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Discrimination in a University Context

Report for Lodz University
of Technology (TUL)

Report Work Package 2 – Activity 2.1.



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Lodz, December 2023



Lodz University of Technology



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Project:

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1. Introduction

This report covers the results of a survey and key findings from the interviews, both carried out at Lodz University of Technology (TUL), with the focus on diagnosing the state of discrimination at the university. The research was conducted within the EQUINI project aimed at improving students' emotional intelligence to tackle discrimination and ensure equal opportunities at European universities.

Additionally, a brief overview of desk research on similar studies of other Polish universities was considered to broaden the perspective of the research. This more extensive approach ensures that the educational tools for anti-discrimination developed in the project have a wider applicability.

The findings presented in this report may not be universally applicable to all universities.

Nonetheless, they offer a reliable glimpse into prevalent situations among diverse stakeholders in the higher education community and provide valuable insights into the frequency and types of discrimination experienced by students, academic staff (teachers) and administrative staff.

For the project, an analysis of the definition and phenomenon of discrimination was carried out by a Portuguese partner – University of Algarve. To enhance comprehension of the study's objectives and the importance of its findings, a presentation of the results from this literature review will be incorporated into the final report, collaboratively produced by the project consortium.

2. Questionnaire survey

2.1. Objective

The main objective of the survey was to identify and describe situations in which students and university staff may have experienced discrimination, specifically to: 1) characterize the prevalence of discrimination in a university context as reported by students, administrative staff, and academic staff and 2) to identify the most common types of discrimination and typical scenarios in which it may occur. These scenarios will be used to develop educational materials and trainings aimed at identifying the sources of prejudice and understanding one's own emotions and those of others.

2.2. The questionnaire and the procedure for conducting the survey

As a starting point, TUL decided to use the questionnaire developed by the University of Algarve. The template included three parts:

- *Sociodemographic data.* Participants were asked to provide information on age, gender and to classify their role in the university community.
- *Discrimination.* An objective measure of discrimination was used, where participants were asked whether they had ever personally experienced discrimination in a university environment. Participants were also requested to describe the situation(s) of discrimination

and the emotional impact they caused. Both questions were qualitative, allowing participants to provide descriptions of varying levels of detail according to their personal discretion.

- *Intersectional Discrimination Index – day-to-day form (InDI-D)*. Lifetime day-to-day discrimination was used as a general measure for discrimination, and its instructions were adapted to ask for these situations specifically in academic context.

TUL decided to further develop the questionnaire, eventually including two additional sections:

- *Witnessing discrimination*. An objective measure of discrimination was used, where participants were asked whether they had ever witnessed discrimination in a university environment. Participants were also requested to describe the situation(s) of witnessing discrimination and the emotional impact they caused. Both questions were qualitative, allowing participants to provide descriptions of varying levels of detail according to their personal discretion.
- *Counteracting discrimination*. The respondents who reported that they had either experienced or witnessed discrimination were asked if they had ever made any attempt to counteract the discriminatory situation and, if not, to indicate the reasons for their lack of response.

In the introduction, the survey questionnaire presented the definition of discrimination in order to familiarize participants with this issue before inquiring about their experiences at the university. The provided definition was as follows: *Discrimination is an act or action that differentiates between a person or group of people because of their belonging to a particular race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation, among other factors.*

The questionnaire was approved by the Data Protection Officer at TUL responsible for enforcing the General Data Protection Regulation and authorized for dissemination by the Vice-Rector for Education. The target audience was contacted through their institutional e-mail addresses. Only English version of the questionnaire was prepared in the first stage.

Due to difficulties in reaching exchange students available at the university only for a limited period, paper version of the questionnaire was prepared for this group of respondents. It was distributed when they visited the Students' Office before returning to their home universities. Participation in the survey was optional.

The first stage of the survey was conducted between 27 June and 12 July 2023 (survey conducted simultaneously online and on paper in English). The second stage took place between 20 and 30 October (survey conducted online in Polish).

2.3. Target audience and response rate

The survey was conducted in three groups of the academic community:

- students of all programmes and cycles of studies with an approximate total of 10,500 individuals (including Erasmus exchange students with an approximate total of 280 individuals),
- administrative staff with an approximate total of 1,400 individuals,
- academic staff/teachers with an approximate total of 1,190 individuals.

The response rate to the questionnaire stood at approximately 3.3%, with 442 responses (435 valid ones) from a total population of 13370 individuals. For the regular students the response rate was only 1.7%, and for Erasmus students – 25.4%, for the academic staff - 8.2% and for the administrative staff - 6%.

While this percentage may be deemed relatively low, it should be considered that the participation in the surveys was voluntary and contingent upon the potential respondents' interest and availability. Out of the 442 individuals who initiated the questionnaire, 7 discontinued before completion, giving in total 435 valid answers collected.

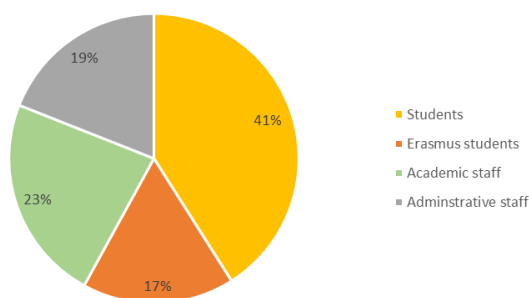
Although the survey sample was not representative and the response rate was relatively low, the results offer a valuable information about the types of discrimination experienced by different members of the TUL community (students, academic staff and administrative staff). The findings can be used as a starting point for further diagnosis and planning adequate anti-discrimination measures by the university authorities.

2.4. Survey Sample

2.4.1. General characterization

The survey included a cohort of 435 respondents who completed the questionnaire. Figure 1 presents the distribution of participants across different categories, students are the most numerous group of participants, accounting for almost 60% of all respondents.

Figure 1. Respondents' role at the university



79% of all respondents were Polish and 21% were of other nationality. In terms of gender identification, 51% of the participants identified themselves as women. The youngest respondent was 17 years old, and the oldest one - 68.

2.4.2. Students

Most of the respondents, 253 individuals (58% of the sample), fell into this category. Out of the 10,500 regular students, 179 took part in the questionnaire and out of 280 Erasmus students, 74 participated. Therefore, the student group represents approximately 2.4% of the total student population (1.7% for regular students and 26.4% for Erasmus students).

The age range of students varied from 17 to 27 years. In terms of gender identification, approximately 43.5% of them identified themselves as women. Regarding experiences of discrimination, 49 individuals (19.4%) reported that they had been discriminated against in academic context. Additionally, 26 participants (10.3%) expressed uncertainty about whether they had ever experienced discrimination, while 178 individuals (70.3%) stated that they had never been the subject of any form of discrimination.

2.4.3. Academic staff

Academic staff constitutes 23% of the survey sample. Out of the 1,190 individuals in this group, 98 participated in the questionnaire, representing approximately 8.2% of the total population in this category.

The age range of academic staff varied from 27 to 68 years. In terms of gender identification, approximately 42.9% of them identified themselves as women. Regarding experiences of discrimination, 40 individuals (40.8%) reported that they had been discriminated against in academic context. Additionally, nine participants (9.2%) expressed uncertainty about whether they had ever experienced discrimination, and 49 individuals (50%) stated that they had never been the subject of any form of discrimination.

2.4.4. Administrative staff

In terms of respondents' role at the university, 84 participants (19% of the sample) categorized themselves as administrative staff. Considering the total number of administrative staff at TUL which is 1,400 it makes a response rate of 6% in this group.

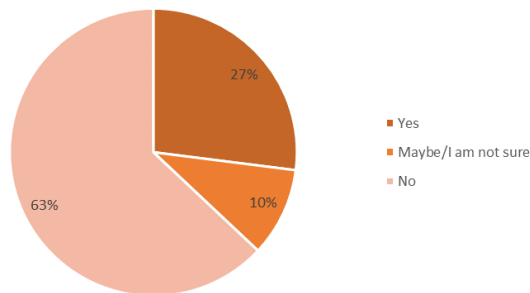
The age of academic staff spanned from 23 to 68 years. In terms of gender identification, 85.7% identified as women. Regarding experiences of discrimination, 27 individuals (32.2%) reported that they had personally faced instances of discrimination. Additionally, 8 participants (9.5%) expressed uncertainty about experiencing discrimination, while 49 individuals (58.3%) affirmed never being subjected to any form of discrimination.

