

Research Article

An Examination of Social Science Learning Outcomes Using Group Work and Individual Assignments: Educational Strategies in Focus

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Abstract

This research aims to provide valuable insights into utilizing group work and individual assignments within Social Studies education at the junior high school level. It adopts a quasi-experimental research approach, focusing on the student population of Gowa Regency's middle schools. A sample of 60 students participated in this study, utilizing observation guidelines and curriculum-aligned tests as research instruments. Data analysis encompassed both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The research findings are significant, revealing the impact of teaching methods. The group work method applied in the experimental class resulted in noteworthy improvements in learning outcomes, evident through increased average scores in both pre-tests and post-tests. The individual task approach used in the control class also enhanced learning outcomes, as evidenced by improved pre-test and post-test scores. A comparative analysis between the average post-test results of the two groups, one employing the Group Work Method and the other the Individual Task Method, showcased a significant disparity. Students in the group work method class achieved notably higher learning outcomes in the domain of social studies in comparison to their counterparts in the individual task method class. These findings underscore the pedagogical effectiveness of group work strategies and individual assignments in the context of Social Studies education, providing valuable guidance for educators and policymakers looking to enhance the learning experiences of junior high school students.

Keywords: teaching methods; learning outcomes; student engagement; individual assignments.

1. INTRODUCTION

In educational reform, the 2003 National Education System Law fundamentally redefines education's role, positioning it as a critical driver for both national enlightenment and comprehensive individual development. This law actively shifts focus from traditional academic learning to a broader, more holistic approach, advocating for the nurturing of diverse aspects of an individual's personality and capabilities. It aims to cultivate well-rounded, morally upright, and informed citizens. Complementing this, Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005, emphasizing National Education Standards, establishes a framework for primary education. This regulation outlines the essential components for developing intelligence, knowledge, personality, noble character, and skills necessary for independent living and lifelong learning, reflecting a commitment to a balanced curriculum that equips students not only with academic proficiency but also with essential life skills for their future roles as global citizens.



These legislative measures collectively expand the scope of educational objectives to include emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, social skills, and an appreciation for cultural and intellectual diversity, crucial for preparing students for life beyond the job market. The holistic development focus calls for an adaptable, inclusive, and responsive education system, demanding pedagogical strategies that center on student needs promoting active learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, they necessitate the incorporation of technology and innovative teaching methodologies to cater to the diverse learning styles of modern students. The 2003 National Education System Law and Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005 lay the foundation for a dynamic and holistic education system, emphasizing education as a pivotal element in personal and societal advancement and fostering a generation capable of contributing to societal well-being, reflecting an aspiration towards a more enlightened, equitable, and prosperous society.

Amidst the strategic role played by schools, the varying academic performance of students emerges as a noteworthy phenomenon. While tests and academic grades often serve as primary metrics of educational achievement, diverse learning approaches, including group and individual tasks, demonstrate varied potential in influencing student learning outcomes. This concept draws inspiration from John Dewey's philosophy, as cited by (Bembenutty 2011), which emphasizes the importance of "learning by doing" in education. Slavin (2011) further reinforces this perspective by highlighting the benefits of cooperative learning methods in enhancing student understanding and retention of knowledge (Slavin 2011).

John Dewey, a prominent figure in educational reform, advocated for experiential education, where students engage actively with their learning environment. This philosophy, outlined in Dewey's seminal works like "Democracy and Education", argues that education should extend beyond rote memorization and passive reception of information. Instead, it should foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and active participation, elements that are crucial in preparing students for real-world challenges (Dewey 2023). Bembenutty (2011), in his article, "The Last Word: The Importance of Self-Regulation of Learning in Student-Centered Approaches," explores how Dewey's principles can be integrated into modern educational practices, emphasizing the role of student autonomy and engagement in the learning process (Bembenutty 2011). Slavin (2010), in his research on cooperative learning, provides empirical support for the effectiveness of collaborative educational strategies. His work, particularly in "Cooperative Learning: What Makes Group-Work Work?" published in "The Nature of Learning: Using Research to Inspire Practice," suggests that well-structured group work can significantly enhance student learning outcomes. Slavin points out that cooperative learning, when implemented effectively, not only improves academic performance but also develops social skills and fosters a sense of community among students (Slavin 2010).

