



# Work-related Burnout Levels among University Lecturers in Kenya

## Introduction

This report covers results of an online survey conducted in the month of July 2022 to identify work-related burnout levels among university lecturers in Kenya by UNESCO-IICBA in collaboration with researchers based in Kenya.

Specifically, the survey aimed at answering the following questions, with a view of identifying how best university lecturers can be supported to deal with work-related burnout:

- (a) How often do lecturers encounter selected work-related issues at their institutions?
- (b) What level of importance do lecturers associate selected burnout effects on their professional output?
- (c) What mechanisms are available in universities in Kenya to support lecturers deal with work-related burnout?
- (d) How often do lecturers apply mechanisms at personal levels to avoid work-related burnout?
- (e) What are the levels of burnout among lecturers across the following FIVE dimensions (i) Depersonalization, (ii) Reduced personal accomplishment (iii) Emotional exhaustion, (iv) Job satisfaction, and (iv) Workload?
- (f) What are the burnout levels across subgroups of lecturers disaggregated by factors such as lecturer sex (male, female), age, type of university (public, private), and teaching hours per week?

## Method and data

The survey covered in this report was conducted online on a Google form platform from 21<sup>st</sup> June to 15<sup>th</sup> July 2022 (25 days). On 21<sup>st</sup> June 2022, email messages were sent to an initial group of lecturers inviting them to participate in the online survey, and encouraging them to share the survey webpage link with their colleagues who they thought might be interested in completing the survey.

The data covered in this report involved 161 university lecturers based in Kenya comprising of 79 (49.1%) males and 80 (49.7%) females with 2 (1.2%) of the lecturers preferring not to disclose their sex.

A vast majority (83.2%) of these lecturers were teaching in public universities, while the rest (16.8%) were teaching in private universities. In terms of age, 26 (16.1%) of these lecturers were below 41 years old, 63 (39.1%) were between the age of 41 and 50 years, and 72 (44.7%) were above 50 years old. The survey did not collect any personal identifier data.

## Results

- Lecturers reported encountering low remuneration and slow job progression more often than other work-related issues.
- Only about one-quarter (26.1%) of the lecturers involved in this study reported "Availability of free training on issues related to stress and work-related burnout" in their institutions.
- About two-thirds of the lecturers (66.5%) said they never or rarely sought professional support to help them untangle life challenges.
- In general, work-related burnout levels were consistently lower among lecturers in private universities than among their colleagues

in public universities. However, burnout levels did not vary much across male and female lecturers.

- Availability of at least one support mechanism at the university or application of at least one mechanism at a personal level seemed to be associated with lower burnout levels than otherwise.

### Box 1: Definition of work-related burnout

In this survey, work-related burnout is defined as "a condition resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed".

In this regard, work-related burnout is NOT stress that is caused by a condition that is not work-related NEITHER is it a one-off condition like feeling tired or exhausted after a hard day at work.

## Limitations

The results presented in this report should be interpreted with some caution since they are based on a convenience sample, which might not reflect accurately what is happening in Kenyan universities. In addition, a vast majority of the survey respondents are from public universities (83.2%

or over four-fifths), meaning that the overall mean results are heavily influenced by the public university data.

Nevertheless, these results should be of interest to university administrators in Kenya, and other partners who might be interested in identifying mechanisms to support lecturers deal with work-related burnout.

## Recommendation

Provide lecturers with **training on work-related burnout issues**. This could include providing them with information on the **importance of burnout** on their professional outputs as university lecturers; the **available support mechanisms** in their universities; and **personal level mechanisms** they can employ to avoid work-related burnout.

Learn more, visit:

<http://www.iicba.unesco.org/>

### Contributors:

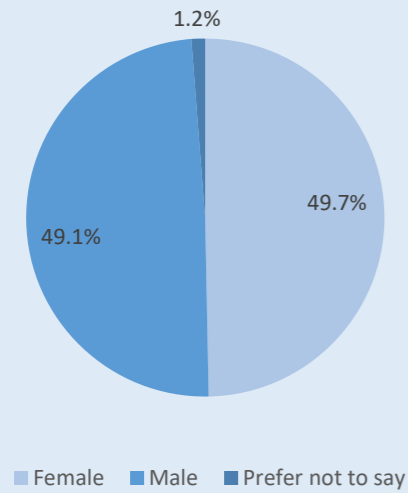
Njora Hungi, UNESCO-IICBA

Florence W. Kamongo, University of Kabianga

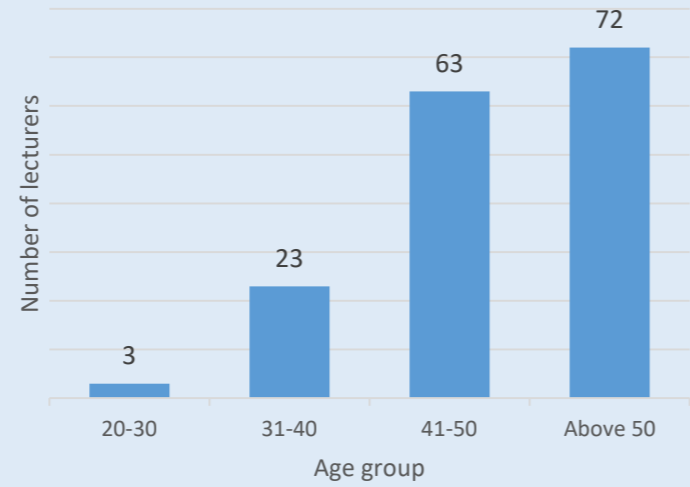
Waweru Muriithi, Bomet University College

**Background information (n=161)**

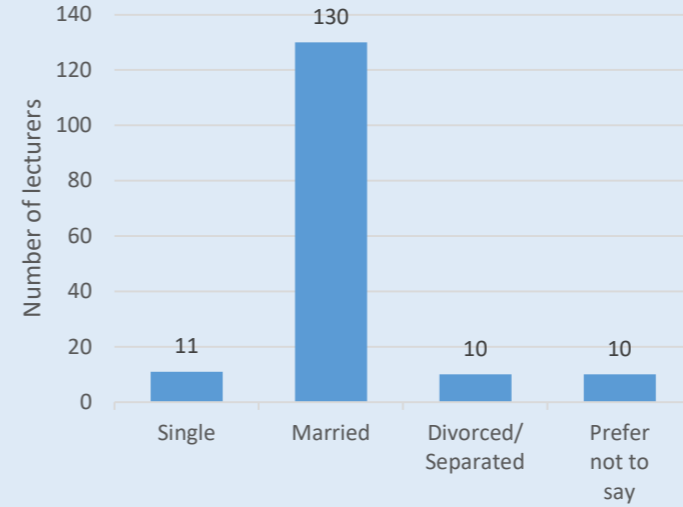
1). What is your sex?



