Retirement Process in University Professors: Motivations and Challenges for the Future

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Abstract

The retirement is a longitudinal process. From this point of view, it is important to consider the context in which university lecturers are immersed: the needs they present, their work history, how they envisage their future in the short and medium terms, and the proposals they consider enriching their profession's performance and subsequent retirement process. This study aimed to identify the psychosocial aspects of university lecturer retirement. The sample consisted of 279 teachers from the University of Seville, Spain (165 males and 114 females). Their ages ranged from 30 to 61 years. They belong to different areas and belong to different professional categories. The research methodology was then mixed. The instruments used were a questionnaire and open interview. The results showed that more than half of the university teachers had not previously thought of retiring professionally. However, the reasons that would lead them to retire were the workload and conditions generated after the implementation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). They were not motivated, satisfied, or enthusiastic about their functions (teaching, research, and management). In conclusion, the future projection of these teaching staff members after retirement is based on their resumption of life projects (hobbies, family, and friends). However, they wanted to continue teaching, form relationships with students, and conduct research at their university.

Keywords: Retirement, university professor, teaching, research, motivation.

Introduction

The university teaching staff is much more than a teacher or researcher; it is a specific profile that must combine both teaching and research competencies, and in many cases, management. University lecturers are concerned about the high demands of these three roles (Contreras et al., 2010). Among the functions carried out by university teaching staff, management is the least valued, because it is rigid and externally imposed. University teaching staff carry out two types of management: formal management of the degree, and management of their teaching and research (Monereo & Domínguez, 2014). The teaching and research functions are closely related. Teaching must be considered as a dimension of research that relates and combines research and teaching.

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This relationship will enhance and improve teaching (Caballero & Bolívar, 2015). The relationship between teaching and research is in a temporal dimension that enables new visions on this topic (Brew, 1999). To understand the teaching role of teachers, it must be considered that classes are only a small part of the entire set of teaching activities (Correa, 2016). To teach a class, it is necessary to reflect on the teaching activities and planning. This planning must be based on research and reflection and must be adapted to the context in which it takes place and to the students to whom the classes are taught. In the academic context, resilience and adaptability are highlighted as key competencies for responding to the continual evolution of pedagogical strategies (Shange & de Jager, 2024).

This article aims to identify the psychosocial aspects of university lecturer retirement. To this end, it will address their employment background; the causes, motives, and needs of university lecturers in their work context; their proposals for improving their profession; and the projection or future they envisage in their retirement process.

Thus, it is necessary to study the teaching, research, and management reasons related to the retirement of university teaching staff (Lima, 2024; Molada et al., 2023), what the future projection, both vital and professional, university teaching staff present in their link with the university after retirement (Carrasco et al., 2024), and what the teachers' assessments of their proposals remain linked to the university after retirement (Tosso et al., 2024).

Taking these psychosocial variables into account, we found studies that have focused on analysing how sociodemographic variables influence teachers' retirement decisions (Salifu et al., 2021), what context of personal fulfilment can be considered after teacher retirement (Shlomo & Oplatka, 2023), understanding the gendered reasons for early retirement (Kreuzfeld & Seibt, 2022), or a phenomenological analysis of social identity in the transition to teacher retirement (Miron et al., 2022).

Miron et al. (2022) revealed one overarching theme -the centrality and importance of academic identity- and 3 identity transition processes with their associated goals: identity continuity, identity change, and identity conservation. Four additional themes captured the manifestations of these identity processes: awareness of negative aspects in academia; perceived lack of fit between self and academia; social disidentification with academic identity; identity discovery and seeking old and new identities; and embracing old and new identities, including hobby-related and place-anchored activities. Maintaining and transforming parts of their former identities, as opposed to

actively searching for new connections, was a prevalent strategy among participants. We discuss the implications of designing strategies to prepare better recent academic retirees and academics who are considering retirement to enable smoother identity transition and improved well-being.

Literature Review

Job satisfaction and burnout among university lecturers

Two results were obtained regarding the work context. First, teachers' perceived opportunities for growth are related to three basic needs: autonomy, relationality, and competence. Second, faculty work pressure is related to low perceptions of autonomy at work, strong feelings of communion, and close relationships with colleagues (Nikisi et al., 2025; Tack & Vanderlinde, 2019). The results prove that universities, whose employees have poor interpersonal relationships, find it more difficult to cope with challenges. This is caused by the demotivation of professionals and the lack of support networks required to overcome difficult situations. The quality of the learning environment also directly affects teacher motivation and job satisfaction (Zhundybayeva et al., 2024). And negative consequences can be mitigated once problems have been recognised and consulted with employees (Gibbs & Kharouf, 2020; Mendez et al., 2025)

One resource that universities can use to foster interpersonal relationships is the collaborative research between institutions. This allows university faculty to pool their limited resources, create affinity groups, and reduce duplication of research (Kosnik et al., 2020).

Therefore, it can be concluded that interpersonal competence is a predictor of research readiness and quality, and autonomy is important for university faculty to value their roles as teachers and researchers (Tack & Vanderlinde, 2019). In addition, faculty recognise the importance of pedagogical quality, and their most important motivations are emancipatory and pedagogical when it comes to feeling satisfied in their work environment (Veiga-Simão et al., 2015). Academics have acknowledged the meaningful and rewarding elements of the teaching job and pointed out the problems and tensions associated with being a teacher. Teachers were examined at three separate but closely interrelated levels: individual, community, and ideological. Elements often appear to be both empowering and simultaneously limiting (Laiho et al., 2020).

With more teaching experience, teachers seem to develop personal theories about teaching that lean towards student-centred learning. Developmentally oriented teachers also focus more on self-focused issues aimed at integrity and maturity as university teachers (Korhonen & Törmä, 2016).

Effective teacher-student communication facilitates the achievement of a meaningful teaching-learning process while simultaneously making it possible to achieve simple challenges, such as gaining students' attention in the classroom or getting some students to lose fear of certain subjects and become attracted to them (Espinosa, 2014; García et al., 2017; Montenegro & Fuentealba, 2010; Montes & Suárez, 2016). Student feedback and supportive school culture, in terms of the effectiveness of their teaching, are essential for enabling teachers to build more complex ideas over time (Hobbs & Quinn, 2020). On the other hand, Giralt-Romeu et al. (2021) emphasised that teachers should spend more time planning lessons and thinking about effective instructional strategies and innovative approaches than reflecting on their practice to improve and create knowledge.

Teacher training includes the renewal of teaching methods, an increase in tasks, new dynamics of interaction with students, and the need to handle new media and languages related to new technologies, all of which entail increasingly higher levels of demand (Zabalza, 2016). It is essential to promote support and encouragement for teachers to carry out increasingly diverse and complex tasks that impose higher levels of involvement and teaching demands to avoid establishing a gap between teachers with a teaching and research orientation (Contreras et al., 2010; Del Mastro, 2018). This should be done to avoid burnout or emotional exhaustion associated with professions with high workloads (Henkens & Leenders, 2008; Mustapha et al., 2023).

