



Applicability of "No Homework Policy": A Study Based on the Perspectives of Teachers and Students

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ABSTRACT

The discourse surrounding homework has evolved into a sensitive issue as both parents and practitioners argue that the drawbacks of excessive homework outweigh its benefits. In response to these concerns, President Rodrigo R. Duterte introduced a "No Homework Policy" in the Philippines to reduce the quantity of homework assigned. This paper employs a qualitative approach to explore the applicability of the no homework policy in schools, delving into its potential impact on students, parents, and educators alike. The study utilized a qualitative exploratory research design, employing thematic analysis as the investigative technique to analyze data collected through the interview guide. The study found that while most teachers view homework as beneficial for students, there is a preference among students for a more balanced approach, with a majority supporting the applicability of a "No Homework Policy" in schools.

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1. Introduction

Homework started centuries ago when learning incorporated mainly of writing, arithmetic, rote learning, and reading (Stevenson, 2021). According to Cooper (1989), homework can be defined as the work that is allotted to students by instructors and that should be finished in non-school hours. Homework is assigned by teachers for both instructional and non-instructional purposes in order to determine whether students were able to comprehend the lessons taught in class, whether they have acquired the skills needed, to embolden them to use their skills for innovation, and improve their discipline, communication skills, and confidence (Heffernan, 2019; McGlynn & Kelly, 2019).

Generally, homework is regarded as a constructive activity and is acknowledged everywhere without question but over the last few decades, homework in school systems has grown from basic assignments to complicated tasks and projects (Zaman, Zaman, Hussain, Amin, & Faiz Rasool, 2019). Parents feel like their kids are being overburdened but the teachers' claim it is for the students' own good and overall academic enhancement (Stevenson, 2021). Most of the research on homework has been conducted on its relationship with academic performance but the conclusions and assumptions are changing with the passage of time (Fan, Xu, Cai, He, & Fan, 2017). Over time, researches by Piñeiro, Estévez, Freire, De Caso, Souto, and González-Sanmamed (2019) and Ozyildirim (2022) demonstrated that the time and hours dedicated to the completion of homework does not predict educational success. That is largely because homework is a multilevel situation, meaning, the results depend on classroom factors such as student's understanding of the homework given (Roderique, Polloway, Cumblad, Epstein, & Bursuck, 1994). Later studies also found negative association

between time given to homework and educational success (Rosário, Cunha, Nunes, Nunes, Moreira, & Núñez, 2019). Studies have found out that negative relationship exists because factors that relate positively with homework are antagonistic in nature (Jerrim, Lopez-Agudo, & Marcenaro-Gutierrez, 2019). Sociological variables like gender have a similar effect, for example, boys spend less time on their homework as compared to girls, but they perform better in mathematics and science subjects (Songsirisak & Jitpranee, 2019). Due to excessive homework students cannot spend quality time with their family members and are unable to focus on other activities like sports and social work (Pollard, 2023).

In Pakistan's national education policy, there is no policy regarding homework (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training Government of Pakistan, 2017). Since there are no regulations, giving homework is the choice of teachers and there is no equilibrium in primary and secondary class homework tasks (Anwar, Khan, & Fazal, 2022). Homework is allocated without considering the students' learning needs, but instead to cover the content of books (Cheema, Ahmad, & Shafiq, 2022). Students are asked to memorize the content of books. If they do not, they are given punishment. Hence, students only do homework out of fear of punishment (Iqbal, 2012). This causes a detrimental impact on learning (Dolean & Lervag, 2022). There is a need for a no homework policy centred on the framework of active school administration (Pfeiffer, 2018). In his research, Moise, Diaconu, Negescu, and Gombos (2021) established that according to some principals, no homework policy had positive impact on school performance of learners. However, if teachers want to know what their students have grasped from class, they can assign them homework in small quantity that only examines their learning. According to study by Pollard (2023), teachers see homework as vital for student improvement, focusing on outcomes and enriching the educational experience. Success hinges on analysing data, student feedback, and parental support. Teachers, with their experience, wield the greatest influence on efficacy. Effective strategies include clear expectations, purposeful planning, flexibility, monitoring, motivation, mental health support, and balancing school and home life. Ineffective approaches lack purpose, dampen motivation, and hinder parental involvement. Teacher experience is key to shaping perceptions, offering insights to enhance homework implementation in elementary settings. Countries like Finland have developed a no homework policy approach and, opposite to Pakistani culture, Finland does not have the tradition of extra, long and private tuition after school. Countries like Japan, South Korea and Brazil dole out homework that takes less than 4 hours for students to complete (Homework Around the World, 2017, January 12). As per Pfeiffer (2018), no homework has better influence on students. According to a bill passed to The Department of Education of Philippines and supported by President Rodrigo R. Duterte, a "*No Homework Policy*" should be introduced in schools that would ban homework for students on weekends.

