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**The city of Berdyansk was occupied on the third day of the war. Due to the occupation, the university was relocated to Zaporizhzhia. We lost all the buildings and the material-technical base.**

**Now we are a University without walls**

**Our university community is scattered around the world**

**But the university is not just about buildings; University is about people**

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CORRESPONDENCE | 14 February 2023

## Universities without walls: global trend v. Ukraine's reality

[Yana Sychikova](#) & [Natalia Trybuliak](#)



Many of Ukraine's universities exist today only in virtual format – as 'universities without walls'. This metaphor represents the grim reality of institutions destroyed since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022. However, these virtual universities are devoid of the freedom and support of the popular global University Without Walls concept, which also offers degree programmes outside conventional classrooms (see [go.nature.com/3l8kvym](http://go.nature.com/3l8kvym)).

Abroad



In Ukraine



# Burnout of Ukrainian Academic Staff during the war: gender aspect

Yana Suchikova, Natalia Tsybuliak, Hanna Lopatina, Anastasia Popova, Serhii Kovachov

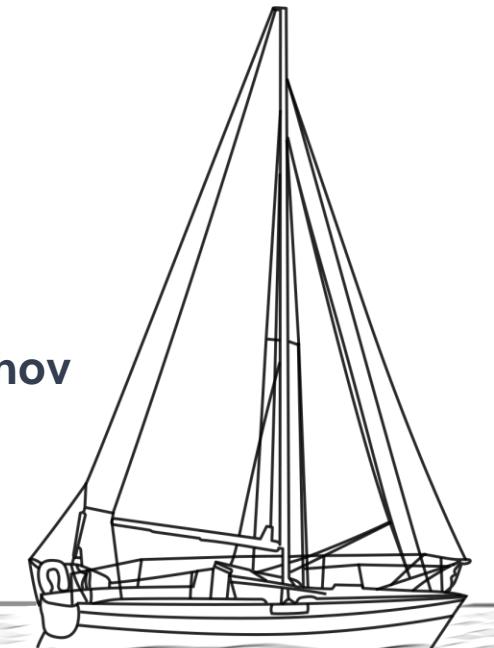
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# Introduction



- **Burnout** is recognized as a typical professional hazard in various people-centric professions<sup>1,2</sup>.
- Professionals in the education sector are particularly vulnerable to an **increased risk of burnout**, as teaching inherently involves demanding working conditions<sup>3</sup>.
- According to Karasek's theory, teaching is classified as a stressful profession<sup>4,5</sup>.
- A significant proportion of academic staff rate their work as the primary source of stress<sup>6,7</sup>.

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# Introduction

**The educational landscape is characterized by:**

professional competition

societal expectations

managing relationships

securing grant funding

institutional modifications

substantial workloads

publication pressure

demands

teaching–research conflict



**Collectively, these factors serve as catalysts for chronic stress among academic staff.**

# Motivation

Crisis events significantly affect the mental health of academic staff and increase burnout.

During the COVID-19 a new kind of fatigue appeared, called "[online fatigue](#)".



Currently, we are witnessing the most extensive military conflict in Central Europe since 1945, instigated by the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

The influence of **war** is an additional factor in causing burnout



There is a lack of research examining the impact of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict on the mental health of academic staff.

# Motivation

*Ukrainian academic staff are brave in trying to hold their educational and scientific front.*

## **'We are unbroken.' A Ukrainian academic's perseverance in a year of war**

23 FEB 2023 • 2:00 PM ET • BY [YANA SUCHIKOVA](#)



**Today, the professional activity of a Ukrainian academic staff depends on:**

- the map of active hostilities,
- missile attacks,
- air raid alerts,
- the availability of electricity,
- the stability of the Internet.

**It is crucial to investigate the condition and dynamics of burnout experienced in a state of unremitting chronic stress caused by both the conventional challenges faced by academic staff and additional factors induced by warfare**

# Theoretical framework

## What is Burnout?

Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when you feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands.