2.5. Survey Results

2.5.1. General information

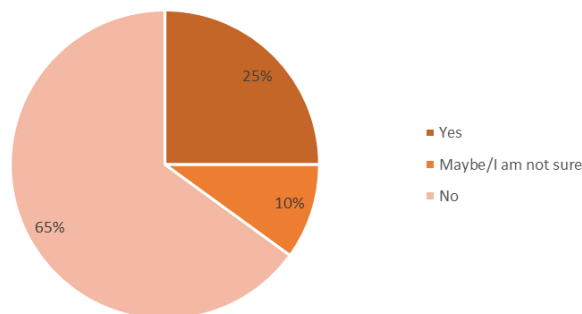
The respondents were asked if they had ever personally experience discrimination in a university context. The possible response options were: 'Yes', 'No' or ' Maybe/I am not sure'. Out of the 435 respondents, 276 individuals (almost 63%), reported that they had not felt discriminated against (see Figure 2). A total of 116 participants (approximately 27%) indicated that they had experienced discrimination and 43 participants (approximately 10%) responded that they were not sure if they had ever been discriminated against at the university. Discrimination was most often experienced personally by academic staff (over 40%) and least often by students (almost 20%). Regarding administrative staff, over 32% respondents reported having personally faced instances of discrimination.

Figure 2. Do you consider that you have ever been discriminated against in an academic context?



Additionally, respondents were asked if they had ever witnessed a situation occurring at the university where someone was discriminated against. As presented in Figure 3, 108 individuals (almost 25%) reported that they had witnessed discrimination and 283 respondents (65%) replied that they had not. Another 44 individuals (10%) were not sure about it. Discriminatory situations were the most commonly observed by administrative staff (over 33% individuals witnessed such cases), less often by academic staff (over 29%) and least often by students (approximately 20%).

Figure 3. Have you ever witnessed a situation occurring at the university where someone was discriminated against?



Considering both the percentage of individuals who reported experiencing discrimination firsthand and those who solely observed instances of discrimination of others, it can be seen that 152 (almost 35%) individuals personally experienced and/or witnessed discrimination, while 238 (almost 54.7%) respondents neither personally experienced nor witnessed discrimination.

2.5.2. Discriminatory situations encountered in a university setting

Individuals who reported experiencing discrimination or were unsure if they had encountered it within a university context were asked to describe the situations they perceived as discriminatory. The responses were presented in a qualitative format, prompting the need for a thematic analysis to categorize and understand these diverse experiences. A similar open question was asked to individuals who recounted instances of witnessing discrimination. The reasons or forms of discrimination reported by witnesses of such situations closely align with the responses from those who were direct targets of discrimination. An exception to this symmetry is discerned in the articulation of discrimination grounded in disability, a motive exclusively introduced by witnesses and absent among those who directly faced discriminatory incidents. However, this outcome may be ascribed to the demographic composition, specifically the absence of participants with disabilities among the respondents. Instances where a person reported both experiencing and witnessing discrimination were considered as one indication if the delineated situations exhibited comparability. The most prevalent category of discrimination was gender (82 instances). This issue was raised frequently, predominantly by students, and less frequently by academic staff. Administrative staff mentioned it only a few times, e.g.:

The student, despite repeating three times that he would not receive the item in question at that location, was still expecting a result. Only after asking another staff member for consultation (male), who repeated my earlier words (only once), did the student acknowledge the information given.

Female students complained about the way they had been treated by teachers, especially older male instructors. They had frequently encountered discriminatory comments perpetuating their limited autonomy and agency or suggesting that they are intellectually inferior to male students. Female students also raised concerns about hearing sexist comments and feeling that male instructors had treated them with excessive leniency, or, in some cases, had exhibited a lack of interest in their academic progress during classes:

A lot of female students were discriminated by professors on the basis of their gender. Those were usually jokes made at their expense.

Professor got into a discussion only with the men, while from the women he did not even expect an answer, or asked questions, such as "Have you ever seen a pinwheel?", "Have you ever used a screwdriver?". He left a group of women alone in the laboratory and had no time

for us, while when our late male colleagues came, the professor magically found the time and began to explain everything.

Male students, on the other hand, raised concerns that they had faced greater demands compared to their female peers:

Teacher (male) was giving higher marks towards girls.

During the exam, the girls received significantly simpler questions compared to the male students.

Employees also complained about gender discrimination:

Boss told one of the employee which was a woman, that she needs a man's lead.

My application for a hybrid job was rejected even though academics were allowed to work remotely during the pandemic. I am the father of a child less than one year old. Surely a woman would have been given the opportunity to work remotely.

Mobbing/psychological harassment was reported by 37 individuals. Employees were more likely to report this form of discrimination, while students less frequently indicated such instances.

The supervisor depresses the employee on the basis of gossip and slander, without checking and finding out what the truth is.

Supervisor and co-workers: refusing to help a co-worker, turning away from him because he was hired to this position, when staff expected that some other person would fill that position.

Following psychological harassment, the third most prevalent category was nationality, comprising 31 responses. The relatively high number of indications in this category may be attributed to the substantial representation of Erasmus students in the survey, accounting for 17% of all respondents. Nonetheless, the described situations are not exclusive to this group; they also apply to students from Ukraine who pursue a full study cycle at the university (and who constitute a relatively sizable group, influenced by the ongoing war in Ukraine):

It seems to me that the Poles in my group avoid me and do not want to work in a group with foreigners. Sometimes I meet oblique glances from one of my colleagues, it seems to me that this is how she looks at foreign students from Ukraine and Belarus.

Discrimination towards a student from Ukraine who, despite living in Poland for many years, was often treated by one of the teacher as if she was not able to understand anything in Polish.

Discrimination was also reported by Poles who had perceived differential treatment favouring Ukrainians from their teachers:

Students from Ukraine are treated better and with greater tolerance than Polish students. During the test, the teacher let the Ukrainian student to use the mobile phone as this student stated it is used as calculator, while other students were punished for this kind of behaviour.

Despite the significant expansion of the academic community with refugees from Ukraine, it is concluded that Polish-Ukrainian relations were infrequently mentioned by respondents. Erasmus students were more prone to complaints, citing situations where discrimination had been often linked to stereotypes about certain nationalities, e.g.:

Teachers have made uncomfortable comments about life in Latin American countries, implying that the countries are less civilized or have no infrastructure.

Twenty respondents reported experiencing and/or witnessing discrimination based on the position, with none of them being a student. This aspect was predominantly raised by administrative staff, who declared that they had been treated by academic staff as inferior and less capable:

I am an administrative employee and I have been humiliated many times by academics – they said I am worse employee because of not being a researcher, professor or I did not have a doctoral degree.

As an administrative employee, it happened that a person in a higher position/academic level made it clear to me that my role at TUL was less important than his and/or "subservient".

Sixteen individuals indicated favouritism or depreciation while describing discriminatory situations they encountered in the academic context.


Eleven respondents reported experiencing discrimination based on age. In most instances, this involved discrimination against older individuals, particularly in terms of reluctance to invest in persons approaching retirement age. On the other hand, the competence of young people had also been questioned but such instances were reported much less frequently.

Respondents also mentioned cases of discrimination based on appearance (11 individuals). Seven descriptions revealed instances of discrimination based on skin colour, e.g.:

In the presence of employees, the supervisor makes abusive and discriminatory comments about foreigners with different skin colour. The opinions most often concern employees/scientists of a foreign origin. They concern the belittling of achievements, education and skills and intelligence because of skin colour. The situation is repeated despite criticism of such behaviour by other employees.

Seven Erasmus students raised concerns about the insufficient availability of educational materials in English, which they also perceived as discrimination.

Another reason for discrimination within academic context was transgender/gender non-conforming status mentioned by six respondents.



