

Symposium title: Burnout: antecedents in Portuguese nurses, teachers and police officers

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Nursing, teaching, and policing are stressful professions, with a central role in society in terms of the health, education, and security domains. Professionals working in human services are more vulnerable to experience burnout, since they work under stressful conditions and deal with people demands. When they experience burnout, it affects their self well-being, the care they provide to others, and it impacts negatively upon their organization. Burnout became a concern since Freudenberger (1974) and Maslach (1976) alerted others to the psychological health of professionals in human services. In Portugal, burnout elicited increased research, with the aim to identify antecedents and the protective factors which related to individuals and organizations. This symposium aims to present four different studies conducted with Portuguese professionals across several professions.

Paper number 1 investigated the influence of social support on burnout among 400 female teachers. Despite the fact that the sample does not experience high burnout levels, they showed high social support from colleagues and students which protected them from emotional exhaustion.

Paper number 2 investigated the influence of engagement on burnout among 1216 nurses. Engagement seems to be an essential element for health and well-being among this population, helping them to face labor demands, and it is likely to contribute positively to the health and quality of life of their patients.

Paper number 3 investigated the predictive role of stress sources on burnout levels among a sample of 355 members of one Portuguese Police Force. The results showed that different dimensions of burnout predicted different stress sources.

Paper number 4 relates to the previous study, since data was collected among 626 recruit police officers in their last month of academy training before joining the Portuguese Police Force. This study investigated sources of stress experienced and the relationship between engagement and coping among this population. Results showed the main sources of stress experienced are related with recruits personal life and the course. Furthermore, engagement levels were influenced by the coping strategy employed by the police recruits. The results suggest that future academy training which aims to increase engagement levels among police recruits should concentrate further on exploring coping strategy preferences.

Theoretical implications of the symposium draw attention to the existence of different antecedents of burnout across different professions. Additionally, the symposium suggests practical implications that future interventions should include coping, and social support in order to prepare workers to deal with the demands of the professions and increase their engagement levels