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THE ATTITUDES OF TEACHING AND NON-TEACHING STAFF TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER QUOTAS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY FROM SERBIA

ABSTRACT

This paper represents the results of a research conducted between 2022 and 2023 within a project¹ between two private universities: Singidunum University in Serbia, and CY Cergy Paris University in France. The aim of the research is to investigate and analyze the attitudes of teaching and non-teaching staff at Singidunum University towards gender equality and gender quotas in this higher education institution, as the new Law on Gender Equality has been adopted. The research results show that the academic community at Singidunum University accepts gender equality as a concept which is necessary in contemporary society, but they do not accept gender quotas as a tool for reaching gender equality in higher education institutions. The aim of this paper is to present the results of the research which can be beneficial in the future decision-making process related to gender equality and higher education.

KEYWORDS

gender equality, gender quota, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, higher education.

Introduction

Gender equality in higher education is a critical area of focus worldwide, especially in contemporary society, when the concept of gender is in the spotlight. It encompasses various aspects, including access to education, representation, and equal opportunities for both men and women. As societies strive for progress and inclusivity, addressing gender disparities within academia becomes essential, as it ensures equal access to educational opportunities for all

1 Project title: Promotion of New Law on Gender Equality in Higher Education Institutions in Serbia supported by French University expertise (Singidunum University, Belgrade, and CY Tech Cergy, Paris), supported and financed by Solidarity Fund for Innovative Projects, civil society, Francophonie and Human Development of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of France.



individuals, regardless of their gender. When women and men have equitable access to education, it promotes social mobility, economic growth, and overall well-being. Moreover, gender-balanced classrooms and faculties enrich the learning environment by bringing diverse perspectives, experiences, and ideas. By addressing gender disparities, all institutions can foster a more inclusive and supportive atmosphere, encouraging female students to pursue STEM fields, leadership roles, and research careers. Ultimately, achieving gender equality in higher education contributes to a fairer and more progressive society.

The question of gender quotas is sometimes associated with gender equality in the area of higher education. In Europe, gender quotas have been implemented in various contexts to address gender disparities. For instance, some countries have introduced quotas for corporate boards, political representation, and academic positions (Revillard 2023: 316). While proponents argue that quotas are necessary to accelerate gender equality, critics raise concerns about meritocracy and potential backlash. In addition to quotas, some European countries have also adopted other strategies, such as mentorship programs, targeted recruitment efforts, and family-friendly policies, to support women's advancement in academia (Revillard 2023: 330). The question of gender quotas in academia has been a subject of debate and study. According to research by Aliza Forman-Rabinovici from Israel's University of Haifa, gender quotas not only achieve their immediate goal of increasing the number of women on academic boards and committees, but also appear to improve gender parity in senior professorship positions and academic staff. The study analyzed data from 25 countries and found that countries with quotas had an average of about 40% women on their academic boards, compared to just over 30% in nations without quotas. Similarly, senior professorship roles showed a similar trend, with 28% held by women in quota countries versus just over 25% in non-quota countries (Forman-Rabinovici 2023: 16).

Serbia was the first country outside the European Union to launch a Gender Equality Index in 2016. According to the official data, Serbia scored 52.4 points in 2016, 55.8 in 2018, and 58.0 in 2021. This indicates continuous progress in improving gender equality. The 2021 Index edition registered the biggest improvement in the domain of power. This domain has increased by 18.5 points since the first edition of the Index for Serbia in 2016. If this pace were to continue, it would take 2.5 years to achieve full equality in this domain. The progress in other domains was slower, with the domain of work increasing by 2.1 points, the domain of money by 0.6 points, and the domain of health by 0.7 points. However, the score in the domain of knowledge has decreased by 0.9 points since 2016 (Gender Equality Index 2016). When it comes to Serbian higher education, the question of gender equality has been on the rise since the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality.

With these issues in mind, the aim of this paper is to present the results of a study analyzing the attitudes and opinions of teaching and non-teaching staff at a private university in Serbia related to gender equality in higher education area in the Republic of Serbia which was conducted between 2022 and

2023 for the purpose of an international project between Singidunum University, Belgrade, Serbia and CY Cergy Paris University, France, in order to help the promotion of the new Law on Gender Equality in higher education institutions in the Republic of Serbia and stimulate gender-aware cultural change.

The theoretical part of the paper consists of four sections: a brief overview of the project, the history of the law on gender equality in the Republic of Serbia, with special reference to the law that was adopted in 2021, an overview of the correlation between gender equality and higher education area in Serbia, and a brief overview of the concept of gender quotas. The research part of the paper presents the research methodology, research results and discussion. Finally, the author offers her conclusion based on the given research results.

About the Project

The project that this research arose from was supported and financed by Solidarity Fund for innovative projects, civil society, Francophonie and human development of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of France. The main idea of the project was to use the expertise of French University as the guidelines for promoting and, later, implementing gender equality and all its aspects written in the Law on Gender Equality, by analyzing Singidunum University capacities and studying its potential. A specialized training program about gender equality issues and the Law on Gender Equality was organized for teaching and non-teaching staff. A study visit to France was organized for Singidunum University members to learn about the experiences of gender equality implementation in higher education institutions. Furthermore, within the project, there was a workshop for students as well, so that gender equality could be promoted both within the younger population and within academic staff.

The reasons why this specific French university was chosen are numerous. Firstly, when it comes to France, it is important to mention that France today has a strong legislative framework to promote gender equality in different contexts: family, political, professional. Since the 1960s, the enactment of dozens of different laws has enabled France to move up to 16th place in the world rankings on gender equality out of 156 countries. Secondly, when it comes to CY Cergy-Paris University, it is an institution famous for its gender equality projects and activities divided into several segments, such as: *assessment, prevention and treatment of pay gaps* (by data collection to refine the analysis of gender pay gaps and by ensuring gender parity in the distribution of managerial tasks in the departments); *ensuring equal access of women and men to civil service bodies, job frames, grades and jobs* (by launching campaigns involving women in highly male fields and men in highly female fields for administrative staff and researchers); *training (equality, discrimination, stereotypes) for recruitment officers*; *developing mentoring activities for PhD students in Science*; *disseminating publications of open positions with a link to a webpage with information on the gender situation in CY*; *maintaining the integration seminar*

for newcomers and including sessions on gender equality policy in CY. All these activities were undertaken in 2022. In 2023, the University had the following activities: promoting the balance between professional activity and personal and family life; fighting against sexual and gender-based violence, harassment and discrimination (by training and raising the awareness of department and component directors, supervisors, staff representatives, as well as all staff and students, launching communication campaigns for all staff and students on the tools available at CY, providing administrative and medical/psychological support to facilitate the gender reassignment process before the change of civil status); promote the gender dimension in research; governance, steering and monitoring of the professional equality policy (by setting up a network of equality advisors).