## Predictors of Burnout According to the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Study (MBI-HSS):



### 1. Emotional Exhaustion

Feeling drained, **lacking energy**, unable to provide any more of oneself emotionally

### 2. Depersonalization

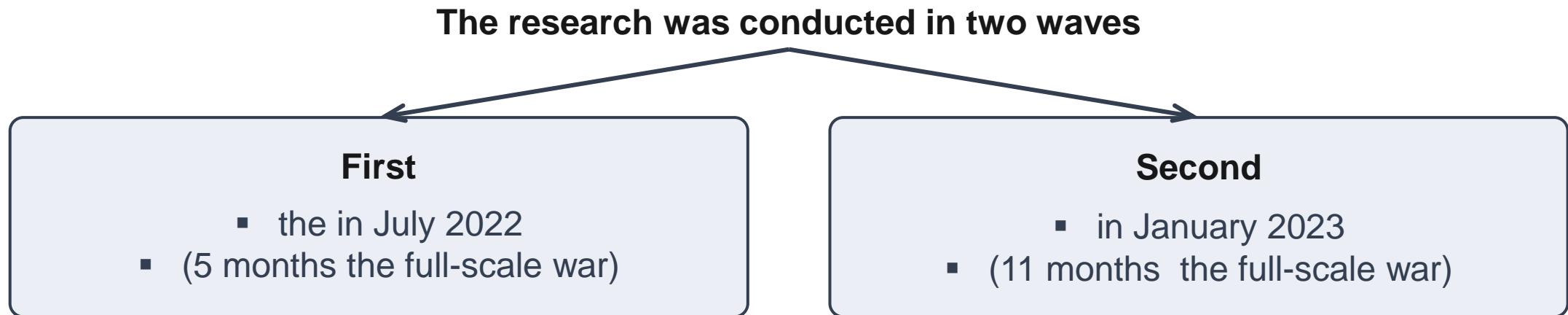
Developing a **cynical** and detached **attitude** towards one's work and the people

### 3. Reduced Personal Accomplishment

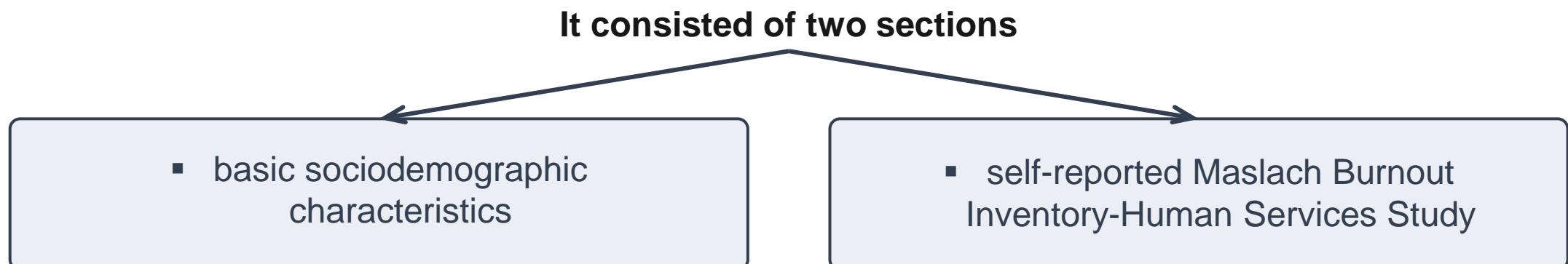
Feeling a sense of **ineffectiveness** and a lack of accomplishment and productivity at work

# Methods

This study is a cross-sectional analytical research.



The online survey was a self-administered questionnaire that took 10 to 12 minutes to complete.



# Participants

836 academic staff members participated in the first wave of evaluation, whereas 228 participated in the second wave.

Variable	Subcategory	1st wave		2nd wave	
		%	N	%	N
Age	Under 35	15	127	15	35
	35–50 years	45	379	37	84
	51–60 years	33	275	42	95
	61 older	7	55	6	14
Gender	Male	20	171	14	31
	Female	80	665	86	197
Scientific degree	Doctor of science	18	152	18	42
	PhD degree	64	536	67	152
	Magister degree	18	148	15	34
Academic position	Professor	18	147	18	41
	Associate professor	55	464	61	139
	Senior lecturer	18	148	15	34
	Assistant	9	77	6	14
Change of permanent residence	Internal military migrants	24	199	22	50
	External military migrants	13	111	11	24
	Remained in the places of permanent residence	63	526	68	154
Currently University location	Remained at a permanent location	79	659	77	176
	Temporarily relocated to the Ukraine-controlled territory	21	177	23	52