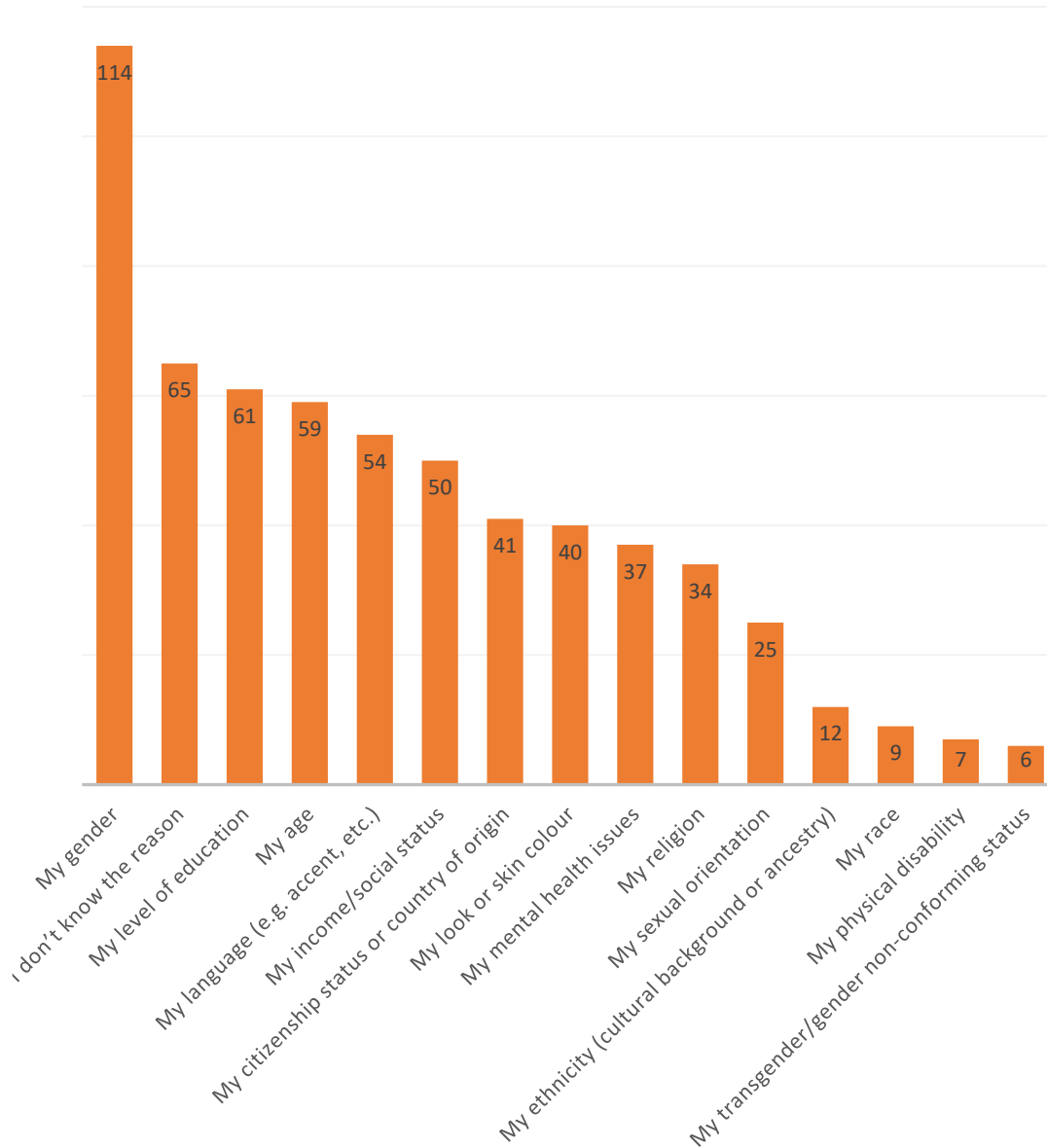
Personal context was disclosed in five descriptions indicating discrimination against a student whose parents were divorced, a student having family connections with the university staff or against staff being engaged in informal relationships or with an illegitimate child.

Four respondents reported cases of discrimination related to religion. A further four indicated cases of discrimination based on mental health. Personal beliefs, disability, financial status also emerged as factors contributing to discriminatory behaviour.

Eighteen respondents who indicated that they had directly faced discrimination and/or witnessed discriminatory situations chose not to disclose details about these incidents.

Beyond recounting instances of encountering discrimination in open-ended question, as initially requested in the questionnaire, participants were also prompted to specify the potential causes of unfair treatment from a predefined list of responses (the final inquiry in the survey). The most commonly cited factor was gender (114 indications). Sixty-five respondents were uncertain about the reasons behind others treating them unfairly. Level of education and age also featured prominently as two of the four most frequently mentioned potential reasons for discrimination – see Figure 4. Language (54 indications) and income/social status (50 indications) were also mentioned with notable frequency. Following closely were the factors of country of origin, look/skin colour. Mental health issues were indicated by 37 survey participants. Fewer than ten occurrences were noted for race, physical disability and transgender/gender non-conforming status.

Figure 4. Possible reasons for being treated unfairly (multiple answers possible)



2.5.3. Emotional responses to discrimination

Respondents who acknowledged experiencing or witnessing discrimination were invited to describe the feelings/emotions that these situations provoked in them. Responses were provided in a qualitative format and therefore it was difficult to categorize them. Fifty one different emotions/feelings were mentioned by individuals experiencing discrimination and 37 – by respondents who witnessed discriminatory behaviour. Table 1 and Table 2 present a concise summary of the content analysis representing emotions/feelings reported by survey participants. Nevertheless, these groupings are conventional. Certainly, if someone other than the report's author had attempted to categorize the emotions reported by the survey participants, the results might have appeared significantly different.

2.5.3.1. Emotions/feelings reported by respondents encountering discrimination

Perceiving inferiority (33 occurrences) and irritation/anger (33 occurrences) appeared to be the most prevalent emotions experienced by individuals who faced discrimination. Twenty seven survey participants stated that when encountering a discriminatory situation, they had simply felt bad (20 indications) or even terrible (7 indications). Lacking motivation came next with 21 indications:

Even if I initially enjoyed the good results of my work, after such situation my self-confidence is taken away, I feel sad, my value is lowered, I am afraid to take up new challenges so as not to expose myself to another such situation.

I felt demotivated - It was difficult to learn the lessons for the final test, putting at risk our final grade.

Sadness was disclosed in 21 descriptions. According to the participants, experiencing discrimination can also lead them to feelings of being marginalized or treated unfairly (21 occurrences), humiliation (20 indications) or social discomfort (20 occurrences).

Twelve individuals expressed a sense of helplessness when facing discrimination. Ten individuals reported feeling astonishment/disgust, and another ten - desolation. Nine respondents mentioned disappointment and additional nine - fearful reactions:

I was scared to speak or write anything. I didn't want to participate in the courses, had panic attacks.

Respondents also mentioned frustration, trust-related emotions (feeling confused, deceived or even betrayed), anxiety, upset or being tired or even psychologically exhausted:

It doesn't make me feel in a certain way but for sure it makes you psychologically exhausted.

For additional information, see Table 1.

2.5.3.2. Emotions/feelings reported by respondents witnessing discrimination


Individuals who witnessed discrimination most commonly reported feeling social discomfort (34 occurrences), indicating being embarrassed, ashamed, or uncomfortable:

I was embarrassed. I felt it was very unprofessional.

Uncomfortable, I didn't want to participate, I was withdrawn, I didn't say anything. I am ashamed that I have never defended him, I just passively listen to others laughing at him.

Irritation or anger came next with 22 indications:

Angry for not being able to speak up since I wasn't the one being discriminated against.



Fifteen respondents did not indicate specific emotions but mentioned feeling generally bad or even terrible:

I felt terribly bad, I felt like standing up for this girl and saying it was wrong, but I was afraid she would throw me out of the exam.

I felt very bad, especially as the person was brought to tears.

Fourteen survey participant felt helpless:

Mad and helpless as I cannot fight with professor and she allows herself for this type of behaviour towards students.

Twelve respondents mentioned astonishment/disgust, and additional ten – disappointment:

I was surprised and disappointed that some people may even say things like that in a university setting.

It made me feel surprised and disappointed with the academic community as I thought people would be more educated towards other cultures/countries.

Individuals witnessing discriminatory behaviour indicated also sadness, desolation, frustration, being confused, indignant or humiliated. For more details, see Table 2.

The Tables 1 and 2 aim to categorize the feelings/emotions indicated by respondents when they experience or witness discrimination. Yet, to gain a more in-depth understanding of these feelings, a thorough analysis of the complete responses to the open-ended question is recommended, as it offers a more comprehensive context of the situations. The quotes included above are only a limited selection from the respondents.

