education institutions offering dental courses is growing. In the e-MEC system, 538 courses are currently accredited and active. Thus, as new dentistry courses emerge, the number of trained dental surgeons in the job market increases significantly. These newly graduated professionals often face situations that are not common during daily academic life. This may cause feelings of insecurity, and make them feel unable to face a professional career<sup>2,3</sup>.

Dentistry is a liberal profession and thus it is an increasingly sought after and growing area. It is the responsibility of higher education institutions to adopt critical and reflective teaching methods contributing to a broad vocational training. Undergraduate courses should perform periodic evaluations related to the quality of teaching, its requirements, and to satisfaction regarding the course itself. Dentistry courses should train dental surgeons, yet with broad biological, scientific, technical, social, and humanistic emphasis; these professionals must be able to perform their duties in public and private services, understand the challenges of the labor market and be able to exercise leadership in their communities<sup>4</sup>.

The Patos University Center (UNIFIP) Dentistry Course was created in the municipality of Patos, located in the state of Paraíba. The first class was enrolled in 2008, with a curriculum providing for completion of the course in four years, at which time the institution was accredited as *Faculdades Integradas de Patos*. From 2013, the course began to be governed by a new flowchart, structured in ten periods, and

requiring students to complete their degree in at least five years. The Course Pedagogical Project (PPC), through its didactic-pedagogical organization, brought the “Finalization Profile” with incorporation of a more social, critical, and humanitarian vision of formation as a graduate professional in dentistry<sup>5</sup>.

Patos is located in the sertão mesoregion and according to 2010 population count data presents a territorial extension of 473,056 Km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 107,790 inhabitants. Being located in the center of Paraíba State, the municipality has a privileged location and exerts strong geoeconomic influence on the surrounding Paraíba municipalities, as well as on municipalities belonging to neighbor states, such as Rio Grande do Norte, Pernambuco, and Ceará.

Considering the socio-demographic importance of the Patos municipality in the commercial, service, and education sectors; and ease of access; undergraduate courses including dentistry UNIFIP bring together a significant number of students from those residing in various locations adjacent to or near the municipality. Thus, in relation to origins, the dentistry course presents a heterogeneous population of students; from a diversity of localities and different sociodemographic contexts.

Given the above, this study proposes to evaluate the sociodemographic profile of undergraduate dentistry students at UNIFIP, involving comparative analysis by school shift (night/day), and to learn their interests in relation to both training and professional practice.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

This exploratory, descriptive, and analytical study was submitted to the UNIFIP Research Ethics Committee and received an approval opinion; CAAE number: 75835717.8.00005181. All proposed guidelines

and standards in Resolution No. 510; April 7, 2016, of the National Health Council (CNS), regulating ethics in research involving human subjects<sup>7</sup> were followed.

As a census study, all undergraduate dentistry students enrolled and attending the second semester of 2017, who authorized their participation by signing the Informed Consent Form (ICF) were included. For students under eighteen years of age, a Minor Consent Form was prepared, as well as an informed consent form for the parent(s).

Data were collected by a single researcher being duly trained to apply the questionnaire. The same was answered by the respondent in the classroom, without interference by the researcher. The questionnaire, prepared by the research team, was adapted from studies by Ponte (2012)<sup>8</sup> and Sousa et al. (2017)<sup>9</sup> and was reviewed by two researchers from the proposed institution, external to the research team. The data collection instrument was divided into two sections: the first referred to the undergraduate's sociodemographic profile. The second section was structured around variables related to expectations regarding the course and professional practice.

For data analysis, absolute frequencies and percentages were calculated for undergraduate student sociodemographic, economic, and professional interest variables<sup>10</sup>. All analyses were conducted using the *Statistical Program for Social Science* software version 20.0 (SPSS for Windows, SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). The statistical tests - Chi-square test and Fisher's exact test - were used to associate the sociodemographic variables with the study shifts (morning or evening) chosen by the students. The tests employed were considered significant with  $p < 0.05$ .