# *Burnout dynamic*

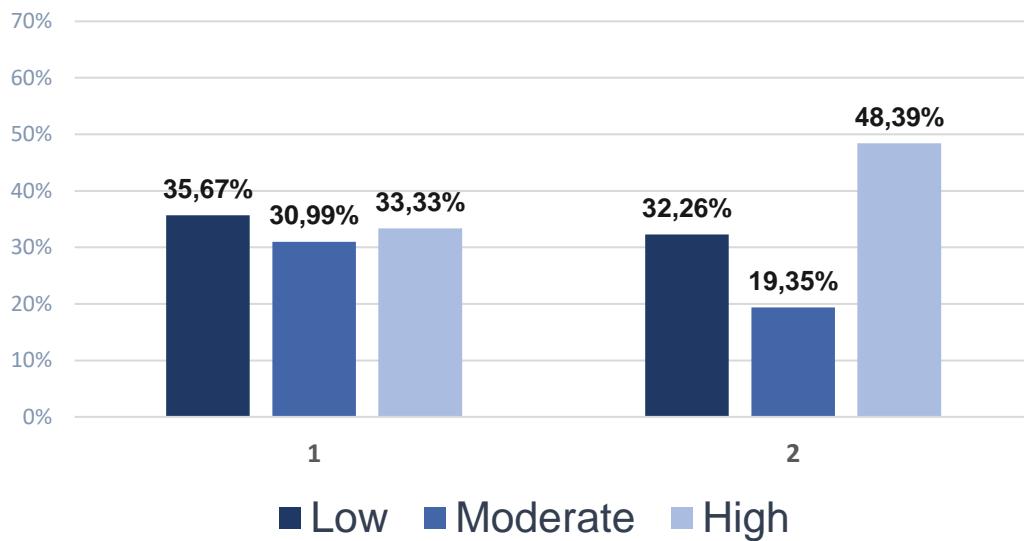


# Emotional Exhaustion

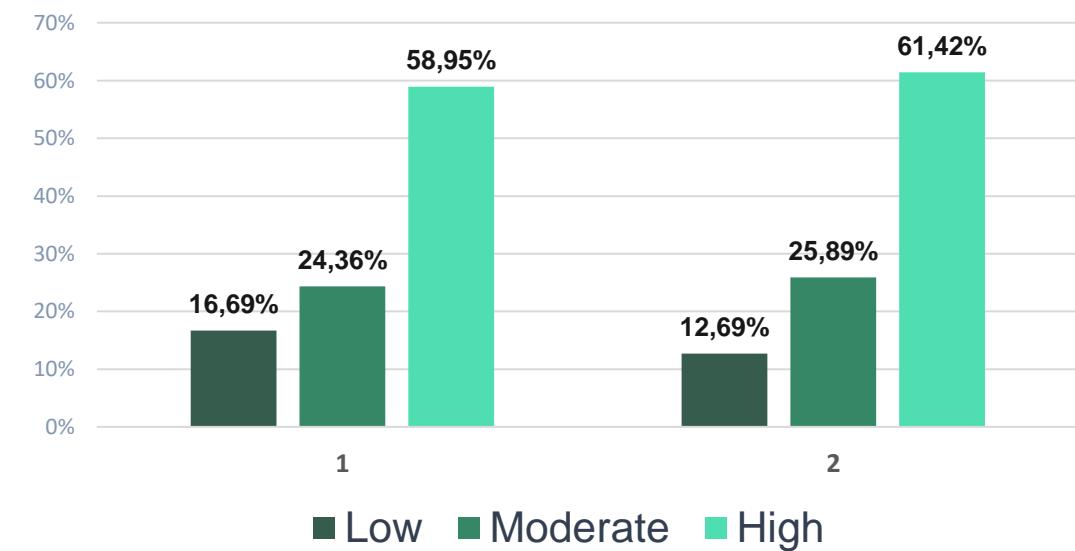
The proportion of individuals experiencing high levels of emotional exhaustion increased **for both men and women**.

- Specifically, for **men**, the percentage of academic staff experiencing high levels of emotional exhaustion rose from **33.33%** in July to **48.39%** in December.
- Similarly, for **women**, this percentage increased slightly from **58.95%** to **61.42%**

## Men



## Women



# Emotional Exhaustion

Increased Emotional Exhaustion: Both surveys show a **significant rise in emotional exhaustion among all staff**, highlighting the intense emotional strain during wartime.