The aim of the project was to use the experience from French colleagues to help the promotion of the Law on Gender Equality in higher education institutions, beginning with Singidunum University, and expanding that knowledge elsewhere, if opportunities arise. Higher education institutions have a major responsibility in instructing their students. This includes raising their awareness regarding gender-relevant issues in all disciplines and subject areas, as this awareness, along with sensitivity about gender equality, contributes to changing attitudes and behaviors in other spheres of their lives. The target group refers to both students and academic staff at Singidunum University. Since the Law on Gender Equality prescribes ‘balanced composition of both sexes in boards, supervision committees and on positions’ (Articles 10 and 26), the Article 46 prescribes ‘the obligation of public authorities, including education, to take measures when there is unbalanced representation of sexes in boards, supervision committees and other bodies, and the Law also considers ‘balance representation of sexes when the representation of one sex is between 45-50% in relation to the other sex’ (Art. 6.9), Singidunum University is the right institution for its promotion, as it is one of the rare examples of gender equality at the very top level of management (the current rector is a female, as well as many deans and vice-deans). To be more precise, apart from the female rector, there are also 2 female deans, 3 female vice-deans, and 4 female heads of various departments (out of 9 faculties). Apart from Singidunum University, there were other non-academic institutions that participated in the project, such as the Study Research Group for Gender Equality and Public Policy of the Institute of Social Sciences and The Office of the Commissioner for Protection of Equality, which gave us their institutional support and promoted the project and its results among their partners.

The duration of the project was one year (from September 2022 to September 2023) and it included four phases. Phase 1: kick-off meeting between the two universities; phase 2: conducting and analyzing the research (questionnaire distributed to students, teaching and non-teaching staff at Singidunum University; comparative analysis of research results and previous studies related to the same topic); phase 3: workshop in Serbia for students, teaching and non-teaching staff, based on the research results; phase 4: training of

Singidunum University representatives in Paris which referred to explaining the gender equality activities of CY Cergy University and making them accessible to the trainees so that they could modify and implement them in their home institution. In this paper, we will present phase 2 of the project: the research about the attitudes and opinions of teaching and non-teaching staff about gender equality and gender quota in higher education area.

The Law on Gender Equality in Serbia

‘A nation is constructed through the institutionalization of a gender hierarchy that prohibits their equality, and vice versa’ (Iveković 2010: 154).

The law related to the issues of sexes and genders in Serbia was first adopted in 2009, although many residents of Serbia did not know about it then or before 2021, when the new Law on Gender Equality was adopted, as can be seen in this author’s 2015 research (Bošković 2015). Although considered desirable and necessary in modern society by a good part of the public, the Law on Gender Equality is also considered as a tool for ‘establishing gender feminism as part of the official ideology and political practice in Serbia’ by those who are against it (Antonić 2011: 7). Although there have already been some official documents and policies that contribute to gender equality in general, such as: *Constitution of Serbia* which endorses equality, mandates equal opportunities policies, and prohibits discrimination based on sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital, and family status; *Strategy for Preventing and Combating Gender-Based Violence (2021-2025)* which focuses on addressing gender-based violence and domestic violence; and *National Strategy for Gender Equality* which aims to advance gender equality across various domains, state’s commitments to the CEDAW² also include adopting the Law on Gender Equality. Namely, when a country becomes a State party to the CEDAW, it voluntarily accepts legally binding obligations to eliminate discrimination against women and promote gender equality. These obligations, outlined in Articles 2 to 5 of the Convention, cannot be altered by individual governments or organizations. The State commits to: *Eliminating Discrimination* (ensuring that women are not discriminated against in all areas of life) and *Women’s Full Development* (facilitating women’s full development and advancement, allowing them to exercise and enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms on par with men) (CEDAW).

The Law of Equality between the Sexes from 2009 included several segments. It defined the concepts of direct and indirect discrimination and gave the basic difference between the concepts of sex and gender. The second segment of the Law referred to equal opportunities in employment and social and health care, equal availability of jobs and positions, equal opportunity for

2 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

advancement and professional development. The third part of the Law was related to family relations: equality regardless of marital status, marriage and cohabitation, childbirth, and domestic violence. The fourth segment of the Law was dedicated to education, culture, and sports, emphasizing the obligation of equal opportunities for education, selection of a profession, scientific works, and training, obtaining a scholarship, evaluation and for active sports, while the fifth part referred to political and public life and voting rights of both sexes. The sixth part of the Law was dedicated to judicial protection, and the seventh part defined supervision over the implementation of the Law (the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, number 104/2009). The Law on Equality between Sexes triggered the foundation of some other institutions related to gender equality that will be mentioned in this paragraph. After 2009, the Serbian government established a Gender Equality Directorate within the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Serbia, which was closed in 2014, to establish the Coordinating Body for Gender Equality. In addition to Gender Equality Directorate, in 2010 the position of Commissioner for the Protection of Equality was created, which represents an independent, autonomous, and specialized state body formed due to the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination from 2009. In other words, the establishment of the Commissioner was prescribed by that Law. As stated in the official statement from their official website: ‘The tasks of this state body are the prevention of all types, forms and cases of discrimination, the protection of the equality of physical and legal persons in all areas of social relations, the supervision of the implementation of regulations on the prohibition of discrimination, as well as the promotion of the realization and protection of equality’ (Commissioner for the Protection of Equality).

According to the European Commission’s Serbia 2020 Report, the adoption of the new Law on Gender Equality has been seriously delayed (European Commission Staff Working Document 2020). As the Law was finally adopted in May 2021, now comes the more important part- its implementation. Having in mind that Serbia was the first non-EU country to implement the Gender Equality Index in 2016, which was developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), it should come as no surprise that this Law has finally been adopted. However, it should be noted that the process was significantly affected and pushed by women’s organizations and women’s network, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality and the Protector of Citizens, with several drafts of the law that have been prepared, and failed to be adopted, due to the objections from specific actors.

