

Exploring EFL Students' Lived Experiences Working in Single-Gender and Mixed-Gender Groups: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract. *Group work (GW) is one of the strategies teachers employ to organize students and let them participate in collaborative tasks to achieve their learning-centered goals. The formation of single-gender (SG) and mixed-gender (MG) groups cannot be avoided in GW. Thus, this research aimed to explore EFL (English Foreign Language) students' lived experiences working in SG and MG groups. A qualitative study using a phenomenological approach was conducted. The data were collected from three rounds of semi-structured interviews with eight participants. They were selected through three steps of online screening with some criteria. The research was conducted at one of the state universities in East Java, Indonesia. Van Kaam's method, modified by Monstakas (1994), was used to analyze the data. This research revealed two main results: positive and negative experiences reported by students in both the SG and MG groups. In the SG group, the themes include effective communication, postponed GW tasks, and a better environment. In contrast, in the MG group, the themes encompass ineffective communication, solid members, and ineffective time management. In short, two positive and one negative theme are mentioned in SG groups, while one positive and two negative themes emerge in MG groups. As a result, the core aspects revealed include communication, individual contributions and responsibility, and productivity and efficiency while working in groups. This present research adds more comprehensive theories of GW related to students' gender and helps students and teachers be more aware of GW related to gender aspects.*

Keywords: *EFL Students, Group Work, Mixed-Gender Group, Phenomenological Study, Single-Gender Group*

INTRODUCTION

Group work (GW) is a condition in which people collaborate to do or resolve their work together. It has long been an essential part of the teaching and learning process. GW is highlighted when small enough students work together to contribute to an allocated learning activity (E. G. Cohen & Lotan, 2014). This is the result of a transformation in learning from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach that emerges in ELT (English Language Teaching) and creates an alternative environment for students to become more mindful of their expression. GW is one of the essential teaching techniques applied in EFL (English Foreign Language) to develop students' communication (Ibniyan, 2012). These activities are one of the ways of learning to achieve goals for two or more students (Bennett, 2015). In higher education, GW improves deep learning and develops teamwork as an active learning strategy (Poort et al., 2022). GW helps learners learn and creates students' motivation (Alfares, 2017; Hamed, 2022; Harputlu & Erarslan, 2019). Gebru (2019) mentions that social comparison, social learning, and social cognition are shown in GW. Johnson and Johnson (Johnson & Johnson, 2018) mention five elements that are crucial to increasing the cooperative potential of GW: positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, the appropriate use of social skills, and group processing. GW can be time-consuming (Chang & Brickman, 2018) and frustrate students (Rajabzadeh et al., 2022; Waragh &

Suwaed, 2021). However, there are several benefits from GW, such as achieving learning goals (Wilson et al., 2018), increasing students' motivation (Hamed, 2022), involving more engagement (Chen et al., 2021; Zulfikar, 2022), decreasing anxiety (Zulfikar, 2022) and reducing shyness (Chen et al., 2021)

A group cannot be separated from the differences in its members; one difference is gender. Gender-based groups provide some advantages for each individual, such as creating unique and challenging situations and improving team workers' work (Cohen & Mullender, 2002). Students' gender has determined their contribution to GW (Joo, 2017). English language learners prefer to do group activities to respect gender differences (Abulhassan & Hamid, 2021). Males and females of different genders perform and have attitudes in groups a certain way, which can have a significant impact on how the group is conducted (Lindsay & Orton, 2011). Not only will students' performance and attitudes be different, but the possibility of gender composition will also be different because working in a group will allow students to work with single-gender (SG) and mixed-gender (MG) students. Further, SG groups are comfortable and confident for students to accomplish their full potency (Candy, 2013). In communication, which is crucial while working in a group, SG groups provide students more focus on communicating in the discussions (Lin et al., 2020) create an active participation and contribute to students' interpersonal connectedness (Feng et al., 2023). Al-ShiBel (2021) supports this by mentioning that male and female students show the highest interaction in the SG group. In addition, MG groups provide a relaxed atmosphere (Burrowes & Day, 2011), a better conversational environment (Jiang et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2022), less distraction (Candy, 2013), and significantly show students' better performance (Gnesdilow et al., 2013). In the context of discussions, MG groups give students broader opinions (Burrowes & Day, 2011) and add more variety to the discussion (Lin et al., 2020) due to different thoughts acquired (Dashela & Mustika, 2022).