In the current educational landscape, Integrated Social Studies (IPS) within the 2013 curriculum plays a vital role in amalgamating various social science disciplines such as sociology, history, and geography. This integrated approach to IPS serves as a critical instrument in fostering cross-disciplinary understanding among students, an essential component in preparing them to navigate and respond to the complexities of an ever-evolving global society. By encouraging students to synthesize knowledge across different fields, this interdisciplinary approach not only strengthens critical thinking but also enhances their social and cultural awareness.

However, challenges become evident when examining the situation at Junior High School Sungguminasa, where initial observations reveal that many students perform below the Minimum Competency Standards in IPS. This situation underscores an urgent need for pedagogical reform. A teacher-centric approach to instruction, prevalent in many educational settings, appears to limit active student participation and engagement. Such an approach often leads to passive learning, where students primarily receive information without adequate opportunities for deep exploration and interaction with the subject matter. Addressing this challenge necessitates the adoption of more student-centered teaching approaches. These approaches, which promote active student engagement and provide opportunities for the practical application of knowledge, could effectively enhance learning outcomes in IPS. Methods such as project-based learning, group discussions, and problem-solving-oriented activities enable students to collaborate, think critically, and develop problem-solving skills - competencies that are indispensable in the modern world.

For instance, Bell (2010), in "Project-Based Learning for the 21st Century: Skills for the Future," emphasizes the effectiveness of project-based learning in developing critical thinking and collaboration skills (Bell 2010). Similarly, Gillies

(2016), in "Cooperative Learning: Review of Research and Practice," highlights the positive impact of group discussions and cooperative learning strategies on students' social skills and academic achievement (Gillies 2016). These scholarly works provide a solid theoretical and empirical foundation for the proposed shift towards more interactive and student-focused teaching methodologies in IPS education.

This research investigates the use of group and individual assignments in Integrated Social Studies (IPS) education at the junior high school level. It evaluates these methods' effectiveness in enhancing academic achievement and their impact on students' social and cognitive skills development. The study also seeks to contribute to the IPS curriculum and teaching strategies, aiming to enrich the knowledge of effective teaching methods and offer practical recommendations for educators. This endeavor not only advances academic literature but also impacts junior high school teaching practices. Emphasizing empirically proven methodologies, the research advocates for inclusive and adaptive teaching approaches tailored to individual student needs, ultimately aiming to enhance educational quality. This aligns with (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 1984) findings on the effectiveness of cooperative learning and (Hattie 2008) work on innovative teaching strategies, underscoring their significance in improving student learning outcomes.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Approach

This type of research is a quasi-experimental study. Quasi-experiments are pseudo-experiments in which the research design cannot fully control the characteristics and traits of the studied samples (Anggito and Setiawan 2018; Sugiyono 2011). This experimental study is conducted in a class that receives treatment, referred to as the experimental group, and a comparison class, referred to as the control group. The form of this experimental research is a development from accurate experimental research, which is challenging to implement. This design includes a control group, but it may not fully function to control external variables that affect the experiment's execution (Davis 2008; Kirk 2009). Quasi-experimental research aims to determine a comparison between two or more groups of variables that are the subjects of the study. In this research, the researcher aims to determine which results in social studies learning are higher, whether in a group assignment or an individual assignment, for eighth-grade students at junior high school Sungguminasa. Therefore, the subjects of this study will be divided into two groups: the experimental group and the control group.

2.2. Location Study

This research will be carried out at a junior high school located in Gowa Regency, situated explicitly at the following address: Mustapa Dg Bunga Road, Romang Polong Village, Somba Opu Subdistrict, Gowa Regency. The research is scheduled to be conducted from May to July in the year 2023.