### 3 RESULTS

Of the 578 undergraduates regularly enrolled in the second semester of 2017, 414 agreed to participate. Table 1 shows the distribution of the students according to sociodemographic, economic characteristics, and course status. Most were female (282; 68.1%), up to 29 years old (385; 93.0%), self-declared white (244; 59.1%) and single (348; 84, 1%). Regarding marital status, a "stable union" was another response option as given by participants. In addition, most reported living with parents or relatives in a home or apartment (208; 50.2%), and as having no income, with spending being financed by family or others (306; 73.9%). More than half of the students who participated in the study were in their 4th, 5th, 6th, or 7th period (218; 52.7%), with those regularly enrolled in night school (208; 50.2%).

Table 2 presents the distribution of students according to their reasons for choosing to study dentistry, difficulties faced and comments regarding qualifications for a good dentist. Most pointed out that they chose to study dentistry as a vocation (198; 47.8%). Those who responded by the "other" option reported having chosen to study dentistry because of their desire to help others. The main difficulty faced was financial, i.e. the high cost of tuition and materials (107; 40.8%). Regarding the qualifications that best describe a good dental surgeon, the responses most marked/pointed out by the students were: competence/experience/commitment/being responsible (99; 25.1%), being a humanized professional (68; 17.3%), and having ethics (50; 12.7%). The areas in which the students were most interested were: oral surgery/minor and traumatology, oral-maxillofacial/dental-implant dentistry (115; 28.8%), orthodontics (79; 19.8%) and oral-dental rehabilitation: aesthetics/prosthesis (77; 19.2%).

Table 1. Distribution of students according to sociodemographic, economic characteristics, and course situation

<b>Variables</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Gender [n = 414]</i>		
Male	132	31.9
Female	282	68.1
<i>Age [n = 414]</i>		
≤ 29 years	385	93.0
≥ 30 or more	29	7.0
<i>Self-declared color [n = 413]</i>		
White	244	59.1
Black	15	3.6
Brown	144	34.9
Yellow	10	2.4
<i>Marital Status [n = 414]</i>		
Not married	348	84.1
Married	58	14.0
Separated /Divorced	5	1.2
Other	3	0.7
<i>Student's housing condition [n = 414]</i>		
Lives alone	64	15.5
Lives with parents or relatives	208	50.2
Lives with spouse and / or children	66	15.9
Lives with others	76	18.4
<i>Income situation that best describes the student case [n = 414]</i>		
No income. expenses are funded by family or other people	306	73.9
Has income. but gets help from family or others	70	16.9
Has income and is fully supported	11	2.7
Has income. supports itself and contributes to the support of the family	21	5.1
Has income. supports itself and is primarily responsible for supporting the family	6	1.4
<i>Household Monthly Income [n = 412]</i>		
Less than 3 minimum wages	138	33.5
4 to 6 minimum wages	213	51.7
7 or more minimum wages	61	14.8
<i>Student's work situation [n = 414]</i>		
Not working	317	76.6
Ocasionalmente works	32	7.7
Works up to 20 hours per week	26	6.3
Works more than 20 hours per week	39	9.4
<i>Type of institution the student attended high school [n = 414]</i>		
All in public school	161	38.9
All in private school	207	50.0
Part in public school and part in private school	46	11.1
<i>Had to change municipalities. state or country to take the course [n = 414]</i>		
Yes. Municipality	208	50.2
Yes. State	72	17.4
No	134	32.4
<i>Place of residence currently [n = 414]</i>		
Patos-PB	212	51.2
In another municipality	148	35.7
Part of the week in Patos / PB and part in another municipality	54	13.0
<i>Period [n = 414]</i>		
1st to 3rd period	86	20.8
4th to 7th period	218	52.7
8th to 10th period	110	26.6
<i>School Shift [n = 414]</i>		
Morning	206	49.8
Night	208	50.2

Table 2. Distribution of students according to the motives for choosing to study Dentistry, difficulties faced and comments regarding the qualifications of a good dentist.

