

Students' and Parents' Perceptions about Homework

Öđrencilerin ve Anne-Babaların Ödeve İlişkin Algıları

Adem Sultan TURANLI*

Erciyes Üniversitesi

Abstract

This descriptive study aimed to identify students' and parents' perceptions about homework and whether their perceptions differed and was conducted with 147 students attending grades 2 through 5 and their parents (father or mother). A questionnaire was developed by the researcher and piloted for its reliability. Some items were either eliminated or reworded so that they could be well understood. The participants were asked to show on a dichotomous 'yes-no' scale whether they agreed with the given statements about their homework assignments. The frequencies and percentages of the responses were calculated, and Pearson chi square was used as the statistical procedure to test if students' and parents' perceptions differed. It was found that students and parents do not find homework very beneficial and do not think that the efforts that students put on homework pay off. In addition, the participants believe that teachers cannot meet the expectations related to monitoring homework assignments and provision of correctives and feedback. On the other hand, it was identified that students and parents think differently about homework assignments in various aspects.

Keywords: homework, parents' perceptions, students' perceptions, academic contribution, attitudes

Öz

Öđrencilerin ve anne-babaların ödeve ilişkin algılarını ve bu algıların farklılık gösterip göstermediđini tespit etmeyi amaçlayan bu betimsel çalışma, 2.-5. sınıflarda okuyan 147 öđrenci ve bunların anne-babalarıyla yürütüldü. Araştırmacı tarafından bir anket geliştirildi ve güvenilirliđi için test edildi. Bazı maddeler ya tamamen çıkarıldı ya da anlaşılması için yeniden yazıldı. Daha sonra katılımcılardan, 'evet-hayır' şeklinde tasarlanmış ikili bir ölçek üzerinde, ödeve ilişkin bazı görüşlere katılıp katılmadıkları soruldu. Sorulara verilen yanıtların sıklık ve yüzdeleri hesaplandı ve ayrıca, öđrenci ve anne-babaların görüşleri arasında farklılıkların olup olmadığını belirlemek için Pearson chi kare istatistiksel yöntem olarak kullanıldı. Öđrenci ve anne-babaların, ödevi faydalı bulmadıkları ve çocukların ödev için harcadığı çabaya değmediđini düşündükleri belirlendi. Ayrıca katılımcılar, öđretmenlerin ödevleri denetleme ve hatalara ilişkin öđrencileri bilgilendirme konusunda beklenilene veremediklerini düşünmektedirler. Diđer yandan, öđrencilerin ve anne-babaların birçok açıdan, birbirlerinden farklı düşündükleri tespit edildi.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Ödev, anne-babaların algıları, öđrencilerin algıları, akademik katkı, tutumlar.

* Yard. Doç. Dr. Adem Sultan TURANLI, Erciyes Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi, Kayseri, TÜRKİYE
turanli@erciyes.edu.tr

Introduction

Homework can be defined as extra work to be completed, generally outside the school to reinforce school learning, and it is claimed to be one of the most controversial issues between children and parents (Harniss et al., 2001). Almost everybody involved in education has something to say about its importance and appropriate amount of daily homework. Although students usually do not like doing homework, they find it useful and appreciate the teachers who regularly assign reasonable amounts of homework (Hallam, 2004). On one hand, some educators maintain that homework increases academic involvement (Bursuck, 1994) and develops self-discipline and good study habits. In addition, involvement in their children's homework helps parents monitor their children's academic development and appreciate their children's efforts. However, too much homework reduces the time students could use for relaxing and socialization (Baumgartner et al., 1993). There are some educators with a more student-centered orientation (i.e., Hong and Lee, 2000) who claim that students' preferences are not adequately taken into account and they even suggest not giving any homework at all.

One reason for assigning homework is to enable communication between schools, pupils and parents so that they can monitor the child's learning process more closely. Another reason for assigning homework is rooted in parents' expectations (Van Voorhis, 2004). Parents believe that homework assignments increase the quality of learning and prepare students for their examinations. Although many studies (Cooper, 1989a; Walberg, Fraser, & Welch, 1986; Cooper et al., 1998; Epstein, 1988; Paschal et al., 1984; Keith, 1982; Keith & Cool, 1992) give evidence about a positive correlation between the time dedicated to homework and academic achievement, Van Voorhis (2003) maintains that this is not a cause and effect relationship. While Walberg, Paschal & Weinstein (1985) claim that homework has a positive effect on academic achievement, others (i.e., Check & Ziebell, 1980; Heller et al., 1988) maintain that it is not an effect or that there is not enough evidence to claim this effect. In addition, McReynolds (2005) argues that the problems homework may bring to students' and parents' lives should also be considered along with its benefits.