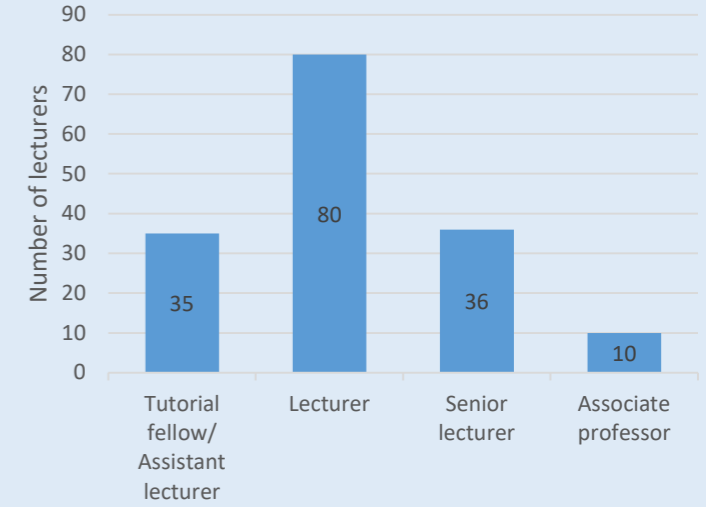
2). What is your age in years?



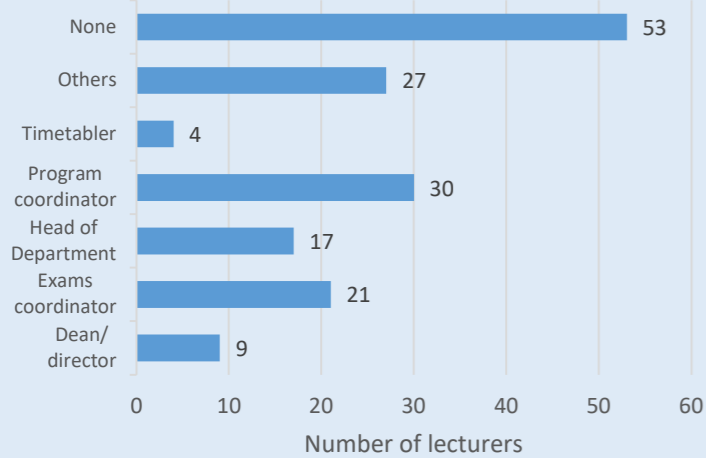
3). What is your marital status?



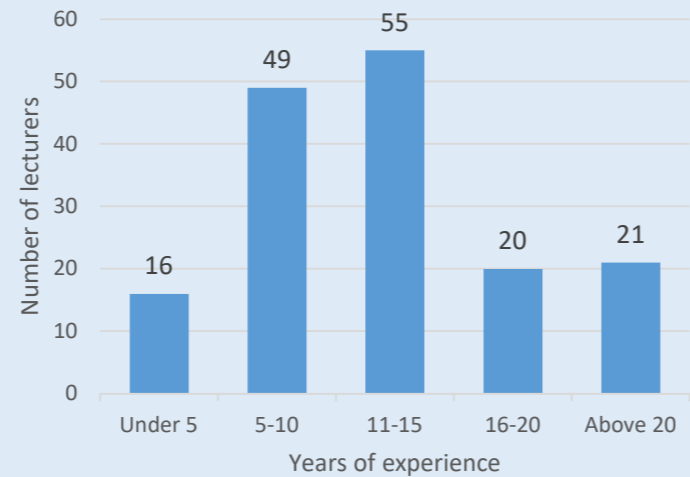
4). What is your employment level?



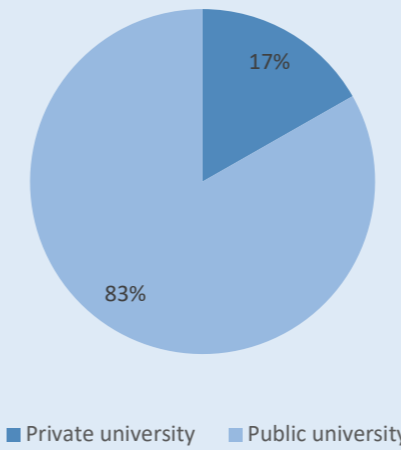
5). What ADDITIONAL responsibility do you hold in your university?



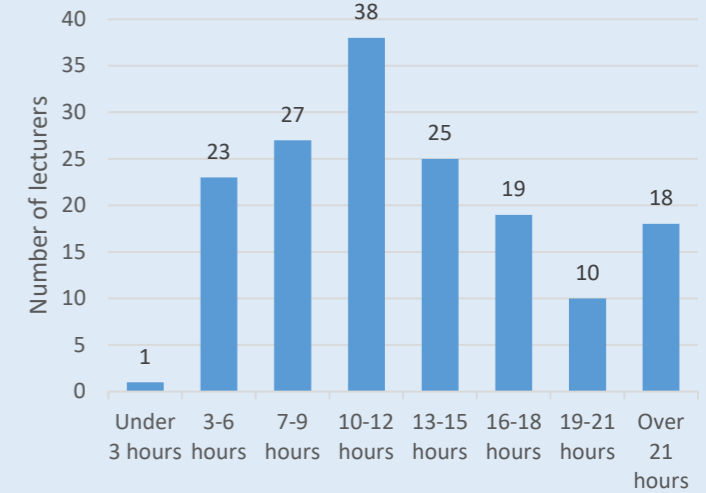
6). How many years of experience do you have teaching at university level?



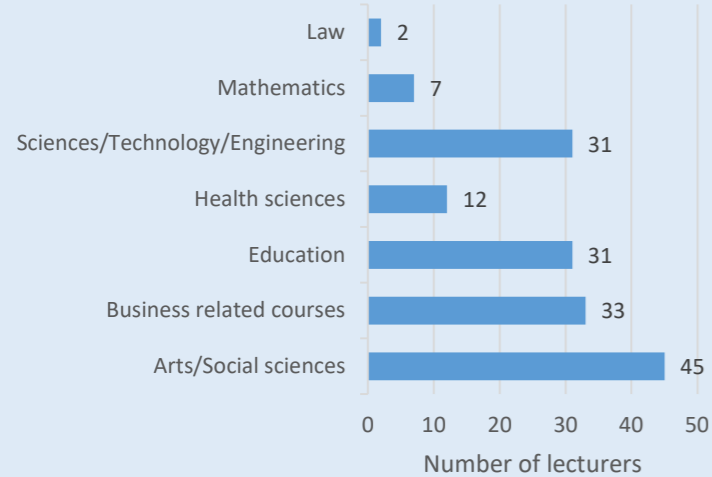
7). Please indicate if your university is classified as a public or a private university



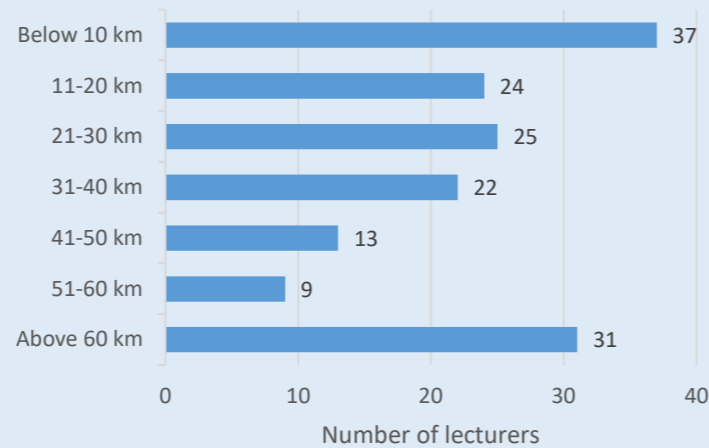
8). How many hours per week are you currently teaching?