2.3. Operational Definitions of Variables

2.3.1. Learning Outcomes

In this study, social sciences learning outcomes refer to the degree of achievement by students in the subject of IPS after participating in the learning process. These outcomes are quantified by the scores obtained from an assessment tool known as the IPS learning outcomes test. The test assesses the knowledge and comprehension of students in the IPS subject matter.

2.3.2. Group Work Method

The group work method is defined as an instructional approach characterized by teacher-assigned tasks that require students to collaborate and work collectively. In this method, students are expected to engage in discussions and cooperative activities to complete the assigned tasks. It emphasizes teamwork and shared responsibility in the learning process.

2.3.3. Individual Assignment Method

The individual assignment method is defined as an instructional approach characterized by teacher-assigned tasks that students are required to complete independently as individuals. In this method, students work on tasks individually, demonstrating their ability to grasp and apply the subject matter independently. It underscores self-reliance in the learning process.

2.4. Population and Sample

2.4.1. Population

Population refers to the generalized group consisting of subjects or objects that possess specific qualities and characteristics determined by the researcher for study and subsequent conclusion drawing (Kothari 2004). According to (Arikunto 2019), "population is the entirety of research subjects." From this definition, it can be inferred that the population encompasses all the research subjects to be studied and from which conclusions will be drawn. In this research, the population comprises all the eighth-grade students in classes VIII A and VIII B during the even semester at a junior high school located in Gowa Regency in the Academic Year 2022/2023, totaling 60 individuals, with 30 students in VIII A and 30 students in VIII B.

2.4.2. Sample

In research, sampling is a crucial step in selecting a group of individuals or elements from a larger population to study and draw conclusions (Neuman and Robson 2014; Yin 2009). It is essential to ensure that the chosen sample accurately represents the characteristics of the entire population. Saturation sampling, as mentioned by (Johnson and Christensen 2019), involves including the entire population as the sample. In simpler terms, every member of the population is included in the study. This approach is particularly useful when the population size is relatively small and manageable, as it eliminates the need to select a subset of individuals through random or stratified sampling methods. In this specific research, the population consists of 60 members. Utilizing saturation sampling means that all 60 individuals are part of the study, ensuring that the findings can be generalized to the entire population. This approach is beneficial when researchers aim to capture a comprehensive understanding of the entire population rather than making inferences based on a smaller sample.

2.5. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques are the primary steps in research aimed at obtaining data. In this study, the desired data pertains to the learning outcomes in the subject of IPS. Therefore, the data collection techniques employed in this research include testing and observation. The testing technique involves the use of an achievement test administered after the completion of the entire learning process, which evaluates students' IPS learning outcomes. The observation technique involves using an observation sheet to assess the implementation of the teaching and learning process, mainly focusing on how group work and individual assignments are carried out in the classroom. These data collection methods are crucial for gathering the necessary information to address the research objectives effectively.

2.5.1. Learning Achievement Test

According to Zainal Arifin (2012), a test is a technique used to perform measurement activities that consist of various questions, statements, or a series of tasks for students to complete, aiming to assess different aspects of student behavior. In this research, a written test is used, consisting of both short-answer and essay questions. Specifically, a post-test is employed to gauge students' understanding of the recently covered material. The test questions undergo prior validation and reliability testing to ensure their effectiveness.

2.5.2. Classroom Learning Implementation Observation Sheet

Observation, or the act of closely watching and assessing, is conducted to determine how well the classroom instruction aligns with the planned lesson structure (RPP) when employing both group work and individual assignment methods. This observation process is facilitated using a predefined observation sheet. The observation sheet serves as an

instrument for the direct and systematic evaluation of classroom activities. During the observation, the observer assesses the quality of the observed indicators.