So far, the use of GW has been researched in different fields and contexts. Notwithstanding, there are several studies discussing working in groups based on gender. Most of the research discusses the use of sex-based grouping or the use of SG and MG groups (Candy, 2013; Karmina et al., 2023; Mahmud, 2018; Shaberina et al., 2023; Smith, 2021). The studies reveal various results, first Mahmud (2018) states that males prefer working with MG groups, and females choose SG groups. Second, Candy (2013) reveals that the environment of the SG group is comfortable for students to accomplish their high potency. Third, Smith (2021) adds that students' perspectives of gender influence their contribution even though gender is one factor that impacts students' group experience and is unrelated to the types of groups they work with. Next, Shaberina et al. (2023) explain that most students choose their group members based on gender stereotypes, considering three factors: communication, coordination, and each member's academic ability. Then, Karmina et al. (2023) Consider that the MG group provides numerous positive findings. For example, the MG group can teach students about different genders, foster good attitudes, and create fun learning. Nonetheless, the context of the previous research is only limited to the environment (Candy, 2013), perspectives (Karmina et al., 2023), teaching (Mahmud, 2018), stereotype (Shaberina et al., 2023), and attitudes (Smith, 2021). In general, the previous studies reveal that gender is one of the crucial things for students while working in a group, and it impacts the group process. Driven by the findings, many various contexts related to gender grouping can be discussed, and this becomes a crucial consideration for future research.

In contrast, some studies have discussed SG and MG groups more in-depth. Almasri (2022), Almasri et al. (2022), Fenol and Zaccagni (2021), Gnesdilow et al. (2013), and Guo (2018)

research gender group composition and students learning outcomes or achievement. Further, Feng et al. (2023) and Lin et al. (2020) examine the gender pairing of GW in social learning. Ma et al. (2022) also compare gender and gender group type with students' performance. At the same time, Almasri et al. (2020), Almasri (2022), and Lin et al. (2020) chose the topic of gender group composition and students' attitudes. Furthermore, the most specific studies conducted by Karmina et al. (2023) explore students' perspectives while working in SG and MG groups, specifically in collaborative learning. However, Karmina et al. (2023) conducted their study with middle school students who might have different perceptions from university students and only focused on students' perspectives. Further, little research has been conducted in the context of EFL. Thus, this study explores EFL university students' experiences of gender grouping in both SG and MG groups. This is studied due to the importance of considering students' points of view in their individual experiences. Besides, EFL students are chosen because of the process of group form involvement in the class to create a learning-centered environment for students. Hence, these research results are expected to contribute to crucial and more expansive data related to the consideration of the use of gender in GW for students in completing tasks.

METHOD

Research Design

This study explored EFL students' experiences working in SG and MG groups. To achieve this purpose, this study utilized a qualitative research design. Natural settings are used in qualitative research, which emphasizes the views and lived experiences of individuals (Creswell, 2007). A phenomenological approach was used to explore the experiences of the participants in order to analyze the data. Phenomenological research focuses on a concept, idea, or reality from the point of view of a group of people, showing what they have in common while experiencing an experience (Creswell & Poth, 2016). By using phenomenological research, a researcher can extract the essential elements from participants' experiences of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). This study was conducted at one of the state universities in East Java, Indonesia.

Participants

Eight EFL university students participated in the study, which consisted of three males and five females. The criteria for selecting the subjects were: 1) EFL university students; 2) have lived experience completing tasks in groups for at least 2 semesters; 3) Be willing to participate and talk about the topic under investigation. Two phases of screening selection were conducted to select the participants. First, permission was asked to join the class for 10-15 minutes and send the first screening Google form link directly to the students. It was done to 2, 4, and 6-semester students. 228 students were willing to fill the first screening section. Second, all included students based on the criteria were selected. 16 students responded to the second screening section. Third, the students were sent the second screening link via WhatsApp to decrease the number of participants by explaining the research objectives in more detail and asking for their willingness. Finally, 8 students participated at the end of the screening. Then, all participants were given a participant information sheet and signed a consent form to ensure their protection and rights. Each participant's detailed information was given a pseudonym.

