**STUDENT’S BACKGROUND, AGE AND TIME TO THESIS PROPOSAL IN NEW PHD PROGRAM IN KINESIOLOGY**

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The new PhD program at the Faculty of Kinesiology in Zagreb started in 2015, with two cohorts enrolled since. The aim of this study was to identify some factors which contribute to earlier topic proposal submission. We investigated the background, gender, age, and differences in time to PhD proposal defense among enrolled students.

Data on background, age, and graduate study grades were analyzed for 114 students enrolled in 2015 and 2017. The mean age at enrollment was 32±7.8 years (range: 24–55 years), with 53% male and 47% female students. The mean graduate study grade was 4.01±0.41. Most students (68%) held kinesiology master’s degrees, while others had backgrounds in medicine (18%), physiotherapy (4%), business (4%), and other fields (5%). ANOVA revealed significant differences in age at enrollment by background (F(4.109)=8.323; p<0.001), with kinesiology majors being the youngest (30.46±0.79 years) and business graduates the oldest (42.25±3.50 years). Medical doctors required less time to defend their PhD proposal compared to kinesiology majors (17.1 months vs. 19.5 months; p<0.05). No significant gender differences were found. The higher-than-expected mean age of students may reflect the fact that Croatian PhD students often work while financing their own studies.

 The flexibility of the new program, which allows early specialization into fields such as sport science, kinesitherapy, motor control, and biomechanics, has attracted graduates from various disciplines. Medical doctors showed quicker initial progress, but future research should explore completion rates.

**References**

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