In academia, various factors lead to burnout among teachers. Burnout is caused by management being viewed as less evil. The results of Xu's (2019) study showed that university professors experience a low-to-moderate level of burnout; there is a partial association between teacher-researcher role conflict and burnout. Specifically, role conflict is positively related to teachers' emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation, and political skill and perceived organisational support moderate the relationship between role conflict and reduced personal achievement. Henkens and Leenders (2008) and Mustapha et al. (2023) found that professionals with a higher level of burnout have a stronger intention to retire.

Retirement of university lecturers

Retirement is a longitudinal process that provides valuable insight into the importance of engaging in valued and meaningful activities chosen to accommodate retirement transition. Most retired

academics maintain a degree of engagement in academic endeavours alongside other interests in shifting the work/life balance (Crow, 2021).

Faustino et al. (2020) study found that in retirement participants preferred to make investments rather than work part-time. This study yielded empirical data that retirement planning policymakers can use to address the uncertainty faced by teachers in academia regarding retirement decisions. Being informed of retirement preferences, academic administrators face the challenge of providing a pre-retirement preparation plan for teachers and managing their assets in relation to their participation in lifelong learning opportunities and access to part-time jobs, thus contributing to their quality of life and successful aging. This study highlights the importance of raising awareness of the plans that academic teachers wish to undertake during the transition from work to retirement (Faustino et al., 2020).

Method

The current educational-social complexity and objectives proposed in this study indicate that this research opts for a mixed methodology. These conditions are the characteristics of the data and techniques (Albert, 2007); that is, a quantitative-qualitative and methodological triangulation approach organised around two phases or stages is used (Hernández et al., 2007). First, a semi-closed questionnaire was administered during the exploratory stage. Semi-structured interviews (Pathak & Intratat, 2012) with predominantly flexible and open characters were used.

Objectives

This article's general aim was to identify the psychosocial aspects related to the retirement of university teachers at the University of Seville (Spain).

This general objective is explained in the following Specific objective (SO):

SO1. Describe the teaching, research, and management reasons related to the retirement of university teaching staff.

SO2. To describe future projections, both vital and professional university lecturers present links to the university after retirement.

SO3. Describing the teaching staff's evaluations of their proposals for remaining linked to the university after retirement.

Participants

The population under study was composed of active teaching staff at the University of Seville (Spain), who are currently active. On 24 March 2022 the Teaching Staff Department of the University of Seville sent information indicating that the number of active teaching staff was 4493. A probability sample (Hernández et al., 2007) of 279 teachers was selected from this population with a confidence level of 95% and an error of 5%.

Of the 279 teachers who participated in the study, 165 were male, and 114 were female. Of these, 8 (2.8%) were under 30 years of age, 53 (19%) were between 31 and 40 years, 113 (40.5%) were between 41 and 50 years, 86 (30.8%) were between 51 and 60 years, and 19 (6.9%) were over 61 years. Of those surveyed, 100 (35.8%) belonged to Social and Legal Sciences, 63 (22.6%) to Experimental Sciences, 47 (16.8%) to Arts and Humanities, 39 (14%) to Engineering and Architecture, and 30 (10.8%) to Health Sciences. Regarding teaching experience, 49 (17.6%) had less than ten years of experience, 62 (22.2%) had 10–15 years of experience, 44 (15.8%) had 16–20 years of experience, 81 (29%) had 21–30 years of experience, 38 (13.6%) had 31–40 years of experience, and 5 (1.8%) had more than 40 years of teaching experience. Finally, it is worth noting the professional category of the group surveyed: 108 were tenured university lecturers (38.7%), 62 associate lecturers (22.2%), 42 university professors (15.1%), 36 tenure-track lecturers (12.9%), and 31 assistant lecturers (11.1%).

Instruments

An ex post facto questionnaire was developed and subjected to content validation by means of "expert judgements" leaving the final version of the instrument structured in 5 dimensions with a total of 59 questions (Table 1). Subsequently, reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha, which reached medium-high levels for all dimensions and questions (0.752).

Table 1

Structure of the research questionnaire

Dimensions	Open questions	Of choice	Likert type	Yes/No	Total
Biographical data	-	7	-	-	7
Background	7	4	4	2	17
Causes, motives and needs	7	2	7	7	23
Proposals	5	-	1	-	6
Projection or future	1	3	-	2	6
Total questions					59

To complement the quantitative data obtained through the questionnaire, a semi-structured interview was designed consisting of 26 open questions, structured in 5 dimensions: biographical data, background, causes, motives and needs, proposals, and protection or future (Table 2). The instrument was validated through "expert judgements".

Table 2

Structure of the research interview

Dimensions	Open questions	Total
Biographical data	3	26
Background	6	
Causes, motives and needs	11	
Proposals	2	
Projection or future	4	

Data collection and analysis procedure

The first phase of the study was exploratory in nature using a semi-closed questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Drive and administered via email. The data obtained from the questionnaire were descriptively analysed using SPSS Statistics v.28.

In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the aim of going deeper into the themes of the questionnaire, based on the participants' answers (Vázquez & Angulo, 2003). A nonprobabilistic purposive sample of 23 university teachers was selected.

The interviews were analysed using the content analysis software MAXQDA following a double process. The selected dimensions and categories are listed in Table 3. It can be seen that the selected dimensions coincide with those proposed in the questionnaire, and categories are extracted to facilitate and structure each dimension.

Table 3

Dimensions and categorisation of interviews.

Dimension	Category	Definition
Biographical data	Date, place and name Department, age and gender Current professional situation	Information concerning the personal and professional identification of the participant.
	Vital moment access	Information on the participant's personal/professional situation when he/she entered the university.
Background	Pre-entry performance	Information related to the participant's professional performance outside the university and the activities he/she may have carried out linked to university teaching.
	Motivation access	Knowledge of the participant's motivational variables for entering university work.
	Influential contact-relationship	Information about the person(s) or facts, situations or events that influenced the participant's access to university employment.
	Work-family influence	Information on the influences of work on the family and vice versa, as well as the possible impact on the participant.
Causes, motives and needs	Retreat	Knowledge of the feelings, emotions and impressions that the interviewee has when living or thinking about a future retirement.
	Reasons for retirement	Knowledge of the motives, causes and influencing elements when thinking about retirement and possible triggers for this idea.
	Permanence	Information on the motives, causes and reasons that influence the interviewee to remain working at the university.
	Professional satisfaction	Knowledge of the elements that have caused professional satisfaction throughout the participant's career.
	Professional dissatisfaction	Information on the elements that have caused professional dissatisfaction throughout the interviewee's career.
	EHEA	Participant's view on the changes that the European Higher Education Area has adopted.
Proposals	Job satisfaction	Awareness of general proposals on what could be done or not done to make teachers more job satisfied.
	Revitalisation	Knowledge of concrete proposals on what can be done to revitalise university teaching staff professionally.
Projection or future	Future project	Information on the interviewee's future life plan after leaving the teaching profession.
	Linking	Knowledge about the interviewee's possible link to the university when he/she retires.
	Changes Dept.	Information regarding whether there will be significant changes in the department when they retire. Knowledge about the loss of expertise.
	Vacuum Dept.	Knowledge about the participant's contribution to the working climate in the department. Information about changes in departmental relations.