The proposal states that teachers should only be allowed to delegate homework to students on weekends if it is limited and takes less than four hours to complete. With a policy like that, students would be able to grow and pass quality time with family, relatives, and friends (Felongco, 2019, August 29). The aim of this research was to investigate the perspectives of teachers and students regarding homework and to explore if such a "*No Homework Policy*" is applicable in various public and private schools located in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. It will also shed light on the alternatives to replace current homework trend in order to inform future discussions and potential changes in homework practices. The study is significant since it has the potential to transform teaching methods and improve student wellbeing. Through a thorough analysis of the effects of a "no homework" policy, the current study can offer insights which might have the potential to drastically alter the way parents, lawmakers, and educators approach education. Teachers may be motivated to implement more creative and student-centered instructional practices that better suit the requirements of various students by looking at alternative teaching and learning approaches that do not primarily rely on homework.

2. Methodology

2.1. Objectives

1. To investigate the perspective of teachers and students regarding homework.
2. To explore the applicability of "*No Homework Policy*" in schools.
3. To find out alternatives to replace the current trends of homework in schools.

3.2. Research Design and Sample

The study employs a qualitative approach. The research design used in the present study is phenomenological. Purposive sampling technique was used to collect data. The sample comprised of 15 students and 15 teachers of grade level 3 to 8 from various public and private schools in the vicinity of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

3.2.1. Investigative Techniques

Thematic analysis was employed as the investigative technique to analyse the qualitative data in this study. This approach was utilized to systematically explore and interpret the gathered information.

3.2.2. Instruments and Measures

Prior to their involvement in the study, participants were provided with a consent form to ensure their voluntary participation. In addition, a demographic form was administered to gather pertinent personal information from the participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the selected sample, employing an open-ended approach. The structure and content of the interview questions were guided by an interview guide developed by the researchers. The interview guide was developed with the help of trained clinical psychologists and educators. The interview guide was based on an open format with spontaneous questions rather than following an exclusive structure.

3.2.3. Procedure

Relevant literature was reviewed to develop comprehensive interview guide addressing the objectives of the study. The assistance of the supervisor was sought and multiple iterations were conducted to ensure their appropriateness. Permission was obtained from the university and the respective schools for data collection. A face-to-face pilot study was done to assess the feasibility of the interview method and guide, resulting in necessary modifications. The final interview guide was generated after the pilot study. Each participant was directly contacted via email and telephone, and primary contacts were established to schedule the interview sessions. Online interviews were conducted with the 15 selected teachers and 15 students from various public and private schools. Participants were provided with a detailed explanation of the study, including its potential benefits and risks, and their informed consent was obtained using a provided consent form. Additionally, participants were requested to complete a demographic form online, collecting relevant details such as gender, education level, teaching grade, school sector, and years of experience for teachers, and gender, age, current grade, and school sector for students. The interviews were conducted using the finalized interview guide and lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes. All participant responses were treated with confidentiality, and the collected data was analysed using qualitative methods after transcription.

3.2.4. Ethical Considerations

Prior to their participation in the study, each participant was sought for permission and provided with a consent form, ensuring their voluntary involvement. Participants were assured that their identifying information would remain confidential, and responses would be used solely for research purposes. The purpose, objectives, methodology, and aims of the study were clearly explained, ensuring participants were well-informed. Communication with participants adhered to principles of transparency, fairness, and respect, refraining from any form of unacceptable, insulting, abusive, racist, or offensive language during the interviews. No emotional or physical harm was inflicted upon the participants, prioritizing their well-being.

4. Results and Discussion

The research found that the majority of teachers believed homework is a natural aspect of student life and does not have any negative consequences for the students. For example, one of them was of the view, "*The teacher does not benefit from homework. It is for the sake of the child; his revision, his independency, his confidence in himself*". Whereas the responses of students were balanced in terms of those in favour and those against it. For example, one of the students' responded by saying, "*Homework is fine but too much of anything is bad. If it's in small quantity then I have no problem doing it*". Other students in favour of homework were of the view that homework helps "*practice learning*", is "*good for brain*", "*creativity*", and for "*gaining knowledge*". Majority of the students against homework reported that it "*wastes time*" and is "*useless*". Most of them reported that they do not like homework because it is just the