Hallam (2004) asserts that a certain amount of homework increases academic performance but 'more' of it will not cause any further increase. Similarly, Kohn (2006) asserts that there is not enough evidence to claim that homework contributes to academic achievement and that students' academic performance will not decline even if they are not given any homework. There is some research claiming that 'a little' homework may lead to more academic achievement than 'a lot' of homework does (Walberg, Paschal & Weinstein, 1985). Opinions about the right amount of homework also vary a lot. Van Voorhis (2004) suggests assigning 20-30 minute homework for kindergarten to second grade students and 30-60 minute homework for grades three through six per day. Cooper (2001) suggests giving 10-minute homework for the first year pupils and adding 10 more minutes for each further year. There exist other suggestions about the ideal length of doing homework.

Although teachers believe that doing homework pays off, they do not pay enough attention to its planning and implementation (Hallam, 2004). Homework assignments should be deliberately planned and organized according to the learning principles and in line with students' cognitive readiness (Epstein et al., 1993). In addition, students' short and long term needs and expectations are deliberately considered important in homework planning (Cooper, 1989b).

The process of doing homework requires careful examination. Whether pupils have enough resources and whether they (can) do it by themselves may affect the effectiveness of homework. Some homework assignments force parents to help their children with the homework or 'teach' them. Moreover, many other parents take homework seriously and do their best to 'support' their children (Hallam, 2004). However, not all parents know how to help their children with homework (Epstein & Lee, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Burow, 1995).

Despite their little impact on children's academic achievements, parents spend most of their limited time helping their children (Solomon, Warnin & Lewis, 2002).

Although collaboration between the student, family and the school is crucial, relationships between these groups are problematic (Jayanthi, Nelson, Sawyer, Bursuck & Epstein, 1995). Despite the abundant literature suggesting cooperation about homework applications (See Berger, 1991; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990; Epstein, 1987), all the literature is not in full agreement (McDermott, Goldman & Varenne, 1984). First, parents' opinions about how to help the children, the ideal amount of homework and ways of giving feedback are varied. While some parents expect teachers to give more homework, some complain that teachers already assign too much. To a common conviction, many teachers assign homework only to conform to the rules and pupils do their homework only to avoid reprimands without any belief in its benefit. The perceptual differences between parents, teachers and students related to the functions of schooling lead to the differences in homework-related attributions and the differences point to lack of awareness of each other's viewpoints.

The relationship between homework and academic achievement has been investigated (e.g., Cooper, 1989a; Snow et al., 1991), but the problems and opinions of students have not been clearly identified yet (Bryan & Nelson, 1994). In addition, parents' and teachers' ideas or perceptions should be identified in order to ease the communication between the sides. Therefore, this research aimed at identifying students' and parents' perceptions about some issues related to homework assignments. It also attempted to identify whether students' and parents' perceptions differ.

Methods

This study was conducted with 147 students from four primary public schools and their parents. The four schools from different parts of the city were purposefully selected to allow heterogeneity. In each school, one teacher was selected through convenience sampling from each grade level, except for the first grade simply because the difficulties that first grade level students had in reading were thought to distort students' understanding the items in the questionnaire. Consequently, a total of 16 primary school teachers teaching grade levels 2 through 5 were included in the study.

The selected 16 classroom teachers were each asked to deliver the questionnaires to the ten of their students in their classes, whom the researcher had randomly selected from the class rosters, and the teachers delivered the questionnaires. Each student was given two questionnaires. One for the student and the other with a cover letter for assent to the parent, the one who deals with the child's schooling most and the letter explained the rationale for the study. For a causal-comparative study, it was assumed that two sample groups of 160 people would be large enough to provide enough data to answer the research questions. Hence, the study would be carried out 320 subjects (160 students and 160 parents). However, 22 of the parents whose children had been randomly selected by the researcher were reluctant to participate in the study. Instead of these reluctant parents and their children, the researcher randomly selected new students from the class rosters again and, consequently, new parents. Finally, the 160 parents agreed to and allowed their children to participate in the study.

The 16 classroom teachers gave the questionnaires (parent and student versions) to their students who had been already selected and asked them to return them within a week. However, 13 pairs of the questionnaires were eliminated due to improper completion. Therefore, 147 pairs of questionnaires (a total of 294) were gathered for analysis. Demographic features of schools, students and parents were not taken into account as factors. Therefore, the relationships between demographic factors and students' or parents' perceptions should be investigated in another study.