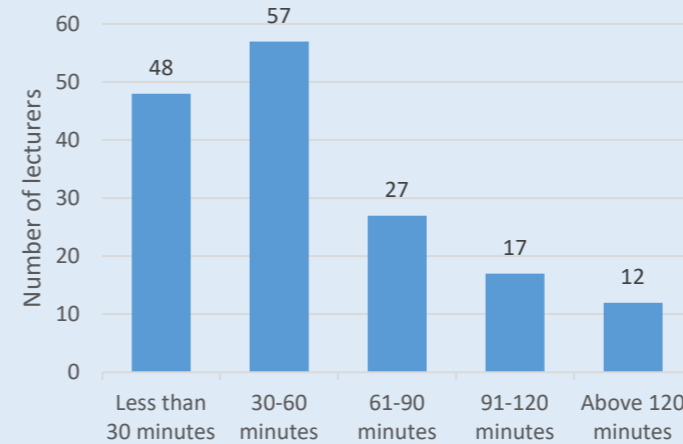
9). What is your teaching subject area?



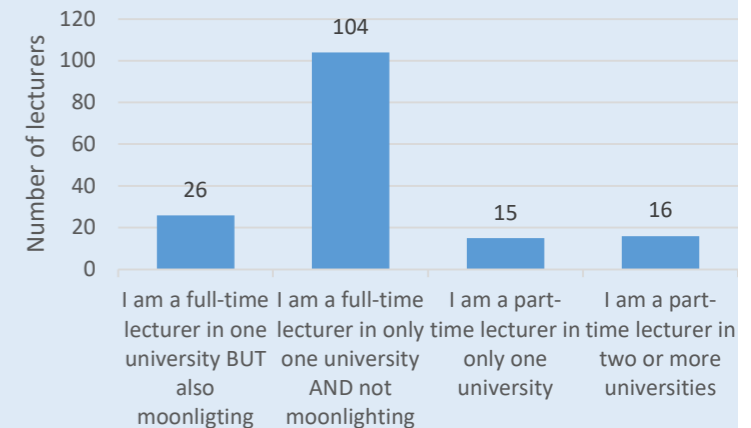
10). About how far is your home from your university in kilometres?



11). How long does it take you to travel from your place of usual residence to your university during a working week?