Findings

Each of the dimensions mentioned above will be analysed in detail below, following the categories created for the analysis of the data obtained.

Teaching, research and management reasons related to the retirement of university teaching staff

The first dimension addressed in the results section refers to the causes, motives, and needs of teaching staff. In this sense, it is interesting to know how teachers feel when they think about their professional retirement, as well as the reasons that make them think about the idea of retirement from the perspective of teaching, research, and management (SO1).

Along these lines, the results show that the teachers have not thought at some point about retiring professionally from the university (57.7%), "I think that nobody really wants to leave, here the problem lies in the fact that certain processes cause you to become exhausted, but it has nothing to do with the profession itself" (interview 18). Specifically, Figure 1 shows that thinking about retirement made teachers feel not at all hopeful (45%), not at all happy (44.10%), not at all relieved (41.70%), not at all anxious (38.10%), not very sad (27.10%), and not very worried (28.90%). In line with this data, we found comments such as "the lack of appreciation of real work, of what our work should really be and not all this nonsense that has been invented, makes you not worry about it and you don't care about retiring" (interview 13).

Figure 1

At this point, the thought of retiring professionally makes you feel relieved, distressed, happy, sad, hopeful, and/or worried.
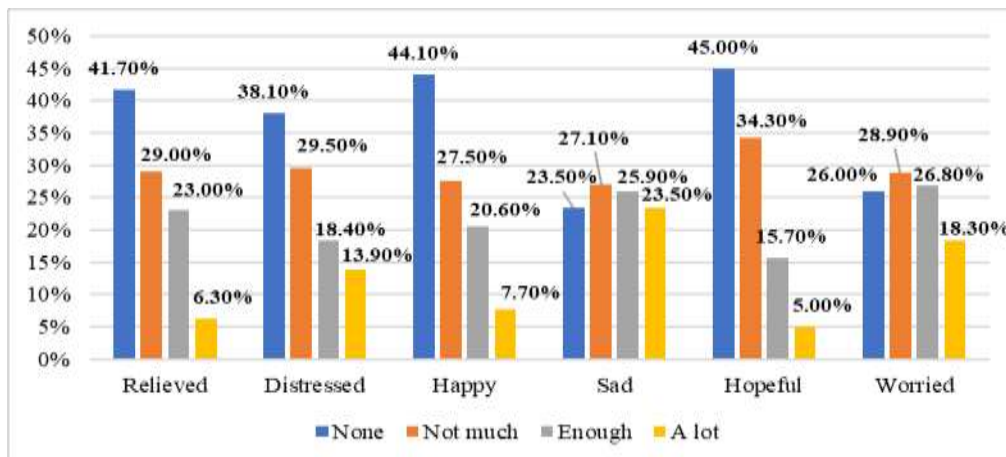
However, Figure 2 shows that the reasons that make them reconsider or would make them rethink the idea of retirement are fundamentally the workload (29.40%) and the conditions arising from the implementation of the EHEA (26.90%). "The problem here is the demands. Correcting examinations, preparing for classes, and research All this is not an overload; the bad thing comes when you have to accredit six-year periods, update the data in the databases and professional networks with the publications with what you do and don't do..." (interview 5). On the other hand, the family/personal situation (36.60%), state of health (37.30%), and family conditions (37.60%) did not seem to favour the idea of retirement "I have had cancer, family obligations..." (interview 5). "With my children, my parents being ill and having to look after them... and yet that doesn't make you want to retire, we all learn to live with the situations that come our way" (interview 14); "when I decide to retire I do it thinking about what is wearing me out professionally, not because my personal situation prevents me from continuing to work" (interview 11).

Figure 2

What are the reasons that make or might make you think about retirement?
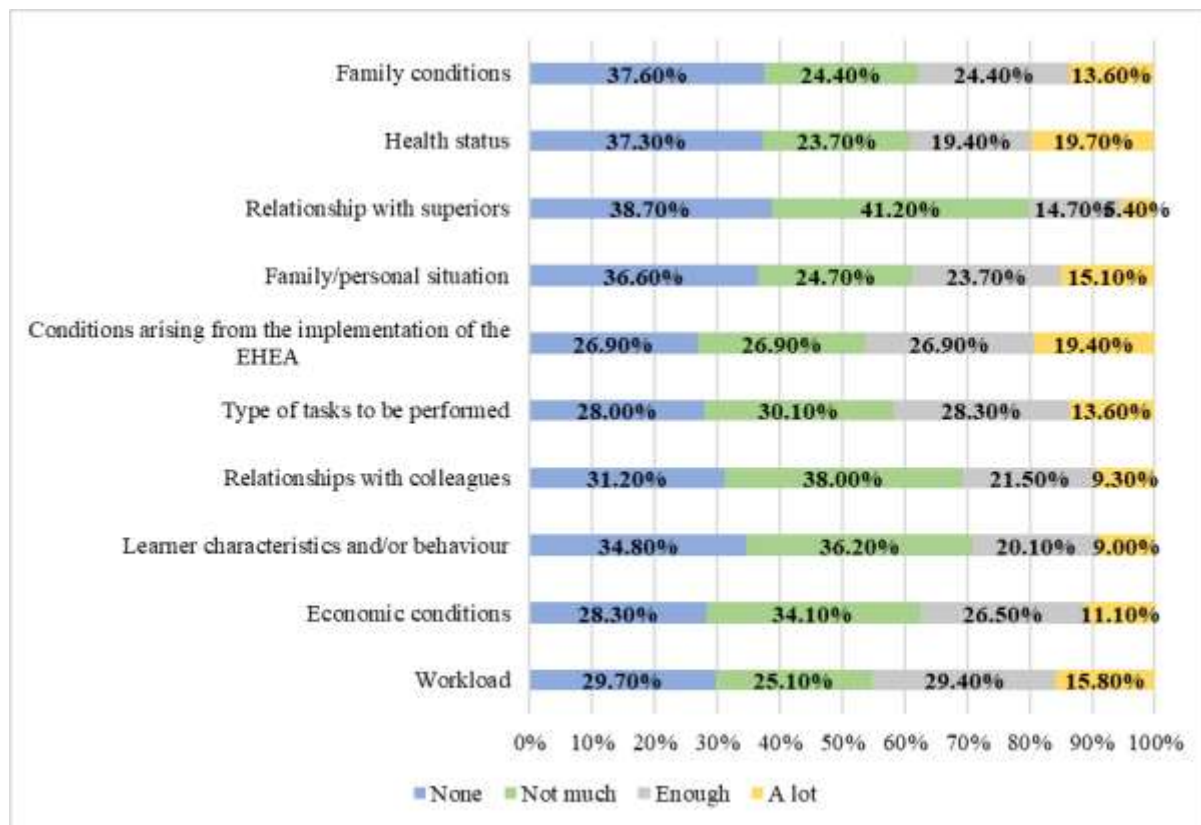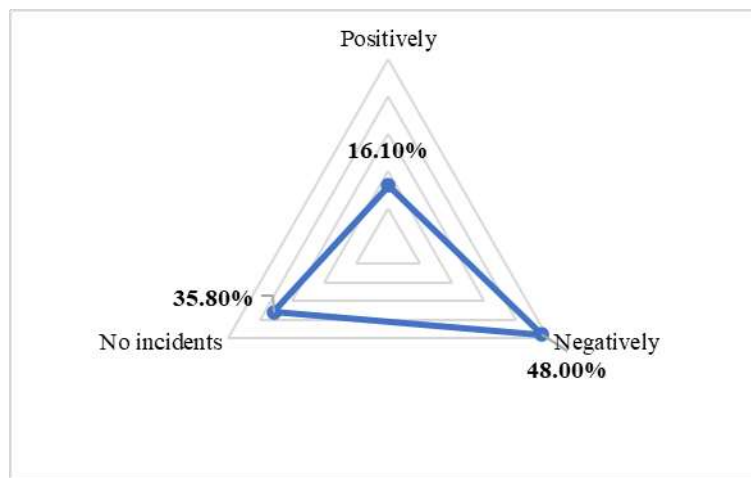