2.6. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis, as defined by many researchers in the field, is the crucial stage that follows the collection of data from respondents or other sources (McCombes 2022). In the realm of quantitative research, data analysis revolves around the application of statistical methods. Distinguishing two fundamental categories of statistics for analyzing collected data, experts in the field elaborate on descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, for instance, serve the purpose of portraying collected data in their raw form without aiming to draw universally applicable or generalized conclusions. Instead, they focus on providing an overview of the data. Descriptive statistics are instrumental in evaluating the relationships between variables through correlation analysis and making comparisons by examining sample or population data averages (Keith 2019; Stockemer 2019). In such cases, there is no necessity to conduct significance tests, as the primary goal is not generalization, thus eliminating the scope for generalization errors.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Description of Research Data

The data on learning outcomes play a crucial role in this study as the variable under examination is the comparison of students' learning outcomes in the IPS subject. These learning outcome data are obtained from the pre-test and post-test scores conducted in the experimental class and the control class of eighth-grade students at Junior High School Sungguminasa.

Table 1 shows data on social science (IPS) learning outcomes for eight grade students with a total sample of 30 students. This table provides information about pre-test and post-test scores for experimental classes (class B) and control classes (class A). In addition, there are an average score, maximum score, and minimum score for each group, which makes it possible to compare learning outcomes between the two classes.

Table 1. Social Science (IPS) Learning Outcome Data for Eighth-Grade Students (n=30)

| Description | Experimental Class B | | Control Class A | |
|-------------|----------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|
| | Pre-test | Post-test | Pre-test | Post-test |
| Mean | 44.5 | 85.33 | 43.8 | 78 |
| Maximum | 65 | 100 | 60 | 100 |
| Minimum | 20 | 65 | 20 | 60 |

From the average score data, it is evident that both groups experienced increased learning outcomes from the pre-test to the post-test. The experimental class exhibited a higher average post-test score compared to the control class, indicating the potential effectiveness of the learning method employed in the experimental class in enhancing students' comprehension of social studies subjects. In terms of maximum scores, it is notable that in both groups, certain students achieved a perfect score (100) in the post-test. However, the experimental class attained a higher maximum pre-test score (65) compared to the control class (60). Both groups shared an identical minimum pre-test score (20). Nonetheless, in the post-test, the experimental class recorded the lowest score (65) in contrast to the control class (60).

The data discussed in Table 1 implies that the experimental group (Class B) displays a propensity for achieving superior learning outcomes in the post-test when juxtaposed with the control group (Class A). Furthermore, variations in student learning outcomes exist within these groups, as reflected by differing maximum and minimum scores. These findings suggest the potential efficacy of the learning methods implemented in the experimental class for enhancing the learning outcomes of students in the field of social studies. However, it is essential to note that further rigorous statistical analysis may be necessary to establish and validate these findings more conclusively.

3.2. Comparison of Pre-Test Scores between the Experimental and Control Class

Figure 1 illustrates that there is no significant difference in the average pre-test scores in social studies between the experimental class and the control class. The pre-test score for the experimental class is 44.5, while the control class has a pre-test score of 43.8. The highest score achieved in both the experimental class and the control class is quite similar, with the experimental class attaining a maximum score of 65 while the control class reaches 60. Furthermore, the lowest score recorded in both the experimental and control classes is 20. These findings indicate that the initial abilities between the experimental and control classes are equivalent, with no statistically significant differences observed. This is supported by the relatively small difference in the average pre-test scores, which is approximately 0.7.