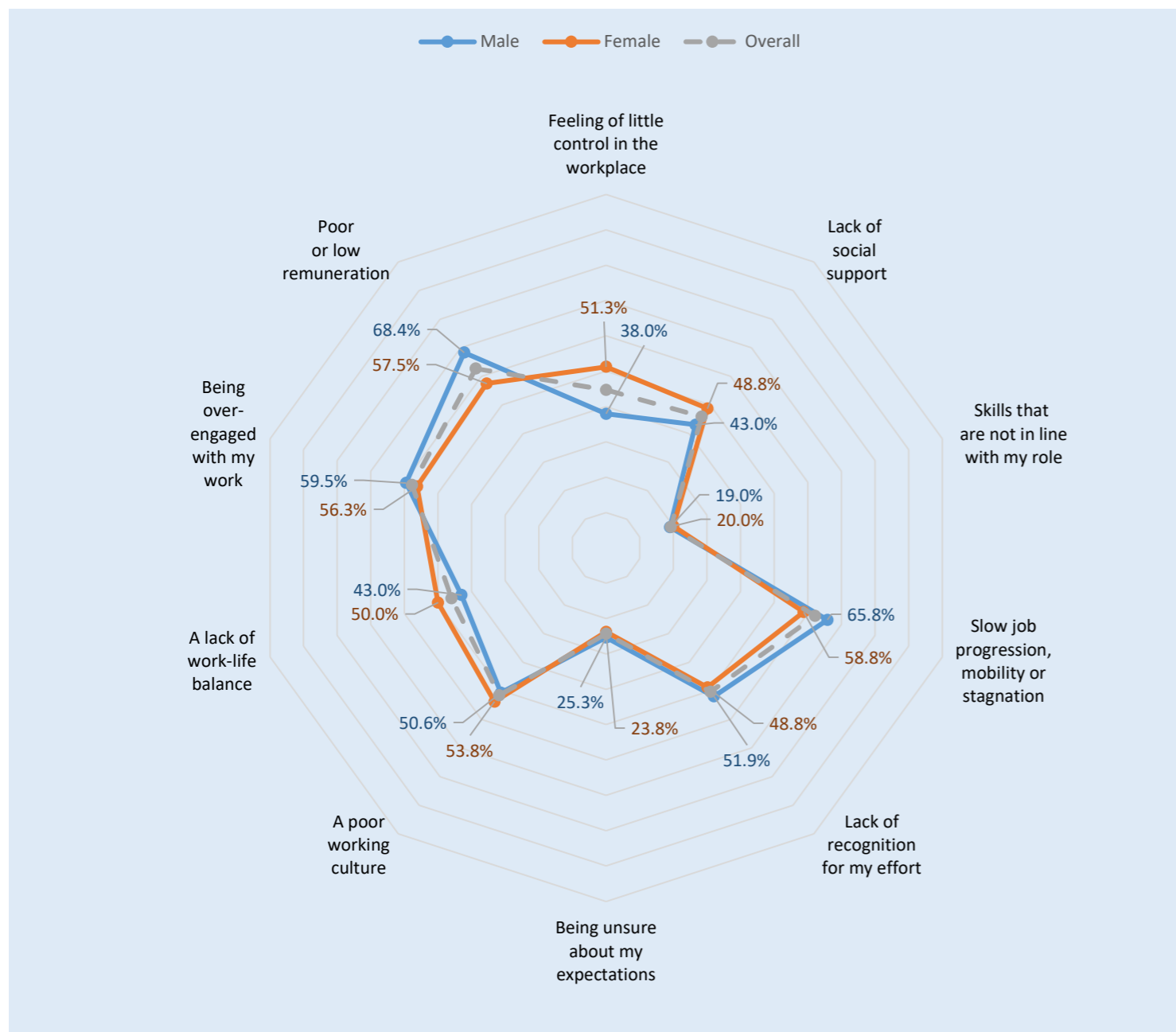


12). Please select the option that best describes your current work arrangement

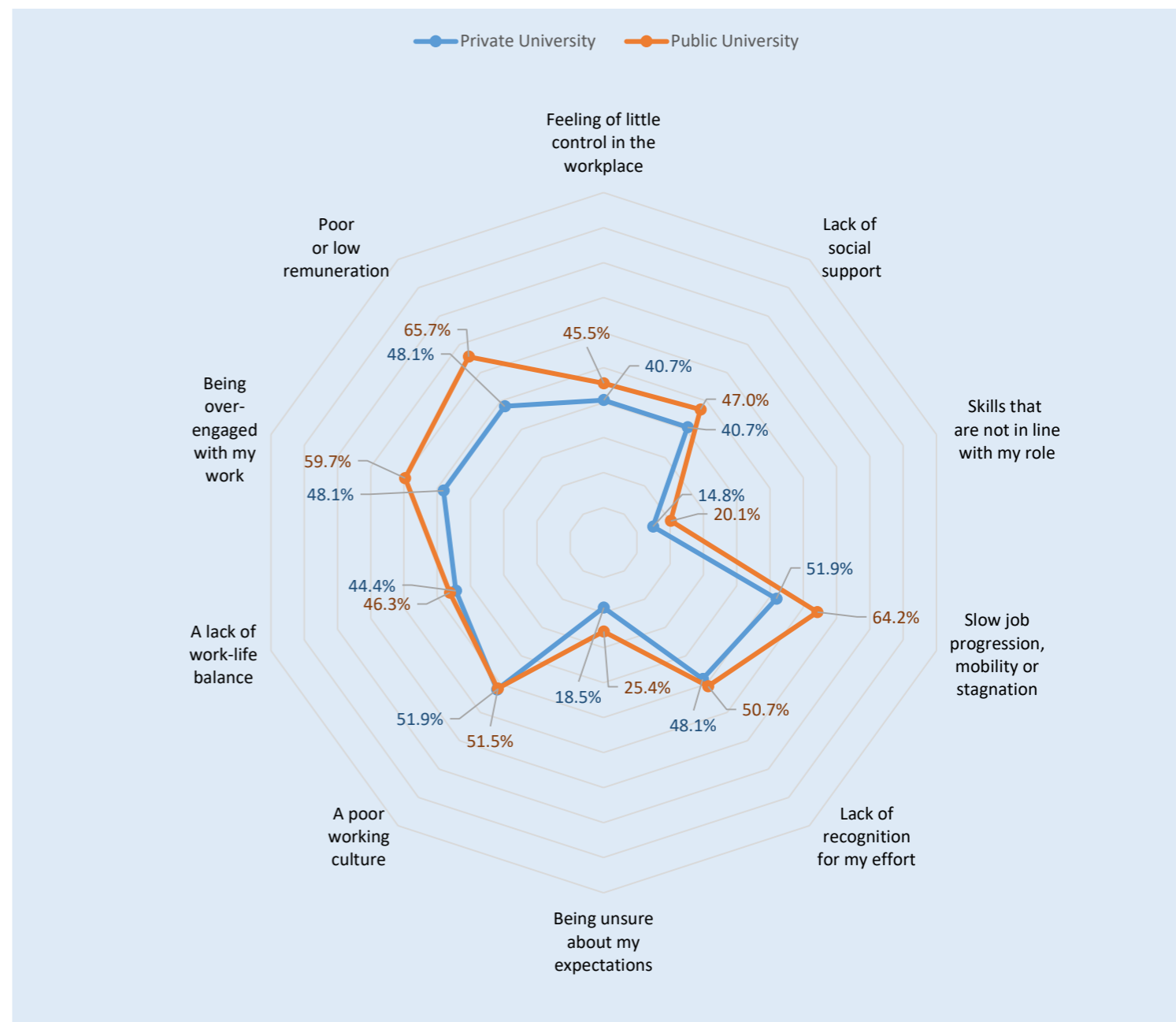


**A** How often do you encounter the following work-related issues as a university lecturer?

Percentages of lecturers reporting encountering selected work-related issues “Most of the time” or “All the time”



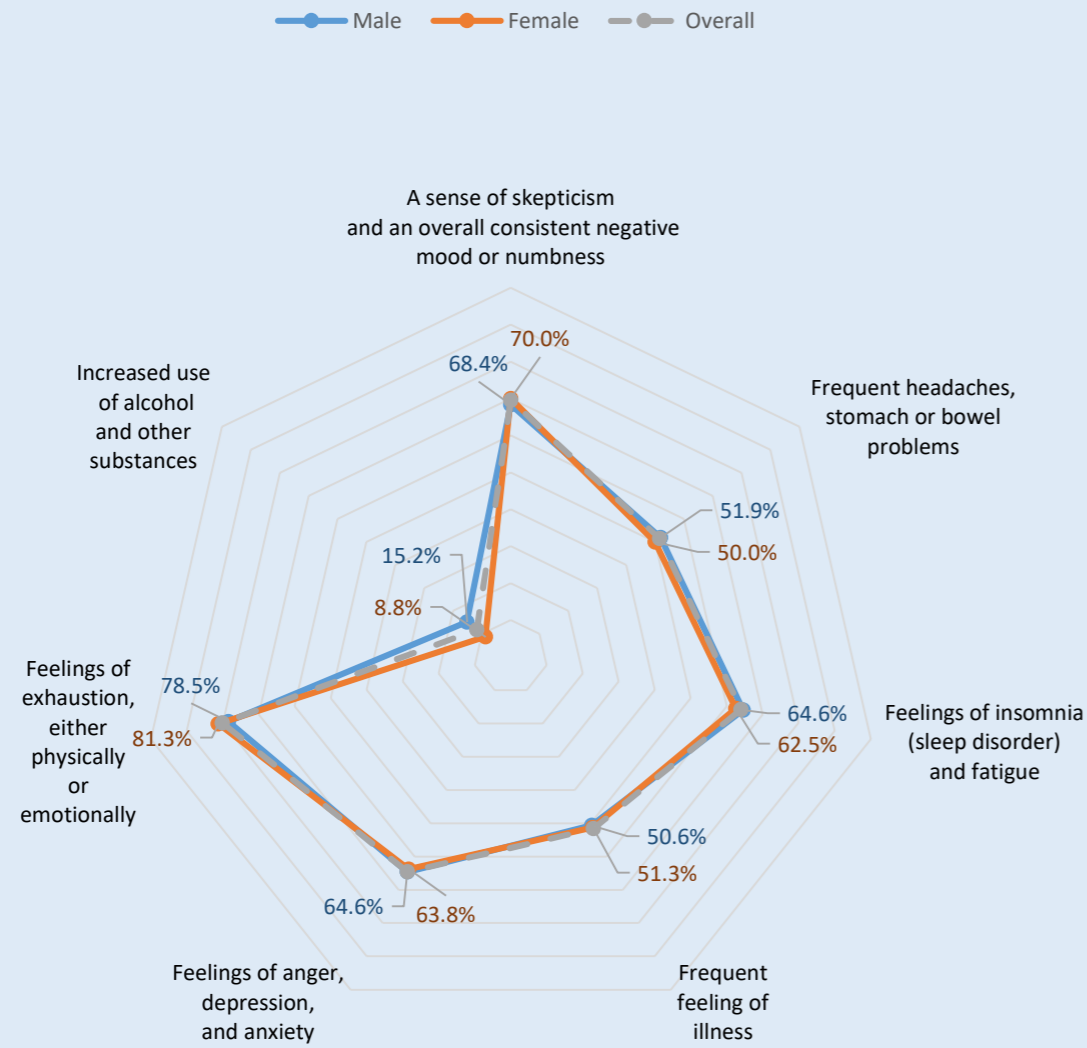
Lecturers reported encountering **low remuneration** and **slow job progression** more often than the other work-related issues. Nevertheless, the perception of **low remuneration** was notably higher among males (68.4%) than among females (57.5%), while the reverse was the case for **feeling of little control in the workplace** (males, 38.0%; females, 51.3%)