Source: Author's elaboration

These answers raise the following question: What are the reasons that make you or might make you think about retirement? Among the reasons highlighted, the impact of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is noteworthy. In Figure 3, we can see how the teaching staff rate the implementation of this area as a negative aspect, with 48% "every time I think about this new regulation to try to find something positive, I cannot find it... the excessive bureaucratisation that it has brought with it is what makes us lose the focus on teaching and research" (interview 23).

Figure 3

*How has the European Higher Education Area impacted your professional performance?*

Source: Author's elaboration

Figure 4 shows that the establishment of the EHEA did not lead to an improvement in professional conditions (95.80%). "I think that nobody has stopped to think about the demands it entails, much more than before of course, and this means that the real professional value we have and are capable of transmitting is lost" (interview 13), nor in the quality of research (90.20%) "there is really no time to research either on teaching issues or on other aspects that interest us..." (interview 11); it has not brought the curricula closer to the social reality (82.30%) "social and professional needs have not been taken into account and so it is impossible to train students who are going to face such a competitive world" (interview 1), it has not improved the quality of teaching (80.50%) "evidently less and less time is dedicated to classes... if in fact they are of interest to us and if in the end they are of interest to us..." (interview 2). (interview 23), the infrastructure of the centres (79.50%) "the participative model proposed with the EHEA cannot be taken to the classroom

where the tables and chairs cannot even be moved" (interview 2), coordination among the teaching staff (72.80%) "we coordinate in the same way as before, everyone does what they want" (interview 5), nor relations with the students (68.50%) "the time, classes, and methodology. does not help the relationship with the students to be what it should be" (interview 4).

Figure 4

*How do you think the implementation of the EHEA has had an impact?*
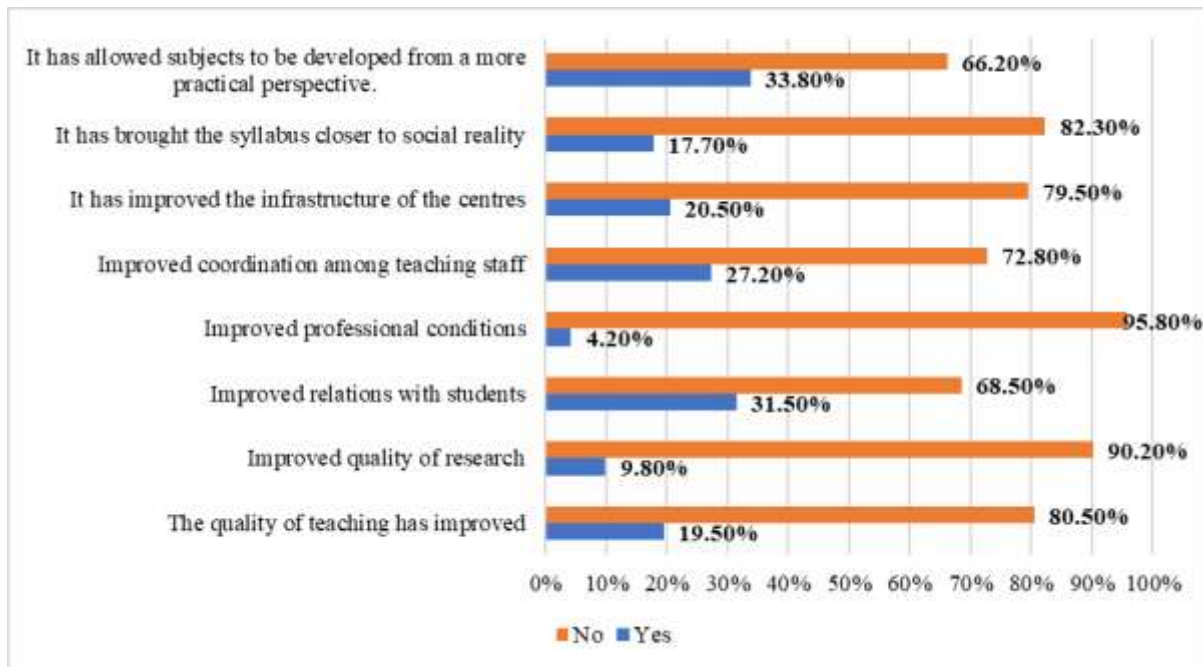
Source: Author's elaboration

Respondents were asked how they perceived university teachers with respect to their professional role and function. With regard to teaching, Figure 5 shows that university teaching staff members consider that teachers are currently not very motivated (67.20%), not very satisfied (63.20%), and not very enthusiastic (62.20%). However, they feel quite understood (38.90%), "Young people who are starting out face a very different reality from when we started out. We already have everything done, and we have to enjoy the profession; before, it was not so demanding to get to where we are..." (interview 12).
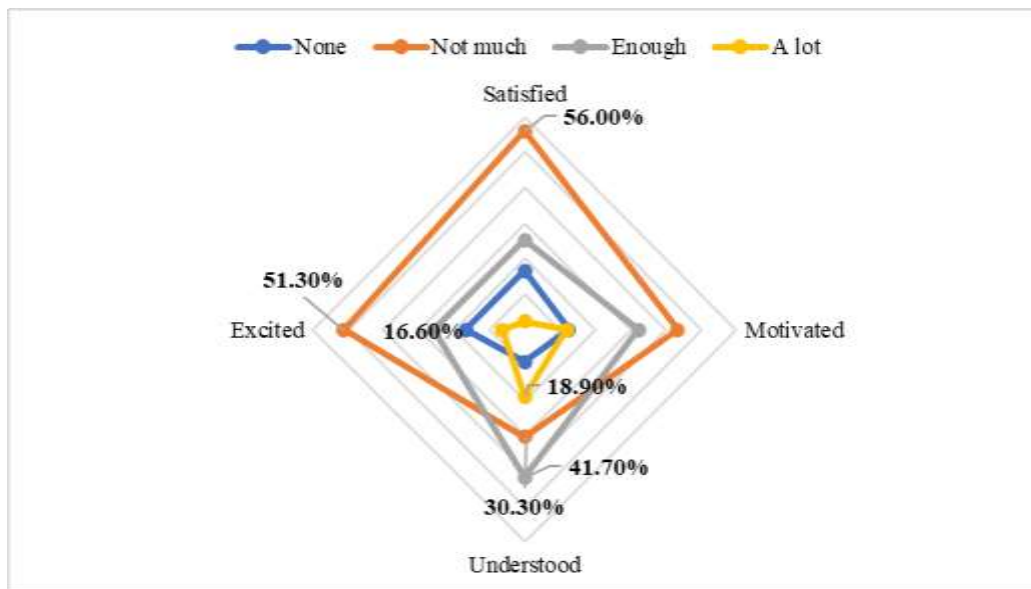
Figure 5