repetition of what they learned at school. These responses differed particularly due to situational factors. However, both teachers and students acknowledged that homework puts a strain on personal and social well-being if it is assigned in large amount. It was noted that private school sector was more conscientious about managing homework burden. The present study's findings were found to be in line with a prior study by Roderique et al. (1994), which found that most of the schools do not have documented homework policies of any kind. And where such a framework is in place, as per Roderique et al. (1994), it is just a recommendation, and the ultimate decision related to homework assignments is always left to the instructor, resulting in confusion throughout grades. That seemed to be the norm in this research as well. Each teacher's motivations and expectations for homework were different. The responses from students revealed that teachers varied in everything from their explanations of homework to the daily amount allocated. Although some instructors valued the right to allocate homework assignments however they see appropriate, they acknowledged however that this inconsistency among teachers could create issues for learners and families who must fulfil the expectations of the teachers. Therefore, majority of both the teachers and students had a positive response to the idea of applicability of "No homework policy" of the Philippines as it might "balance students' personal and academic growth". Most of them were of the view that homework policies are needed because of the "lack of organization" and "lack of consistency of homework" in schools. These findings were consistent with the study conducted by Cordova, Pagtulon-an, and Tan (2019). The responses demonstrated that the policy rarely posed any major barriers aside from the fact that teachers would have to balance their schedule in order to complete the course material.

Upon asking the ways in which this policy could be applied, some of the responses were: "divide the homework in smaller units or give lesser than normal homework", "voting for subjects", "government intervention or regulatory authorities", "education budget and teacher training", "step wise implementation of 'No Homework Policy'", and "homework provision as per a fixed time table". However, one thing should be noted with the policy's context to Pakistan. Pakistan being a developing country lacks a number of resources needed to work on its education system. The problem of illiteracy, a lack of basic knowledge, and infrastructure hinders students' access to the educational system and schooling institutions (Akhtar, Tanweer, Khaskheli, & Khaskheli, 2022). The critical position of schooling is overlooked in rural areas, resulting in low growth in all spheres of living (Vatterott, 2018). In such a system, where one or both of the parents lack basic education, the child is bound to face difficulty in his educational matters and schools are bound to face difficulties in the implementation of policies. The reason teachers supported "No Homework Policy" was mainly because it does not discard homework completely but focuses on reducing its quantity both on weekends and weekdays. Their suggestions for alternative homework practices included introducing the Philippines's "No Homework Policy" in schools, introducing "interesting educational activities", organizing "workshops and meetings" so that teachers can consult each other, and incorporating "students' opinions" on what they want as homework. As per the teachers, if a student does not have parental supervision at home or the resources to participate in tasks, the "No Homework Policy" may "restrict substitute schoolwork tasks".

Participants' opinion regarding the change in current homework trend was similar to what (Darling-Hammond & Ifill-Lynch, 2006) noted in their study. Most teachers were of the view that homework should be "interesting" and "engaging". With online learning on the rise, many teachers have developed contingency strategies for students' learning. Therefore, the trend for traditional homework has been reducing. A prominent pattern could be seen in the answers. The overwhelming number of respondents believed that a policy regarding homework at schools, as well as specific guidelines and instructions for instructors on what makes successful homework, will tend to maximize the advantages of homework for learners while minimizing possible issues. Since the "No Homework Policy" was a bill passed in Philippines, schools and instructors may specify the importance of homework for each level's learning themselves.

5. Conclusion

The current study was conducted in order to explore the applicability of "No Homework Policy" and to gather the perspectives of teachers and students regarding homework. The study concludes that most teachers consider homework to be an advantage for students; however, students prefer a more balanced approach to homework. Majority of the participants' agreed to

the applicability of "No Homework Policy" in schools, however, the situational factors of each region must be considered. Lastly, the sample also recommended the ways to change the current homework trend in schools and provided a few alternatives. It is suggested that teachers clearly define the type of homework that is beneficial; homework that is acceptable for different grades; determining the homework quantity; planning and scheduling among various instructors; parents' obligations concerning workload be explicitly specified; and the stakeholders responsible should be demarcated. The stakeholders can start to experiment the implementation process with the help of the ways and trends provided by students and teachers in the present study. Since the "No Homework Policy" does not entirely eliminate homework, after the inclusion of other modifications and guidelines, the policy can be termed as a "Homework Policy" as well. In order to build a more comprehensive and definitive future study of this kind, including administrators and parents will prove to be valuable. Similarly, including teachers from all grades and regions of the country can also provide with a wide range of comprehensive answers and opinions. As a research base, future studies may use this research as preliminary evidence for more through studies into the perceptions and suggestions of stakeholders involved in the homework process.

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