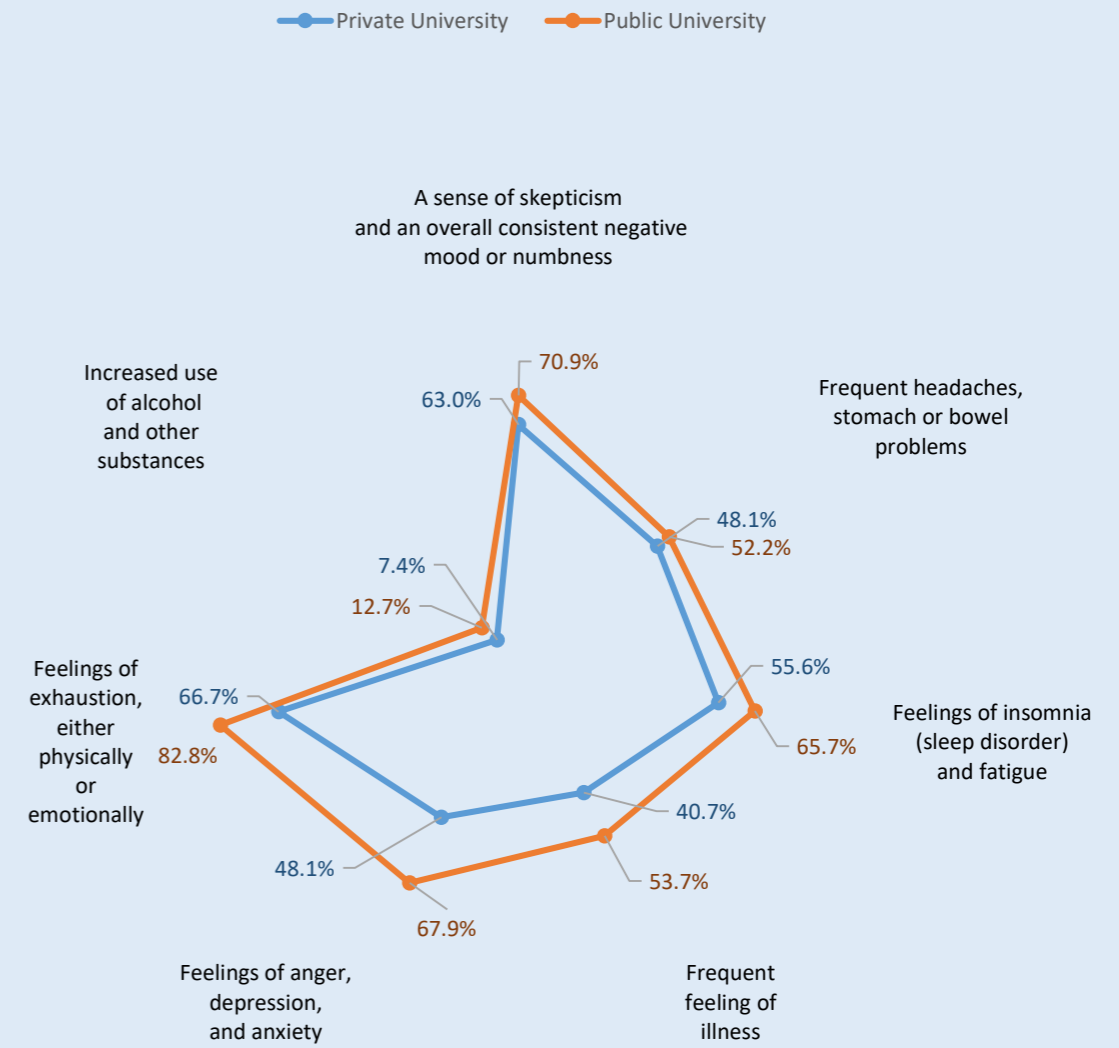
In general, lecturers in private universities reported encountering the selected work-related issues slightly less often than their colleagues in public university - and more so on issues related to **low remuneration**, **slow job progression**, and **being over-engagement with work**

**B** What level of importance do you associate with the following burnout effects on your professional output as a university lecturer?

Percentages of lecturers associating the level of importance of selected burnout effects on their professional output as “Medium”, “High” or “Very high”

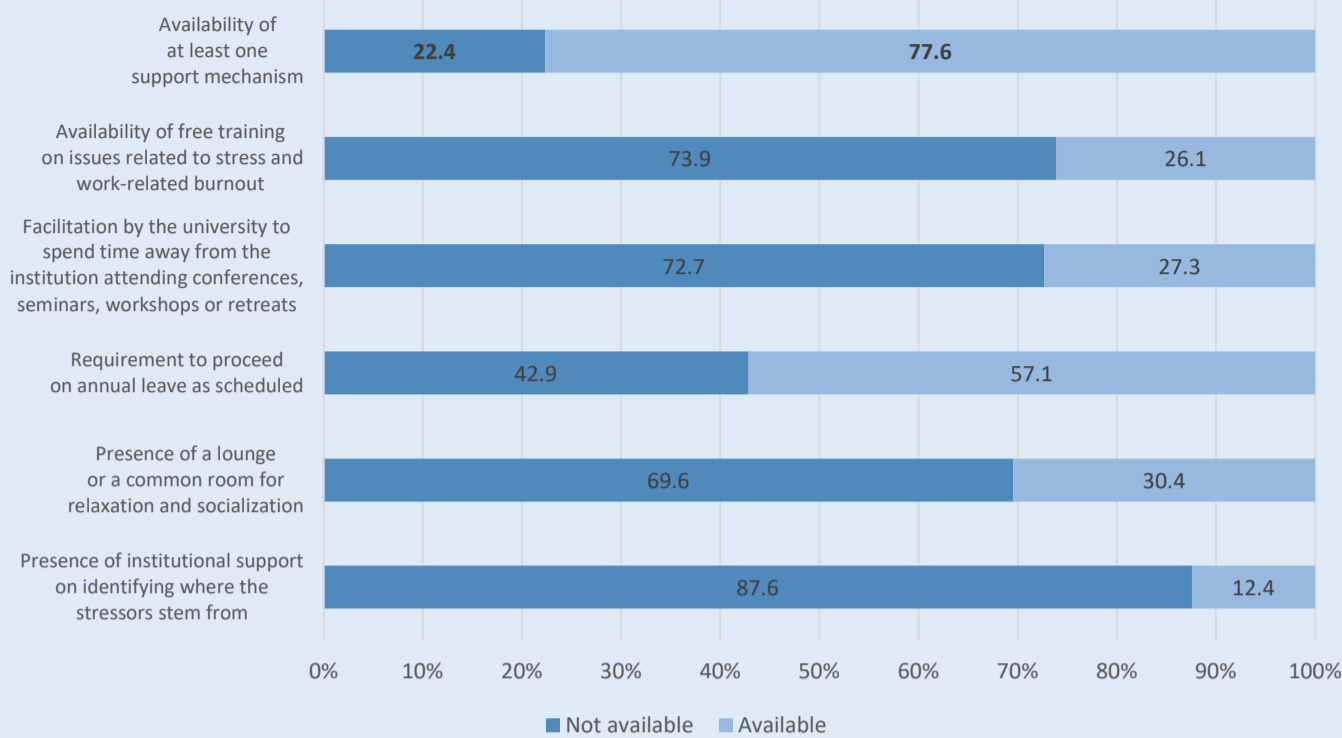


The effect of burnout associated with highest importance by lecturers (both males and females) on their professional outputs was **feeling of exhaustion** (either physically or emotionally) followed by **a sense of skepticism**