The Law on Gender Equality from 2021 is supposed to ‘improve the institutional framework and create conditions for the implementation of policy of equal opportunities for women and men. It prescribes duties of public bodies, employers, and other physical and legal persons regarding gender equality. It also envisages measures against gender discrimination and for the realization and improvement of gender equality, which is one of the basic international standards in ensuring human rights.’ (Law on Gender Equality, the Official Gazette number 52/2021). The new Law has several new aspects, and they

have caused much opposition by the traditional part of our community, especially those related to penalties, gender budgeting, and gender-sensitive language. More precisely, the Law defines gender-sensitive language as ‘language that promotes the equality of women and men and a means of influencing the awareness of those who use that language in the direction of achieving equality, including changes in opinions, attitudes and behavior within the framework of the language used in personal and professional life’ (Law on Gender Equality, the Official Gazette 2021). It also requires the usage of gender-sensitive language in public administration and state institutions (Article 25), in education (i.e., in textbooks and teaching materials, certificates, diplomas, classifications, titles, professions and licenses and other forms of educational work) (Article 37, paragraph 3); and in the field of public information (Article 44). What is more, the new Law also implements penal policy regarding gender-sensitive language, which applies to public authorities, and a fine of RSD 5,000 to 150,000 is prescribed for non-compliance (Article 68, paragraph 9). The obligation to use gender-sensitive language should have entered into force three years after the law is passed – that is, on June 1, 2024 (Article 73). However, up to this date, there are no official guidelines, recommendations or even confirmations that these Articles of the law are to be followed. On the contrary, The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Serbia has temporarily stopped the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality, until it reaches its final decision, which will be based on the explanations given by National Assembly and Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue of the Republic of Serbia.

Even before its adoption in 2021, and especially after, the Law on Gender Equality encountered criticism and resistance from a large part of the Serbian scientific community, such as Serbian Community of Sciences and Art, Matica Srpska, the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Patriarch himself. Among other things, the law is criticized for its procedural shortcomings, the influence of the ‘West’ on domestic legislation, the way it regulates the use of gender-sensitive language, i.e., how it interferes with language policy, the determination of the concept of ‘gender’ and ‘gender identity’ in Serbian legislation.³ There have been many public debates, but conferences as well, which discussed only the negative effects of the Law, which, in the author’s opinion, seems to be a bad scientific practice. For instance, Sreto Tanasić, a Serbian linguist, claims that gender sensitive language, as a part of the new Law, is a mere product of gender ideology which diminishes and destroys the biological and inherent roles of men and women, which will lead to the destruction of family and marriage (Tanasić 2021: 14). In the same Collection of Papers, another Serbian university professor claims that gender sensitive language is a threat to word formation

³ These comments have been presented during the two social dialogues organized by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue. The author of this paper has participated in these dialogues as a sociolinguist and an expert on gender sensitive language.

and that linguists should be the only ones who decide which words should be coined (Dragičević 2021: 33). In other words, we can conclude that the main reason for objections refers to the usage of gender sensitive language which is written in the new Law.

Gender Equality and Higher Education Area in Serbia

Only since 1974, when the Women's Educational Equity Act was passed by the United States Congress, which insists on eliminating all gender stereotypes in educational institutions, have officials around the world started paying attention to gender equality in education (Blumberg 2007). When it comes to Serbia, according to Pejić, 'during the 20th century, research related to gender relations and education focused primarily on the education of girls, or women as a socially, economically, and politically vulnerable part of the population' (Pejić 2015: 1). CEDAW Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Serbia recommended to the Republic of Serbia that it should:

- Develop gender-sensitive content on gender discrimination and gender equality and incorporate it into age-appropriate curricula, programs, and textbooks;
- Integrate sexual and reproductive health education according to the age of children;
- Reduce gender segregation at all levels of education and encourage girls and boys to pursue non-traditional 'female' and 'male' occupations;
- Strengthen mechanisms to retain Romani girls in the education system and continuously monitor the implementation of the Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma and Romani Women (2016-2025) (CEDAW/C/SRB/CO/4, 2019, para. 34)

According to the Report on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Serbia for 2023, 57.9% of first year university students in 2022/2023 were women. In the same Report, it has been noticed that: 'there has been no progress in implementing the Law on Gender Equality regarding the obligations of educational institutions to incorporate a gender perspective and eliminate gender stereotypes from the curriculum, textbooks, and teaching materials, although these activities were planned in the 2022-2023 Action Plan for the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy. An analysis of the level of achievement conducted by the organization FemPlatz shows that the planned educational content and textbooks have not been revised, meaning that gender stereotypes, discriminatory content, and discriminatory language have not been addressed.' What is also highlighted is that in the Regulation on Teaching, Educator, and Professional Associate Licenses from 2022, the list of knowledge and skills that teachers and educators are expected to acquire during their internship does not include competencies related to gender equality. (Report on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Serbia for 2023 2024: 70-71).

According to List of the population, households and apartments in 2022 on school education, literacy and computer literacy of the population of the Republic of Serbia by Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, more than half of the population aged 15 and over completed secondary school (53.1%), 17.8% of the population completed primary (eight-year) school, 22.4% of people obtained a higher education diploma, while 6, 3% of the population are out of school or have completed less than eight grades of primary school (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia) (see Table I below). Observed by sex, the share of women who have obtained higher education in the total number of women aged 15 and over is higher than the share of men with higher education in the total number of men of the same age (the share of persons with completed higher education/faculty/ academy includes 24.03% women, and 20.73% men) (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia). In the period between the two censuses, the share of persons with higher education increased significantly - from 16.24% (Census 2011) to 22.44% (Census 2022), as well as the share of persons with secondary education - from 48.93% (Census 2011) to 53.08% (Census 2022), while a decrease in the share of persons without formal education and with incomplete basic education was recorded - from 13.68% (Census 2011) to only 6.28% (Census 2022). In the 2021/22 school year, 243,730 students were enrolled in all higher education institutions and at all levels of study in the Republic of Serbia. Of the total number of students enrolled, 102,527 students (42.1%) were male, and 141,203 (57.9%) were female. (List of the population, households and apartments in 2022 on school education, literacy and computer literacy of the population of the Republic of Serbia by Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia). There is still no available data for the school year 2022/2023.