Burnout predictor	Gender	Wave	Age		Scientific degree		Academic position		Change of permanent residence		Currently University location	
			Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Asymp. Sig.	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Asymp. Sig.	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Asymp. Sig.	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Asymp. Sig.	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Asymp. Sig.
EE	Men	1	8.056	0.018	0.343	0.843	1.77	0.413	1.14	0.565	1.406	0.495
		2	1.114	0.573	2.612	0.271	4.779	0.092	3.244	0.197	1.067	0.587
	Women	1	1.446	0.485	0.177	0.915	0.43	0.807	13.33	0.001	0.519	0.771
		2	0.518	0.772	5.639	0.06	5.944	0.051	1.522	0.467	0.633	0.729

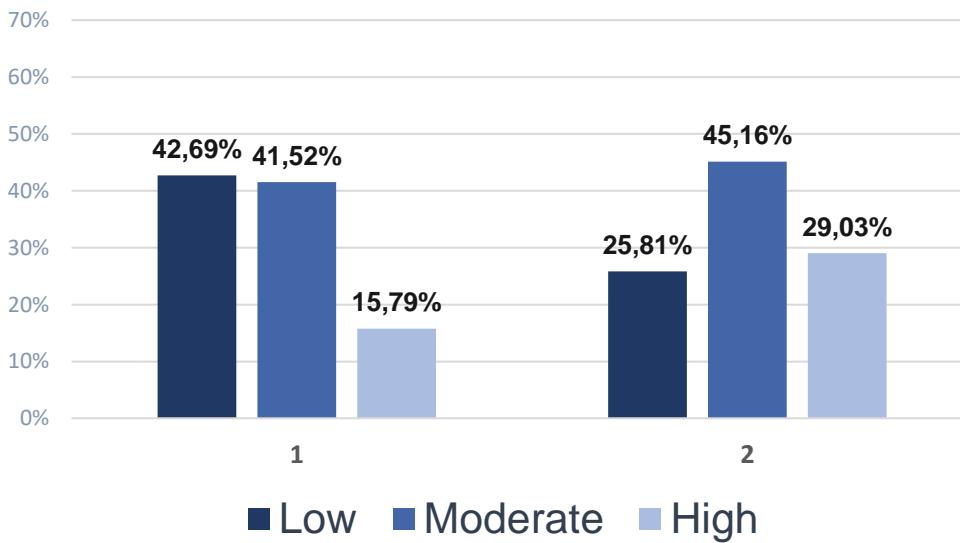
- **Gender Differences:**
  - **Female Staff:** Higher levels of emotional exhaustion were noted in both surveys.
  - **Male Staff:** There is a notable increase in emotional exhaustion over one year of conflict, suggesting a delayed reaction compared to female staff.
- **Age Factor in Men:** The impact of age on emotional exhaustion decreases over time during continuous wartime stress.

# Depersonalization

There was also a significant increase in the percentage of individuals experiencing high levels of depersonalization **for both genders**.

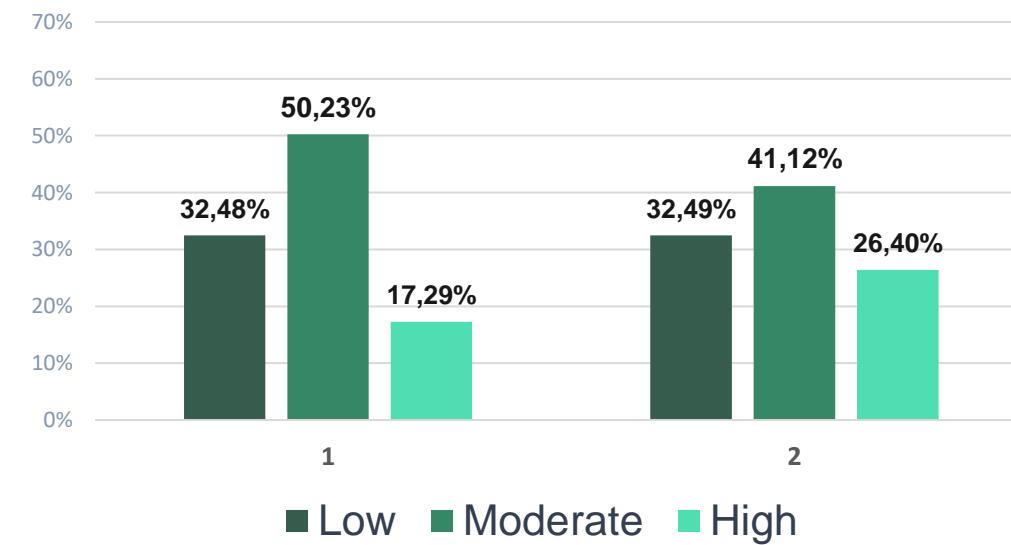
Among **men**, the percentage of academic staff exhibiting high levels of depersonalization increased from **15.79%** in July to **29.03%** in December.