Instrumentation

Fifteen points worthy of consideration were identified from the research literature on homework assignments. Since the study aimed at identifying how primary school students and their parents perceive homework assignments and whether their perceptions differ, two versions of the questionnaire were prepared, equal in content but different in wording. For instance, the first item in the questionnaire for students "The assigned homework usually helps me understand the related topic" was stated as "The assigned homework usually helps my child understand the related topic" in the version for parents. The two versions were separately piloted with 15 students in a primary school and their parents for the purpose of clarity. They were asked to provide feedback about the unclear statements in the questionnaire, and some items were thereby re-worded and improved. For instance, one of the items was originally read as "Our teacher usually helps us with our homework"; however, since both the teachers and the students asked for clarity about the meaning of the item, it was reworded as "Our teacher usually helps us correct our mistakes" after the piloting. It was also thought that answering dichotomously as 'yes' or 'no' would be appropriate for the students, especially for those in the earlier grades, and therefore, both versions of the questionnaire (student and parent versions) were accordingly prepared on the dichotomous scale basis to allow comparison. Table 1 shows the distribution of the students according to their schools and grade levels.

Table 1.

Distribution of Students to Schools and Grade Levels (freq.)

| | Class2 | Class3 | Class4 | Class5 | Total |
|----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| School A | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 36 |
| School B | 9 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 36 |
| School C | 10 | 8 | 10 | 9 | 37 |
| School D | 9 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 38 |
| Total | 37 | 37 | 38 | 35 | 147 |

Data Analysis

For the analysis of the data, participants' responses were tabulated in frequencies and percentages to identify what they thought about homework assignments. Pearson chi square was used as a statistical procedure to determine whether there were differences between students' and parents' perceptions related to homework assignments.

Results

It is a controversial issue among educational circles whether or not homework is helpful for students' academic improvement and whether it is worth the pain, even if it is necessary. The more data is gathered from and about the sides of the discussion, the better decisions can be made about homework assignments at schools. The data were gathered from 147 students and 147 parents and in Table 2 the responses are displayed in frequencies and percentages. The table also includes chi square values and the level of significance for each item in the questionnaire which indicates whether or not students' and parents' perceptions about homework assignments differ.

Homework helpful for understanding topics: The first question was about how helpful the students and the parents found homework assignments in relation to understanding the lesson or task in hand. Less than half of the respondents (48,0%) claimed that the given assignments helped the students understand the related topic. On the other hand, the students' and the parents' perceptions about it seem to differ: While only 40,8% of the students responded that doing homework was helpful to understand the subject matter, more of the parents (55,1%) than the students found homework assignments helpful. Furthermore, chi square analysis also

indicated that students and parents have significantly different opinions about the contribution of homework assignments to the understanding of the subject matter ($\chi^2=6,01$, $p<0,05$). In other words, parents believe that doing homework contributes to learning more than students do.

Necessary for short-term goals: The second question aimed to identify how necessary students and parents found homework assignments for students' short-term goals (such as monthly examinations). Only half of the respondents (51,0%) claimed that the homework assignments were really necessary for students' short-term academic goals. While more than half of the students (57,1%) stated that homework was not necessary for the students' short term goals, a close percentage of the parents (59,2%) found them necessary for this purpose. Chi square analysis also indicated that the students' and the parents' perceptions about the necessity of homework assignments for students' short-term goals significantly differ ($\chi^2=7,84$; $p<0,01$). In other words, more parents than students believe that doing homework is necessary to help students achieve their short-term goals.

Necessary for long-term goals: Contribution of homework assignments to students' actualization of long-term goals is another controversial issue and not all educators agree on the contribution of assignments to long-term academic goals. More than two thirds of the respondents (61,9%) found them useful for the students' long-term academic goals. While more than two thirds of the parents (69,4%) responded that homework assignments were useful for the students' long-term goals, only half of the students (54,5%) found homework useful for long-term academic goals. More specifically, quite a lot of the parents (30,6%) and the students (40,8%) find homework useless for long-term academic goals. The analysis showed that students and parents disagree on the usefulness of homework assignments and more parents find homework useful for students' long-term academic achievements than students ($\chi^2=6,98$; $p<0,01$).

Table 2.