Table I Population aged 15 and over according to educational level and sex (year 2022/2023)

	Overall	No schooling and incomplete primary education	Primary education	Secondary education	Higher education	Unknown
The Republic of Serbia	5.691.551	357.406	1.013.067	3.020.958	1.277.396	22.724
Men	2.739.739	110.031	450.544	1.599.987	567.960	11.217
Women	2.951.812	247.375	562.523	1.420.971	709.436	11.507
%						
The Republic of Serbia	100	6,28	17,80	53,08	22,44	0,40
Men	100	4,02	16,44	58,40	20,73	0,41
Women	100	8,38	19,06	48,14	24,03	0,39

Adapted from: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, <https://www.stat.gov.rs/sr-cyrl/vesti/20230731-skolska-sprema-pismenost/>

According to the Report on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Serbia for 2023, just like in previous years, female students are more represented at the level of higher education. To be more precise, in academic year 2023/24, 47.946 students were enrolled in the first year of undergraduate studies in all higher education institutions in Serbia, out of which 57.9% were women. The largest number of students (56.2%) enrolled in state faculties, and in terms of study financing, 49.7% of newly enrolled students were budget-funded, while 50.3% were self-financing students. In 2022, a total of 36.951 students graduated, with 60.7% being women. From 2019 to 2022, female students constituted the majority in all fields of education, except for information and communication technology (30.7% in 2022) and engineering, production, and construction fields (41.9% in 2022) (the Report on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Serbia for 2023 2024: 73). In Table II below, the percentage of female students enrolled in various fields of education in 2022 is presented.

Table II The percentage of female students enrolled in various fields of education in 2022

Field of Education	% of students enrolled in 2022
Education	84.4
Arts and Humanities	67.3
Social Sciences, Journalism, and Information	68.4
Business, Administration, and Law	63.8
Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Statistics	67.1
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, and Veterinary Medicine	51.6
Health and Social Care	74.6
Services	52.1

Adapted from: the Report on Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Serbia for 2023: 73

Even though these contemporary results depict a satisfactory level of gender equality in education in the Republic of Serbia, it has not always been like that. According to Duhaček and Popović, who based their sources on statistical data in Serbia in the period before the Second World War, the number of female students in Serbia was low. Namely, after the Second World War, women made up almost half of the total number of students, with 35% of female students studying natural and technical sciences, while as many as 60% were in teaching programs. From 1947 to 2001 of the total number of Master of Science, 27% were women, and 22% of women defended their doctorates (Duhaček, Popović 2009: 683). According to Šoljan, 'after World War I, the underprivileged classes, including women, found it much more difficult to pursue higher education' (Šiljan 1991: 132). In Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a steady rise in the proportion of women in the student population was noticed, whereas in the nineties, 'for the first time in the history of Yugoslav higher education, women were the majority' (Šiljan 1991: 134). Since 2000, Serbia has had 57% female doctoral students (compared to 37% in 1998), which is

explained by the phenomenon of brain drain and the frequent state of war in the country, and not by the phenomenon of gender-sensitive educational policy (Duhaček, Popović 2009: 681- 693). After the democratic changes, the trend of feminization of higher education continues and, as of 2005, women make up 59% of graduate students in Serbia, 51.6% of Master of Science, and up to 55.4% of Doctor of Philosophy. In the period from 1990 to 2007, the number of women employed in scientific institutes and higher education institutions in Serbia also increased, which is explained by the fact that the academic career is no longer a prestigious profession and that men are moving to the field of business and private practice (Duhaček, Popović 2009: 681- 693). In the academic year 2023/2024, according to the data obtained from Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 249 626 students started studying in Serbia, which includes 102 050 male students (40.9%) and 147 576 female students (59.1%) (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Enrolment students 2023/2024). In Table III below, we can see the data about students enrolled by way of financing, by universities and sex.

Table III The data about students enrolled by way of financing, by universities and sex in 2023/2024

Universities	Students enrolled			Way of financing					
				Budget			Self-financing		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
Total	249626	102050	147576	96662	36945	59717	152964	65105	87859
State universities	175625	68553	107072	82867	30816	52051	92758	37737	55021
University of Belgrade	90152	33798	56354	37352	13151	24201	52800	20647	32153
University of Arts	2875	918	1957	1790	554	1236	1085	364	721
University of Defense	881	539	342	800	499	301	81	40	41
University of Kragujevac	15202	5658	9544	7767	2962	4805	7435	2696	4739
University of Niš	22000	8633	13367	11446	4364	7082	10554	4269	6285
University of Novi Sad	41109	17777	23332	22113	8736	13377	18996	9041	9955
University of Novi Pazar	2681	852	1829	1264	378	886	1417	474	943
University of Criminalistics and Police Studies	725	378	347	335	172	163	390	206	184
Private universities	34200	15398	18802	-	-	-	34200	15398	18802
University "Singidunum"	9330	3910	5420	-	-	-	9330	3910	5420
University "Union – Nikola Tesla"	5291	2681	2610	-	-	-	5291	2681	2610
University "Union"	3616	1617	1999	-	-	-	3616	1617	1999
"Alfa BK" University	1082	556	526	-	-	-	1082	556	526
University "Metropolitan"	2053	1000	1053	-	-	-	2053	1000	1053
University "Educons"	2024	925	1099	-	-	-	2024	925	1099
University "Business Academy"	6521	2823	3698	-	-	-	6521	2823	3698
International University in Novi Pazar	777	227	550	-	-	-	777	227	550
University "MB"	933	546	387	-	-	-	933	546	387
European University	7	6	1	-	-	-	7	6	1
Faculties not being part of universities	2566	1107	1459	-	-	-	2566	1107	1459
State academies/higher schools of applied studies	32528	14982	17546	13795	6129	7666	18733	8853	9880
Private higher schools of applied studies	7273	3117	4156	-	-	-	7273	3117	4156

Adapted from: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, Students enrolled by way of financing, by universities and sex 2023/2024

When it comes to the number of women employed in tertiary education, according to Statistical Pocketbook 2024, there are 8,275 women involved, including 6,352 female researchers and 750 research assistants (Statistical Pocketbook 2024: 82). In addition, according to the data about teaching staff

in institutions of tertiary education in 2021/22 school year, there are 5,359 female members of teaching staff and 395 female assistants at universities who are Doctors of Arts (Sciences), whereas there are 1,957 female members of the teaching staff who are Masters of Arts (Sciences) and Specialists (Statistical Yearbook, Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia 2022: 134).

When it comes to gender equality university curricula, in Serbia the first course related to gender studies entitled ‘Sex Relations and Society’ was held at the Department of Sociology at the University of Belgrade in 1993 (Bošković 2015: 59-60). Today, there are numerous gender studies programs: Women’s Studies and Research at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Novi Sad within the Center for Gender Studies; Master and doctoral programs introduced within ACIMSI at the University of Novi Sad in 2003 and MA program within the University Center for Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies and Research; gender studies at the Faculty of Political Sciences of the University of Belgrade; and the newest one- MA program ‘Law and Gender’ within the Faculty of Law at the University of Belgrade.

