Between multiple identities and ethical dilemmas:
Healthcare professionals’ identity conflict perception and ethical behaviour in End-of-Life circumstances

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Abstract
Legal changes in medical regulations and advancements in medical technology have challenged healthcare organisations’ approaches to ethical controversies and influenced healthcare professionals’ clinical practice, especially in End-of-Life (EoL) situations. In such situations, healthcare professionals may experience moral identity conflicts and ethical dilemmas. Indeed, the moral code of conduct of doctors and nurses’ professional identity can interact with the moral values of their other non-work identities. These ethical conflicts could significantly affect healthcare professionals’ actions, patient care and quality of healthcare. Although a thorough understanding of identity conflict emergence, perception and influence would help healthcare professionals and organisations to promptly respond to such consequences, research has not exhaustively addressed these ethical conflict dynamics.

Therefore, through an interdisciplinary perspective integrating theoretical and empirical works in management/organisation studies and medical literature, this paper explores healthcare professionals’ ethical identity conflicts perception and behaviour in EoL circumstances. To pursue this aim, a qualitative research methodology has been chosen. Semi-structured interviews (N=54) are conducted among healthcare professionals, implementing both theoretical sampling, to strengthen the rigour of the study, and random sampling, to ameliorate any potential selection bias. The tradition of thematic analysis is followed to analyse the data. Hence, by offering an in-depth understanding of how ethical conflicts are experienced by doctors and nurses and bringing new insights on healthcare professionals’ behavioural consequences in terms of decision making and clinical practice, this paper enriches current works on ethical identity conflicts proposing findings and themes.
related to spiritual/religious identity, moral identity, procrastination of duties and absenteeism.