What do you feel when you think about retirement? Teaching
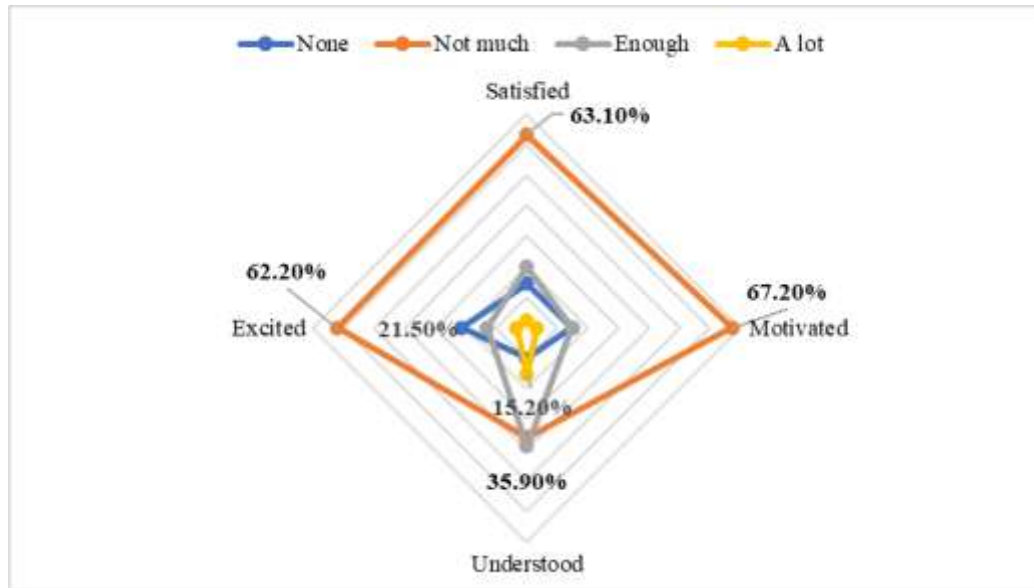
Source: Author's elaboration

Regarding the research, the opinions were the same, and it can be seen in Figure 6 that teachers were currently not very satisfied (56%), not very enthusiastic (51.30%), and not very motivated (43.20%). At the same time, 41.70% felt fairly well-understood (41.70%). In the interviews, we can see how the profession motivates the teaching staff. Still, the institution and its demands are what make them think about leaving "research is my life, and I believe that it is what keeps us here,....but the bureaucracy is such that you lose your enthusiasm, you don't feel like presenting new projects, because you also know that competitiveness and the interests of some and others limit the possibility of continuing to invest in research" (interview 7); "you don't feel motivated by the institution and much less by the mechanisms" (interview 8).

Figure 6

What do you feel when you think about retirement? Research

Source: Author's elaboration

Finally, at the management level, the teaching staff's evaluations aligned with their opinions on teaching and research. Figure 7 shows the low satisfaction (51.30%), enthusiasm (47.90%), motivation (47.70%), and understanding (41.20%). Management is not viewed positively by university teaching staff "Without a doubt, spending a few years in management gives you a chance to innovate, to change what you saw as necessary, and that you could not do from your role as a teacher... it opens up a new world for you..." (interview with the university professor), "it opens up a new world for you" (interview 22) "it is a function that is not very rewarding despite its importance, the time spent, the coordination involved, the lack of recognition or appreciation of the function..., means that when you do it, you do it because you have to do it for a few years and little more, you practically feel obliged to do it" (interview 10). In this sense, the teaching staff pointed out the need for it to be a short period, as the dedication and involvement are almost complete, bearing in mind that other functions such as teaching and research must be combined: "two years, four years, I think that would be enough in management tasks" (interview 19).

Figure 7

What do you feel when you think about retirement? Management
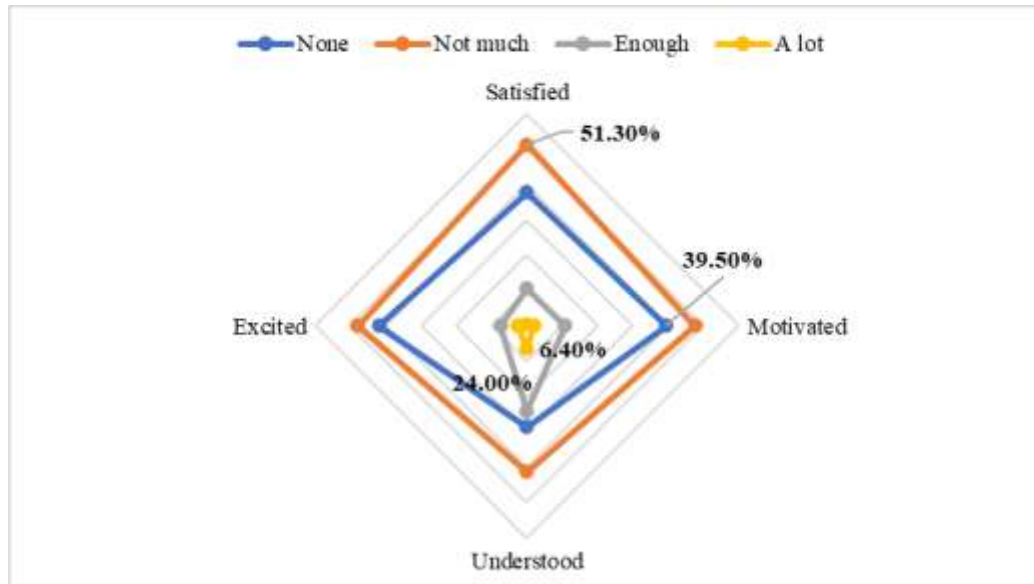
Source: Author's elaboration

The future projection, both vital and professional that university lecturers present in their links with the university after their retirement

