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Title: The Experience of Saudi Female Students Attending Mixed Gender ESL Courses in Melbourne, Australia.

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Abstract:

This study explored the experience of Saudi female students attending mixed-gender English as a second language (ESL) courses in Melbourne, Australia and the factors that impacted their levels of engagement. A transcendental phenomenological research design was used to provide a thick description of the essence of the Saudi female experience in this learning environment. The participants included four Saudi female students currently attending ESL courses in Melbourne, Australia. Two phases—descriptive and interpretive—were employed in the data analysis to accurately capture the nature of the experience. This study revealed that, while all the participants held a positive attitude towards their experience, language proficiency level and marital status played crucial roles in their adaptation. Participants with high language skills reported smoother adaptation than students with low language skills. The married students tended to be more inhibited than single students by the attendance of male especially Saudi male. Working solely with males or participating in physical activities with males had the greatest impact on levels of engagement in classroom activities. These findings were broadly in line with the sparse literature available on this phenomenon. Therefore, future research suggestions and practical implications were offered.

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