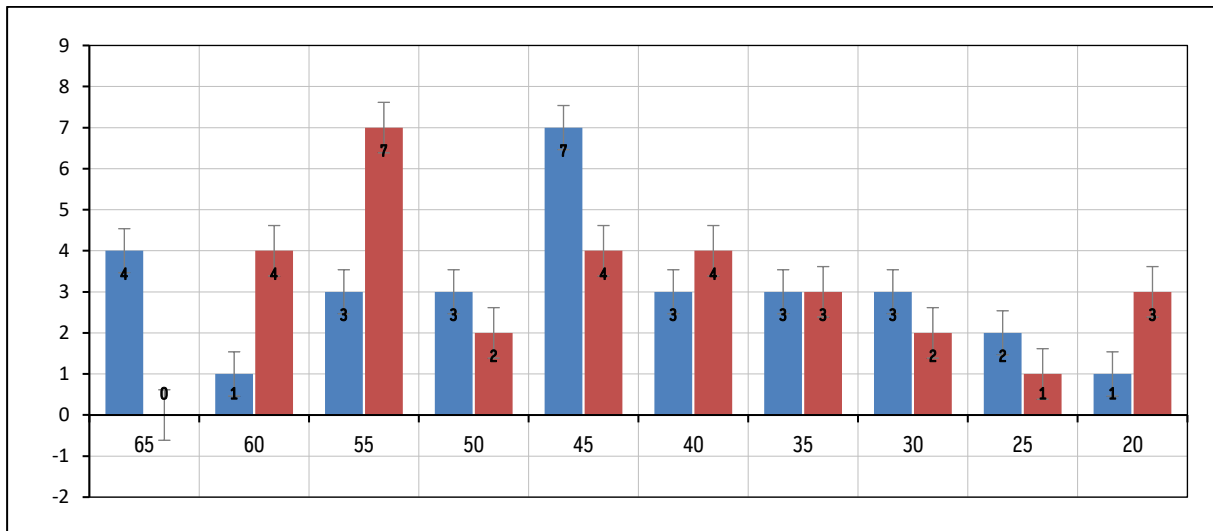


Figure 1. Comparison of Pre-Test Scores of Experimental and Control Classes.

The observed similarity or lack of significant difference in pre-test scores between the two groups holds substantial implications. It implies that prior to the intervention involving different teaching methodologies (group work and individual assignments), students in both groups possessed similar baseline levels of proficiency. In essence, there were no notable disparities in the fundamental comprehension of students before the commencement of the instructional period.

This observation holds significance because, when considering the subsequent improvement in post-test scores, we can attribute the changes directly to the utilization of distinct teaching methods. Consequently, variations in learning outcomes between the two groups can be more effectively interpreted as outcomes stemming from the instructional method employed during the experiment rather than from dissimilarities in students' initial abilities. The superior learning outcomes observed in the experimental class can then be attributed to the efficacy of the group work method in enhancing students' comprehension and engagement.

3.3. Comparison of Post-Test Scores between the Experimental and Control Class

Figure 2 shows the comparison between post-test results from the experimental class and the control class in the value category. It appears that the two classes have the same range of values in the "very high" categories (92-100) and "very low" (60-67). However, there are significant differences in the frequency distribution of values in both classes. In the experimental class, seven students received "very high" categories, and 13 students received a "high category." On the other hand, in the control class, there were only two students who got the "very high" category scores and seven students with a "high category value." This shows that the proportion of students who reach the highest value category is higher in the experimental class than in the control class. Likewise, if we look at the "very low value category" in the experimental class, there is only one student. In contrast, in the control class, there are four students. This shows that the number of students reaching the lowest grades in the experimental class is higher than in the control class.