## Men



**Women** also showed an increase from **17.29%** to **26.40%**.

## Women



# Depersonalization

The results of the study demonstrate that prolonged stress related to the ongoing war and increased workload leads to significant depersonalization dynamics among academic staff of **both genders**

Burnout predictor	Gender	Wave	Age		Scientific degree		Academic position		Change of permanent residence		Currently University location	
			Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Asymp. Sig.	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Asymp. Sig.	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Asymp. Sig.	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Asymp. Sig.	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Asymp. Sig.
DP	Men	1	8.473	0.014	0.001	0.999	0.342	0.843	0.953	0.621	1.354	0.508
		2	1.539	0.463	4.565	0.102	5.833	0.054	1.651	0.438	1.601	0.449
	Women	1	2.689	0.261	2.992	0.224	2.162	0.339	12.856	0.002	2.088	0.352
		2	1.394	0.498	4.796	0.091	3.957	0.138	2.512	0.285	3.813	0.149

## Male Academic Staff:

- **First Survey:** Age is correlated with higher depersonalization.
- **Second Survey:** Age becomes an insignificant factor; instead, academic position is significant in influencing depersonalization.

## Female Academic Staff:

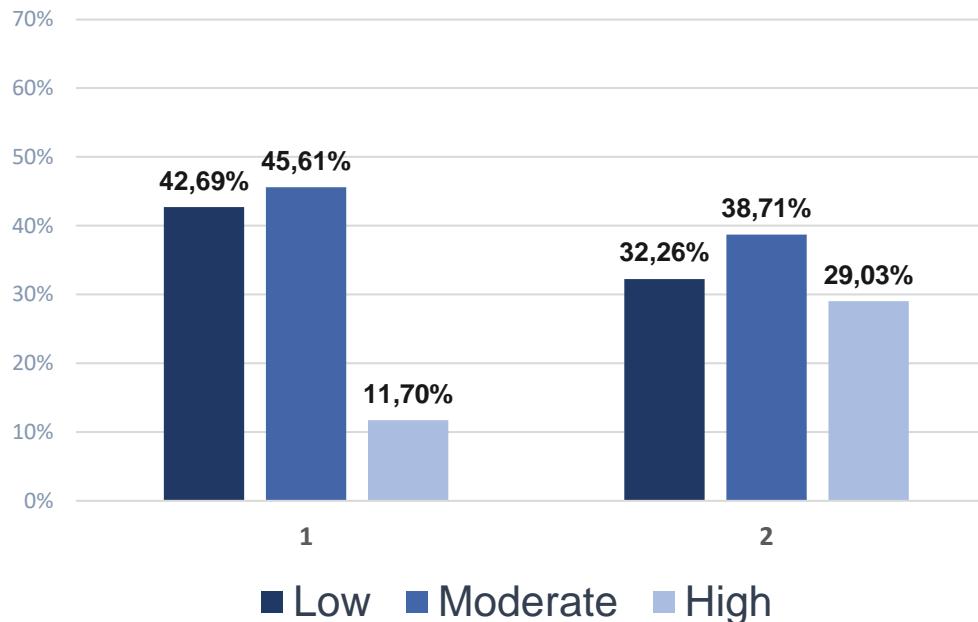
- **First Survey:** University relocation to territories controlled by Ukraine influences feelings of depersonalization.
- **Second Survey:** No correlation between depersonalization and factors such as age, academic position, scientific degree, or migration processes. Women consistently report feelings of alienation, cynicism, and detachment from their professional activities throughout the war.