In this section, we address the projection or future of university lecturers present in their links to the university after retirement (SO2). The teaching staff participating in this study disagreed with 55.90% when asked about their desire to remain linked to the university after retirement (Figure 8): "there comes a time when you say I have come this far" (interview 9); "there are too many demands that exhaust you to the point of not wanting to continue and if you can take early retirement you do so thinking about yourself on a personal level despite having to retire knowing that you are giving up a part of yourself, of who you really are..." (interview 7). There were 44.10% of the teachers who said that they would continue to be linked in some way, although they were only those who had achieved a certain stability and professional category, and not all of them aimed to be in emeritus. I am privileged. If I did not have the conditions I have, I would answer you differently" (interview 5).
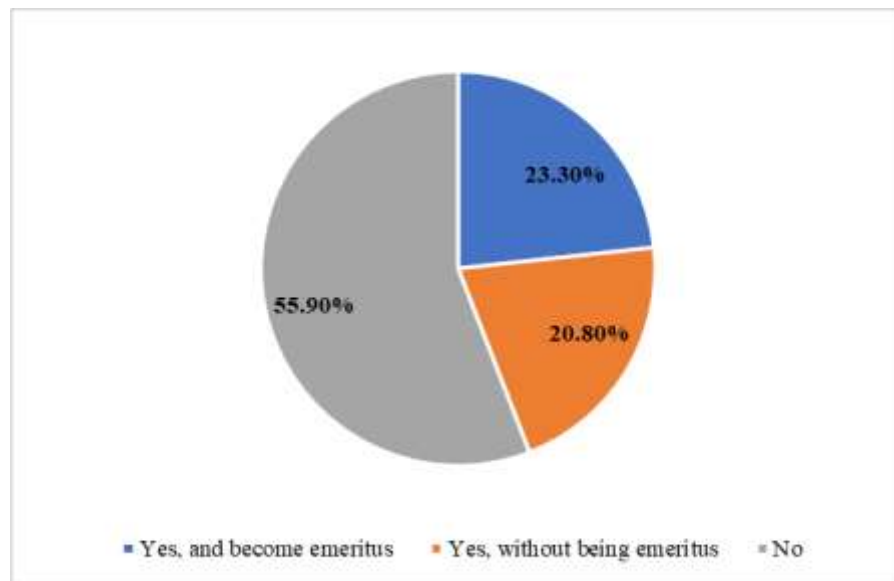
In this regard, it is interesting to learn about university lecturers' lives and professional projects. In relation to their life projects, Figure 9 shows how most of them have thought about them, with the most important projects being those linked to increasing their dedication to hobbies (48.80%)

"this profession is very restrictive, it requires a lot of dedication inside and outside the institution and you give up activities that you used to do in your free time, but that no longer exists..." (interview 8), family and friends (37.10%) "don't think that because we are men we don't miss being with our families and friends."(interview 8), family and friends (37.10%) "don't think that because we are men we don't miss being with our families and enjoying them, I think that leaving this system will allow me to focus on my wife, my children and my grandchildren" (interview 3). In addition, their preferences include resuming studies they have already started or undertaking other "longed-for" studies (27.20%) "I plan to continue with my psychology degree, it has always been important to me and I have never been able to combine it with work" (interview 18); and learning new hobbies (26%) "...it might seem silly, but I would like to sign up for painting classes..." (interview 20).

Figure 8

When the *time comes for you to retire, have you considered remaining involved with the university?*
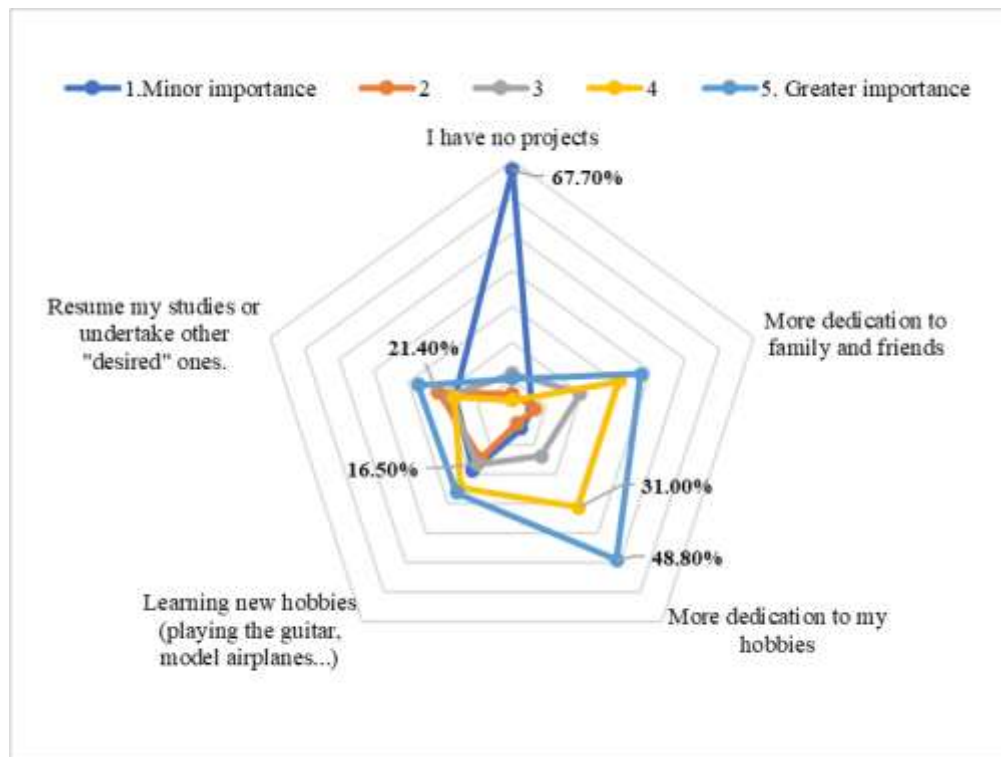

Source: Author's elaboration

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Figure 9

*What life plans do you have for your retirement?*

Source: Author's elaboration

With regard to the professional projects they have for when the time of retirement approaches (Figure 10), 67.30% of university lecturers say that until retirement they will continue with the same pace of work "this dynamic does not allow you to do more or less, until I can retire this is what I will continue to do" (interview 16), with 65.30% that they have no immediate projects that could change their current working life "the truth is that I don't have much more to do..." (interview 6) and 57% that once retired they will continue to be linked to the university with sporadic activities or projects "if life and my strength allow me, I hope to be able to continue contributing to research and contributing to the university with sporadic activities or projects..." (interview 7)."(interview 6) and 57% said that once retired, they would continue to be linked to the university with sporadic activities or projects "if life and my strength allow me I hope to be able to continue contributing to research and contributing my experience to the newcomers" (interview 10).

It is important to highlight that the intentions of university lecturers do not revolve around the idea of totally disconnecting from university life once they have retired (63.60%) "I have to retire (laughs), but obviously, one way or another, I will continue to be involved, this has been and is my life and always will be" (interview 17), nor to progressively abandon their responsibilities until retirement (61.40%) "really perhaps it would be the least traumatic, shocking... but when you are inside you can't slow down... so when you get there it's all over and that's it" (interview 19). However, when you are in the job, you cannot slow down... so when I get there, it's all over, and that's it" (interview 19).

