



Regional Disparities in User Perception of Oral Health in Brazil's Primary Care: An Integrative Review

**Patrícia Silva Chaves ^{a++},
Yago Cesar Do Nascimento Souza ^{a++},
Yann Nobre Viana ^{a#*}, Richelly Maria Rodrigues Holanda ^{a#},
Luciana Maria Arcanjo Frota ^{at},
Mariana Ramalho de Farias ^{at},
Jacques Antonio Cavalcante Maciel ^{at}
and Myrna Maria Arcanjo Frota Barros ^{at}**

^a Universidade Federal do Ceará - Sobral Campus, Brazil.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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⁺⁺ Dentist Surgeon;

[#] Dentistry Student;

[†] Doctor of Dentistry and Dental Surgeon;

*Corresponding author: Email: yannnobre@alu.ufc.br;

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ABSTRACT

Aim: One of the alternatives used to evaluate the quality of dental services is the use of instruments, which provide an analysis of the user's perception of health care in the service. The study aims to identify regional differences in the quality of oral health in Primary Health Care (PHC) from the perspective of service users.

Study Design: This is an Integrative Literature Review.

Methodology: This is a qualitative study using the Scielo, Bireme and PubMed databases. By crossing the descriptors "Health Assessment", "Primary Health Care", "Oral Health", and "Brazil", 661 studies were obtained, of which 14 were selected for meeting the inclusion criteria. No specific and relevant studies were found for other regions of Brazil, such as the North, Central West regions.

Results: The results of the studies in the different regions of Brazil showed similarities. It was found that women, elderly people, those with low levels of education and socioeconomic status were more expressive in the use and evaluation of services, exposing the need for Public Policies that recognize the user's vision as a means of improving the service provided by PHC.

Keywords: Health assessment; primary health care; oral health; Brazil; Regional Disparities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Primary Health Care (PHC) is described by a set of conducts, at the individual and collective levels, which include the promotion and protection of health, the prevention of diseases, diagnosis, therapeutic resources, rehabilitation and health maintenance, which interfere in the indicators and in the high regulatory competence of the use of high-standard technological means, ensuring society the advantages of universal access that the services offer (Bulgareli et al., 2014).

Barbara Starfield systematized Primary Health Care into essential and derived attributes, which classify care and expand the relationship between the community and service users (Prates et al., 2017). In this way, an effective primary care service is established as a means of promoting access to its "front door" in a simple and easy way. Care must be uninterrupted and progressive, presented in a coordinated and integrated manner, taking into account the most varied nuances and biopsychosocial aspects of users. The peculiarities of the families that occupy a given territory are also highlighted, highlighting not only the demands of the community itself but also the inherent cultural aspect of each population, which are fundamental characteristics (D'ávila Otávio, 2016).

PHC activities are organized by means of seven attributes, known as dimensions, with structuring aspects that relate to the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of their interventions: access,

longitudinality, comprehensiveness and coordination of Primary Health Care – which are classified as primary attributes; family-centered health care, community assistance and cultural competence – as derived attributes. Therefore, the greater the performance and relevance of these attributes, the more stable their presence in primary care (Araújo et al., 2021).

However, health promotion is something different from the treatment and prevention of diseases. Therefore, by perceiving this reality and studying the problems, it was possible to observe the fragility of the curative medical approach in effectively managing the health demands of the Brazilian territory, requiring a restructuring of health services. Therefore, it became urgent to consolidate a health system that emphasizes comprehensive care and equity. Thus, over time, health authorities realized that the health model centered on curativism and individualization, linked to hospital care, was doomed to user dissatisfaction and failure to resolve demands (BUSS, 2002).

The history of dentistry in Brazil is no different. It has been characterized by failures in care, which has overburdened the health system due to the population's difficulty in accessing care. Therefore, it was essential to develop a Public Policy focused on oral health, which has been in effect since 2003 through the Brazil Smiles Program. The Program's guidelines emphasize the expansion and quality of dental services in primary care, through tasks aimed at promoting health and preventing diseases, providing

coverage to the entire population (Bulgareli et al., 2014).

