

Gender Equality and Work-Life Balance in Higher Education: Navigating Institutional Norms, Expectations and Everyday Realities

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Abstract *Is the 21st century a time of change for gender equality, particularly in academia? How do students perceive gender equality in higher education? Is there a clear divide between their academic and private lives, or is the boundary increasingly blurred? These questions guided the research on gender equality and work-life balance among faculty students.*

As public discourse increasingly addresses gender equality and work-life balance, especially in societies striving for liberal values and the emancipation of gender roles, this study explores how these issues manifest in the academic context. The focus is placed on students' study conditions, career development opportunities, participation in extracurricular activities and their ability to balance academic obligations with personal life. These aspects are considered key indicators of both individual well-being and institutional inclusiveness.

A quantitative survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire with 31 questions across six sections, including both closed- and open-ended questions. The research sample included 324 randomly selected students from the Faculty of Organization and Informatics University of Zagreb, regardless of gender identity. The survey aimed to capture diverse perspectives and experiences related to gender roles and life balance within the student population.

Results showed no statistically significant gender differences in academic performance, suggesting gender was not a determining factor in educational achievement. This finding indicates a level of equality in academic outcomes among the respondents. Additionally, a small but positive correlation was found between involvement in extracurricular activities and students' ability to balance academic and private responsibilities. Students who maintained a better work-life balance were more likely to engage in extracurricular activities. It was a pattern consistent across both genders.

Keywords. Gender Equality, Work-Life Balance, Academic Environment

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