Table 1. Participants' Demographics

Participants' Code	Type of interview	Gender	Semester
Ani	Google Meet	F	4
Bela	Face-to-Face	F	4
Cia	Google Meet	F	4
Dea	Google Meet	F	4
Ebi	Face-to-Face	M	4
Fal	Google Meet	M	4
Gisa	Phone Call	F	4
Han	Google Meet	M	4

Instruments

The main instrument of the data collection was an interview. Three different kinds of interview are known as structured interview, semi-structured interview, and unstructured interview (Thomas, 2022). A semi-structured interview was chosen to collect the data. As this research aimed to collect in-depth participants' experiences, a semi-structured interview was supported to explore what participants meant during the interview process. In addition, the interview questions used were arranged after a pilot study. The pilot study was done with five volunteers. Finally, 18 main questions were formulated. They were related to participants' experiences, which consisted of 3 parts.

A Basic Introduction

In this part, research participants are expected to introduce themselves in detail, such as name, place, date of birth, address, domicile, ethnicity, nationality, religion, siblings, parents, etc. However, they are free to introduce themselves at any point they like. They were allowed to limit their introduction point as much as they wanted to be known by the researchers.

GW in General

Participants' knowledge related to GW was asked about in this research. They were also asked to discuss their GW experience, perspectives, feelings, reasons, etc. Besides, they needed to clarify their statements by connecting them to their experience while working in groups.

GW, Specifically in SG and MG Groups

The last point was that participants were asked about their experience working in groups, but the questions were categorized into SG and MG group work. This point needs structured descriptions of participants' experiences.

Procedures

A semi-structured interview was conducted to question EFL students' experience with gender grouping. The semi-structured interview process was conducted individually for each participant. The interviews were done thrice. The first was done for a maximum of 50 minutes, the second took about 20 minutes, and the last was done for about 15 minutes. The semi-structured interview was done face-to-face, via phone call, or via Google Meet online video conference based on our and the participants' agreements. The semi-structured interview process was voice recorded for a

face-to-face interview, audio recorded for a phone call interview, and video recorded for a Google Meet interview with the participant's consent.

Analysis

The semi-structured interview results were transcribed verbatim. The complete transcription was returned to each participant. They had a chance to change or delete their previous statements. Each transcription was read and re-read many times. Researchers could ask and make sure of unclear statements from participants. Then, the data collection was continued by adopting the data analysis of Van Kaam's method, modified by Moustakas (1994). The Moustakas modification version's structure and clearness caused the adoption of data analysis. Moustakas (1994) as stated in (Anthony & Weide, 2015) convinicenced that similar topics could be grouped together and then further analyzed using the van Kaam modified method to establish connections and correlations between the experiences. There are several steps in Van Kaam's method modified by Moustakas (Moustakas, 1994);

Listing and Preliminary Grouping (Horizontalization)

All participants' experiences related to the experience investigated were listed in the expressions. All information was seen equally. The primary classification was started in this first step.

Reduction and Elimination

Each expression listed was tested to find the invariant constituent by answering two questions: Does it include part of the experience that is essential and sufficient to understand it truly? and can this expression be reduced to its essence? The expressions were deleted if they could not answer both questions. Further, overlapping, unclear, or stated more than once were deleted.

Clustering and Thematizing

The invariant constituents of the experience were clustered to become a thematic label. As a result, the core themes were identified.

Final Identification of Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application: Validation

The invariant constituents were rechecked by comparing them to the primary data. This step was to find "Are there any explicit expressions behind? or is it still appropriate for the lived of participants' experience?". This part showed that the accurate themes that emerged were suited to the participants' experience as the final identification.

Creating Individual Textural Description

Individual textual descriptions for each participant were written. It included verbatim examples from the transcription.

Creating Individual Structural Descriptions

The participant's structural descriptions of the experience were based on individual textural descriptions and imaginative variations.

Create Individual Structural Descriptions

The structural-textural descriptions of the meanings and essence of the participants' experiences were constructed. The combination of the invariant constituents and themes was put together.