One of the alternatives used to assess the quality of dental services is the use of instruments, which provide an analysis of the user's perception of their health care in a given service, specifying the nuances of the procedure, while enabling the incorporation of information related to the health status of users (Bastos et al., 2019).

The users' point of view is established as an instrument to measure the effectiveness of health services. Therefore, satisfaction is understood as a measure of health outcomes. Thus, the analysis of individuals' satisfaction with the provision of health services consolidates the integration of community members by appropriating their civil rights and investing them with obligations for co-production of the health approach, which can help guide planning and decision-making methods related to health management (Amorim et al., 2019).

As the care provided and user approval are directly linked to access, coordination and continuity in health units, user dissatisfaction is mainly due to the lack of responsibility, respect, adequate reception, accessibility, unique therapeutic projects, care coordination and comprehensiveness (Maciel et al., 2021).

Brazil has a historical legacy that highlights the regional differences that define its political and economic profile. During the 20th century, progress was characterized by the execution of productive tasks related to the geodemographic and cultural particularities of the country's large regions. The regional layout of the Unified Health System (SUS) expresses and configures the territorial contrasts of Brazil. In the first ten years of its implementation, the regional organization of health practices, specifically in Primary Health Care (PHC) and with a focus on the Family Health Program (PSF), achieved significant growth in the country's poorest states (De Albuquerque, 2017) Discrepancies in health and access to care in primary care institutions are being analyzed through surveys of user opinions in order to understand the health deficiencies, the search for services and the socioeconomic situation of each region (Viacava et al., 2019).

However, even with the numerous advances and significant developments over time, there is still a need for Brazil to successfully overcome the significant dissolution of activities and provision

of health services and competence in the conduct of care, with regard to the burden of Primary Health Care (PHC) (Bastos et al., 2019).

Confirming the relevance of users in the evaluation of services offered in primary care, this study aims to identify the predominant regional differences in the quality of oral health in Primary Health Care (PHC) from the perspective of service users.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study is an Integrative Literature Review, based on the methodological proposal of Mendes et al., 2008, which stands out for allowing the integration of research results with different designs, whether qualitative or quantitative, offering a comprehensive and critical synthesis of the knowledge produced on a given topic. This approach is particularly relevant for the area of Public Health, since it allows the articulation between multiple regional realities and perspectives of the subjects involved in the care processes.

As an initial stage of the design, a guiding question was developed based on the PICO strategy, adapted for observational and qualitative studies. The formulation aimed to guide the search and selection of studies and had the following elements:

- P (Population): Users of the Unified Health System (SUS) in Brazil;
- I (Intervention/Interest): Users' perception of the oral health services offered in Primary Health Care (PHC);
- C (Comparison): Differences between Brazilian regions (regionality);
- O (Outcome): Identification of regional disparities in the perception of quality and access to oral health services in PHC.

Based on this structure, the following research question was defined: "Are there regional disparities in the perception of users of the Unified Health System (SUS) regarding oral health in the context of Primary Health Care in Brazil?" This guiding question not only delimited the focus of the review, but also enabled a critical analysis of the available evidence, highlighting territorial inequalities, perceived barriers and gaps in the provision of public oral health services. With this, the review aimed to

contribute to the improvement of public policies in the scope of Primary Care, based on qualified listening to the subjects who experience the SUS in their daily lives.

2.2 Search Strategy and Review Protocol

This integrative review was conducted in an adapted manner, following the methodological guidelines established by the PRISMA checklist – Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (Page et al., 2021), with the aim of ensuring transparency, traceability and standardization in the process of identifying, selecting and including the studies analyzed. The methodological steps were systematically organized into four phases: identification of records in the databases, screening by reading titles and abstracts, verification of eligibility by reading them in full, and, finally, inclusion of studies that fully met the guiding criteria for selection of studies, which consisted of considering articles that address the perspective of users on oral health services in different Brazilian regions.

The screening process was carried out independently by two reviewers, with eventual

resolution of disagreements by consensus, ensuring greater reliability in the selection process. To illustrate the methodological path in an objective and concise manner, a flowchart was constructed using the PRISMA model, presented in the results section, detailing the quantities relating to the records identified, excluded and selected in each stage, which is recorded in the flowchart.