Table 1. Content analysis for feelings/emotions indicated by respondents encountering discriminatory behaviour

perceiving inferiority	undervalued/not appreciated	18
	inferior	15
irritation/anger	angry	24
	furious	5
	annoyed	3
	irritated	1
feeling bad/terrible	bad	20
	terrible	7
lacking motivation	demotivated/discouraged	18
	resigned	3
sadness	sad	21
being marginalized or treated unfairly	treated unfairly	7
	excluded	5
	ignored	3
	discriminated	1
	unnecessary	1
	unwelcomed	1
	withdrawn	1
	not being taken seriously	1
	not respected	1
humiliation	humiliated	15
	offended	5
social discomfort	embarrassed	7
	ashamed	7
	uncomfortable	6
feeling powerless	helpless	12
desolation	stressed	6
	depressed	3
	overwhelmed	1
astonishment/disgust	astonished	4
	disgusted	3
	surprised	1
	feeling disbelief	1
	shocked	1
disappointment	disappointed	9
fearful reactions	scared	7
	terrified	1
	threatened	1
frustration	frustrated	8
trust-related emotions	confused	3
	deceived	2
	betrayed	1
anxiety	anxious	5
upset	upset	5
tiredness	tired	3
	psychologically exhausted	1
other	embittered	2
	indignant	2
	misunderstood	1
	indifferent	1
	heartbroken	1

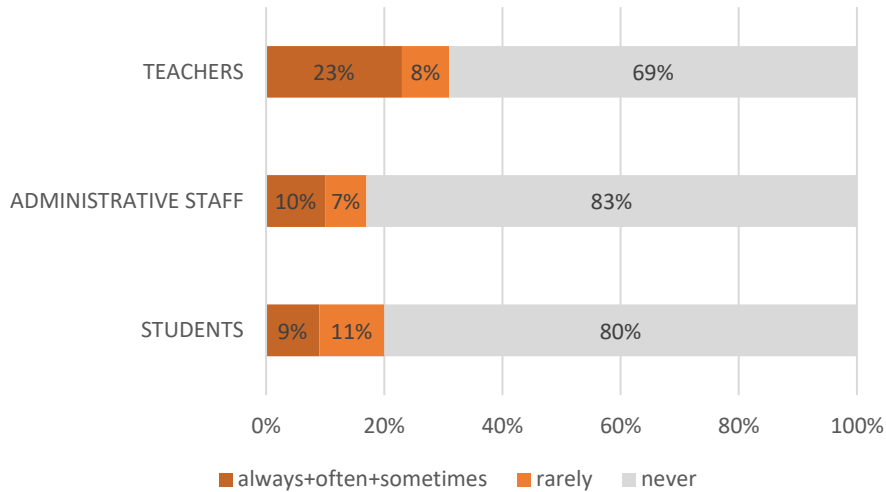
Table 2. Content analysis for feelings/emotions indicated by respondents witnessing discriminatory behaviour

social discomfort	embarrassed	16
	uncomfortable	12
	ashamed	5
	unpleasant	1
irritation/anger	angry	18
	annoyed	4
feeling bad/terrible	bad	11
	terrible	4
feeling powerless	helpless	14
astonishment/disgust	disgusted	5
	astonished	3
	shocked	2
	feeling disbelief	1
	appalled	1
desolation	stressed	3
	depressed	1
	overwhelmed	1
humiliation	humiliated	2
	offended	1
lacking motivation	demotivated	1
	resigned	1
other	disappointed	10
	sad	8
	upset	5
	indignant	4
	confused	4
	frustrated	3
	scared	2
	treated unfairly	2
	outraged	1
	tired	1
	empathic	1
	disturbed	1
	not having courage to react	1
	undervalued	1
	anxious	1

2.5.3.3. Perpetrators of the discriminatory behaviour

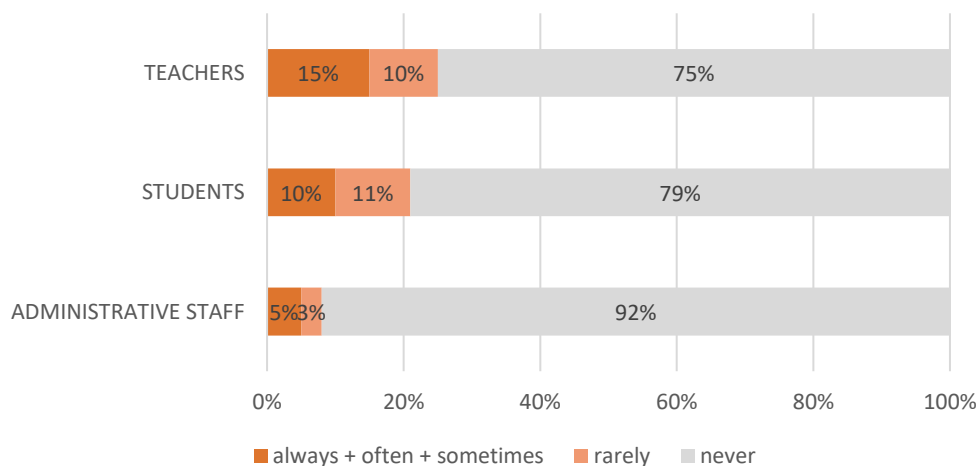
Figure 5 displays the distribution of those responsible for discrimination. It represents the frequency of discrimination on three levels. Responses 'always', 'often', and 'sometimes' were combined together for interpretation purposes. Among the instances reported, considering always/often/sometimes levels, teachers emerged as the primary source of discrimination and students discriminated least frequently.

Figure 5. Perpetrators of the discriminatory behaviour



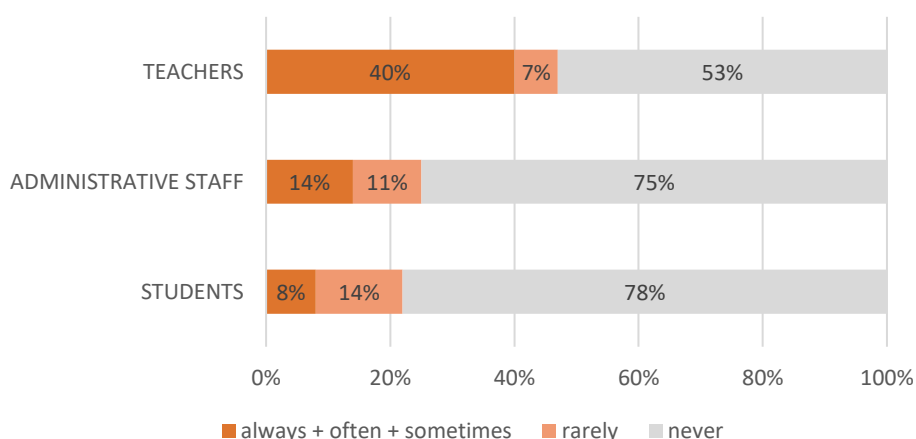
Figures 6, 7 and 8 illustrate the distribution of discrimination agents categorized by their origin and target. Considering students (see Figure 6), the primary origin of discrimination was frequently attributed to academic staff (teachers), with their peers being the subsequent source.

Figure 6. Students' declarations indicating the source of discrimination



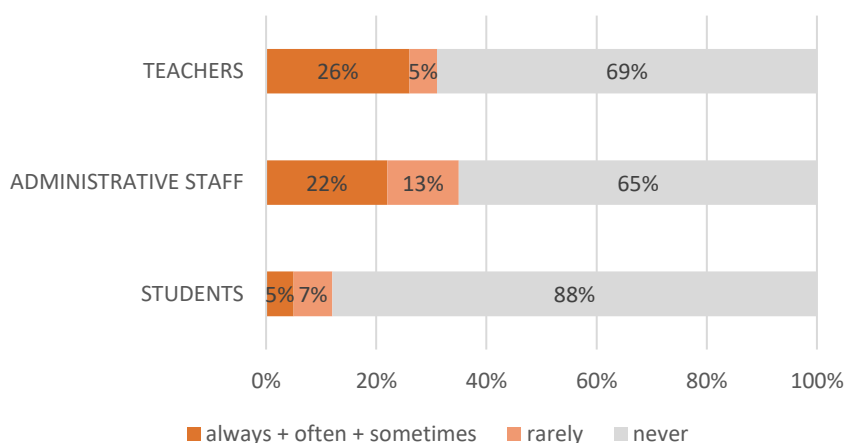
Academic staff were predominantly subjected to discrimination from other academic staff, followed by incidents involving administrative staff (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Academic staff/teachers' declarations indicating the source of discrimination



When considering administrative staff and always/often/sometimes responses, teachers were commonly recognized as the main contributors to discrimination, with administrative staff serving as the subsequent source and students mentioned the least frequently as the origin of discriminatory conduct – see Figure 8.