Create Composite Textural-Structural Descriptions

The composite of textural-structural descriptions was created to develop the meanings and essences of participants' experiences. In this part, the meanings and the core themes created were reflected in the group as a whole to describe the essence of the findings.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness is one of the crucial steps. To overcome the trustworthiness of this research, Guba and Lincoln (1985) provided that the researcher should check credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability for the validity of the research (Karmina, 2019). Participant validation was used to confirm the credibility of the data. Each participant was sent their interview transcription and recording file via email and WhatsApp. Each participant was given three days to ask, check, confirm, correct, and validate their statements for the data collected by the researchers. Next, thick descriptions of the participants were used to provide transferability. The details of all participant descriptions were not changed at all. They were arranged and written as wholly and naturally as possible. Then, dependability was ensured with a clear audit trail. The data were documented, and the protocol and procedure were well described. Lastly, the final findings were sent to the participants via email or WhatsApp. They can review and give comments to clarify and verify the data in a week.

FINDINGS

The findings of EFL students' experience working in groups are divided into two parts: EFL students' experience in SG groups and MG groups. Themes are classified based on the data, and the excerpts of the semi-structured interview are included to support the results.

EFL students' experience in SG groups

Theme 1: Effective Communication

The first theme in the participants was effective communication (7/8). Most participants experienced that working in SG groups was easy because having communication during the process of GW is not a big deal to handle in SG groups. For example, Bela said, "When working with female members, it is like the communication is easier while working together, Miss. I think it is because we often play every day, so we are used to talking every day." A similar statement was also supported by Dea, who elaborated:

It is like we can help each other; for example, when she has finished her job, I don't hesitate to ask for help. Help me, please. Then, she wants to help me. So, it is better to communicate and be more flexible in doing the task; it does not have to be 'it is my part, and I will do this.' (Dea)

As a result, Bela's statement and the detailed experience shared by Dea implied that this first theme described participants' experiences. Similar statements about effective communication

of the phenomenon in SG groups also coordinated with Ani, Cia, Ebi, Fal, and Han. They described that the way of communication in SG groups provided them with mutual help, flexible communication, and understandable communication among members. As a result, effective communication is experienced in SG groups.

Theme 2: Postpone GW Tasks

The second theme in SG groups is the postponed GW task (5/8). Ani, Cia, Dea, Gisa, and Han felt that working in SG groups delayed their work. The tasks took a long time and could be done precisely before the deadline. Dea mentioned, "The difficulty is more about asking members group to do the task," and Ani added:

Females are more like, 'I cannot do the work now,' it is also about the timing, such as the members prioritizing other things than the task. So, it is not easy because they have their own business. So, when do we do the task? (Ani)

Further, it was postponed because of an uneasy asking of members to start doing the tasks and participants' issues, as they considered they were working with their friends in SG groups and they knew each other. Hence, the tasks felt easy and could be done later. As Han described, "If all males, that will be more like 'ok, we will meet later.' So, it is often postponed and not the priority". Significantly, participants revealed that postponement in completing GW tasks was not only because of the group members but also because of themselves due to some factors such as task distribution, habit, different time management, and negligence.

Theme 3: Better Environment

The last theme covered participants' experience working in SG groups in a better environment (5/8). For example, Dea stated, "The positivity working in SG groups is better than MG groups, and we feel more relaxed; I mean, it is more flexible." Then, Han shared his experience by mentioning:

Males are more relaxed... I prefer SG and working with my friends. So, we have the same frequency because our characters are similar. We have the same thought; it makes us know each other...I feel calmer and feel no pressure when I work with SG... (Han)

Further, Dea and Han agree that SG groups provide a comfortable environment during the GW process. Gisa, Ani, and Fal also expressed the phenomenon in the semi-structured interview. In conclusion, participants mentioned that a better environment supports GW tasks and provides flexibility due to calmness, no pressure, the same characteristics, and relationships among members.

