ABSTRACT

Introduction: The concept of work exhaustion (or job burnout) was described in 1974 by Herbert Freudenberger as being a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, relationship or way of life that failed to meet expectations. The burnout became a professional disease in which the common denominator is the direct relation between work and the state of fatigue or tiredness of the worker and is more obvious in the healthcare professionals. The hospital environment and the emergency service in particular, involve a great deal of stress, essentially to the healthcare professionals, leading to a decline in the mental and physical health of the professional and to a lower quality of life.

Objectives: In the present study, having the Bioethics area as a reference, the aim is to outline a critical reflection on the burnout syndrome and its connection to certain socio-demographic variables and also the role of Bioethics in the practice of the professionals of the Obstetrics emergency service at the São João Hospital in Oporto.

Materials and Methods: This is an observational/transversal study. The chosen method was a simple random sample, including 31 professionals of the Obstetrics emergency service at the São João Hospital, 2 of them being general nurses, 16 specialized nurses, 8 gynecological and obstetric doctors, 4 medical assistants and 1 administrative. The following methods were used to obtain the data: the Portuguese version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS), a questionnaire for the socio-demographic variables and a questionnaire to evaluate some Bioethical subjects, both questionnaires being originally developed for this study.

Results: The obtained results globally indicate a low burnout level and a valorization of the professional orientation principles based on the five Bioethics pillars. Additionally remarkable is the high median values obtained in the subscale of the self-fulfillment in the evaluation of the burnout, what might be an indicator of good professional satisfaction levels.

Conclusion: Assuming that the human resources should be considered as one of the main factors to the quality improvement in organizations, it is essential to think over the Bioethics contribution to the definition of the organizational and social policies, and the humanization of a service might be defined by the procedures of its human resources and how they interact with the users in search of excellence in the provision of healthcare services.