Figure 10

What Professional plans do you have for when you approach retirement?
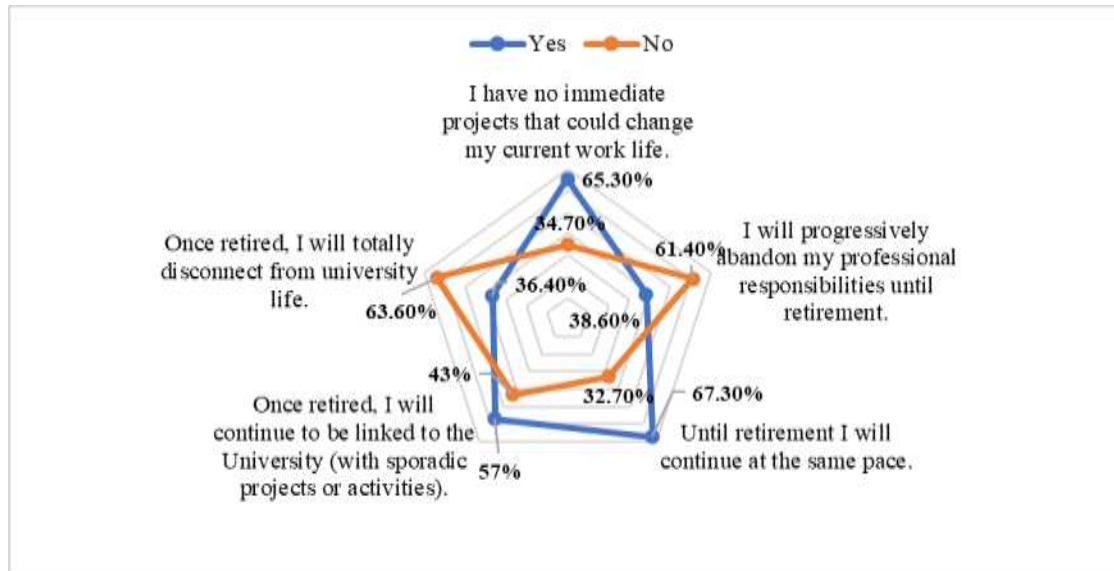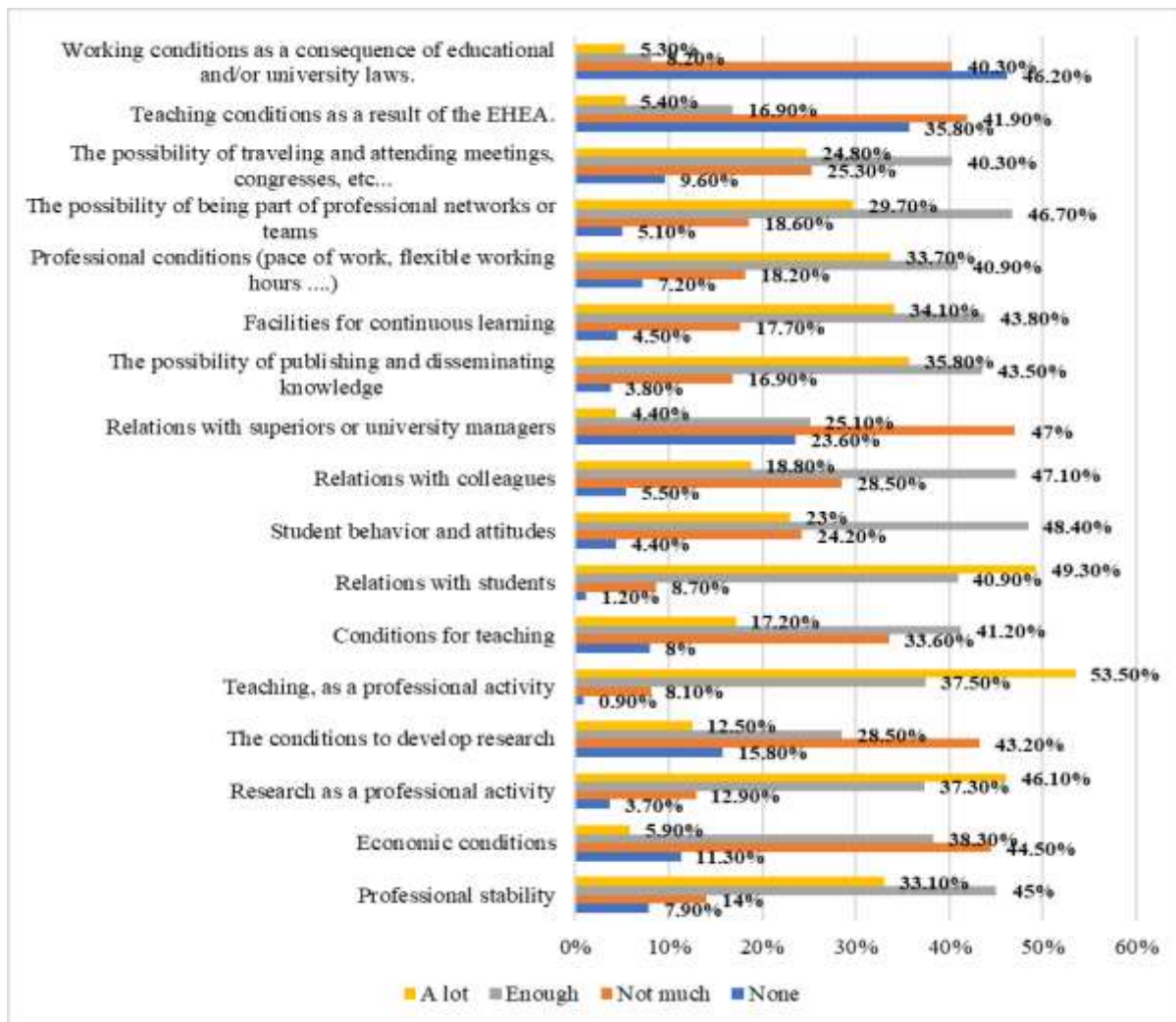

Source: Author's elaboration

Teaching staff's evaluations of their proposals for remaining linked to the university after retirement

The last section of the results includes the teaching staff's evaluations of their proposals to remain linked to the university after retirement (SO3). It should be noted that the lecturers value the circumstances and/or reasons that contribute to remaining at the university (Figure 11) teaching as a professional activity (53.50%), "perhaps it is the least valued, but if I had to decide what it is that most contributes and motivates me... it would be teaching without a doubt" (interview 20), relations with students (49.30%) "I have always liked working with young groups and specifically university students... you feel that you can really influence their professional lives and they contribute to you. You feel that you can really influence their professional lives and they bring a lot to you too... they are very grateful, and the least I can do is to give myself to them" (interview 14); and research, as a professional activity (46.10%) "researching your interests and concerns and creating knowledge is not paid for with anything" (interview 5). In addition, students' behaviours and attitudes (48.40%), relationships with colleagues (47.10%), and the possibility of forming part of professional networks or teams (46.70%) are valued as circumstances that have a considerable influence on satisfaction: "this world is very complex and walking alone is not an option if you

want to advance and remain psychologically stable" (interview 14); "the support of colleagues and contact with other professionals in the sector is essential to survive in the system and feel fulfilled" (interview 16). Economic conditions (44.50%): "It is a long career, and getting promoted is professionally and economically rewarding" (interview 10). The conditions for carrying out research (43.20%) "Without a doubt it satisfies you that they can support the research you propose, (interview 2), the teaching conditions caused by the EHEA (41.90%) and the working conditions as a consequence of educational and/or university laws (40.30%) "everything bureaucratic influences your state of mind, especially if it does not bring any benefits" (interview 7).