EFL students' experience in MG groups

Theme 1: Ineffective Communication

Having ineffective communication in MG groups was almost provided by the participants (7/8). Participants recognized in their experience that communication in MG groups was challenging for them. Nia had experienced giving up speaking with male members in MG groups. She stated, "If working with males, they do not speak... I mean less likely to speak. If females give a long explanation about the group tasks and the male members only reply 'oh, okay, yes' and it is

difficult”. She did not feel free to communicate with their members during the GW process. Moreover, ineffective communication in MG groups could also create conflicts among members. For example, Ebi illustrated that:

For the discussion, for example, if we do not understand. For example, if I do not understand this, I ask a friend who is thought to understand. Further, if I do it myself, it is like coming from a counting group well. Sometimes, I am reluctant to ask because I do not know the members and am not very familiar with them; even if I cannot, I still do it by myself; I do not ask my group or my members. (Ebi)

Further, Gisa also added that she usually commented if she found a problem that should be discussed while working in groups. However, especially in MG groups, she admitted to being uncomfortable with giving comments but tried to speak forcefully.

However, in SG, because of a problem, I say, ' You have promised to do this at this time, but I am waiting, and you do not come, and I do it alone.' So, I express my feelings. However, in MG, I am uncomfortable to say it. (Gisa)

Related experiences were also found and mentioned by Bela, Cia, Fal, Gisa, and Han. In other words, participants agreed that they had difficulties communicating in MG groups due to communication styles, unresponsiveness, reluctance to seek help, and time constraints.

Theme 2: Solid Members

The second theme is solid members (7/8). The participants exhibited this theme based on their experience working in MG groups. Participants admitted that they felt helped and relied on each other while working in MG groups. For instance, Han stated, “Mixed-gender will be more diligent and disciplined in doing group tasks.” Ani also supported this by mentioning that she chose MG groups, which contained male members, because he is diligent, “If I get a diligent male in the group and we will be able to share job desk with him, I will choose the group containing male members.” Further, not only did Ani mention a diligent member, but Dea also proved male members were diligent, “...but in college the males are diligent, I thought it would be difficult to be in a group with males, but it turns out, and they can do it”.

In addition, Cia shared her thoughts about not only other MG group members doing their part well but also herself trying not to lose to the other members and support her groups, “...because he is a perfectionist, it means that no matter what, I have to be perfect, that is how I balance him”. Bela, Gisa, and Fal also found the phenomenon of reliable members in MG groups. As a result, MG groups showed good contributions among members and helped and motivated each other to complete the tasks well.

Theme 3: Ineffective Time Management

Time management becomes problematic while participants work in MG groups (5/8). Participants experienced a different starting time to do tasks due to their different gender in MG groups. For example, Bela stated, “If working with male members in mixed-gender groups, it is still like ... later,” and Ani supported:

I am just too lazy when I am with male members. Usually, it is like I am waiting to do it ... and males prioritize gaming or pushing rank. So, they said, let us do it later; I need to push my rank now.
(Ani)

In short, Bela and Ani agreed that working with male members of MG groups could take time to start work, and they did not prioritize GW tasks. As a result, the work was delayed and could not be completed as soon as possible. The same phenomenon is also shown in other participants: Ali, Lia, and Aya. Most participants experienced ineffective time management focused on male members. Because they could lead to delays in the GW tasks. However, participants also considered that they need better coordination and awareness of each other.