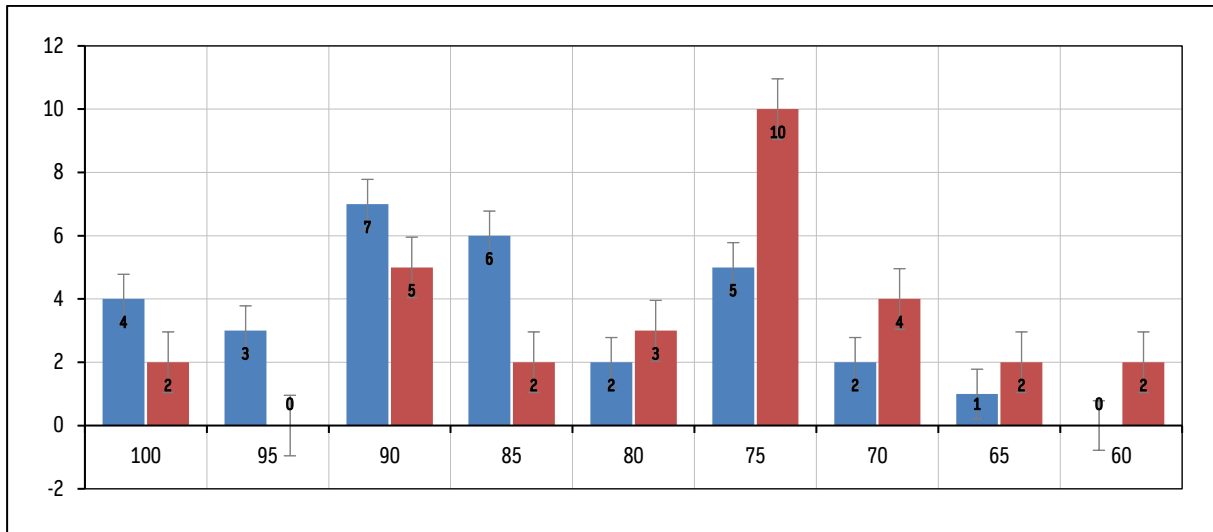


Figure 2. Comparison of Post-Test Scores of Experimental and Control Classes.

From Figure 2, it can be concluded that the post-test results of the experimental class are significantly higher than the control class. These results indicate that the learning method or intervention applied in the experimental class has a positive impact on increasing student learning outcomes in the category of values. Although both have the same range of values, a better distribution of values in the experimental class shows the effectiveness of the learning methods used in increasing students' understanding and achievement.

3.4. Comparison of Mean Scores between the Experimental Group Using Group Work Method and the Control Group Using Individual Assignment Method

The research focuses on assessing whether there is a significant difference in the learning outcomes of IPS (Social Studies) between two groups of eighth-grade students. One group is subjected to the group work method, while the other group receives individual assignments. To determine the statistical significance of any differences observed, a t-test is employed with a predetermined significance level of 5%. The use of a t-test is a standard statistical approach for comparing the means of two groups, in this case, the experimental group and the control group. By comparing the post-test results of these two groups, the research aims to evaluate the impact of the teaching methods on student learning outcomes. In interpreting the results, if the calculated t-value is greater than the critical t-value at the 5% significance level, it would indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups. This difference, if significant, would support the research hypothesis, suggesting that the method of instruction (group work vs. individual assignments) has a notable impact on IPS learning outcomes among eighth-grade students.

Table 2. The Average Comparison Test Between the Experimental and Control Class

| Class | Mean | t-test for Equality of Means | | | |
|-----------------|-------|------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|
| | | t-ht | t-tb | Sig. | Selisih |
| Work in group | 85.33 | 2.810 | 1.671 | 0.007 | 7.33 |
| Individual task | 78 | 65 | 100 | 60 | 100 |

The results of the t-test analysis in the table above indicate that the calculated t-value is 2.810, while the critical t-table value with degrees of freedom (df) of 58 is 1.671, with a significance level of p equal to 0.007. Since the calculated t-value (2.810) is greater than the critical t-table value (1.671), and the significance level (p) of 0.007 is smaller than the predetermined significance level (0.05), it can be concluded that the hypothesis stating "There is a significant difference in the IPS learning outcomes between eighth-grade students at Junior High School Sungguminasa who were given group assignments and those given individual assignments" is accepted.

In the analysis of the mean scores, the results of using the group work method yielded an average score of 85.33. In contrast, the results of giving individual assignments had an average score of 78. There is a difference of 7.33 between the two. This indicates that the implementation of the group work method significantly enhances learning outcomes more effectively than the provision of individual assignments.

The choice of using group work and individual assignments as teaching methods reflects the researcher's interest in exploring the pedagogical strategies that can be most effective in enhancing student learning in the context of IPS. The research hypothesis suggests that one of these methods may be significantly more effective than the other. The results of this research can have implications for instructional practices, highlighting the potential benefits of either group work or individual assignments in improving student achievement in IPS. Additionally, it underscores the importance of evidence-based decision-making in educational settings, where data-driven insights can inform teaching methods and curriculum design.