Figure 8. Administrative staff's declarations indicating the source of the discrimination they face in university context



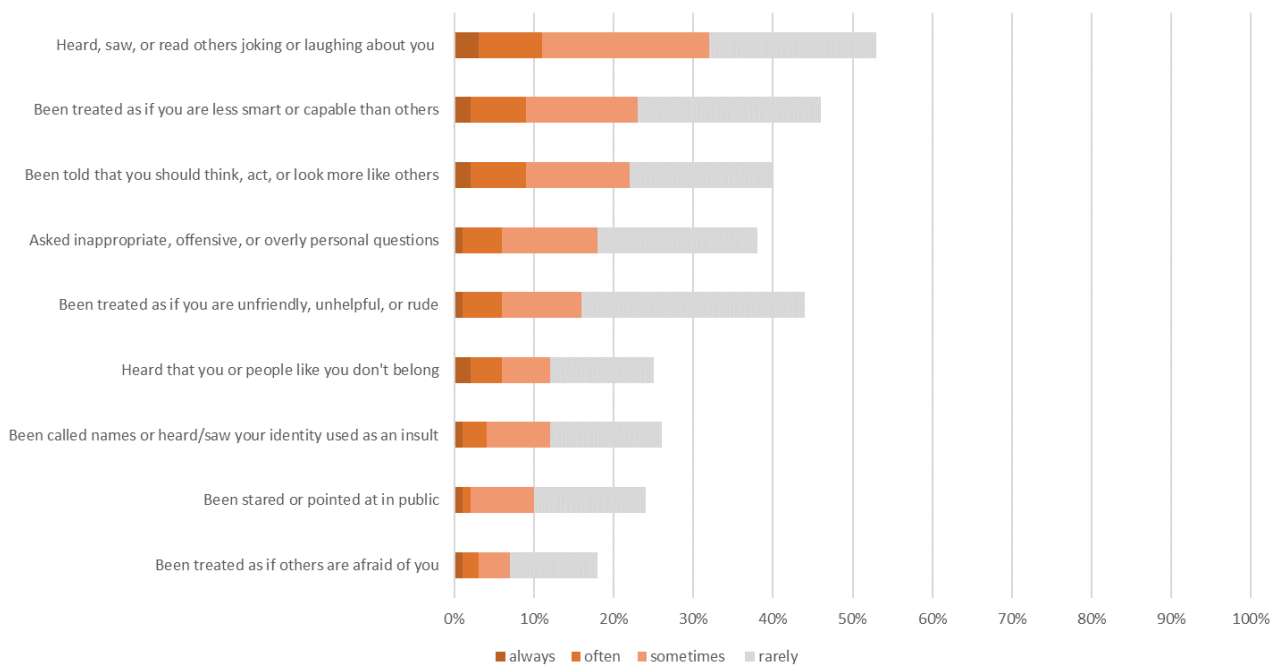
2.5.3.4. Intersectional Discrimination Index – day-to-day form (InDI-D)

The Intersectional Discrimination Index – day-to-day form (InDI-D) was also included in the survey. The questions in this part of the questionnaire were related to personal experiences of the respondents. This includes both how they describe themselves and how others might describe them. For example, their skin colour, ancestry, nationality, religion, gender, sexuality, age, weight, disability or mental health issue, and income.

Figure 9 represents the frequency of discrimination on three levels in orange: 'always', 'often', 'sometimes'. The responses 'rarely' were shaded in grey and the responses 'never' were excluded from the chart to facilitate interpretation. Nonetheless, it should be bear in mind that the response 'rarely' does indicate that the respondent encountered the delineated form of discrimination.

“Having heard, saw or read others joking or laughing at you or people like you” emerged as the most frequently reported form of discrimination with 32% of the surveyed individuals acknowledging that they had always/often/sometimes experienced such instances. “Being treated as if you are less smart or capable than others” was presented as the second most common form of discrimination (with 23% of the sample reporting it). Following closely, the third most prevalent form of discrimination, reported by 22% of the sample, was “been told that you should think, act, or look more like others”. Eighteen percent of the respondents declared that they had always/often/sometimes experienced „being asked inappropriate, offensive, or overly personal questions”. In fact, the percentage of individuals experiencing such situations is much higher as the response „rarely” was not counted and marked in orange.

Figure 9. Day-to-day discrimination in university setting measured with InDi-D



An analysis of responses to the questions included in this section, when compared with their statements regarding experiencing discrimination, revealed a certain inconsistency. On the one hand, 27% of respondents indicated that they had experienced discrimination and another 10% indicated that they may have encountered such situations (37% in total). On the other hand, considering always/often/sometimes/rarely answers, 53% of individuals declared that they had heard, saw, or read others joking or laughing about them, 46% of respondents had been treated as if they were less smart or capable than others, 44% of respondents had been treated as if they were unfriendly, unhelpful, or rude, 40% had been told that they should think, act, or look more like others and 38% had been asked inappropriate, offensive, or overly personal questions. These are all situations indicating that

the responders had encountered discrimination even though some of them asserted otherwise in the previous questions.

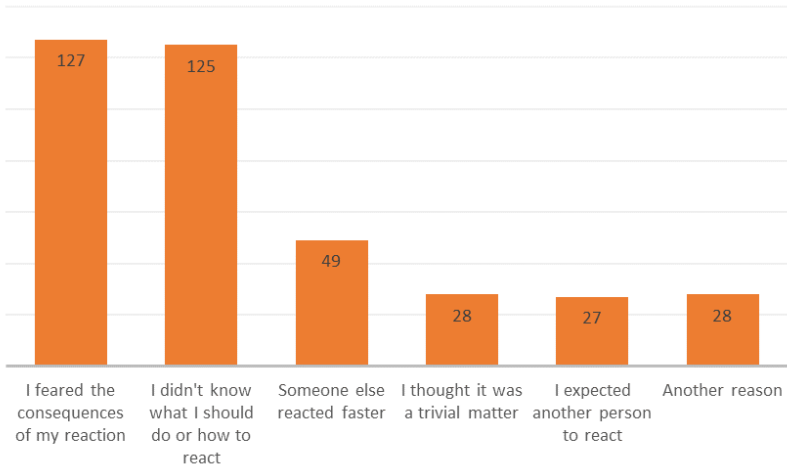
This observation implies a potential lack of initial awareness regarding the discriminatory nature of the outlined situations. Consequently, there is a likelihood that individuals may not actively oppose such behaviours when confronted with or witnessing them, and they may even inadvertently engage in such conduct. Once again, this underscores the need to enhance awareness of discriminatory behaviour and take proactive steps to prevent discrimination within the university environment.

2.5.3.5. Counteracting discrimination

Survey participants were also asked about their reactions when experiencing or observing discrimination. Eleven percent of respondents acknowledged that they had never responded in such situations, 19% had rarely reacted, 36% had sometimes responded, 22% had demonstrated frequent responsiveness, and 12% had consistently exhibited proactive engagement in such situations (they had always reacted).

When providing justifications for refraining from reacting in discriminatory situations, respondents predominantly cited fear of the potential repercussions of their reactions (127 indications) and a lack of knowledge on how to respond appropriately (125 individuals) – see Figure 10. A less prevalent reason was that someone had already reacted faster (49 indications). Finally, some survey participants conveyed an expectation of a response from another individual, or alternatively, expressed that they had not deem the situation significant enough to warrant their own proactive engagement.

Figure 10. The reason for respondents' lack of response to counteract a discriminatory situation (multiple answers possible)



3. Summary of the interviews

3.1. Introduction

In total ten interviews were conducted between 22 November and 15 December 2023. They were deliberately scheduled after the preliminary analysis of the survey results to be able to address the initial observations and results and to facilitate a more profound analysis of the instances of discrimination within the university setting. Three students, three teachers/academic staff, and four administrative employees were interviewed, each of them during a separate meeting.