Although this review has not been previously registered in international repositories such as PROSPERO – which corresponds to the prospective registry of systematic review protocols – and allows for the evaluation of the study's conduct and the quality of the reporting of its results, increasing transparency and reproducibility. Consequently, all stages were conducted with methodological rigor and documented organization, allowing full reproducibility of the adopted strategy. It is important to note that the option not to previously register the review does not compromise the scientific quality of the work, since the detailed description of the protocol, from the definition of the research question to the eligibility criteria, ensures transparency and methodological consistency.

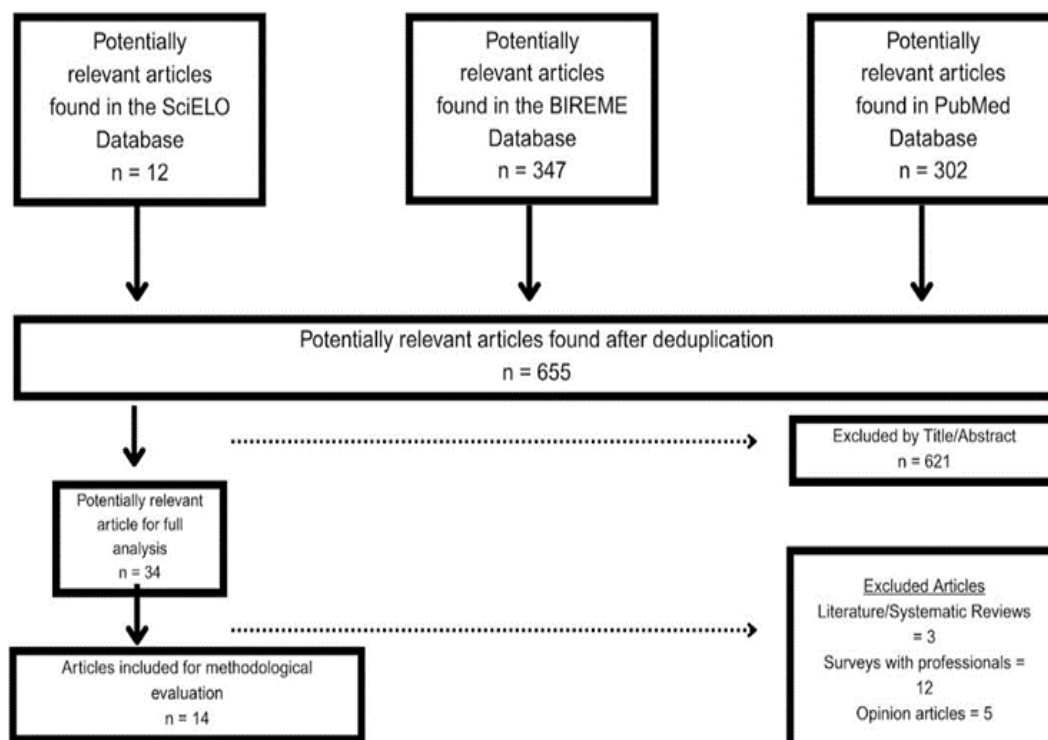


Fig. 1. Flowchart of article search and selection

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024).

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles published in Portuguese or English, freely available in full and conducted in Brazil, focused on the perspective of SUS users on oral health in PHC and that used valid instruments for evaluating oral health services were included. Studies that were excluded included studies focusing exclusively on the perception of health professionals, systematic or scoping reviews, opinion articles and editorials, as well as dissertations, theses and unpublished documents. Furthermore, no restriction was applied regarding the publication period, in order to seek a broad and representative overview of all available evidence in the aforementioned criteria.

2.4 Study Selection and Categorization Process

After applying the eligibility criteria, 661 articles were identified: 12 in the SciELO database (1 selected), 347 in BIREME (7 selected) and 302 in PubMed (6 selected), totaling 14 studies included in the final synthesis. The screening was performed by two reviewers independently, with disagreements resolved by consensus. The analysis of the selected studies involved a careful reading of the objectives, methodology, population investigated, Brazilian region represented and main findings. Subsequently, the data was categorized thematically, allowing the construction of a critical and integrative view

of the results in line with the objectives of this review.