# Reduced Personal Accomplishment

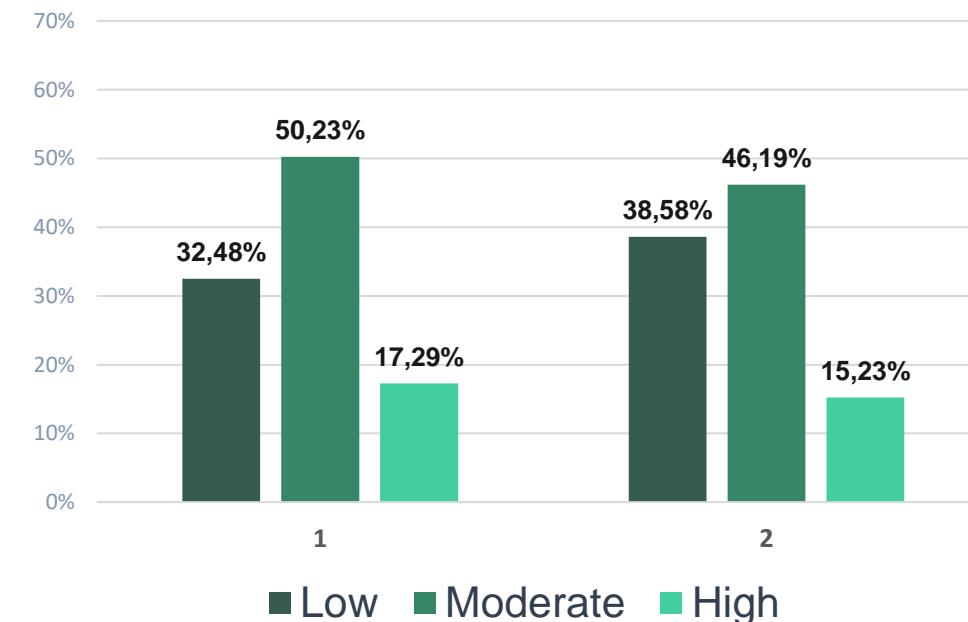
Concerning **personal accomplishments**, there was a decrease in the percentage of individuals with high levels **for both sexes**.

- For **men**, the percentage of those with low levels of personal achievement decreased from **42.69%** to **32.26%**.
- However, among **women**, there was an increase in indicators of low levels of this predictor, from **32.48%** to **38.58%**

## Men



## Women



# Reduced Personal Accomplishment

The research results indicate that **female** academic staff experience a reduction in accomplishment during the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Burnout predictor	Gender	Wave	Age		Scientific degree		Academic position		Change of permanent residence		Currently University location	
			Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Asymp. Sig.	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Asymp. Sig.	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Asymp. Sig.	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Asymp. Sig.	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	Asymp. Sig.
PA	Men	1	1.959	0.375	0.273	0.872	2.645	0.266	1.008	0.604	0.759	0.684
		2	2.791	0.248	4.445	0.108	2.268	0.322	0.538	0.764	0.55	0.76
	Women	1	2.682	0.262	2.271	0.321	7.473	0.024	1.818	0.403	0.475	0.789
		2	1.81	0.405	4.868	0.088	5.278	0.071	9.811	0.007	7.762	0.021

## Initial Findings:

- **First Survey:** Academic position significantly influences perceptions of personal accomplishment among **female** educators.

## Changes Over Time:

- **Six Months Into War:** Academic position no longer a significant factor.
- **New Significant Factors:** University relocation and migration processes now significantly shape perceptions of effectiveness and accomplishment among **female** staff.

# Dynamics of Burnout Factors Among Ukrainian Academic Staff During War

## Initial Impact on Male Educators:

- **Age:** Initially a significant factor for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.
- **Academic Degree:** Found to be an insignificant factor for burnout throughout the war.

## Changing Significance Over Time:

- As the war progresses, the impact of age on burnout dynamics decreases and becomes non-essential.

## Impact of Academic Position:

- **Female Staff:** Initially significant for accomplishment, later influences emotional exhaustion.
- **Male Staff:** Affects depersonalization dynamics, varies with the duration of the war.

## War-Related Influences:

- **University Relocation significantly impacts the** emotional exhaustion and depersonalization of female staff in the early months; later, it influences their perception of personal accomplishment.
- **Migration Processes:** Emerges as an essential factor as the war continues.

## Gender Sensitivity to War-Related Factors:

- Female staff show higher sensitivity to the influences of war-related factors, affecting various aspects of burnout.

The alarming levels of burnout detected among Ukrainian academic staff represent only the tip of the iceberg of the mental health problems caused by the war.



# Conclusion

These findings emphasize the need for further research on the impact of war on academic staff burnout and the development and implementation of appropriate support strategies and interventions. Burnout can have a negative impact on academic staff productivity and mental health, which ultimately affects the quality of education provided to students. Therefore, it is crucial to minimize this effect.

The alarming trend of burnout levels detected among Ukrainian academic staff highlights the need for prompt action at both the national and institutional levels to improve the mental health of academic staff. This is crucial for preserving human capital in the field of higher education during times of war and for postwar recovery. Further research can also help to identify the factors that increase or decrease the risk of burnout under these conditions, enabling the development of more targeted and effective interventions.



# Read more

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# THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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