Participants' Perceptions about Homework Assignments and Differences

| | Students | | Parents | | Total | | χ^2 | p |
|--|----------|--------|---------|--------|-------|--------|---------------|-------|
| | N | (%) | N | (%) | N | (%) | | |
| <i>The assigned homework is usually helpful for me to understand the related topic</i> | | | | | | | | |
| No | 87 | (59,2) | 66 | (44,9) | 153 | (52,0) | $\chi^2=6,01$ | <0,05 |
| Yes | 60 | (40,8) | 81 | (55,1) | 141 | (48,0) | | |
| <i>I usually find the assigned homework necessary for my short term goals.</i> | | | | | | | | |
| No | 84 | (57,1) | 60 | (40,8) | 114 | (49,0) | $\chi^2=7,84$ | <0,01 |
| Yes | 63 | (42,9) | 87 | (59,2) | 150 | (51,0) | | |
| <i>I usually find the assigned homework useful for my long term goals.</i> | | | | | | | | |
| No | 67 | (45,6) | 45 | (30,6) | 112 | (38,1) | $\chi^2=6,98$ | <0,01 |
| Yes | 80 | (54,5) | 102 | (69,4) | 182 | (61,9) | | |
| <i>I usually find the homework assignments interesting.</i> | | | | | | | | |
| No | 103 | (70,1) | 83 | (56,5) | 186 | (63,3) | $\chi^2=5,85$ | <0,05 |
| Yes | 44 | (29,9) | 64 | (43,5) | 108 | (36,7) | | |
| <i>Our teacher/s usually assign/s too much homework.</i> | | | | | | | | |
| No | 49 | (33,3) | 72 | (49,0) | 121 | (41,2) | $\chi^2=7,43$ | <0,01 |
| Yes | 98 | (66,7) | 75 | (51,0) | 173 | (58,8) | | |
| <i>Our teacher/s usually assign/s very difficult homework.</i> | | | | | | | | |
| No | 79 | (53,7) | 55 | (37,4) | 134 | (45,6) | $\chi^2=7,90$ | <0,01 |
| Yes | 68 | (46,3) | 92 | (62,6) | 160 | (54,4) | | |
| <i>I usually cannot have time to play games.</i> | | | | | | | | |
| No | 94 | (63,9) | 107 | (72,8) | 201 | (68,4) | $\chi^2=2,66$ | >0,05 |
| Yes | 53 | (36,1) | 40 | (27,2) | 93 | (31,6) | | |
| <i>The due time to submit the assigned homework is usually enough to do it properly.</i> | | | | | | | | |
| No | 57 | (38,8) | 79 | (53,7) | 136 | (46,3) | $\chi^2=6,62$ | <0,05 |
| Yes | 90 | (61,2) | 68 | (46,3) | 158 | (53,7) | | |

Assigned homework being interesting: The motivational power of homework is an important issue as well as its academic contribution. Hence, its motivational contribution needs consideration. Many students and parents complain that homework assignments often lack this contributory power. In order to see what students and parents think about this, the students and the parents were asked how interesting they found the assignments set by the teachers. The analysis showed that only one third of the respondents thought that the given assignments were interesting for the students. More specifically, a great majority of the students (70,1%) responded that their homework was uninteresting but more of the parents (43,5%) than the students thought that the homework assignments were interesting. This indicates that parents are less skeptical about the motivational effect of homework. Furthermore, chi square analysis shows that this difference between students' and parents' perceptions is significantly different ($X^2=5,85$, $p<0,05$).

Homework load: Another controversial issue about homework is the daily or weekly load; in other words, how much homework should students be assigned to do within a certain period of time? Without regarding the exact amount of homework that the teachers assigned to the students, the participants were asked to state whether or not they found the load of given assignments 'too much'. The analysis showed that two fifths of the respondents (41,2%) did not find the homework load 'too much'. However, it was calculated that students' and parents' perceptions showed significant differences ($X^2=7,43$, $p<0,01$). Two thirds of the students (66,7%) claimed that their teachers assigned too much homework and 51% of the parents agreed with those students. In other words, both groups believe that students are assigned more homework than students can handle. Also, the difference may imply that parents are more demanding and expect their children to work more.

Level of difficulty: Obstacles may lead to frustration. Homework assignments beyond students' ability may have negative impacts on students' attitude toward and on their perceptions about homework, which in turn disappoints parents. Therefore, it was supposed to be fruitful to know how difficult students and parents find homework assignments. More than half of the respondents (54,4%) found the assignments too difficult for the students. However, while the majority of the parents (62,6%) found the assigned homework difficult for the students, only 46,3% of the students agreed with their parents. In other words, parents complain more that homework assignments are very difficult for students. Also, the analysis indicated that parents and students think differently about the challenge that homework brings to students ($X^2=7,90$, $p<0,01$).