Variables	n	%
<i>Why you chose to study Dentistry [n = 414]</i>		
Vocation	198	47.8
To be self employed (have no boss. Set my own fees)	32	7.7
Influence of family and/or friends	50	12.1
Good Pay Perspective (Profitable Profession)/Offers Great Chances for Professional Growth/Status	96	23.2
Offered at local college	6	1.4
I didn't pass another entrance exam	16	3.9
Others	16	3.9
<i>Greatest difficulty faced [n = 262]</i>		
Financial/high cost of tuition and materials	107	40.8
Travel/Transportation/Change of City	73	27.9
Concentration on studies/returning to school after a long time/complicated curriculum	16	6.1
Absence of family members/living alone	34	13.0
Relationship with teachers/staff/course friends/psychological pressure	3	1.1
Reconcile work and study or family responsibility/Have little time for study	27	10.3
No affinity with the course	2	0.8
<i>First qualification for good dentist [n = 394]</i>		
Professional up to date	45	11.4
Have vocation	38	9.6
Humanized Professional	68	17.3
Knowledge (theoretical. Integrated knowledge. Technical skill/practical skills)	94	23.9
Competence/experience/commitment/ responsibility	99	25.1
Ethics	50	12.7
<i>First area of choice [n = 399]</i>		
Oral rehabilitation (dentistry/aesthetics/prosthesis)	77	19.2
Oral diagnosis (stomatology/radiology)	3	0.8
Minor oral surgery/maxillofacial traumatology/implantology	115	28.8
Endodontics	53	13.3
Periodontics	12	3.0
Pediatric dentistry/public health/cariology/preventive dentistry	56	14.0
Orthodontics	79	19.8
Special Needs Patients	1	0.3
Legal dentistry	3	0.8

In the short term, most respondents intended to start a specialization or continued training course, (290; 70.0%), or work independently in private practice (201; 48.6%). In the medium and long term, most pointed out that they intended to work self-employed in a private clinic (284; 68.6%). A noteworthy fact is that less interest was found for acting within the Family Health Strategy (FHS) when considering medium and long term

perspectives (80; 19.3%), as compared to short term perspectives (182; 44.0%). It was also found that the students expected to take between 1 and 5 years after graduation before setting up an office for private practice (294; 71.2%).

Table 3 presents comparative analysis for students regularly enrolled in the morning and evening shifts according to sociodemographic characteristic. For gender, the course has a

higher proportion of men in the night shift and women in the morning shift ( $p = 0.041$ ). In the morning shift, most were aged up to 29 years old, with a higher proportion of students aged 30 or more in the night shift ( $p = 0.001$ ). In the morning shift, there was a higher proportion of single students, and in the night shift, a greater proportion of married students ( $p = 0.003$ ). More students in the morning shift lived alone in a house or an apartment, while those enrolled in the night shift more often resided with their spouses and/or children ( $p < 0.001$ ). As for income, more students of the morning shift reported not having income of their own, thus spending was financed by family or others. In contrast, in the night shift, there were a greater number of working students and even of those contributing to support their families ( $p < 0.001$ ). Regarding work, it was found that most of the morning shift students did not perform any type of work, while in the night shift the proportion was different, and included students working more than 20 hours per week ( $p < 0.001$ ).

#### 4 DISCUSSION

The process of change affecting the direction of dental education involves acts of adequation or adjustment found within pedagogical plans for higher education institutions. In this context, the UNIFIP Dentistry Course has adopted, in its curriculum, disciplines that promote a more integrated forming of the student, enabling him/her to perform at all levels of health care. In addition, through its curricular internships, the course seeks to insert the undergraduates

into the social reality of Patos/PB and the surrounding municipalities, by including their needs and social realities. This enables the students to participate locally in the development of prevention, promotion, protection, and health rehabilitation activities; both individually and collectively, and also brings to light the National Curriculum Guidelines which regulate the organization of undergraduate courses within institutions of the country's Higher Educational System<sup>2</sup>.

In this scenario, it is possible to see that changes have happened within the teaching itself, but also in the profile of those who choose have chosen to become dentists. Studies have revealed a process of feminization, that is, a greater number of women in dentistry, which historically has been considered a male profession. This preference can also be explained by the more delicate feminine characteristics which women possess towards development in handicrafts<sup>11-15</sup>.