3. RESULTS

Based on the applied research criteria, 661 articles were obtained as a result of the searches, of which 6 studies were excluded due to the presence of duplications, leaving 655 studies. After reading the titles and abstracts, 621 publications were discarded because they were not in the field of Dentistry and/or had themes that differed from the present article, as well as research that did not meet the inclusion criteria. From the final reading of the 34 articles that remained after the initial selection, a total of 20 studies were eliminated because they did not meet the stated objective.

The selection of articles for writing this Integrative Literature Review is represented in a flowchart model (Fig. 1). Information that includes the number of potentially relevant publications in each database, exclusion criteria and articles included for methodological evaluation are displayed in the aforementioned image.

Table 1 presents the selected articles, the year in which they were published, the location where the study was carried out, its outcome, the instrument used for the research and, finally, what each author concluded.

Table 1. Year of publication, author, research location, outcome, instrument and conclusion

Year	Title	Research Location	Outcome	Instrument	Conclusion
Mendonça et al., 2012	Self-assessment of oral health: results of the World Health Survey – Primary Care in four municipalities in the State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2005	Rio de Janeiro	Positive or negative self-assessment is related to age group, socioeconomic factors and education level	Adaptation of the World Health Survey (WHS) questionnaire	Dental care should address health promotion and disease prevention actions
Brunhauser et al., 2013	Evaluation of oral health services: a comparative study	Rio Grande do Sul	ESF oral health well evaluated due to the fact that it meets the attributes of PHC	QASSaB	The direct work of the professional in the territory brings greater satisfaction to users
Bordin et al., 2015	Comparative study of user and health professionals' satisfaction with the public dental service	Paraná	High level of satisfaction among users, however, they show conformism and low critical content	Adaptation of PNASS and PMAQ	High levels of user satisfaction were achieved. More specific and periodic evaluations are suggested.

Year	Title	Research Location	Outcome	Instrument	Conclusion
Oliveira et al., 2016	Relationship between perception of dental services and oral health conditions in hypertensive and diabetic individuals	Minas Gerais	Faster services in the ESF, but access, connection and communication are insufficient.	ASBAP-user	Oral health was better evaluated in users who had a good relationship with the dentist
Aldosari et al., 2017	Factors associated with patient satisfaction in Brazilian primary dental care	Minas Gerais	Education level, gender and professional status are associated with satisfaction	PMAQ-AB	Combination of factors interfere in the final satisfaction of patients
Bordin et al., 2017	User Satisfaction with Public Oral Health Services in Different Dimensions of Health Care	Paraná	Users were satisfied with the services. However, conformism and low critical level must be taken into account	Questionnaire summarized by the authors themselves	The overall satisfaction of individuals was associated with gender, age and education
Gonçalves et al., 2018	Use of oral health services during prenatal care in primary health care: data from PMAQ-AB	Brasil	Higher prevalence of prenatal dental care among pregnant women > 30 years old	PMAQ-AB	Low-income and younger women used dental services less during prenatal care
Nascimento et al., 2018	Evaluation of public oral health services in Curitiba, Brazil: a cross-sectional study using the Primary Care Assessment Tool (PCATool) in Primary Care	Paraná	The users' perception of the attributes of PHC in the ESF was favorable, except for affiliation and accessibility.	PCATool-SB	The positive results achieved indicate that the provision of oral health care should be expanded
Amorim et al., 2019	User satisfaction with public oral health services in the Brazilian Unified Health System	Minas Gerais	Users reported satisfaction with services. Assessment associated with age and socioeconomic level	PMAQ-AB	Users with low socioeconomic status and older reported greater satisfaction
Bastos et al., 2019	Access to dental services and quality of life related to oral health in the context of Primary Health Care	Rio Grande do Sul	Access to dental care is associated with better oral health-related quality of life	PCATool-SB	Access to dental services impacts the user's quality of life
Rebelo et al., 2019	Contextual and individual determinants of non-use of dental services among Brazilian adults	Brasil	Non-use of dental services was higher among adults in cities with a high cost of living	SB Brazil Project	Socioeconomic and demographic issues influence the non-use of dental services
Cardozo et al., 2020	Validity and reliability of the Brazilian Primary Care Assessment Tool: Adult Oral Health	Rio Grande do Sul	The instrument was effective in measuring the presence and extent of essential and derived attributes of PHC	PCATool-SB	Instrument was effective and reliable in assessing user experience in PHC
Mialhe et al., 2021	Association between oral health literacy and dental outcomes among users of AP	São Paulo	Low oral health literacy is linked to higher rates of tooth loss	HL in Dentistry Scale (HeLD-14)	Socioeconomic factors and low education are related to greater tooth loss