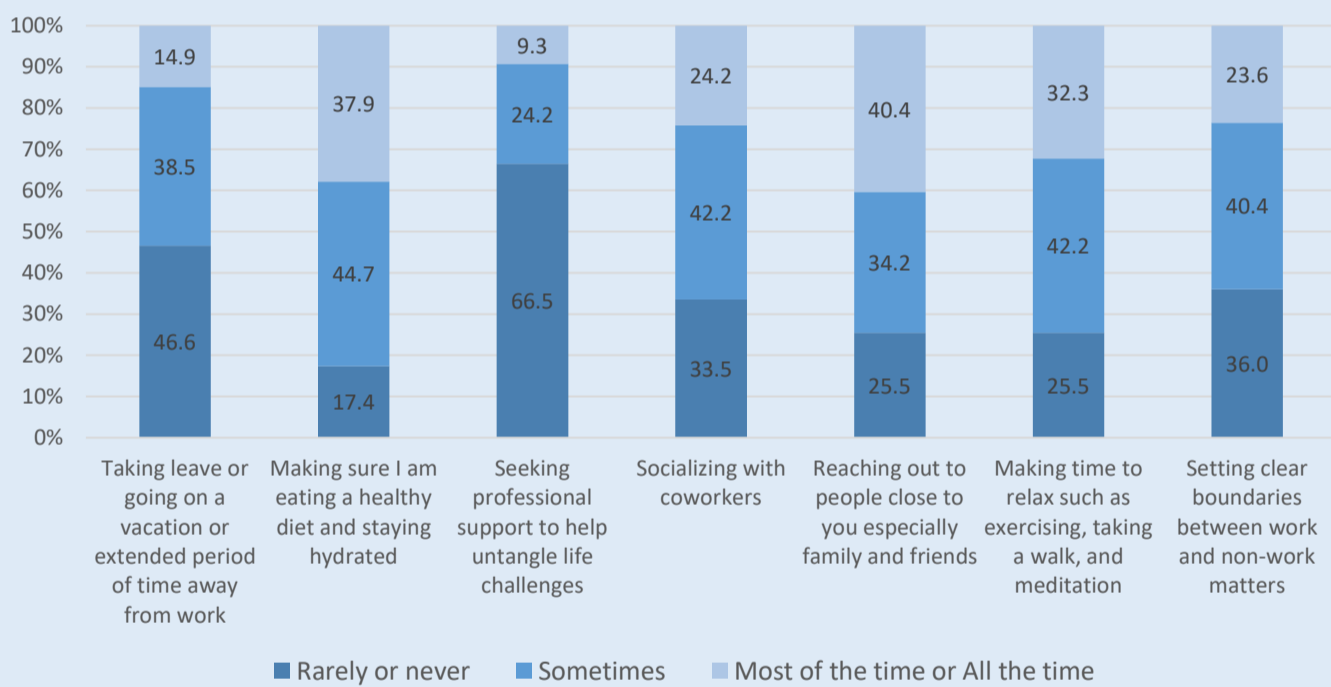
Compared to their counterparts in public universities, lecturers in private universities consistently perceived burnout effects to be of lower importance on their professional outputs

### C What support mechanisms are available in your institution to support lecturers deal with work-related burnout?



Only about one-quarter (26.1%) of the lecturers involved in this study reported **Availability of free training on issues related to stress and work-related burnout** in their institutions

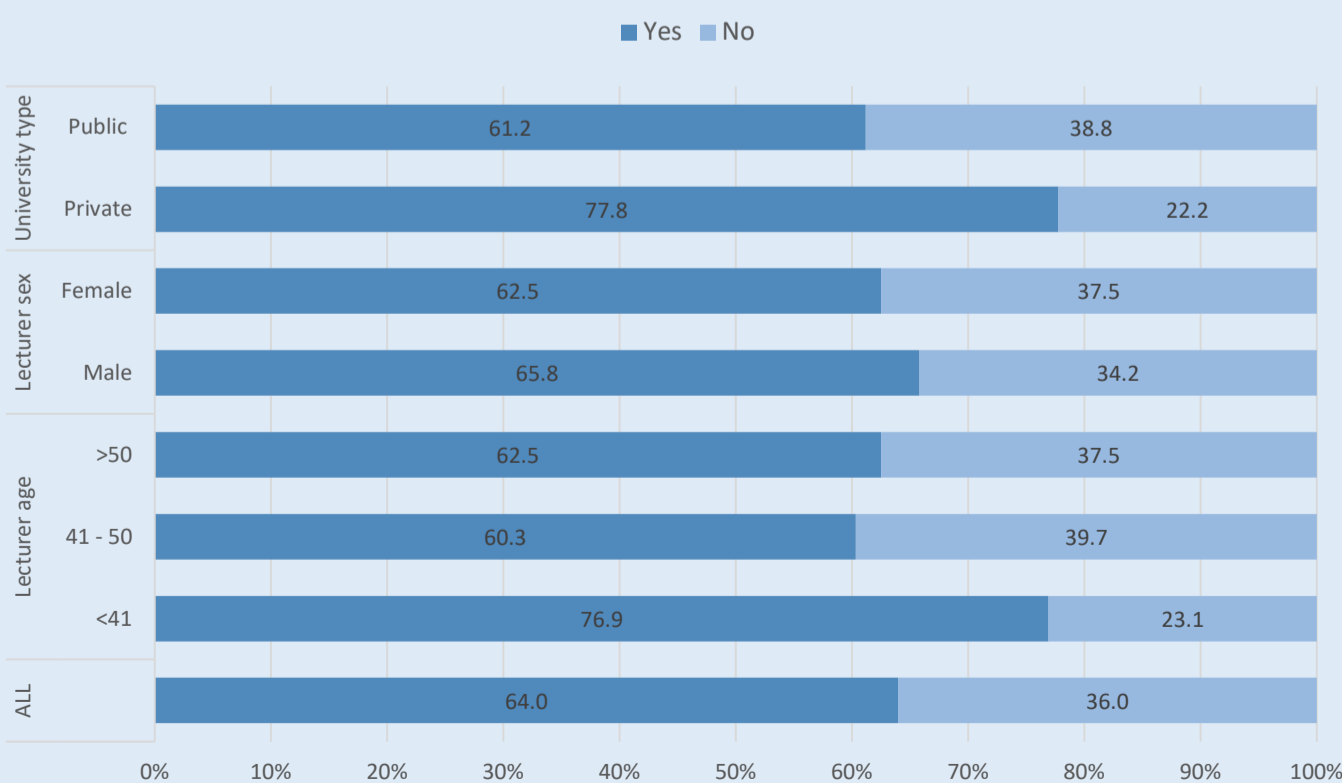
### D On a personal level, how often do you apply the following mechanisms to avoid work-related burnout?