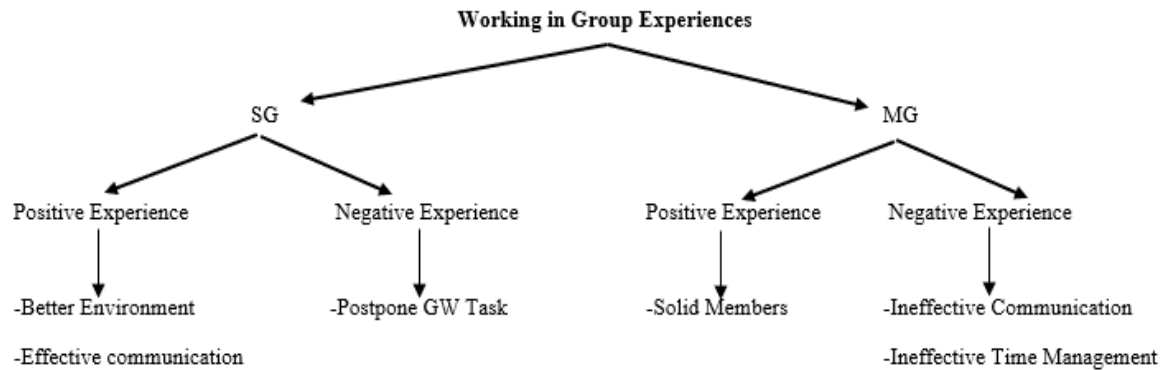


Figure 1. Themes in the EFL Students' Experiences Working in SG and MG groups

Core Themes

Participants' experiences working in SG and MG groups were encouraged by the core themes of positive and negative experiences. Communication, individual contributions and responsibility, productivity and efficiency were discussed to cover the experiences mentioned. First, effective communication is detected in SG groups. Participants' friendships supported them in communication because they knew each other and their friends' ways of communication. It was easier for them, like a habit. So, members were not hesitant to ask for help or discuss the tasks. Then, ineffective communication showed up in MG groups. Uncomfortable communication due to shyness and not being close enough to the members was created in MG groups. Their communication styles were also different. It means they had limited ways to have discussions. Second, individual contributions and responsibility, working in SG groups, took a long time. Participants did not do the tasks after given them. They felt they knew their members, thought working with them could be done anytime, and were not afraid. As a result, they met the deadline and did the tasks in a rush. Further, MG groups indicated having solid members to complete the tasks well. It was because there would be a diligent, disciplined, or competent member in a group that can support all members. It also motivated other members to do their best to achieve task goals. Third, productivity and efficiency. Working in SG groups was enjoyable because the SG groups' environment was relaxed for the participants. In sum, the participants experienced that they were not afraid or disinclined to do anything while working in SG groups. In addition, time management became an issue in MG groups. Both male and female students had their businesses and different priorities.

DISCUSSION

Prior studies have noted the concern of students working in groups (Alfares, 2017; Bennett, 2015; Chen et al., 2021; Hamed, 2022; Harputlu & Erarslan, 2019; Ibnian, 2012; Wilson et al., 2018; Zulfikar, 2022) and students' gender becomes one of the crucial aspects that determine the success of GW (Abulhassan & Hamid, 2021; M. Cohen & Mullender, 2002; Karmina et al., 2023; Lindsay & Orton, 2011). As a result, the discussion about SG and MG groups is provided. Regarding the research questions, it was discovered that participants expressed positive and negative experiences in both SG and MG groups. The core themes of this research are communication, individual contributions and responsibility, and productivity and efficiency. First is communication. Most students state that effective communication is found in SG groups, such as ease of communication and well-handled discussions. This is consistent with that of Al-Shibel (2021), who states that male and female students have the highest interaction while working in SG groups, and Lin et al. (2020) support that discussions in SG groups create focus communication. Shaberina et al. (2023) agreed that SG groups provide accessible communication, making coordination easier. Effective communication is also reflected in students' courage to ask for help or ask questions from their group members. As Shaberina et al. (2023) state, female students ask for help from their friends. On the contrary, the data show that most participants are talkless due to unfamiliar members and are uncomfortable expressing themselves when complaining about each other in MG groups. It indicates that ineffective communication emerges in MG groups. Dashela and Mustika (2022) also support the idea that shy communication, not confidence or nervousness, can be reached in MG groups. Karmina et al. (2023) also state that working with different genders created shyness, which influenced the process of GW. As a result, the data of this research show that effective communication is only detected in SG groups. However, the finding differs from Ma et al. (2022) and Jiang et al. (2017), who found a better conversational environment indicating effective communication in a discussion detected in MG than in SG groups. Different from the findings of the present study, ineffective communication is only detected in MG groups, and it is not only communication when the group discusses their task but also when they need communication in scheduling work time, arranging job desks, or reaching out to members' response in other things.