Year	Title	Research Location	Outcome	Instrument	Conclusion
	servicesS				
Melo et al., 2021	Indicators for scheduling dental appointments in PHC: a national cross-sectional study	Brasil	The search for oral treatment in the PHC depends on the user and the unit team	PMAQ-AB	The age of users and the organization of the service influence the search for treatment

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024)

4. DISCUSSION

In view of the above, it became clear that the range of publications addressed presented a similarity in their conclusions, which attest that the search for dental services in PHC is linked to the following factors: age, gender, socioeconomic conditions and level of education. All articles used to write this Integrative Literature Review were conducted in Brazil. No isolated studies were found in the Northeast, North and Central-West regions. Of the 14 publications selected, 42.8% were written through research conducted in the South of Brazil, 35.7% in the Southeast region and 21.4% occurred at a national level.

The most widely used instruments in the literature chosen for writing this article were: PMAQ-AB (28.5%) and PCATool-SB (21.4%). The National Program for Improving Access and Quality in Primary Care (PMAQ-AB) was structured with the aim of promoting improvements in the aspect of public health services through means of improvement, monitoring and analysis of professionals in Primary Health Care (PHC). Three cycles of the Program have been carried out to date. The member cities that obtain better results in the standard of care will have increased financial resources (Melo et al., 2021).

The general variant of the Primary Care Assessment Tool is a potentially effective instrument for assessing the quality of services provided in PHC, based on the estimated coverage of essential and derived attributes, resulting in a score on the effectiveness of care (Cardozo et al., 2020).

In one article, a study was conducted on self-assessment of oral health among individuals living in the state of Rio de Janeiro. It showed that, although residents had coverage from the Primary Health Care service, the demand for dental care showed low rates. It was identified that this demand varied according to gender, age, level of education and socioeconomic

conditions, finding that women, young people and those with a higher level of education represented the majority when using the services, and consequently, greater satisfaction with their oral health condition (Mendonça et al., 2012).

In the state of Rio Grande do Sul, the socioeconomic status of the user was linked to satisfaction with dental care provided by the Family Health Strategy (ESF). Access to the service was another factor that performed positively, demonstrating that this condition is the one that most impacts a favorable evaluation of oral health services in primary care (Brunhauser et al., 2013).

In a study conducted in Paraná, users also demonstrated satisfaction with the approach to dental care in PHC, reaffirming findings from national bibliographical research. However, the data collected require a detailed analysis, since Brazilians are complacent and have limited critical sense regarding the public health services apparatus, validating them as a privilege and not as a duty of the State. Socioeconomic, demographic and educational circumstances induce the understanding of users, in which those who have lower levels of the aforementioned characteristics are more likely to have a better evaluation of oral health services (Bordin et al., 2017, Bordin et al., ., 2017).

In Minas Gerais, researchers conducted an epidemiological survey on the perception of dental services among patients with Chronic Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) - hypertensive and diabetic. Females and the elderly were the most prevalent in the surveys and reported that care in the ESF was quick; however, the essential attributes of Primary Health Care remained weakened, both due to user choice and sociocultural factors (Oliveira et al., 2018).

In the same state of the aforementioned article, male users, employees and those with a considerable level of education were less likely to

be satisfied with the dental services provided in Primary Health Care. The conditions of reception and connection provided to patients, as well as the perspective on the structure of the dental office were evaluated positively. Users who were seen on a first-come, first-served basis were more satisfied when compared to those who were seen at a previously scheduled time. It can be inferred that the education, gender and professional context of individuals are closely linked to satisfaction with oral health services (Aldosari et al., 2017).