The interviewees initially responded to questions from the survey questionnaire, followed by a brief overview of the primary survey results. Subsequently, they were invited to share their insights and comments on the findings. Their comments served as the starting point for a more extensive discussion on discrimination at the university. The most important conclusions from the interviews are presented below.


3.2. Discrimination at the university

None of the interviewees reported personally experiencing discrimination at the university, and they generally labelled the atmosphere at TUL as friendly. Nevertheless, half of them witnessed such situations, and most of them heard about such incidents. Both employees and students confirmed the existence of discrimination based on gender and position. Senior male academics, in particular, find it challenging to acknowledge that a woman can excel as much as they do in their work and that women conduct high-level research. For students, gender-based discrimination manifests in conflicting ways - on the one hand, female students face prejudice as some teachers assert that there is no place for them in engineering or technology. On the other hand, female students occasionally benefit from preferential treatment. Within the academic staff, discrimination based on position or academic title/degree was noted as relatively common.

However, it should be considered that the interviewees may not have felt as anonymous as the survey participants. As a result, it is likely that their reports of discrimination at the university were more balanced and they may have intentionally omitted certain situations they had experienced in the academic context.

Academic staff emerged as the group most frequently implicated in discriminatory behaviour, much less the students who happened to discriminate mostly against their peers. No instances of discrimination by administrative staff were reported during the interviews. These findings align closely with the conclusions drawn from the survey questionnaire.

Long-term employees at TUL asserted that there used to be more instances of discrimination, suggesting that generational shifts have contributed to positive changes. A decade ago, discrimination



against female employees was prevalent, but with the departure of the older staff and greater societal awareness, some of these issues have naturally diminished. According to the interviewees, the younger generation is notably more open-minded, tolerant, and understanding. Its presence in the university brings positive changes that contribute to the ongoing efforts against discrimination.

The fact of perceiving discrimination depends on awareness, sensitivity and certain characteristics of individuals. One interviewee emphasised that she herself had not encountered discrimination and very rarely had witnessed it. But a colleague, who identifies herself as a feminist and works in the same Faculty, holds the view that she had frequently encountered such situations.

According to those interviewed, instances of discrimination appeared to be less common:


- in smaller faculties, where students feel less anonymous, making engagement in discriminatory behaviour less likely;
- in faculties where there is a majority of female students;
- in faculties with a predominance of female staff members;
- in faculties with a higher percentage of young employees.

However, these are only certain observations that would require validation through additional survey to be considered as binding conclusions.

Faculty of Material Technologies and Textile Design, bringing together technology and arts, appears to stand out as an exceptional case, where instances of discrimination are exceedingly rare. According to the interviewees, the remarkably high sensitivity of students and teachers in this Faculty is likely the reason. It was highlighted that even individuals from the LGBTQA+ community, who might be hesitant to disclose their identity at certain faculties (as confirmed by two cases in the survey), had not encountered discrimination there. The overall atmosphere in the Faculty was described as exceptionally friendly, applying to both students and staff. However, it is worth noting that there had been historical instances of discrimination and mobbing by senior staff.

Individuals engaged in daily interactions with those having special needs reported also instances of discrimination against this group. While this may not be a pervasive issue at TUL, it is one that needs attention. The academic environment is witnessing a rising number of individuals with mental health concerns (who also fall under the category of people with special needs), and it is anticipated that the discrimination against this group may escalate.

Interviewees attributed the source of this discrimination to a lack of awareness regarding the fact that disabilities are not always visible. There is a low awareness of the considerable number of



individuals with limited abilities in their midst, where seemingly 'ordinary' conditions such as allergies or atopic dermatitis can pose challenges.

Disabilities that are visible tend to be more readily accepted by the community, as there is a collective awareness and some level of preparedness for their presence. On the contrary, it is more challenging to embrace (and consequently avoid discriminating against) individuals with conditions like autism spectrum or Asperger's syndrome.

The growing number of students with special needs stemming from mental health issues poses a notable challenge for academic staff. Many teachers find themselves lacking the knowledge of how to identify such individuals (as not everyone openly shares information about their conditions) and are uncertain about whether or not or how to provide effective support. However, there is a noticeable shift in awareness. Some teachers actively seek guidance on how to assist these students and adapt the educational process to meet their needs. Frequently, personal experiences prompt teachers to pursue specialized training in this area; those who haven't encountered students with such mental health problems may remain unaware of the issue and may not perceive the necessity for proactive education in this regard. On the other hand, there is a group of teachers who deny the existence of such problems, considering them as contemporary inventions. This particular group often engages in discriminatory behaviour. Additionally, students with mental health problems may sometimes be regarded as troublesome, as their education demands extra effort from teachers, further contributing to instances of discriminatory conduct.

Frequently, the issue of discrimination against an individual with a mental health issue diminishes when that person talks openly about their conditions. When students discover that someone they may have previously considered different has a mental health problem, they tend to approach that person with greater caution and understanding. This confirms that discriminatory behaviour often stems from a lack of awareness rather than being an intentional malicious act.

Finally, students with special needs, typically characterized by a friendly demeanour, find it easier to receive support from their peers. A notable example is a student with a mobility disability who, owing to her open and friendly nature, engaged others to the extent that they competed to assist her. In such instances, discrimination is generally absent. However, challenges arise when individuals with special needs display demanding or anti-social behaviour. Thus, our attitudes and personal traits in a way influence discriminatory behaviour. Interviewees emphasize that people who behave in a way that is difficult to accept and cannot win over those around them may often mistakenly interpret this as discrimination, even if it is not necessarily the case. Despite this, it is important to note that people who perceive that they are the object of others' contempt due to their gender, colour, or membership

in another group are more prone to participate in social deviance because they believe that others do not treat them with respect.

3.3. University procedures addressing discrimination

The university established a Committee for Good Academic Practice and appointed 12 Gender Equality Officers. Measures have been put in place to prevent discrimination, including the implementation of Regulations on Anti-Discrimination Practices at TUL and the Human Resources Development Policy.


In 2021, the Rector of TUL signed the Plan for Gender Equality at TUL. The document provides for ensuring equality, in accordance with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers, and is the result of efforts by university authorities to raise awareness of the importance of equality issues. The plan covers all groups of employees and undergraduates of all degrees, including the doctoral group. The document designates 28 activities assigned to four areas: Institutional infrastructure; Gender balance in leadership, decision-making and research; Gender equality in recruitment and career development; and Work-life balance and organizational culture.

Human Capital Management Centre is responsible for Gender Equality Plan and antidiscrimination procedures at TUL.

The composition of the Committee for Good Academic Practice is fixed (nine persons representing different faculties). The scope of its activity includes:

- formulation of opinions and motions in matters concerning infringements of good academic practice,
- formulation of opinions and motions in matters referred by the Rector of TUL concerning in particular: conduct contrary to the obligations of academic teachers, nepotism, abuse of power, conducting activities competitive to TUL, lack of respect for intellectual property, application of non-substantive criteria in the assessment of the work of academic teachers and students, discrimination, undermining of authority, scientific competence and rights, mobbing, incidents of corruption, conflict of interest and mediation in conflicts between academic teachers.

Gender Equality Officers are individuals designated to assist the academic community in resolving conflicts, providing counselling, addressing and resolving equality issues, mediating and investigating complaints. Staff, doctoral students and students are encouraged to approach them within their respective units regarding any issue of discrimination, harassment, or bullying. Notifications can be submitted either in person or via email.



The Academic Good Practices Team convenes when a formal complaint is reported, typically in response to specific issues. Over the past three years, there have been two cases reported, with only one involving discrimination. This committee handles complaints from employees while student complaints are addressed by a disciplinary ombudsman. However, students often approach the Dean of Student Affairs or someone they trust with their concerns.

Gender Equality Officers receive a maximum of a few cases per year, but these instances often involve seeking conversation rather than initiating a formal complaint. Individuals reporting such cases typically expect someone to address discriminatory behaviour informally.

The university conducts an EXIT Survey for departing employees, addressing various reasons for leaving, including infrequent discrimination-related problems. It is planned to cover the topic of discrimination in onboarding procedures for new employees, as well.

There are anti-discrimination trainings at the university but they mainly focus on gender discrimination and have limited participation.