Enough time left for playing: Games have an important role in children's lives. However, having to do a lot of homework may prevent them from playing. Expectedly, most of the respondents (68,4%) claimed that the children did not have enough time to play due to too much homework. Most members in each group (63,9% of the students and 72,8% of the parents) agreed that there was limited time for students to play games. However, chi square analysis showed that students and the parents did not think differently about the time that students can spend playing games ($X^2=2,66$, $p>0,05$).

Enough time for preparation: Parents and students often complain that students are not given enough time to submit a well prepared homework assignment. The shortage of time for preparation supposedly reduces homework quality. Nearly half of the respondents (46,3%) stated that students were not given enough time to prepare their homework properly. On the other hand, more of the parents (53,7%) complained about the time shortage than the students (38,8%) did, and this difference was found statistically significant ($X^2=6,62$, $p<0,05$). It can be said that parents think that teachers do not give their students enough time to prepare their homework properly before they submit them.

Getting help from family members: Getting help from a family member, such as a parent or an elder sibling, is very common and often recommended. The analysis showed that students get help from their family members. Only 30,6% of the respondents claimed that the students did not get help from any of their family members. 74,1% of the students and 64,6% of the parents stated that students get help from other family members, which confirms the common conviction. However, the analysis indicates that the difference between the students' and the parents' responses is not statistically significant ($\chi^2=3,14$, $p>0,05$).

Helpful resources available at home: Not all families can afford for their children all resources they might need for school. It is found that 40,8% of the respondents stated that the students did not have enough resources for the given homework. While 63,3% of the students maintained that they had the needed resources, fewer of the parents (55,1%) agreed with the students, and chi square analysis displayed that students and parents do not think differently about the availability of required resources ($\chi^2=2,03$, $p>0,05$).

Watching TV: Many parents complain that school children watch a lot of TV. and they expect their children to study harder. However, fewer than half of the respondents (46,6%) stated that students watched a lot of TV; however, it was found that students and parents thought differently about it ($\chi^2=30,19$; $p<0,01$). While two thirds of the students (69,4%) responded that they did not watch too much of it, nearly the same number of parents (62,6%) disagreed with them and claimed that students watch TV too much.

Table 3.

Participants' Perceptions about Homework Assignments and Differences

| | Students N (%) | Parents N (%) | Total N (%) | χ^2 | p |
|--|-------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|---------|
| <i>I usually get help from my family members.</i> | | | | | |
| No | 38 (25,9) | 52 (35,4) | 90 (30,6) | $\chi^2=3,14$ | $>0,05$ |
| Yes | 109 (74,1) | 95 (64,6) | 204 (69,4) | | |
| <i>I have enough resources/books to use for my homework.</i> | | | | | |
| No | 54 (36,7) | 66 (44,9) | 120 (40,8) | $\chi^2=2,03$ | $>0,05$ |
| Yes | 93 (63,3) | 81 (55,1) | 174 (59,2) | | |
| <i>I watch a lot of TV.</i> | | | | | |
| No | 102 (69,4) | 55 (37,4) | 157 (53,4) | $\chi^2=30,19$ | $<0,01$ |
| Yes | 45 (30,6) | 92 (62,6) | 137 (46,6) | | |
| <i>I listen to music while doing my homework</i> | | | | | |
| No | 111 (75,5) | 99 (67,3) | 210 (71,4) | $\chi^2=2,400$ | $>0,05$ |
| Yes | 36 (24,5) | 84 (32,7) | 84 (28,6) | | |
| <i>Our teacher checks regularly if we have done the assigned homework.</i> | | | | | |
| No | 48 (32,7) | 72 (49,0) | 120 (40,8) | $\chi^2=8,11$ | $<0,01$ |
| Yes | 99 (67,3) | 75 (51,0) | 174 (59,2) | | |
| <i>Our teacher usually helps us correct our mistakes.</i> | | | | | |
| No | 77 (52,4) | 96 (65,3) | 173 (58,8) | $\chi^2=5,07$ | 0,05 |
| Yes | 70 (47,6) | 51 (34,7) | 121 (41,2) | | |
| <i>I usually spendhour/s doing the assigned homework on a weekday.</i> | | | | | |
| <1hour | 8 (5,4) | 26 (17,7) | 34 (11,6) | $\chi^2=46,75$ | $<0,01$ |
| 1h-2hours | 50 (34,0) | 87 (59,2) | 137 (46,6) | | |
| 2-3hours | 72 (49,0) | 32 (21,8) | 104 (35,4) | | |
| >3hours | 17 (11,6) | 2 (1,2) | 19 (6,5) | | |

Listening to music: Like the habit of watching TV, many parents complain that their children listen to a lot of music while studying, which may distract them. Unexpectedly, the analysis indicated that a great majority of the respondents (71,4%) did not think that students listened to

music while doing homework. Furthermore, chi square analysis did not provide any evidence of difference between what parents and students think about students' listening to music while studying ($X^2=2,40$, $p>0,05$).