Gender Quotas at Universities

Gender quotas have proliferated worldwide as a major tool of gender equality policies, first in the electoral arena, and then expanding to other socioeconomic spheres. European countries have increasingly adopted this policy model, particularly in academia, corporate boards, and politics. Norway has been a pioneer in implementing gender quotas. In 2006, it became the first country to introduce a substantial quota requiring that at least 40% of women serve on the boards of public and state-owned companies. It has also implemented gender quotas for academic boards and committees, with the aim to increase the representation of women in decision-making positions within universities, contributing to greater equality in academic staff and senior professorship positions (Revillard 2023: 317). Finland, known for its commitment to gender equality, has fewer specific measures for promoting gender balance in academia compared to Sweden and Norway. However, despite fewer formal policies, Finland boasts an equally high share of female professors. Namely, according to a study from 2021, whose aim was ‘to investigate what is referred to as the Nordic gender equality paradox: even though Nordic countries distinguish themselves as gender equal societies, the gender balance in academia is no better than in the rest of Europe. In fact, for a long time the proportion of female professors in Norway and Sweden has been the same as the European average’ (Mustosmäki et al. 2021: 2). Also, in Finland, candidates for university studies get more points if they apply to gender non- stereotyped faculties, e.g. men applying to education and languages, women applying to technics and mathematics. On the other hand, a recent study explored the direct and indirect effects of state-mandated gender quotas in European academia, and its findings indicate that quotas achieve their intended effect of increasing women’s representation on academic boards, contributing to greater equality in academic

staff and senior professorship positions (Revillard 2023: 330). Therefore, we can conclude that, even though gender quotas aim to address inequality, their efficacy and consequences can vary, depending on multiple factors.

What is also important to mention is that gender quotas are, on the surface, an explicitly feminist policy and an example of gender feminism⁴. They seek to correct the overrepresentation of men in various areas and advance the political and symbolic representation of women. However, it is essential to recognize that quotas are a policy of assimilation. In other words, while they aim to promote gender equality, their implementation can be complex and context-dependent. Research has shown that the impact of gender quotas on public attitudes toward women varies based on factors like the type of quota and the social context (Kim, Fallon 2023: 982). Quotas can raise awareness about the underrepresentation of women in academia, but their effects can be both positive and negative (Fernandez, Valiente 2021: 368).

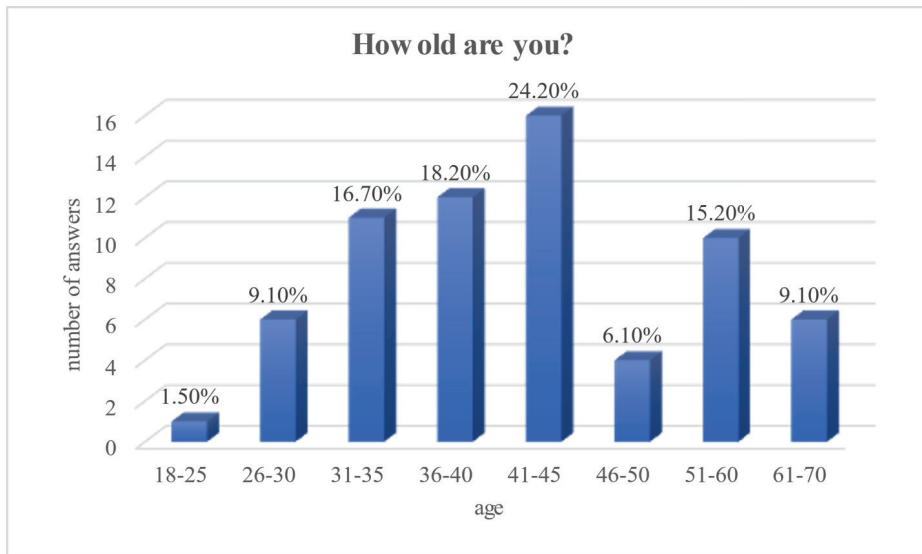
Research Methodology

The main idea of the project was to motivate Serbian higher education institutions to implement the new Law on Gender Equality properly, starting with Singidunum University, where the study was conducted. The first step to reach that goal was to investigate the attitudes of members of these institutions towards gender equality in Serbia in general, and especially towards gender equality in higher education. The main hypothesis that the research was based on is that both teaching and non-teaching staff are in favor of gender equality, but they do not know how to implement it. With that in mind, an anonymous online questionnaire was given to teaching and non-teaching staff at Singidunum University with the aim of discovering their attitudes and opinions related to gender equality in higher education in Serbia, with special reference to the Law on Gender Equality. The sample included 66 participants, 80.3% of which included teaching staff, whereas 19.7% of participants belonged to non-teaching staff. 62.1% of participants were female (41 participants), while 37.9% of them were male (25 participants). Most of the participants (24.2%) were aged between 40 and 45, whereas the rest of them were aged from 25 to 70. The age of the participants can be seen in Graph I.

The questionnaire consisted of 11 questions related to gender equality; two questions were open-ended (*‘Why do/don’t you believe in gender equality?’* and *‘Name the reasons why there should or should not be gender equality in higher education institutions in Serbia’*), five questions were in Likert scale, and the rest of the questions were multiple choice. Due to the variety of the types of questions, both qualitative and quantitative analysis were used.

4 Gender feminism is the concept of all genders having equal rights and opportunities; respecting diverse women’s experiences, identities, knowledge and strengths, and striving to empower all women to realize their full rights.

Graph I The age of participants.



Research Results

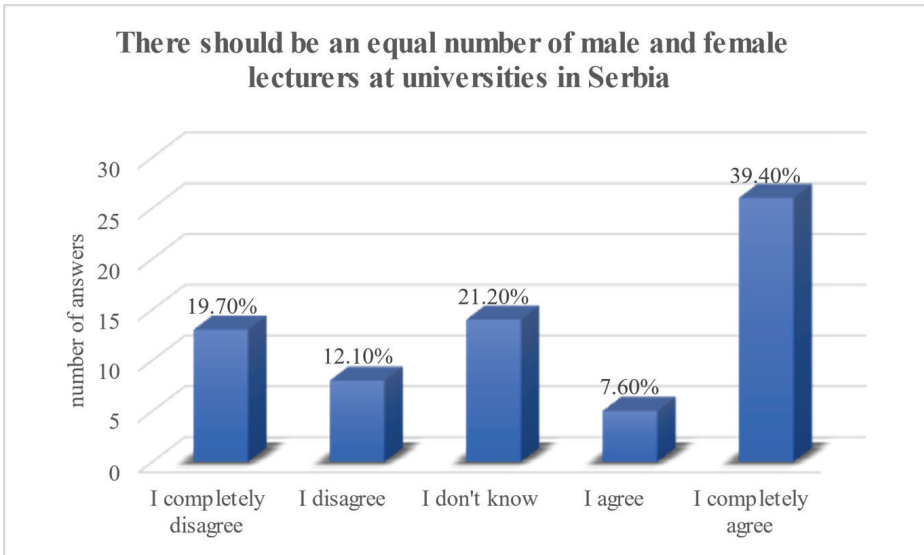
When asked whether gender equality in general can be reached in our country, 68.2% of participants gave a positive answer, whereas 31.8% of them said 'no'. This question was used as an 'icebreaker' to see the general opinion of the participants, before they continued to some more serious and more detailed questions. The next multiple-choice question was *'Is gender equality important for higher education area?'*. This time, 75.8% of participants said 'yes', 10.6% of them gave a negative answer, while 13.6% of them remained indecisive by circling the answer *'I don't know'*. If we compare these two questions, the answers imply that the participants believe gender equality to be even more important in higher education area than in some other areas.