Confirming this feminization process, evaluation of the sociodemographic profiles of the study's participants revealed that 68.1% of the undergraduates were female. This finding corroborates results from another study conducted with 98 students enrolled in the same course in 2013, in the morning shift, and in the first through eighth periods. At that time, most of the sample (68.4%) was also female<sup>16</sup>. In addition, recent studies assessing the profiles of graduates and senior year dentistry students in differing macroregions of the country have revealed a predominance of women among the undergraduate population<sup>17-20</sup>.

Table 3. Comparative analysis between students regularly enrolled in either morning or night shift according to sociodemographic characteristics

Variables	Shift				Total		p-value
	Daytime		Night		n	%	
	n	%	n	%			
<i>Sex</i>							
Male	56	42.4	76	57.6	132	100.0	0.041 <sup>(a)*</sup>
Female	150	53.2	132	46.8	282	100.0	
<i>Age</i>							
≤ 29 years	200	51.9	185	48.1	385	100.0	0.001 <sup>(a)*</sup>
≥ 30 or more	6	20.7	23	79.3	29	100.0	
<i>Marital status</i>							
Not married	186	53.4	162	46.6	348	100.0	0.003 <sup>(b)*</sup>
Married	18	31.0	40	69.0	58	100.0	
Separated/Divorced/	1	20.0	4	80.0	5	100.0	
Other	1	33.3	2	66.7	3	100.0	
<i>Housing Condition</i>							
Lives alone	40	62.5	24	37.5	64	100.0	< 0.001 <sup>(a)*</sup>
Lives with parents or relatives	102	49.0	106	51.0	208	100.0	
Lives with spouse and/or children	19	28.8	47	71.2	66	100.0	
Lives with others	45	59.2	31	40.8	76	100.0	
<i>Income situation</i>							
No income funded by others	172	56.2	134	43.8	306	100.0	<0.001 <sup>(b)*</sup>
Has income. but gets help from family or others	23	32.9	47	67.1	70	100.0	
Has income and makes a living	5	45.5	6	54.5	11	100.0	
Has income. contributes to self-support and family	4	19.0	17	81.0	21	100.0	
Has income. Supports self and family	2	33.3	4	66.7	6	100.0	
<i>Work situation</i>							
Not working	183	57.7	134	42.3	317	100.0	< 0.001 <sup>(a)*</sup>
Ocasionalmente works	8	25.0	24	75.0	32	100.0	
Works up to 20h per week	8	30.8	18	69.2	26	100.0	
Works more than 20h weekly	7	17.9	32	82.1	39	100.0	
<i>High school institution</i>							
All in public school	62	38.5	99	61.5	161	100.0	0.001 <sup>(a)*</sup>
All in private school	118	57.0	89	43.0	207	100.0	
Part in public school and part in private school	26	56.5	20	43.5	46	100.0	
<i>Dwelling place</i>							
Patos/PB	123	58.0	89	42.0	212	100.0	<0.001 <sup>(a)*</sup>
In another municipality	51	34.5	97	65.5	148	100.0	
Part of the week in Patos and part in another municipality	32	59.3	22	40.7	54	100.0	

Note: (a) Pearson's chi-square test; (b) Fisher's exact test; \* p <0.05.

As to participant age, it can be affirmed that the course presents a young undergraduate population. Most (93.0%) of the enrolled students were younger than or equal to twenty-nine years of age. Other studies have also

confirmed the greater number of young people enrolled in dentistry courses<sup>21-23</sup>.

It was also observed that the majority did not have their own income, and their expenses were paid for by family members, which is

probably closely related to student occupational status since 76.6% did not work. In 2016, another study conducted with students in the morning shift alone showed a slightly higher percentage of 86.7%<sup>16</sup>. The monthly family income of most respondents ranged from four to six minimum wages, which may explain the fact that half of the students had attended high school in private institutions. Favorable socioeconomic conditions may make it easier to acquire study materials, as well as allow greater dedication towards development of activities which promote learning<sup>24</sup>.