The adoption of the Gender Equality Plan has prompted the development of new anti-discrimination documents and procedures. Planned changes include introducing a variable composition for the Committee on Good Academic Practices, which is expected to allow experts in a particular area to be selected for handling complaints in the future.

Interviewees noted that discriminatory behaviour is often signalled but not officially reported, as confirmed by the presented statistics. According to administrative staff, it is due to the absence of a well-defined reporting procedure. Students, in particular, expressed scepticism about officially reporting complaints, preferring to resolve matters amicably through discussions with vice-deans or other mediators. They generally do not seek punitive measures against individuals engaging in discriminatory behaviour but rather expect the behaviour to cease.

A comprehensive information campaign is considered necessary, as many students and employees are unaware of the existing anti-discrimination policy of the university. More active students, involved in student government or research clubs, tend to have a better understanding of complaint procedures compared to the general student body. Nevertheless, overall, there is a low level of awareness within the university regarding the recognition of behaviours that indicate discrimination.

3.4. Summary

Interviewees generally perceive the university environment as friendly, yet they recognise the need for improvement. The university community has long tolerated discriminatory behaviour, making rapid changes difficult to achieve. According to those interviewed, generational and societal shifts

play a significant role in mitigating discrimination, as younger generation is more open-minded, tolerant and demonstrating courage to explicitly reject discriminatory behaviour.

While there is a growing awareness among students and staff about countering discriminatory behaviour, interviewees acknowledge that it does not result from university-led campaigns or initiatives. Instead, sensitivity on the subject is acquired outside the academic setting. The lack of anti-discrimination campaigns within university poses significant challenges. On the one hand, it results in students and staff being unfamiliar with anti-discrimination regulations and procedures binding at TUL, often unaware of their existence within the university at all. On the other hand, members of the university community may not recognize that certain behaviours bear the hallmarks of discrimination. This is a crucial point underscored by all interviewees. They firmly believe that discrimination is not deliberate or malicious conduct, but rather stems from a lack of understanding, openness to others, and unawareness that certain jokes made during classes may only be amusing to the person making them. This viewpoint is supported by the statements of students who highlighted that issues reported informally had been usually resolved, and a corrective conversation between the supervisor and the individual engaging in discriminatory behaviour had been usually sufficient to cease discriminatory conduct.

4. Desktop research

4.1. Introduction

Concurrently with the questionnaire survey on discrimination conducted at TUL, a comparative desktop analysis was conducted on analogous research endeavours at other Polish universities. The inclusion criteria encompassed surveys carried out exclusively between 2020 and 2023. The focus was mainly on research conducted at three universities: Jagiellonian University in Kraków¹, University of Szczecin², University of Silesia in Katowice³, but these do not exhaust the pool of valuable studies identified. The choice is justified by the most similar thematic scope which was still not identical to that of the survey carried out within the framework of the EQUINI project. Nevertheless, some

¹ [Bezpieczeństwo i równe traktowanie na Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim 2020/2021 – Raport z badania](#)
(Safety and equality at Jagiellonian University 2020/2021 - Survey report)

² [Bezpieczeństwo i równe traktowanie na Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim 2021/2022 – Raport z badania](#)
(Safety and equality at Jagiellonian University 2021/2022 - Survey report)

³ [Plan Równości na Uniwersytecie Szczecińskim na lata 2022-2024](#)
(University of Szczecin Equality Plan 2022-2024)

³ [Raport z badania opinii prowadzonego wśród studentek i studentów Uniwersytetu Śląskiego w Katowicach na temat dyskryminacji i nierównego traktowania](#) (published in 2021)
(Report on a survey conducted among students of the University of Silesia in Katowice on discrimination and unequal treatment)

interesting facts have been pointed out below concerning similar issues addressed in the survey conducted at TUL.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that none of the three universities is a university of technology, so these results can be expected to differ significantly. While, in the case of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and the University of Silesia in Katowice, the survey reports were published on the institutional websites, in the case of the University of Szczecin the analysis was based on the Equality Plan, in which the survey results were referred to. The reports are only available in Polish.

In the surveys conducted at the first two universities, only students participated as respondents, whereas in the study conducted at University of Szczecin, students, PhD students and staff were included.

4.2. University of Silesia in Katowice

A study conducted at the University of Silesia among 1,445 students demonstrated the presence of discrimination within the university setting. This was indicated by declarations of their direct experience by one in five respondents and confirmation of witnessing such situations by one in three students. Regrettably, there is a lack of awareness among students on how to respond to discrimination. More than half of the respondents (58.5%) do not know how to react in such situations - especially when witnessing discrimination.

Almost 85% of respondents indicated that discriminated persons do not report these situations due to fear of negative consequences which emerged as the most frequently cited reason. This is also the most predominant reason for non-reaction by witnesses of discrimination, chosen by 71% of respondents.

Students considered factors related to the perpetrators' personality (e.g. rigidity of attitudes, lack of openness, level of empathy) as the main contributors to the occurrence of discrimination at the university. These personality factors are believed to be rooted in the perpetrators' socialization process and various deficits, particularly in the cognitive and social domains. Example answers:

Lack of empathy and reflection on one's words.

Unreflective putting one's beliefs above the feelings of others.

Insufficient willingness to comprehend and tolerate alternative perspectives.

Inadequate education and upbringing of the individual displaying such behaviour during their school years.

Deficient early education, where children are not taught that differences are not inherently wrong.

Survey participants acknowledged that discrimination commonly stems from a lack of empathy rather than being a purposeful, targeted action against someone. They emphasized the need for widespread campaigns and training programs to raise awareness about this issue:

It would be beneficial if the university underscored its commitment to antidiscrimination and arranged events to promote equality. This could include voluntary educational sessions on tolerance.

Mandatory training for teachers to raise awareness of potential unconscious discrimination, focusing on identifying inappropriate words and remarks. Promoting equality is needed with the involvement of NGOs that could collaborate on various engaging initiatives with the university.

4.3. Jagiellonian University in Kraków

The survey conducted at Jagiellonian University involved 886 students. Over 66% of respondents rated the level of equal treatment at the university high or very high, 14.5% rated it low or very low and the remaining 18.9% rated it neither low nor high. Over 20% of respondents encountered unequal treatment, and an additional 8.4% chose not to provide an answer to this question.

The open question revealed 154 situations of unequal treatment. The most commonly reported experiences were related to gender, accounting for 15.3% (e.g. differential treatment based on gender, with women often receiving less favourable treatment), world view - 11.4% (e.g. criticising opinions of others), field of study - 8.9% (e.g. disrespecting persons representing a different field of study/discipline or specialisation). Other frequently cited reasons for unequal treatment included health status (5%), religion (4.7%), socio-economic status (3.9%), age (3.6%), language/dialect/accents (3.6%), and sexual orientation (3.3%). Respondents most commonly identified teachers as the source of unequal treatment.

The report highlighted that experiencing unequal treatment not only deters attendance but also leads to a decline in motivation to learn, temporarily hindering participation in classes. This implies that encountering discrimination can have lasting repercussions affecting various aspects of the respondents' lives.

One hundred and thirty-four individuals provided suggestions on actions to ensure that students feel treated fairly and equally. Their proposals included trainings for academic staff, incorporating a question on equal treatment in teaching evaluation surveys, extending the offer of psychological support, enhancing the availability of materials in English for international students, and considering the needs of individuals on the autism spectrum.

In the concluding section of the report, a significant recommendation highlighted the need to undertake information and education activities/campaigns aimed at preparing university staff for interactions with students, emphasizing the significance of equal treatment and encompassing aspects of interpersonal communication.

4.4. University of Szczecin

The report presents results separately for staff (184 teachers and 126 administrative staff), students (927 individuals) and PhD students (93 persons).

4.4.1. Staff

Employees were asked to rate the workplace atmosphere on a five-point scale. Almost 42% described it as friendly, while 14.8% characterized it as very friendly. A neutral atmosphere was reported by 24.8% of respondents, 13.5% found it unfriendly, and 3.2% labelled it as hostile.

More than 43% of respondents either experienced or witnessed discrimination. According to their responses, the primary cause of unequal treatment was job position, accounting for 23.9%. Other frequently mentioned reasons for discrimination included age (15.38%), gender (13.77%), education (8.10%), and political views (6.07%). Less frequently cited reasons included religion or lack thereof (2.83%), disability (1.62%), and sexual orientation (1.62%).