As they moved on to Likert scale questions, we could see that the participants completely agree that gender equality exists at universities in Serbia, as there were no disagreements related to this statement. Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that there was no definition of gender equality within the statement, so the participants could have defined it in their own terms, and, based on their definition and understanding of the term, they shared their opinion.

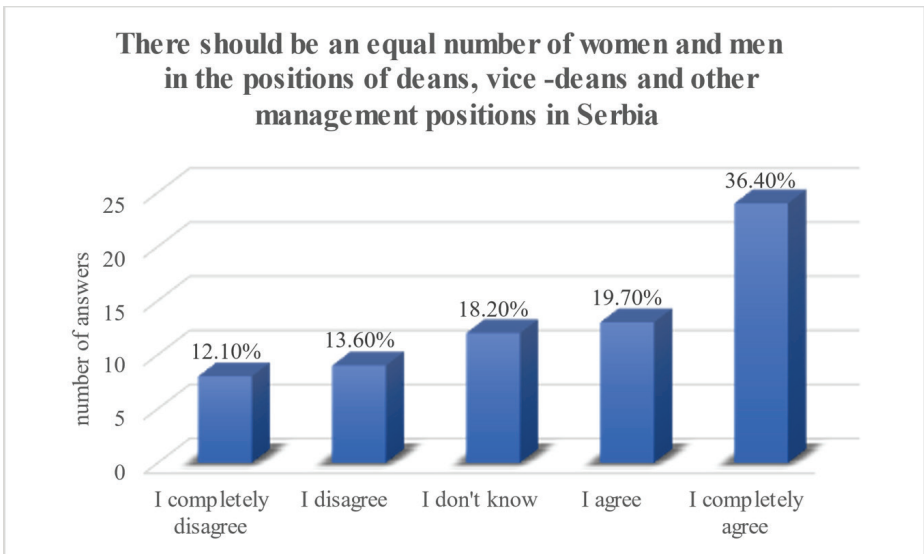
However, when it comes to the statements referring to gender quota: *'There should be an equal number of male and female lecturers at universities in Serbia'*, and *'There should be an equal number of women and men in the positions of deans, vice-deans, and other management positions at universities in Serbia'*, the opinions of the participants were different, as it can be seen in Graph II and Graph III below. Number one stands for 'I completely disagree', number two 'I disagree', number 3 'I don't know', number 4 'I agree', and number 5 'I

completely agree'. Even though gender quotas were not mentioned in the Law on Gender Equality, due to the fact that there are some European universities which implement this concept, the author decided to analyze the attitude of participants related to this issue as well.

Graph II Statement 'There should be an equal number of male and female lecturers at universities in Serbia.'

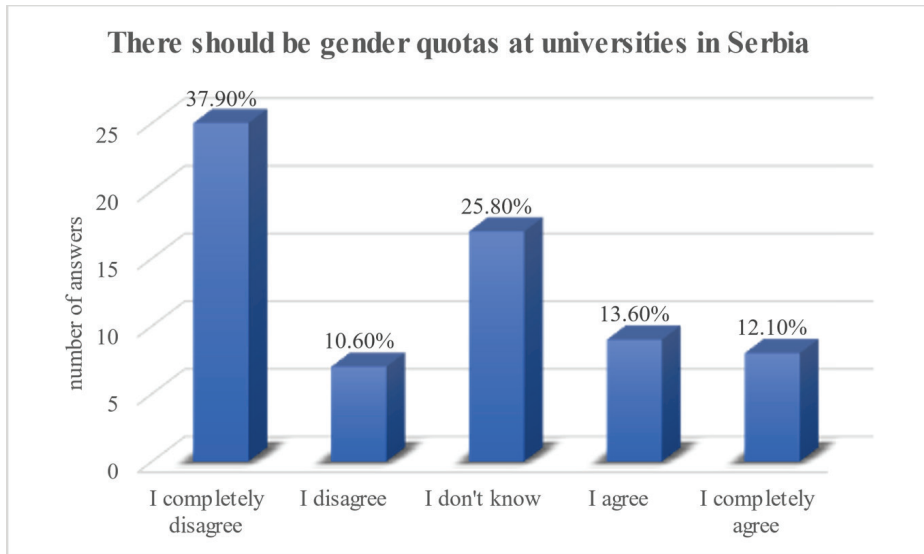


Graph III Statement 'There should be an equal number of women and men in the positions of deans, vice-deans and other management positions at universities in Serbia.'



The negative attitude of participants towards the concept of gender quota in general is confirmed in the final Likert scale statement *'There should be gender quotas at universities in Serbia'*, with 37.9% of the participants who completely disagree, and only 12.1% of the participants who completely agree with this idea (see Graph IV).

Graph IV Statement *'There should be gender quotas at universities in Serbia.'*



The most useful part of the questionnaire were open-ended questions, as this is where we could actually understand why the participants feel in favor or against gender equality in higher education. When asked why they do or do not believe in gender equality in general, some of the participants gave very thorough answers which also explain their (mostly negative) attitudes towards gender quota, which can be found in Table II. What is interesting to notice is the fact that gender of the participants is not crucial in these answers, as both male and female participants were equally in favor of gender equality, but against gender quota.