3.5. Discussion

3.5.1. Student Learning Outcomes with Group Work Methods

The pre-test data for class VIII.B (the experimental class), conducted on May 23, 2023, reveals that the average pre-test score for the experimental class is 44.5, with a maximum score of 65 and a minimum score of 20. After implementing group work methods in the experimental class, a significant improvement in the average post-test score was observed, reaching 85.33, with a maximum score of 100 and a minimum score of 65. This treatment demonstrates that the group work method applied in class VIII.B at Junior High School Sungguminasa has a significant positive impact on the learning outcomes in the subject of Social Studies (IPS).

The post-test data for the experimental class is further supported by observations of students' attitudes during the learning process. In the first meeting, it was noted that 73.3% of students exhibited a good attitude. In the second meeting, the percentage of students with a good attitude increased to 80%. In the third meeting, it reached 93.3%, which was categorized as very good. Ongoing observations also revealed that students learning through the group work method demonstrated a higher level of responsibility towards the material they were studying. This encouraged them to be more active and enthusiastic in seeking a deeper understanding of the subject matter compared to students in the control class.

These findings are consistent with the perspectives of several experts in the field. According to (Smith et al. 2005), collaborative group work has the potential to foster active student engagement within the learning process. Furthermore, a study by (Hunter, Vickery, and Smyth 2010) suggests that the group work method can improve learning outcomes and elevate the average class grades. Additionally, this pedagogical approach can enrich students' educational experiences while cultivating essential skills such as teamwork, effective communication, and leadership, as highlighted in the work of (Hackman and Johnson 2013). These scholarly viewpoints underscore the positive impact of employing group work methodologies, affirming its effectiveness in promoting both academic achievement and the development of valuable skills among students. Throughout the learning process, the experimental class appeared more dynamic, with students displaying tremendous enthusiasm in exploring the concepts of international trade, its benefits, and its positive and negative impacts. This reflects the effectiveness of the group work method in activating the learning process and promoting a better understanding of the Social Studies (IPS) subject matter.

3.5.2. Student Learning Outcomes with An Individual Assignment Method

The pre-test data for class VIII. A (the control class), conducted on Tuesday, May 24, 2023, reveals that the average pre-test score for the control class is 43.8, with a maximum score of 60 and a minimum score of 20. Following the implementation of individual assignment-based learning in the control class, a significant improvement in the average post-test score was obtained, reaching 78, with a maximum score of 100 and a minimum score of 60. This treatment demonstrates that the individual assignments provided to class VIII. A at Junior High School, Sungguminasa has a significant impact on the learning outcomes in the subject of Social Studies (IPS), specifically in class VIII.A.

The post-test data for the Control class is further supported by observations of students' attitudes during the learning process. In the first meeting, it was noted that 53.3% of students exhibited a moderate attitude. In the second meeting, the percentage of students with a positive attitude increased to 60%. In the third meeting, it reached 73.3% with a positive attitude. Furthermore, based on observations conducted during the learning process, students learning through individual assignments appeared less enthusiastic in completing their tasks, showed less enjoyment, and were less active in completing assignments. Additionally, they exhibited a reduced willingness to express their ideas while working on assignments.

According to (Mazenod et al. 2019), the positive aspect of employing this teaching strategy is that it fosters students' self-confidence, encourages independence in learning, reduces dependency on others, and has the potential to enhance learning outcomes (Otter 1992), and academic achievement (Tateyama-Sniezek 1990). However, on the other side, this teaching strategy has its weaknesses, including the possibility that if students encounter difficulties in learning, it may lead to reduced interest and attention due to the lack of communication among students in the learning process, reluctance to ask questions to the teacher, and a lack of experience in collaborating within a team (Frey, Fisher, and Smith 2019; Rachmaniar, Yahya, and Lamada 2021).