About one in every ten (40.4%) of the lecturers said they **reached out to people close to them especially family and friends** "Most of the time" or "All the time" as a mechanism of avoiding work-related burnout at a personal level

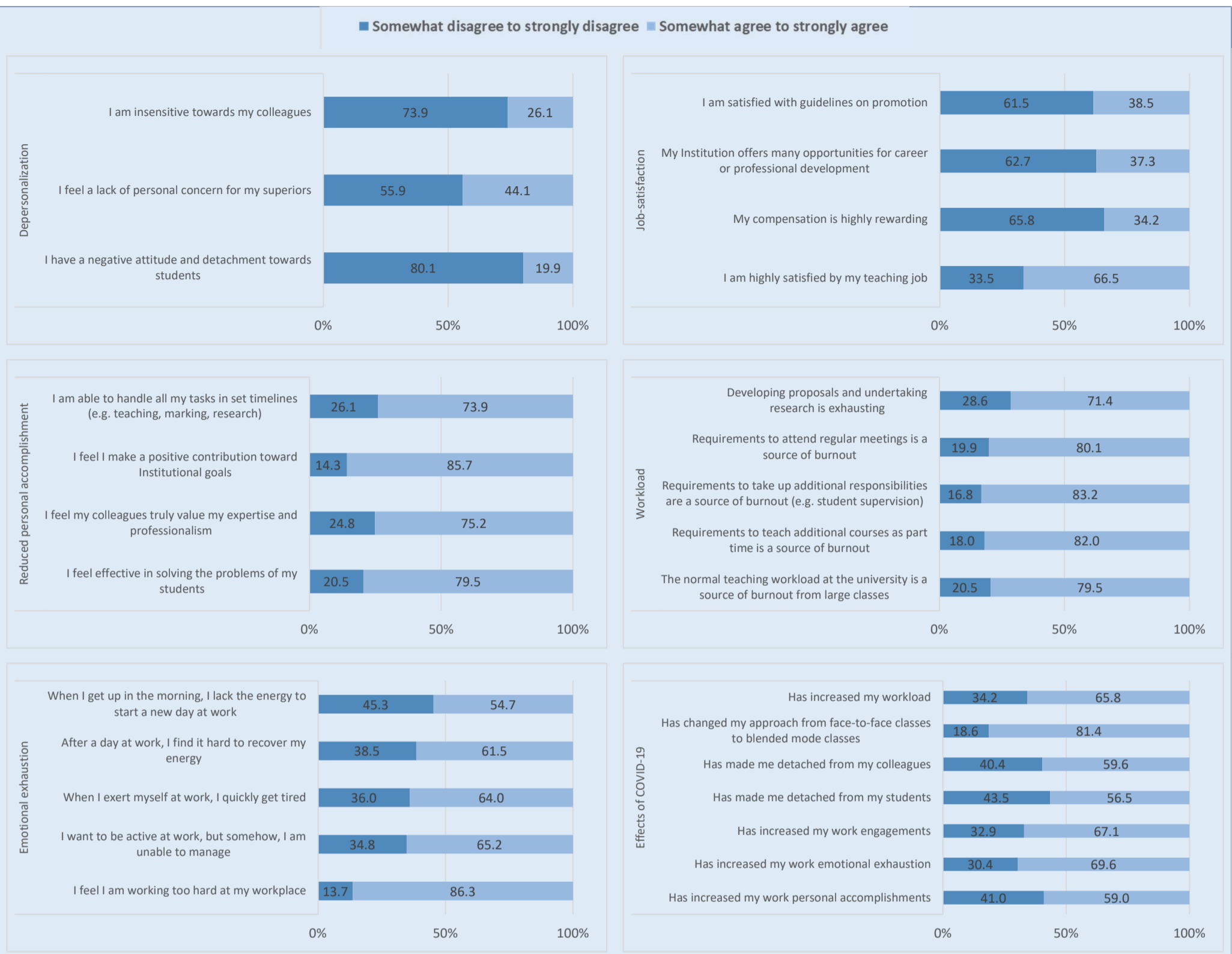
On the other hand, about two-thirds of the lecturers (66.5%) said they **never or rarely sought professional support to help them untangle life challenges**

Percentages of lecturers reporting to apply at least one mechanism to avoid work-related burnout 'Most of the time' or 'All the time' at a personal level



Only about two-thirds (64.0%) of the lecturers said they employ at least one mechanism at a personal level to avoid work-related burnout – but these levels were better in private universities (77.8%) and among lecturers below 41 years in age

**E1** The following statements describe feelings and perceptions about the experience of being a lecturer. Please rate how much you agree or disagree with each statement



**Note:** Statements were adopted from various tools such as Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach & Jackson, 1986), Bergen Burnout Inventory (BBI) among others

**Box 2: Computation of outcome variables**

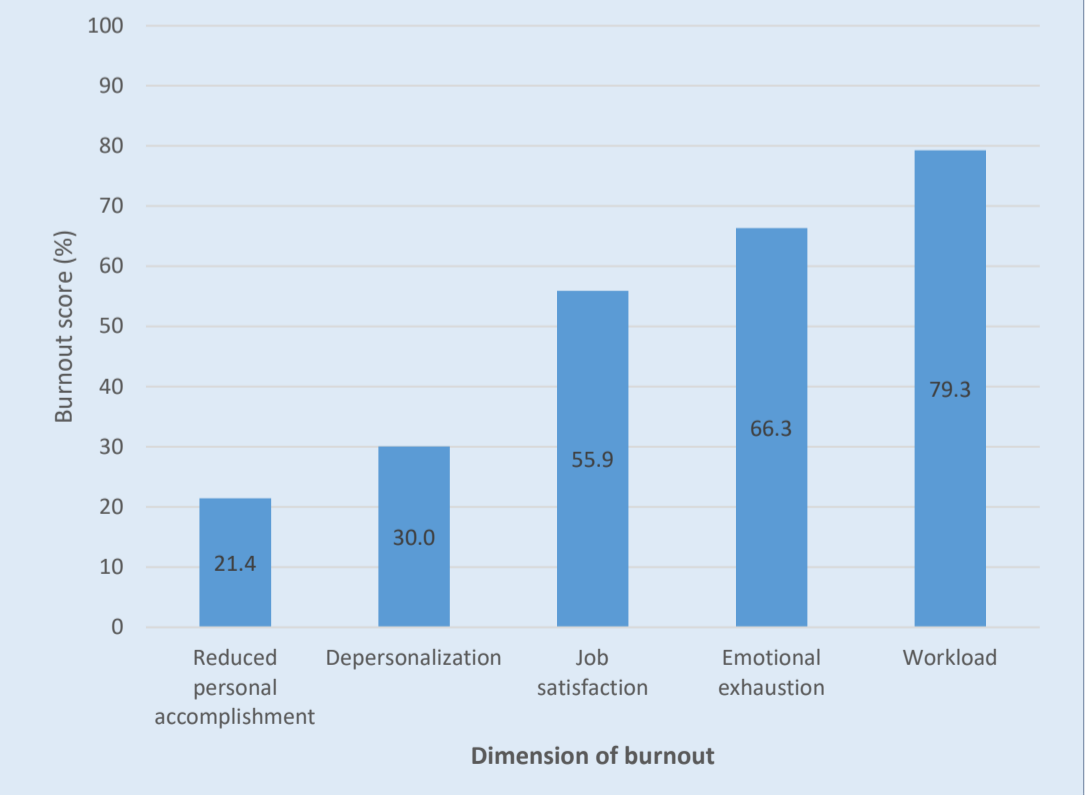
The outcome variables denoting the FIVE burnout dimensions of interest in this study (namely Depersonalization, Reduced personal accomplishment, Emotional exhaustion, Job satisfaction, and Workload) were derived from lecturers' rating of their level of agreement with the statements under each dimension (see information under E1 above).