Teachers' checking assignments: As commonly suggested, monitoring homework assignments (whether and how well they have been done) may contribute positively to students' achievement. However, only 59,2% of the respondents thought that the teachers checked the submitted homework regularly. On the other hand, it was also found that parents and students think differently about homework monitoring ($X^2=8,11$, $p<0,01$); while 67,3% of students perceived that teachers checked homework regularly, 51,0% of the parents agreed with them.

Teachers' providing feedback: Correcting mistakes and providing feedback/correction for students is considered to be beneficial and essential. However, students often complain that teachers do not give enough correction/ feedback for their work. The analysis showed that students' and parents' perceptions regarding teachers' feedback/correction about the submitted homework statistically differ ($X^2=5,07$, $p<0,05$). While 47,6% of the students responded that teachers gave them feedback/correction related to the homework, far fewer parents (34,7%) agreed with the students. In other words, parents' and students' perceptions regarding teachers' provision of feedback/correction are statistically different.

Time spent doing homework: In the core of the debate about homework lies the question of how much homework students at different grade levels should be assigned to do. Along with many suggestions from educators, it was assumed that students and parents, who are directly or indirectly affected by homework assignments, should have a word to say about the amount of homework to be done. The students claimed that they spent more than two and a half hours ($\bar{x}=2,67$; $SD=0,75$) per day doing their homework while the parents thought their children spent somewhat less ($\bar{x}=2,07$; $SD=0,67$) doing homework. Chi square test showed that the difference between their responses related to amount of time spent on homework was statistically significant ($X^2=46,75$; $p<0,01$). This difference may imply that doing homework bores students, that they thereby exaggerate their efforts and that parents are not 'satisfied' with their children's efforts however much they study.

To sum up, it can be concluded that students' and parents' perceptions about homework differ in many aspects. There may be various reasons for the differences. First, parents may see the whole picture about the likely effects of homework better than young people; students may not be able to see how homework may contribute to their academic progress in the short or long run. Second, the challenge that homework assignments bring to students may lead to avoidance. Although parents emotionally support their children, they are aware that lack of effort or challenge may result in failure. Also, it is known that primary school students will have to take many competitive examinations in the future to gain places in better schools. Therefore, parents expect their children to work harder than other students. Third, similarly, parents think differently from students about leisure activities and believe that students waste a lot of time watching TV or listening to music while studying. This difference may be due to parents' conviction that watching TV and listening to music distract students, whereas complete silence is required to understand the subject matter.

Conclusions and Implications

Conclusions

One of the limitations of this study was related to the sampling method used since the respondents came from only one city. Secondly, dichotomous answering might have decreased the precision of the answers related to the perceptions. Therefore, the results should be

cautiously used and new studies should be carried out with larger and more heterogeneous samples with in-depth data gathering procedures. Despite these limitations, the findings can still provide useful insights about students' and parents' perceptions related to homework assignments and the differences between their perceptions.

The first concern of this study was to identify what parents and students think about certain problematic issues about homework. The findings from the study show that more than half of the parents and students do not believe that homework assignments are interesting enough to motivate students or helpful to have students understand the subject matter. However, it does not necessarily mean that students' lack of interest in homework assignments indicate that they do not find that useful. According to Hallam (2004), teachers who assign regular and reasonable amount of homework are liked by students comparatively more than other teachers. Hong and Lee (2000) claim that the major problem is that students' individual needs and interests are not taken into account. On the other hand, although homework increases the amount of time spent on academic work (Bursuck, 1994), the finding from this study supports the educators who do not believe that homework is helpful for academic achievement (Cooper, 1989a).

This study also indicates that students and parents do not think that students have enough time left to play games. Not more than half of parents believe that students watch too much TV or listen to music while studying. Furthermore, the study shows that many teachers do not give enough feedback/corrections about homework assignments. This finding supports Hallam's (2004) findings in that teachers are not careful enough in homework planning and evaluation since, as the researcher claims, homework should be carefully planned, checked and given back to students with proper feedback. Because the teacher's attitude toward homework reflects how seriously he/she takes it, being positive and enthusiastic about homework will determine how seriously students and parents take it.