Table II Some of the answers to the question *'Why do you/ don't you believe in gender equality?'*

Participant 1	<i>Gender should not affect the choice of a profession or study or workplace, that is why I do not agree with gender quotas in workplaces, studies...</i>
Participant 14	<i>I think that it has been around for a long time, and now many are abusing it.</i>
Participant 13	<i>I believe in the ability, knowledge, skills and experience of all persons, regardless of whether they are male or female. I believe that gender should not and should not be an element of favoritism or discrimination.</i>

Participant 4	<i>I don't believe in gender equality, because both at the global and national level it boils down to the questions that you also asked in this questionnaire, which are numerical values. I believe that the numerical ratio of women and men in any system, in general, does not indicate the achieved gender equality, but only the fulfillment of the form. The numerical values do not indicate the existence of any form of inadequate treatment of women in any system. Determining the (non)existence of gender equality in a system requires much more complex questions and answers.</i>
Participant 23	<i>I believe in gender equality. I always felt equal and tried to win that equality. I think I even succeeded. However, if (as the questions in this survey show) the concept of gender equality is trivialized by reducing it to a mere equal numerical representation of both sexes, the superior concept - equality - is lost.</i>
Participant 61	<i>Gender equality is a natural state, which society deforms throughout its history on the basis of natural differences in physical strength. The return of equality is a condition for the survival of the shell of civilization. This will not be achieved in Serbia, as well as in the rest of the world, until it is understood that numbers cannot be used to characterize whether or not gender equality has been achieved.</i>
Participant 54	<i>I believe in gender equality when it comes to intellectual capacity and I believe that there is no difference between men and women in terms of achievements in any field. Women rarely have the opportunity to prove themselves.</i>
Participant 38	<i>It is an important condition of sustainable development.</i>
Participant 29	<i>I believe in gender equality in the sense that everyone is born equal, male or female, and therefore everyone has equal opportunities in life according to their abilities, hard work, commitment and resourcefulness. Gender inequality starts from the home and our entire society, the way girls and boys are educated about their roles in society, the way employers treat pregnant women. Changes should start from the beginning - from society and family and not from the end - at the university. Our problem is that women are treated unequally when they remain in a different state, that women are asked at job interviews when they are planning a family, that flexible working hours are not taken into account when children are small, that men who work as hairdressers or carers receive various epithets because men's and women's jobs are established. It must be changed from the roots. Every job should not be viewed through gender, but through the specific possibilities or impossibilities of the candidate, regardless of gender.</i>
Participant 40	<i>Gender equality is not essentially a language problem (in terms of terminology, male or female professor) as it is said and understood. Gender equality should enable and make it easier for women to perform all their roles at home and at work. This implies, for example, a greater number of vacation days, fewer working hours during the working week, protection against mobbing, etc. Gender representation in workplaces, faculties, should depend exclusively and only on the competence, knowledge, skills that someone possesses... And of course, there are jobs that women (most of them) are unable to perform, solely for biological reasons. (weaker and smaller constitution). For example, should it be prescribed that an equal number of women and men enroll in a secondary vocational school that educates personnel dealing with electricity?</i>
Participant 19	<i>I have a mother and a father, I think that is enough reason to believe in gender equality.</i>
Participant 34	<i>Because it leads to an increase in productivity, efficiency and success of an organization as a whole.</i>

Participant 11	<i>I believe in gender equality, as both sexes should have the same chances and opportunities. However, it should not be misused in the sense that a person is selected for a position solely on the basis of gender quotas, but the most qualified person (whether male or female) should always be selected.</i>
Participant 65	<i>Gender equality is important in the sense that no persons are discriminated against at work. However, since housework is not valued in any way, there is no way to achieve true equality.</i>
Participant 29	<i>Gender equality is something that has only just begun to be openly discussed in our country. It is important because it gives hope that in the future women will be equally recognized for their qualities as men, which will further lead to an increased desire and effort of young women to develop and improve and thus improve the general condition of society and our community.</i>
Participant 55	<i>Equality of any kind, including gender equality, is always a benefit for the social community.</i>
Participant 6	<i>I believe that the human rights of both women and men should be respected equally. Until now, I have never been exposed to gender discrimination. I am not in favor of introducing gender quotas in universities because I believe that everyone should be employed/promoted according to their abilities and education, not their gender. In my opinion, it does not matter whether there are more women or men working within the scope of the institution, as long as they are competent for the work they perform.</i>
Participant 27	<i>The competence of the teacher or the ability to teach the students does not depend on the gender of the person, that person and the other gender should be represented in the same percentage in the mentioned positions. However, I do not think that there should be quotas, because this can lead to the fact that quality teachers are not hired or students are not enrolled, but that a certain percentage is met.</i>
Participant 62	<i>I absolutely believe in gender equality, but not in “quotas” – every job should be performed exclusively by the most capable, and positions should not be filled against quotas in order to force gender equality. This destroys any business in the medium and long term. The second is the fact that there really are typically “male” and typically “female” professions, i.e. professions in which, due to the nature of the work, one or the other gender dominates (eg craft/technical professions vs HR/PR). Attempting to equalize this relationship with artificial quotas has unfathomably bad consequences. So, yes, gender equality in education and employment must be forced (otherwise it’s idiocy), but the only criterion for employment must be the candidate’s professional suitability and not belonging to one or the other gender!!!</i>
Participant 2	<i>I believe in gender equality, but I don’t think that belonging to a certain gender is a prerequisite for performing a certain function in terms of fulfilling previously defined percentages.</i>

Furthermore, in Table III, we can see their answers to the question ‘*State the reasons why gender equality should or should not be respected in higher education institutions in Serbia.*’

Table III Some of the answers to the question 'State the reasons why gender equality should or should not be respected in higher education institutions in Serbia.'