Figure 11

*Circumstances and reasons for staying at university.*

Source: Author's elaboration

The teaching staff highlighted various proposals to revitalise teaching satisfaction. As Figure 12 shows, the following aspects stand out as very important: providing greater recognition of teaching and research work (65.90%) "research, with the issue of six-year periods, seems to be getting recognition, although not very much, but above all it would be important for teaching to be valued and not only through surveys that do not really value quality" (interview 1) and revitalising the figure and social prestige of teaching staff (49.80%) "I think that people are not aware of the work that is done, the effort, the merits achieved, the time spent and the sacrifices that are made to get to where we are... we are talked about but without knowing it.people talk about us but without knowing..." (interview 3).

Other objectives pursued by university teaching staff are exchanging teaching experiences (54.10%), participating in coordination actions between teachers (50.90%), creating spaces for sharing good teaching practices (48.40%) and designing actions that enable individual and collective reflection by teaching staff (42.30%) "we need aid, grants,... to create collaborative initiatives between professionals in the field, generate shared experiences and learn from each other, go along the same lines, reflect on the world we are building from education..." (interview 23). However, participation in training actions that have a bearing on the problems of teaching staff and providing greater authority for teaching staff in the eyes of students are little aspects highlighted by respondents in terms of measures that could revitalise university teacher satisfaction (40.90%) "I am saturated with so much training, it is important of course, but it doesn't really influence my satisfaction..." (interview 13).

Figure 12

To what extent, if any, could the following proposals revitalise university teachers' satisfaction and reduce professional dissatisfaction?
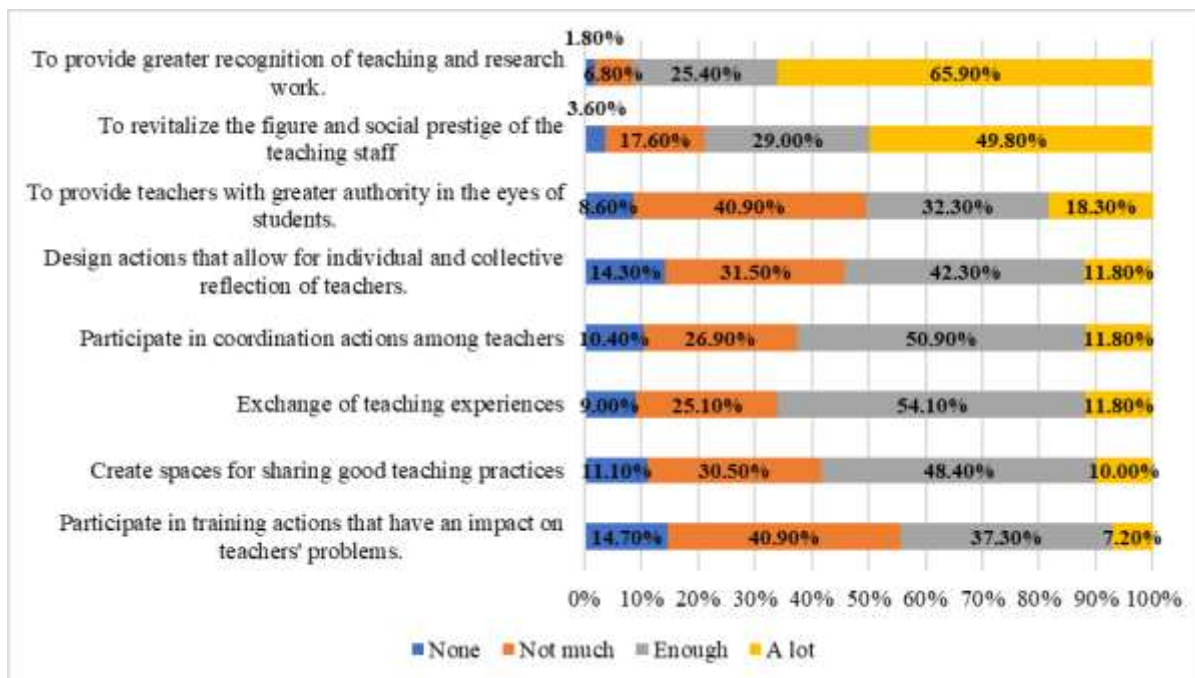
Source: Author's elaboration

Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

The first dimension addressed in the results section refers to the causes, motives, and needs of teaching staff. The results showed that the teachers did not think at some point about retiring from the university (57.7%), and it was also observed that the reasons that made or could make them think about retirement were mainly the workload (29.40%) and conditions arising from the implementation of the EHEA (26.90%). This may be due to the fact that university teachers are concerned about the high demands in the three roles they play: management, teaching and research (Contreras et al., 2010), which are the cause of burnout or emotional exhaustion that is linked to professions with high workloads (Henkens & Leenders, 2008).

The results of this study regarding teaching, research, and management show that university teaching staff do not consider themselves very motivated, dissatisfied, or disillusioned. In the interviews, it was observed that the profession motivates the teaching staff, but the institution and its demands make them think about leaving. Furthermore, it has been shown that university

teaching staff do not positively value management, as in previous studies, such as Monereo and Domínguez (2014).

The second section deals with the projection or future presented by university lecturers. The teaching staff participating in this study (Figure 8) disagreed (55.90 %) when asked about their desire to remain linked to university after retirement. Moreover, although 44.10% of the teachers said that they would continue to connect in some way, only those who achieved a certain stability and professional category. This study contradicts the findings of Cahill et al. (2021), Crow (2021), and Shlomo and Oplatka (2020) claim that continuing valued activities and professional relationships related to their pre-retirement academic role, as well as engaging in other significant ongoing and new activities in their daily lives post-retirement, facilitated the adjustment to retirement for female academics (Cahill et al., 2021). Most retired academics maintain a degree of engagement in academic endeavours alongside other interests in a shifting work-life balance (Crow, 2021), and teaching remains a fundamental part of their lives (Shlomo & Oplatka, 2020).

It should also be borne in mind that disengagement from a previous activity is managed more effectively to the extent that it has been anticipated (Crow, 2021). With regard to their life projects, this study shows that most of them had thought about them, with the most important projects being those linked to increasing their dedication to hobbies (48.80%) and family and friends (37.10%) (Figure 9). It should also be noted from this study that lecturers value teaching as a professional activity (53.50%), relationships with students (49.30%), and research as a professional activity (46.10%) as circumstances and/or reasons that contribute to staying at the university (Figure 11). In addition, students' behaviour and attitudes (48.40%), relationships with colleagues (47.10%), and the possibility of forming professional networks or teams (46.70%) were rated as circumstances that had a considerable influence on satisfaction. In line with the findings of this study, Faustino et al. (2020) yielded empirical data that retirement planning policymakers can compare to address the uncertainty faced by teachers in academia regarding retirement decisions. Having been informed about retirement preferences, academic administrators face the challenge of providing pre-retirement preparation plans for teachers.

In conclusion, the study participants were reluctant to completely disengage from the university activities that they had been carrying out for many years. They understand that they can continue to contribute valuable activities and professional networks that enrich their university lives.

A limitation of this study is that the sample should be more representative of all sectors of the university community, including administration and service staff. Further, for future research, it is necessary to strengthen the qualitative analysis of the data provided in the interviews from sociological and ethnographic perspectives.

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