On the other hand, more than half of the participants maintain that the assigned homework is necessary for students' academic achievement and effective in its purpose but too hard for students to do. The literature suggests different things about this point. Many studies (Cooper, 1989a; Walberg, Fraser & Welch, 1986; Cooper et al., 1998; Epstein, 1988; Paschal et al., 1984; Keith, 1982; Keith & Cool, 1992; Walberg, Paschal & Weinstein, 1985) assert that there is a relationship between time spent on homework and academic achievement; however, many researchers claim that the relationship cannot be explained as causality (Van Voorhis, 2003; Check & Ziebell, 1980; Heller et al., 1988). On the other hand, Cooper, Lindsay, Nye and Greathouse (1998) state that homework might have positive effects on achievement only in upper classes. Walberg, Paschal and Weinstein (1985) articulate that doing homework may help students gain independent studying habits; they also point to the studies which show that a small amount of homework may contribute more than a lot of homework.

More than half of the participants claim that students are assigned too much homework to do. The suggestions about the right amount of daily homework in the literature change from 20-30 minutes in the early classes of primary school (Van Voorhis, 2004) and at least one hour for upper classes (Strother, 1984). When the findings from this study are compared to what the literature suggests, it can be concluded that too much homework is assigned to students in our schools daily. Another finding from this study is that students are claimed to get help from family members. This is an important issue to consider. One of the reasons for assigning homework is to set up communication between teachers, students and parents (Van Voorhis, 2004), and thereby help parents monitor their children's academic improvement (Walberg, Paschal & Weinstein, 1985). According to some researchers such as Epstein, 1983, 1985; Walberg et al., 1985; Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman & Hemphill, 1991, such an involvement

influences children's attitude toward school positively. According to Solomon, Warnin and Lewis (2002), since doing homework decreases the time for resting and socializing, parents are ready to sacrifice their own time by reducing their children's workload; however, parents should consider that they may have detrimental effects on their children's academic progress if they use any improper strategies (Baumgartner et al., 1993). There are also studies indicating that primary school students may learn from their parents (Cooper, 1989a; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler & Burow, 1995), while this is not exactly true for secondary school students (Balli, Demo & Wedman, 1998; Xu & Corno, 2003).

Moreover, parents and children assert that although teachers do not usually give enough time for students to do homework properly, they monitor homework submission regularly. On the contrary to common assumptions about homework load, students and parents claim that children spend a lot of time doing homework. It is observed that homework applications are far from what is 'idealized'; students and parents believe that although homework is given to contribute to students' academic success, it might cause problems. Therefore, as McReynolds (2005) suggests, despite the advantages of assignments, the likely problems that they may bring to the lives of children and parents should be considered. It can also be concluded that neither students nor parents are happy with some homework procedures or teachers' attitudes regarding homework.

Another concern of this study was to identify the differences between children' and parents' perceptions about homework assignments. The analyses showed that there were some differences between the groups. More parents than children believe that homework assignments are useful for students' goals. Similarly, more parents than children find assignments interesting and helpful to motivate children to learn the subject matter. However, parents find homework more difficult than children do. Moreover, more of the parents think that children spend too much time watching TV and listening to music while studying. However, comparatively more children than parents maintain that they are assigned too much homework and consequently they do not have enough time to play games but more children than parents believe that they are given enough time to complete their homework. More children than parents assert that they have enough resources to use for school, and that they get help from other family members. As for monitoring homework, children think more than parents that although teachers check whether homework has been done or not, teachers do not give students feedback/correctives. Finally, more students than parents maintain that children spend more time doing homework.

It can be concluded that not many students or parents seem to be happy with homework assignments. Schools' and teachers' agendas about homework assignments do not match students' and their parents' needs or expectations. Such disagreements between school and the family (parents and children) will push them away from school or school-related activities. Unless they find these activities helpful and reasonable, they will rarely be motivated to do any school work. In addition, the study showed that students and parents do not agree about many issues regarding homework assignments. Disagreement or the lack of mutual understanding may lead to conflict in the family. Since many parents very often interfere in their children's 'business', such conflicts may reduce parents' interest in school and discourage them from trying to help their children. Therefore, it can be suggested that both sides, especially parents, should be informed about the others' perceptions and feelings. More empathetic behaviors may help prevent misunderstandings and conflicts.

*Implications**Implications for Practice*

In line with the results obtained from this research study and from the related literature, the following can be suggested.