4.4.2. Students

Forty three percent of students assessed the university atmosphere as neutral, 49% rated it as friendly or very friendly, 6.7%, described it as unfriendly, and a mere 1.3% - as hostile. Over 23% of survey participants confirmed experiencing or witnessing discrimination.

The most prevalent reason for unequal treatment was gender, cited by 40.74% of respondents. Other common reasons included political views (25.46%), age (23.61%), education (19.91%), full-time/part-time study status (18.52%), nationality (12.50%), and religion or lack thereof (9.26%). The least frequently mentioned reasons were sexual orientation (6.48%), race (3.24%), and disability (1.85%).

4.4.3. PhD students

Among PhD students, 45% characterized the university atmosphere as friendly or very friendly, over 24% considered it neutral, 16% perceived it as unfriendly, and almost 14% labelled it as hostile. Notably, 33.3% of PhD students acknowledged experiencing or witnessing instances of discrimination.

The most common causes of discrimination were gender (38.7%) and age (35.48%). As subsequent and common reasons for unequal treatment, respondents selected: religion or lack thereof (29.03%), education (25.81%), political views (22.58%), and sexual orientation (12.90%). The least frequently mentioned reasons by doctoral students were race (3.23%) and nationality (3.23%).

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The results of the survey, as well as the findings from the interviews and desk research showed that discrimination is a multifaceted phenomenon that can appear in diverse forms and impacts all groups within the university. The main conclusions are as follows:

1. The most frequently reported reasons for discrimination mentioned in open-ended questions were gender, nationality and position (hierarchy). Discrimination tied to nationality stood out as a significant category, suggesting that individuals from different countries or cultural backgrounds may encounter challenges related to the perception of their origin. However, it should be noted that the nationality being the third most frequently mentioned reason may be attributed to the relatively large proportion of Erasmus students among the respondents.


Additionally, participants were also prompted to specify the potential causes of unfair treatment from a predefined list of responses (the final inquiry in the survey). The most commonly cited factors were gender, level of education and age, thus confirming the observations from the analysis of the answers to the open question. The high frequency of discrimination based on gender and level of education/position underscores the need for targeted interventions to address these specific areas of concern.

Comparing to the result of desk research, gender was also the most frequently mentioned by the students of Jagiellonian University as well as by the students and PhD students of University of Szczecin. Additionally, academic and administrative staff of University of Szczecin perceived job position as the primary cause of unequal treatment. Therefore, it can be concluded that gender and job position issues require, in general, special attention in the Polish context.

2. In the survey conducted at TUL, it was observed that situations of discrimination seem to be concentrated in the teachers → teachers, teachers → administrative staff, and teachers → student axes, with teachers being the perpetrators of discriminatory actions and behaviours the most frequently.

A study conducted at Jagiellonian University led to similar findings, indicating that teachers were the most likely individuals to engage in discriminatory behaviour. It is worth noting, however, that only students were surveyed at this university.

3. The emotional responses to discrimination revealed a profound impact such experiences have on individuals. Anger, sadness, humiliation, feeling undervalued or demotivated emerged as prevalent emotional reactions, highlighting a significant harm caused by discriminatory incidents. Additionally, the feeling of humiliation denotes the detrimental




impact that instances of discrimination can have on an individual's self-esteem and dignity. The feeling of being marginalized or treated unfairly indicates that individuals who experienced discrimination felt excluded and isolated from the university community. In consequence, all these negative feelings indicated by respondents encountering or witnessing discrimination may hinder individuals in their academic performance, impede their personal development, and/or may have damaging impact on individuals' self-perception and confidence. Finally, they can cause mental health implications.

Survey conducted at Jagiellonian University yielded comparable results, indicating that experiencing unequal treatment by students not only discourages attendance but also diminishes motivation to learn, temporarily impeding class participation. This implies that facing discrimination can have lasting effects on various aspects of respondents' lives.

4. Diverse perspectives on discrimination within faculties appear to be influenced by the proportion of female students/academic staff in each faculty as well as its profile and size, but this hypothesis would require confirmation by in-depth research.
5. According to interviewees, discrimination is not rooted in malicious intent. Rather, it arises from a lack of empathy and awareness, where individuals may not realize that certain comments and behaviours can be discriminatory. It can be confirmed by the survey results, - the term "malicious" suggesting that some individuals perceived the discriminatory acts directed at them as intentional and driven by ill intentions, did not appear even once in the answers to the open questions.

Similarly, students of University of Silesia also acknowledged that discrimination commonly stems from a lack of empathy rather than being a purposeful, targeted action against someone. They considered factors related to the perpetrators' personality as the main contributors to the occurrence of discrimination at the university. These personality factors are believed to originate from the perpetrators' socialization experiences and deficiencies, particularly in cognitive and social abilities. Therefore, students of University of Silesia emphasized the need for widespread campaigns and training programs to raise awareness around the issue of discrimination.

6. Members of the academic community find it challenging to respond to discriminatory behaviour, irrespective of whether they personally encounter or witness such instances. They consider a formal written complaint as a last resort, to be employed only when other methods have proven ineffective. A simple conversation with a person displaying discriminatory behaviour is typically sufficient to discourage repetition of such conduct.



Students bring instances of discrimination to the attention of the vice-dean for student affairs, and these issues are usually resolved amicably. They generally do not seek punitive measures against those involved in discriminatory behaviour but rather expect the behaviour to cease.


7. Students and academic/administrative staff have absolutely different ideas regarding actions addressing discrimination issues and procedures for filing complaints about discrimination. Administrative staff believe that enhancing anti-discrimination procedures will contribute to an improvement in the situation. Students, in particular, express scepticism about officially reporting complaints, preferring to resolve matters amicably through discussions with vice-deans or other mediators.
8. Generational change at TUL is perceived as conducive to a less frequent occurrence of discrimination (considering both, staff and students).
9. The increasing prevalence of students with mental health-related special needs presents a significant challenge for the academic community. A significant number of teachers lack knowledge to identify such individuals given the limited disclosure of their conditions. This leads to uncertainty in providing effective support for them. Additionally, there is a group of teachers who deny the existence of these issues, perceiving them as contemporary inventions, and consequently engaging in discriminatory behaviour. Additionally, students with mental health issues may be viewed as troublesome due to the extra effort required from teachers to address their needs, further contributing to instances of discriminatory conduct.

Likewise, students engage in unconscious discrimination, as well. They show increased understanding towards conduct that diverges from what is commonly acknowledged as the norm only when the individual experiencing difficulties talks openly about their conditions.

When they are unaware of someone's health condition and notice that person behaving differently from the majority, there are occasions when they might inadvertently discriminate.

Mental health issues were also raised by the students of Jagiellonian University - 134 individuals provided suggestions on actions to ensure that students feel treated fairly and equally. Their proposals included not only conducting trainings for academic staff, but also considering the needs of individuals on the autism spectrum in various aspects of education.

10. While some of the situations described by the survey participants can be classified as discrimination, not all instances may fit the definition the respondents were provided with in



the questionnaire. Based on the analysis of the open-ended questions, it can be concluded that some individuals mistakenly interpreted certain conduct as discriminatory, even though it may not be objectively so. Hence, there is a necessity for an informational campaign targeted at both parties: those who engage in discrimination and those who perceive themselves as being discriminated against. The campaign should educate on the differences between prejudice, discrimination and intergroup conflict. Consideration should also be given to feelings and emotions that instances of discrimination evoke in those targeted.

11. A widespread anti-discrimination information campaign is required at TUL. The rationale behind this is that many students and staff lack awareness of the anti-discrimination regulations and procedures enforced at TUL. On the other hand, members of the university community may not recognize that certain behaviours bear the hallmarks of discrimination. Similarly, in the report for Jagiellonian University, a significant need was highlighted to undertake information and education campaigns aimed at preparing university staff for interactions with students, emphasizing the significance of equal treatment and encompassing aspects of interpersonal communication.

12. A widespread information campaign and education activities are required at TUL on how to react to discrimination - 125 out of 231 respondents (54.1%) who indicated the reasons for their lack of response to counteract the discriminatory conduct explained that they had not known what they should do or how to react.

Similarly, almost 60% of the respondents of University of Silesia also declared that they do not know how to react in such situations - especially when they witness such incidents.