Regarding the choice of dentistry as a profession, this study reports a significant number of participants answering “vocation” as a reason for the decision. However, other justifications were cited, such as believing that dentistry is a field of activity with good remuneration prospects, and offering opportunity for professional growth and status. A study conducted in Minas Gerais confirmed that social and economic advancement (as cited by the undergraduates), were among the various motives linked to a desire to be able to maintain a good standard of living, of convenience, of more liberal work scheduling, and of financial autonomy<sup>25</sup>. Research conducted with dentistry graduates at Paraíba State University revealed that personal and professional achievement motivated students to choose the course, in addition to their interest in working with community<sup>18</sup>.

Although the participants in this study presented a satisfactory family income, financial difficulty was reported by most. The main obstacle faced was the monthly cost and expenses for materials and instruments. This is considered an obstacle to entry and continuing for students in dentistry courses, especially for those whose families have a lower monthly income<sup>23</sup>. It is therefore suggested as one of the

causes of dropouts. Such costs account for a significant portion of monthly expenses. Other difficulties were also cited such as transportation, relocation, and displacement. Certainly, these motives relate to the fact that a significant part of the students lived in other municipalities.

Regarding professional perspectives upon conclusion of the course, for the short-term, almost half of the respondents (48.6%) expressed a desire to perform their activities autonomously in private clinics. A study conducted in Belo Horizonte presented similarities with the present study; in three universities of the municipality undergraduates also wanted to work in private sectors<sup>9</sup>. Similarly, a significant number of graduating students from a public university in São Paulo revealed the desire to work in private clinics or practices or act as freelancers<sup>20</sup>. In contrast, 80% of graduates at the Federal University of Santa Catarina wished to associate their private office work with public service, yet for reasons of stability and income<sup>19</sup>.

In this study, 44% of the students wanted to work in the FHS system, and 70% wanted to undertake specialization or improvement courses. In the medium and long term, the option of choosing to work in private practice as self-employed professionals was even greater (68%), as well as an interest to pursue an academic career (43.2%). However, interest in working in public service and the FHS was considerably lower (19.3%) when compared to the short-term. In this sense, the responses were similar to those found in a study conducted with two dental courses, public and private in the State of Bahia, in which interest in working in public service was initially higher, yet in the long term, the desire decreased significantly<sup>26</sup>.

Although registration with the Regional Council of Dentistry (CRO) is required to act professionally, a small portion of the students (3.1%) said they did not want to enroll

immediately after graduation. This finding revealed agreement with another study, in which a small number of students (3.9%) stated that they did not wish to enroll in CRO<sup>19</sup>.

Salary perspectives for the next five years ranged from four to six minimum wages, this approaches the salary hopes of students from a private college in Belo Horizonte, as well as students from the Federal University of Pernambuco, who presented an initial income perspective of two thousand five hundred to five thousand reais<sup>3,22</sup>. A study of graduates at more than ten years, working in a public institution in Piauí, revealed the financial satisfaction of the respondents, with more professionals working in the countryside and reporting average salaries of up to ten minimum wages<sup>17</sup>.

When comparing the students by school shift, statistically associated variables were observed, revealing important differences in the UNIFIP dentistry student profiles. The night shift presented a significant majority of male students, aged 30 and over, and a majority of married students as compared to the morning shift students. These results are different from those found in a study of dentistry school night students at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, which revealed mostly single women aged 17 to 22 years<sup>14</sup>.

Other significant differences were noticed between the students of the two shifts. Regarding housing, income, and work, most of the night shift students responded as living with their spouses and/or children, having income and contributing to the support of their families, and working more than twenty hours per week, as well as residing in other municipalities. In contrast, the morning shift presented a larger population of students living alone, having no income, and not working, living in Patos/PB or spending the week in Patos and then weekends in their own municipalities. These characteristics

show that there are not only significant differences between the sociodemographic profiles, but also different life realities to attend to. The fact that the night shift academics traveled daily from other municipalities to the college means that they spend time in commuting when compared to the morning shift students. This may, in turn, reflect in additional study hours available for undergraduates who spend less time getting to the educational institution.