At a national level, the prevalence of pregnant women in prenatal dental care was assessed based on results obtained in cycles I and II of the Program for Improving Access and Quality of Primary Care (PMAQ-AB). Population size, financial situation and age group are the most prevalent aspects in the findings of both cycles of the Program. The interviewed users aged >30 years demonstrated greater presence in the use of dental services during pregnancy. It is important to mention that the women who benefited most from prenatal dental care were those with higher incomes and who lived in large cities (Gonçalves et al., 2017).

In another study conducted in the state of Paraná, in the city of Curitiba, regarding the evaluation of public oral health services, it was demonstrated that changes in the dynamics of dental care in the Family Health Strategy (ESF) were required. This finding was confirmed by the limited evaluation of some essential attributes, specifically affiliation and accessibility. Sociodemographic issues, travel time to the health unit, as well as cultural factors, affect the user's accessibility to the health service. In contrast, the attributes derived from PHC were evaluated positively by the users, an aspect that favors the maintenance of a good bond with the professionals and the unit (Nascimento et al., 2019).

A study conducted in Minas Gerais assessed patient satisfaction with the dental care provided by the Family Health Strategy. It was clear that individuals with lower purchasing power, low levels of education and advanced age (elderly) were satisfied with the service offered, influencing a perspective that is far from reality, as these users tend to develop a less critical view of the services offered by the unit (Amorim et al., 2019).

In a study conducted in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, researchers obtained relevant data regarding the association between oral health in Primary Health Care and the quality of life of service users. The conduct of offering effective access to oral health in a dignified manner and at the appropriate time is linked to a quality of life related to ideal oral health (Bastos et al., 2019).

Another study investigated individual and contextual determinants of non-use of national dental services among adult patients. The findings indicated that the human development index (HDI), demographic and socioeconomic conditions, as well as gender, ethnicity and education were associated with non-use of the service. The prevalence was more evident in indigenous and black adults, with low educational attainment and economically disadvantaged. The demand for dental consultation was higher among younger users, since the elderly tend to neglect their oral health (Melo et al., 2021, Rebelo et al., 2019).

In a study conducted in Rio Grande do Sul, users of an ESF evaluated the Access (first contact) attribute negatively, highlighting failures in telephone services, waiting times of over 30 minutes to be seen by a dentist, and the need to take time off work or school to attend dental care. The Continuity attribute also received an unfavorable evaluation, as users claimed instability in the permanence of oral health professionals in the Family Health Strategy, which harmed the bond between user and professional. However, the coordination and family guidance attributes received a satisfactory evaluation (Cardozo et al., 2020).

In the state of São Paulo, researchers interviewed users of primary health care dental services to investigate the relationship between oral health literacy and oral hygiene conditions. Factors related to low levels of education and family income were associated with lower levels of education and self-care for oral health, leading to tooth loss, untreated cavities and periodontal disease. Users have very low accuracy in recognizing the need for early treatment (Mialhe et al., 2022).

Despite the significant number of studies obtained during the literature searches, many of them were intrinsically linked to the areas of Medicine and Nursing or focused on the oral health team of Primary Health Care (PHC) services. It can be inferred that the prevalence of

research on the perspective of users on dental care in the Family Health Strategy was in the South and Southeast regions of Brazil.

In general, similarities were observed between the outcomes of the articles. Aspects such as age group, gender, level of education and socioeconomic status were linked to the ability of users to evaluate the quality of oral health services in the PHC from their perspective. A more accurate perspective of patients is needed to analyze whether the services offered in the unit are in line with the essential and derived attributes of PHC (Amorim et al., 2019, Bordin et al., 2017, Bordin et al., 2017, Rebelo et al., 2019).

The oldest article used in this Integrative Literature Review, conducted in the Southeast region of Brazil, addressed individuals' perceptions of their oral health, as well as the use of services offered by the ESF. The outcome

of this study was similar to that of the most recent research, conducted at a national level, highlighting the relationship between the level of knowledge of users and the efficiency in evaluating the oral health services offered (Melo et al., 2021, Mendonça et al., 2005).