Second, regarding individual contributions and responsibility, members in SG groups are used to doing the work late and almost waiting until the deadline because they prioritize other businesses, and they think it is easy to do the work later because the members are their friends. This indicates that the data are contrary to that of Olshefski (2004) who finds the SG in cooperative learning groups complete the task quickly and are well-balanced. In comparison to the findings of the current studies, SG groups take longer to complete not only in the context of cooperative learning groups but also in all kinds of GW in general. In addition, MG groups are beneficial because there will be male members who are diligent, disciplined, and intelligent. They can support the group and contribute to the group tasks well. This result follows Gnesdilow et al. (2013) who stated that students perform better in MG groups. In contrast, Karmina et al. (2023) provide that working in MG groups is difficult because members find it difficult to concentrate, affecting the GW. Notwithstanding, different points of view state that male members in MG groups are lazy (Kamal, 2022; Riwoe et al., 2022; Shaberina et al., 2023). Compared to the findings of the recent investigations, male members in MG groups are not lazy and show much better contributions, such as diligence and discipline, which highly impact the GW process. This was proved by most

participants who expected male members to join their group. This research's current findings provide more specific data by mentioning what better work means for male members.

Last, productivity and efficiency: In SG groups, the environment is relaxed, with flexible working hours and calmer responses from the members due to their similar characteristics. It makes students enjoy working in SG groups. They do not feel any pressure to complete the tasks together. This finding is similar to Candy (2013) who states that SG groups create comfort for students, which helps them do their best to complete the tasks. Other studies indicate that MG groups create a better environment when doing group tasks. Previous studies show that a more relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere (Burrowes & Day, 2011), funnier, and more understandable (Karmina et al., 2023) can be reached in MG than in SG groups. Otherwise, this finding clarifies why the SG group environment allows each member to relax. Further, in the context of MG groups, productivity and efficiency are created through ineffective time management as they wait for each other to start doing the task. As provided by Olshefski (2004) students in MG groups start the task longer because of their unpredictable behavior.

One unanticipated finding is that the male members perform beyond the expectations of female members in this current study compared to the previous studies. Female members usually have fewer expectations while working with males and get ready to put more effort into completing group tasks. However, male members do their work much better in this current study. In contrast, this also differs from previous studies, which found that males are burdens on the group. The participants' story backgrounds can consider this different finding. However, the exclusion of students' backgrounds is not considered. It should be respected when analyzing these findings. Therefore, there is likely a relationship between students' background and group work grouping based on gender.

CONCLUSION

The present research aimed to explore EFL students' experience working in SG and MG groups. The study revealed that EFL students had positive and negative experiences in both SG and MG groups. Specifically, two positive experiences were identified when students worked in SG groups: having a better environment and effective communication. However, they also identified a negative experience related to postponed GW tasks. Conversely, there was only one positive thing the students experienced during MG groups: having solid members. Nevertheless, they encountered two negative experiences: ineffective time management and communication in MG groups. As a result, the findings emphasize that communication, productivity, and efficiency should be paid attention to in MG groups. MG groups also needed to consider the delay in starting or doing the GW tasks. Likewise, SG groups need to avoid delays in the GW process.

Furthermore, this research contributes to students, teachers, and the field of GW. The results of this study add new insight into the advantages, disadvantages, and what happens in the field from students' experiences while working in SG and MG groups. Then, the findings show the students that SG groups give them a better environment and effective communication. However, students also become more aware that SG groups will provide a work delay that should be considered. Further, in the context of MG groups, the findings shared with the students were that there will always be solid members who can enhance the GW task. In contrast, they also note that communication and time management are less effective when working in MG groups. Finally, teachers are also given ideas on how to arrange an appropriate teaching method by using GW while

considering students' genders, and teachers are also given another insight from the findings that group composition is crucial to influential GW.

In addition, the primary limitation to the generalization of these results revealed in this research is related to time. Some conditions indicate that this research takes longer than planned, for example, finding research participants who meet the criteria and are willing to participate in three-time semi-structured interview steps, arranging for the semi-structured interview schedules for each participant, and the analysis process that needs to be re-reviewed many times to avoid subjectivity. Another limitation is that all participants' experiences are based on two conditions: pandemic and post-pandemic group work experience. As a result, their experience working in SG and MG groups is a combination of both pandemic and post-pandemic GW processes.

Besides, it is essential to note that this research only focused on EFL university students' experiences working in SG and MG groups. Consequently, more profound research is strongly suggested for more comprehensive results. Future researchers should explore SG and MG group dynamics from various points of view, such as different contexts or levels, specific courses and times, or involving teachers' experiences.

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