We highlight that many of the night study undergraduates were employed, contributing to their families' livelihoods, and must then reconcile daily conflicts between study and work. The relationship between work and study, can be considered a difficulty factor for such students. A qualitative approach, aiming to identify reasons for student retention and dropout might identify that working students reveal factors such as tiredness, sleep, exhaustion, and less time to devote to studies that interfere with academic performance. The teachers, on the other hand, perceived that the performance of these night-shift students decreases as they approach the end of class, interfering with their performance. However, the teachers perceived how dedicated these students were in the classroom, in making the most of explanatory moments<sup>27</sup>.

Given the above, the present study confirmed a divergence between UNIFIP dentistry student profiles for those who study in the morning or night shifts. Higher education institutions that offer students the option of pursuing undergraduate courses in a specific shift (mainly in private institutions) provide working individuals, who are responsible for their own and sometimes the whole family's livelihoods, access to higher education in health, including dentistry. Moreover, the statistical differences highlighted are important for coordinators and educators to understand situations such as differential academic performance, as well as

participation and/or absences in monitoring, research, and extension programs, which may relate to this profile heterogeneity. Finally, the UNIFIP dentistry course attracts students from various sociodemographic contexts, operating in a municipality that despite being located in the interior of the state of Paraíba, exerts strong geographical and economic influence on inland locations of this and other states.

## 5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the students involved in this study were mostly female, single, and under the age of twenty-nine, who responded that they had chosen the course to obtain a vocation. They showed interest in working in private practice as self-employed professionals, as well as expressing the desire to attend postgraduate courses. Their wage target for the next five years was from four to six minimum wages. As for areas of expertise in dentistry; surgery and orthodontics were indicated by the students to be of great interest.

When comparing the students by school shift, there were important differences in profile. In the night-school shift, there was a predominance of male students, aged 30 years and over, and a higher proportion of either married or divorced individuals, living with spouses and/or children, having an income and contributing to the support of their families, working over 20 hours a week, having attended public high school, and of residing in other municipalities.

## RESUMO

### **Perfil sociodemográfico e interesses profissionais de graduandos de Odontologia do Centro Universitário de Patos**

Este estudo objetivou avaliar o perfil sociodemográfico dos graduandos em Odontologia do Centro Universitário de Patos (UNIFIP), bem como conhecer seus interesses e

expectativas em relação à formação e exercício profissional. Participaram desta pesquisa os 414 estudantes matriculados no curso, no segundo semestre letivo de 2017. Empregou-se um questionário contendo questões objetivas e subjetivas e foram utilizados testes estatísticos para associar as variáveis sociodemográficas com os turnos de estudo. A maioria dos graduandos era do sexo feminino (68,1%), na faixa etária de até 29 anos (93%) e solteiros (84,1%). A principal razão diante da escolha do curso foi vocação (47,8%). As áreas de atuação de maiores interesses foram cirurgia e traumatologia (28,8%), seguida pela ortodontia (19,8%). A análise comparativa demonstrou que no turno noturno havia predominância de graduandos do sexo masculino ( $p=0,041$ ), com idade igual ou superior a 30 anos ( $p=0,001$ ), casados ou divorciados ( $p<0,003$ ), que residiam com cônjuges e/ou filhos ( $p<0,001$ ), que possuíam renda e contribuía para o sustento de suas famílias ( $p<0,001$ ), trabalhavam mais de 20 horas semanais ( $p<0,001$ ), cursaram todo o ensino médio em escola pública ( $p=0,001$ ) e residiam em outros municípios ( $p<0,001$ ). A curto prazo, 70% dos pesquisados pretendiam iniciar curso de pós-graduação e atuar na Estratégia Saúde da Família (ESF) (44%). A médio e longo prazo 68,6% pretendia atuar em clínica privada, com menor interesse em atuar na ESF (19,3%). Em conclusão, existem diferenças significativas no perfil dos estudantes do Curso de Odontologia diurno e noturno do Centro Universitário de Patos.

**Descritores:** Educação Superior. Estudantes de Odontologia. Mercado de Trabalho. Educação em Odontologia.

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