Lecturers who rated their agreement level with a particular statement as "somewhat agree" through to "strongly agree", their data were put under the same category – and coded as "1", while lecturers who rated their levels with a particular statement as "somewhat disagree" through to "strongly disagree", their data were put under the alternative category – and coded as "0". Reverse coding was carried out for the negatively framed statements.

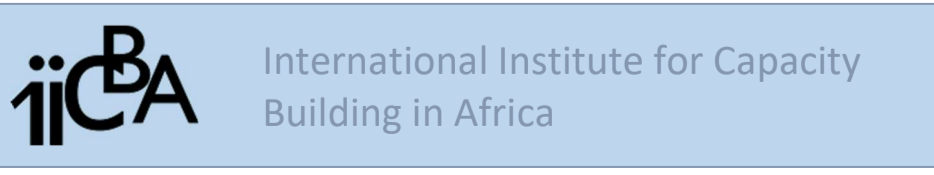
Thereafter, for each of the five burnout dimensions, lecturer scores on each of the statements under that dimension were added-up to compute a total score, and then a percentage score.

Thus, based on this procedure, the scores on a particular dimension, generally indicate the average level of agreement with the statements in that dimension.

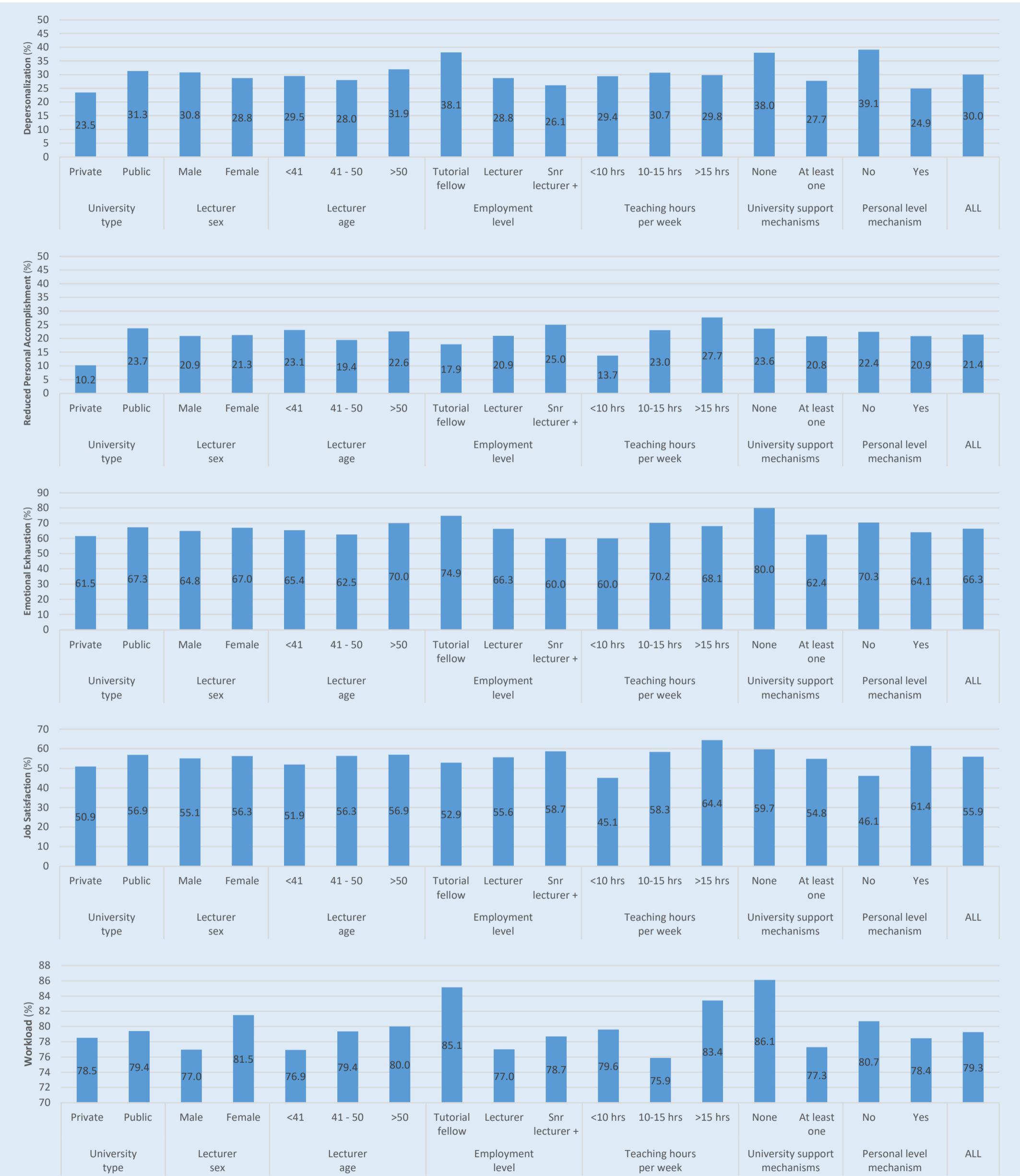
**E2** Burnout levels across various dimensions



A vast majority of the lecturers were experiencing work-related burnout in regard to **Workload** and **Emotional exhaustion** dimensions



### E3 Burnout levels across various subgroups of lecturers



In general, work-related burnout levels were consistently lower among lecturers in private universities than among their colleagues in public universities – and more so on the dimension of **Depersonalization** and **Reduced personal accomplishment**. However, burnout levels did not vary much across male and female lecturers. Encouragingly, availability of at least one **support mechanism at the university** or application of at least one **mechanism at personal level** seemed to be associated with lower burnout levels than otherwise.