4.4.3. Comparison of Student Learning Outcomes Between Group Work and Individual Assignment Methods.

Based on the analysis results, the use of the group work method yielded an average score of 85.33. In contrast, the use of individual assignments resulted in an average score of 78, with a difference of 7.33. This indicates that the group work method is superior to the individual assignment method. This conclusion is further supported by the results of a mean difference test conducted using the t-test. The calculated t-value was 2.810, while the critical t-table value with degrees of freedom (df) of 58 was 1.671, with a significance level (p) of 0.007. Since the calculated t-value (2.810) is greater than the critical t-table value (1.671), and the significance level (p) is less than 0.05, the hypothesis stating, "There is a significant difference in the IPS (Social Studies) learning outcomes between eighth-grade students at Junior High School Sungguminasa who were given group assignments and those given individual assignments," is accepted.

This finding aligns with the results of studies conducted by (Cheng and Warren 2000; Johnston and Miles 2004; Walker 2001), which both concluded that students who were assigned group tasks performed better academically than those given individual assignments. Therefore, it can be stated that the use of the group work method is more effective in engaging students in the learning process (Idkhan and Idris 2021). This method creates a more exciting and enjoyable learning environment, where students find it easier to comprehend the material and express what they have learned, resulting in more optimal learning outcomes. This is in line with (Espey 2018) perspective that group work enhances critical thinking skills, encourages students to voice their opinions, promotes discipline, and fosters mutual assistance among group members. The application of group work methods enlivens the classroom atmosphere, encourages active participation, makes learning enjoyable without causing monotony, and has a positive impact on students' final grades (Brookfield and Preskill 2012; Suarlin et al. 2021).

The analysis presented here, which demonstrates the clear superiority of the group work method over individual assignments in terms of student learning outcomes within the context of IPS (Social Studies), is supported by a body of research and educational literature. These findings are substantiated by multiple studies and scholarly works that emphasize the benefits of collaborative learning through group work in education. One notable reference in this context is the work of (Gillies 2007; Slavin 2011), who has extensively researched and advocated for cooperative learning strategies, including group work. Their research underscores the positive impact of cooperative learning methods on student engagement, academic achievement, and the development of critical thinking skills. Their studies have consistently shown that students who participate in well-structured cooperative group activities tend to outperform those engaged in individual tasks.

Furthermore, the research by (Slavin 2015) in the field of educational psychology provides insights into the significance of cooperative learning. Slavin's work highlights the effectiveness of cooperative learning approaches, including group work, in promoting active participation, peer interaction, and a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Research by (Clark, Kirschner, and Sweller 2012; Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark 2006; Suarlin and Ali 2020) offers a contrasting

viewpoint that promotes direct instruction over constructivist approaches. However, it is worth noting that their perspective has sparked a debate in the educational community, with proponents of collaborative and constructivist methods arguing for the value of active student engagement and social interaction.

Incorporating these references into the discussion strengthens the argument for the superiority of group work in educational settings. These scholarly works not only support the assertion that collaborative learning through group work enhances student outcomes but also provide a broader theoretical and empirical foundation for this pedagogical approach. The adoption of the group work method is firmly grounded in educational research and literature. By drawing on the insights of researchers such as (Johnson, Johnson, and Smith 2014; Loh and Ang 2020; Slavin 2015), it becomes evident that collaborative learning methods like group work offer a more effective way to engage students, deepen their understanding of the material, and ultimately, create a more satisfying educational experience. These references contribute to the evidence base that supports the pedagogical advantages of group work in the field of education.

4. CONCLUSION

This research shows that the use of the group work method significantly improves the learning outcomes of social studies students in junior high schools in Gowa Regency compared to the individual assignment method. These findings also illustrate the vital role of learning methods in forming students' positive attitudes toward learning. The use of group work methods stimulates student collaboration. It increases their understanding while also encouraging motivation and engagement in the learning process. This shows that educators and educational researchers need to consider implementing group work methods as an effective learning strategy, especially in subjects that require deep understanding and social interaction of students. This research not only validates the effectiveness of group work methods in improving learning outcomes, but also emphasizes its essential role in creating a positive learning atmosphere and stimulating students' enthusiasm for learning. These findings guide the development of better, student-focused learning practices in the future.

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