Participant 5	<i>When it comes to people enrolling in higher education institutions in Serbia, they make their choice based on their interests and the goals they want to achieve in their career or life. Depending on the area of the higher education institution, a different percentage of male and female students are enrolled.</i>
Participant 8	<i>When we talk about teaching and non-teaching staff, I believe that it is necessary to respect gender equality in order to remove the trend and all prejudices about the abilities of one or the other sex.</i>
Participant 12	<i>In higher education institutions, apart from competences and references, there should not be any other criterion during employment.</i>
Participant 17	<i>Gender equality should certainly be respected in all institutions in Serbia, because the participation of both sexes in the implementation of activities contributes to the quality of the functioning of the institution itself and the final results. However, the situation is not the same in all areas of higher education, as well as in all scientific fields and disciplines, so it does not necessarily mean that there is no gender equality if the numerical ratio of women and men is not uniform.</i>
Participant 22	<i>The parameters that are imposed as indicators of equality are incorrect. Insisting on gender equality using numerical parameters is incorrect and backward and makes the whole concept wrong. The abilities and values of an individual, and thus his contribution to this or that uncle, do not depend on his/her gender. Higher education institutions are obliged to provide the best to their students, and this cannot be achieved by equalizing the number of members of this or that gender, on the contrary, it can destroy the chance of "most" to contribute.</i>
Participant 26	<i>Equal opportunities should be ensured and guaranteed, but not at the cost of forced "equalization" in order to satisfy some "statistics" and equality in terms of the "number of people"; but to ensure that everyone has equal opportunities, and only equal treatment of everyone must be guaranteed. People's interest in study programs and job positions at higher education institutions will determine whether there will be an equal number of male and female students in a course or an equal number of cleaners. Competitions should not be "adjusted" or students prevented from enrolling in order to artificially maintain some statistically driven numerical equality. The market, affection and interests of people should regulate the filling of positions/places, and the institutions should only guarantee an equal relationship, criteria and opportunities for all interested parties.</i>
Participant 31	<i>Gender equality should be respected in higher education institutions for the sake of raising the awareness of future generations.</i>
Participant 43	<i>It is important to put the quality of teaching staff first (knowledge, expertise, communication skills, experience, teaching skills, etc.) when talking about teaching staff working in higher education institutions and hire them on that basis, regardless of their gender. On the other hand, I think that the existence of an equal number of male and female students in all study programs and universities in Serbia does not make sense. The best students should be enrolled regardless of their gender, and the chance should be given to everyone regardless of how many male or female applicants there are. If there had to be an equal number of male and female students, does that mean that due to the enrollment of only 20 girls at e.g. Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, the same faculty can enroll a maximum of 20 men and vice versa? This would lead to a situation where potentially worse students are enrolled in higher education institutions and in such a way better students would be discriminated against regardless of gender.</i>

Participant 44	<i>It should be respected, just as it should be understood that some programs enroll more men and some women. Insisting too much on something sometimes creates more repulsion than acceptance.</i>
Participant 50	<i>Today, women have the right to education, but later with the same diplomas, they do not have the same treatment at work or in life.</i>
Participant 52	<i>Increasing awareness and knowledge about Chapter 23 (Judiciary and fundamental rights) with a special emphasis on women's rights and their discrimination, when it comes to work and employment, as well as the process of further harmonization with the EU regulations.</i>
Participant 56	<i>Gender equality should be respected in all areas, so higher education should not be an exception. There is no reason for anyone to advocate for gender equality to be respected in higher education institutions, but it should be part of the general narrative that gender equality is one of the crucial issues in modern society.</i>
Participant 58	<i>Gender equality should be established at higher education institutions, but with respect for the specificity of study programs (some are almost entirely female and some are male). The right to higher education must not depend on gender. The problem arises when graduated students gossip, because there women are often paid less or find it harder to get a job because of the possibility of motherhood.</i>
Participant 61	<i>Gender equality is a basic human right, academic institutions, as the highest educational institutions, must set an example in gender equality.</i>
Participant 66	<i>Equality yes, but not at any cost. (equal number of male and female students...I think quality is more important than quantity...etc).</i>

Conclusion

Even though gender equality is a topic that has been discussed many times, there is always a need to analyze it more thoroughly and in different communities. Therefore, the analysis of the attitudes of teaching and non-teaching staff toward gender equality in higher education areas could be crucial for curricula, student population and education specialists in the future. As members of the academic community, representatives of both teaching and non-teaching staff in a higher education institution form an essential component in creating and achieving gender equality within any society. Not only do the answers presented in this research clearly depict the attitudes of specific academic community towards the new regulations related to gender equality, but they also offer an argumentative approach towards the steps we need to take to reach gender equality in contemporary society.

Based on all given answers, it can be concluded that members of teaching and non-teaching staff at Singidunum University do believe that we, as a society, should nurture gender equality. On the other hand, when it comes to finding the appropriate tools for reaching gender equality in higher education, gender quotas are not desirable, as most of the participants believe they are unnecessary and that they can even lead to more discrimination. Moreover, the attitudes toward gender quotas in higher education area are extremely negative, so it is highly unlikely that teaching and non-teaching staff will adopt or

implement them in the future. We could also conclude that the main hypothesis has been confirmed, as both teaching and non-teaching staff are in favor of gender equality, but they do not agree with the steps needed to implement it, as it is written in the new Law on Gender Equality.

The sex of participants did not play a crucial role in this research, as both male and female participants were strictly against gender quotas, but mostly in favor of gender equality in general. What remains to be seen is whether the research results would be different if the sample was larger. Also, due to the fact that the research was conducted for the purpose of the project, we have not analyzed the answers based on the title, background, or place of birth of the participants, so there should be another research which would analyze the answers of the teaching assistants, full professors, non-teaching staff, etc. in order to see whether their answers would vary depending on their level of education, their vocation, or their place of birth. Also, it would be significant to conduct the same research within other higher education institutions in Serbia and compare the results, as this sample is quite small. Therefore, the author is planning to organize another research, paying attention to all correlations and a bigger sample.

Despite considerable progress in the last decade, gender equality remains a critical goal within academia. Gender quotas, when thoughtfully implemented, can serve as a powerful catalyst for change, but should not be considered crucial. By mandating a minimum representation of women in decision-making bodies, universities can foster an inclusive environment that benefits all. However, it is essential to recognize that complementary efforts, such as mentorship programs, training, targeted recruitment, and family-friendly policies, are equally relevant. Only when we understand that we are all in charge of gender equality will we be able to contribute to equal opportunities for everyone, in all spheres of society.

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Valentina Bošković Marković

Stavovi nastavnog i nenastavnog osoblja prema rodnoj ravnopravnosti i rodnim kvotama u visokom obrazovanju: studija slučaja iz Srbije

Apstrakt

Ovaj rad predstavlja rezultate istraživanja sprovedenog od 2022. do 2023. godine u okviru projekta između dva privatna univerziteta: Univerziteta Singidunum u Srbiji i Cl Cergi Paris univerziteta u Francuskoj. Cilj istraživanja je da se ispituju i analiziraju stavovi nastavnog i nenastavnog osoblja Univerziteta Singidunum prema rodnoj ravnopravnosti i rodnim kvotama u ovoj visokoškolskoj ustanovi, pošto je usvojen novi Zakon o ravnopravnosti polova. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da akademska zajednica Univerziteta Singidunum prihvata rodnu ravnopravnost kao koncept koji je neophodan u savremenom društvu, ali da ne prihvata rodne kvote kao sredstvo za postizanje rodne ravnopravnosti u visokoškolskim ustanovama. Cilj ovog rada je da predstavi rezultate istraživanja koji mogu biti od koristi u budućem procesu donošenja odluka koji se tiču rodne ravnopravnosti i visokog obrazovanja.

Ključne reči: rodna ravnopravnost, rodna kvota, nastavno osoblje, nenastavno osoblje, visoko obrazovanje.