Two publications were related to the evaluation of oral health from the perspective of patients with special needs (PNE), which discussed hypertensive and diabetic patients in a city in the Southeast region and prenatal dental care in capitals of the national territory. A coincident factor in both concerns the socioeconomic condition and level of education of users, since this group of individuals tends to seek care when they have a higher income and higher level of education. This result explains the hypothesis that access to services is not in accordance with the principles and guidelines of the Unified Health System (SUS) (Oliveira et al., 2018, Gonçalves et al., 2020).

Table 2. Sociodemographic Factors Associated with Users' Perception of Oral Health Services in PHC, by Region, based on the articles included in the review

Region	Percentage of studies (%)	Main findings	Related sociodemographic factors
South	42,8%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negative assessment of access (waiting time and difficulties with scheduling) - Problems with continuity and turnover of professionals - A good relationship with the dentist influenced a more positive assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low level of education - Socioeconomic status - Advanced age - Travel time to the unit - Gender
Southeast	35,7%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Users with low education and income tend to evaluate positively due to low criticality - Greater health literacy results in more accurate evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education - Income level - Gender (greater use by women) - Age (young people and pregnant women with greater access)
National	21,4%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pregnant women with higher incomes and living in large cities use prenatal dental care more - Disparities in access by ethnicity and educational level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education - Age group - Family income - Ethnicity (indigenous and black people with less access)
Northeast/ North/Central- West	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The lack of isolated studies in these regions highlights a research gap and potential invisibility of regional disparities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reinforces the need for research into territorial inequalities and vulnerable populations in these regions

Source: Prepared by the authors (2024).

Other studies filtered to integrate this research, carried out in the South and Southeast regions of Brazil, addressed the relevance of access to Primary Health Care services to user satisfaction with their oral health condition. A good relationship with the dentist influenced a more positive assessment of the oral health of individuals and the consultations offered (Brunhauser et al., 2013, Oliveira et al., 2018, Rebelo et al., 2019).

Dental services are similarly relegated to the sidelines of UHC in low and middle-income countries. In fact, the World Bank's Universal Health Coverage Study Series, which documents and analyses low-income countries' paths towards UHC, omits oral health from its monitoring of benefit packages. Nevertheless, a few countries have made strides towards aligning dental care with UHC initiatives. For example, Brazil integrated dental and primary medical care through the nation policy *Brasil Sorridente* (Smiling Brazil) in 2004. However, most low- and middle-income countries do not have UHC initiatives that integrate universal oral health programmes (Wang et al., 2020).

It is important to emphasize the relevance of applying assessment instruments in primary care services in order to determine, analyze and study the oral health scenario from the users' point of view. They will benefit from new research on the subject, as well as improvements in the dynamics of work in the Family Health Strategy (ESF) (Cardozo et al., 2020, Nascimento et al., 2019, Rebelo et al., 2019)

5. CONCLUSION

The publications selected for the synthesis of this Integrative Literature Review highlight that socioeconomic aspects, gender, age group and level of education induce a positive or negative evaluation by users. Such data were collected through the application of evaluation tools in Primary Health Care units with an emphasis on the patients' perspective.

It is worth noting that the outcomes of the studies in the different regions of Brazil showed similarities. It was found that women, elderly people, those with low levels of education and socioeconomic status were more expressive in the use and evaluation of services, exposing the need for more effective Public Policies that take into account the user's perspective as a guiding

means to make improvements in the service provided by PHC.

It is essential to carry out more research on the subject in the North of the country, where studies have been carried out, but only regarding the professional opinion on the service or focused on Secondary Health Care. As they will provide adjustments in the units and consequently, the essential and derived attributes will be fulfilled and applied successfully.

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study makes an important contribution by highlighting users' perceptions of oral health services in Brazilian PHC. It also provides an approach focused on social determinants and points out significant gaps in coverage in certain regions of the country.

However, it faces important methodological limitations, such as low geographic representation. This issue limits the generalization of the results and reinforces the need for further research, especially in the North, Northeast and Central-West regions.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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