1. Assigning homework facilitates the cooperation between parents, school children and the teacher (Van Voorhis, 2004). For instance, Bryan & Nelson (1994) state that especially parents have the opportunity to monitor their children's progress. Therefore, the teacher and parents should do their best to make use of homework applications.
2. The findings from this study related to the contribution of homework to students' academic performance are parallel to those in the literature, claiming that the contribution of doing homework is controversial (see e.g., Walberg, Fraser & Welch, 1986; Epstein, 1988; Check & Ziebell, 1980; Heller et al., 1988). Consequently, homework as an instructional technique should be cautiously used, taking into account what educators suggest.
3. When deciding whether homework is useful, the problems it brings to the student and the family should also be taken into account (McReynolds, 2005). For instance, contrary to the common conviction, there is not enough evidence to verify the hypothesis that doing homework provides students with the habit of studying harder (Kohn, 2006). Therefore, decisions related to setting homework assignments or not should not be based on unsound assumptions.
4. Students and parents complain about homework load. Parents claim that it may paralyze their social life (Simplicio, 2005). When assigned too much homework, students attempt to get rid of it and display avoidance behavior, which requires that teachers should be aware of the effects of too much homework. Therefore, teachers should monitor students' individual readiness to do homework.
5. Another controversial issue is whether the school child should get any help from the other family members and if so, how they should do it. Especially primary school students learn a lot from their parents (Cooper, 1989a; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Burow, 1995) because parents already know the content matter due to its simplicity for adults. But parents should be careful while helping their children because they may also give harm to their children (Cooper, Lindsay & Nye, 1999) because teaching requires certain professional skills. On the other hand, parents and the teacher should know the other side's expectations about helping children with the homework (Patton et al., 2001).
6. The reasons why students need to do any homework should be clear and acceptable to students. If they find the homework irrelevant, they lose interest, and doing homework turns into a waste time.
7. Using homework as an instructional technique requires careful planning; the teacher should be able to plan the tasks according to certain learning principles and students' readiness (Epstein et al., 1993). In addition, they should be planned considering students' short and long term needs (Cooper, 1989b).
8. On the other hand, doing homework may be problematic for students and evaluating or giving feedback may lead to the teacher's exhaustion and frustration due to the shortage of time. Frequent assignments in large classes will often result in too much work for the teacher (Cooper, 1989b). In addition, just noting whether the homework has been submitted is not the right thing to do for evaluative purposes. Therefore, the teacher should assign relevant and well-planned homework and provide feedback for it (Hallam, 2004).

Implications for Further Research

Additionally, the following implications may be suggested for further research:

1. A larger scale study which covers all the levels from primary through secondary schools may be conducted, so that more comparative data can be gathered.
2. Qualitative data gathering procedures can be used in order to eliminate the weaknesses of the questionnaire, which was also used for the present study, and to gather in-depth data.
3. Along with students and parents' opinions, teachers' opinions need to be identified, since they are the key figure in homework procedures.
4. Finally, experimental or quasi-experimental designs can be used in order to assess the effect of doing homework on students' academic achievements and their attitudes toward schooling.

References

- Baumgartner, D., Bryan, T., Donahue, M., & Nelson, C. (1993). Thanks for asking: parent comments about homework, tests, and grades. *Exceptionality*, 4(3), 177-185.
- Berger, E. H. (1991). *Parents as partners in education: The school and home working together* (3rd ed.). New York: Macmillan.
- Bryan, T., & Nelson, C. (1994). Doing homework: Perspectives of elementary and junior high school students. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 27(8), 488-99.
- Bursuck, W. (1994). Introduction to the special series on homework. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 27, 466-469.
- Check, J. F., & Ziebell, D. G. (1980). Homework: A dirty word. *The Clearing House*, 54, 439-441.
- Cooper, H. (1989a). *Homework*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Cooper, H. (1989b). Synthesis of research on homework. *Educational Leadership*, 47(3), 85-91.
- Cooper, H. (2001). Homework for all - in moderation. *Educational Leadership*, 58(7), 34-38.
- Cooper, H., Lindsay, J. J., Nye, B., & Greathouse, S. (1998). Relationships among attitudes about homework, amount of homework assigned and completed, and student achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90, 70-83.
- Epstein, J. L. (1987). Parent involvement: What research says to administrators? *Education and Urban Society*, 19, 119-136.
- Epstein, J. L. (1988). *Homework practices, achievements, and behaviors of elementary school students* (Center of Research on Elementary and Middle schools Report No. 26). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University.
- Epstein, J. L., & Lee, S. (1995). National patterns of school and family connections in the middle grades. In B. A. Ryan, G. R. Adams, T. P. Gullotta, R. P. Weissberg & R. L. Hampton (Eds.) *The family-school connection: Theory, research and practice* (108-154). Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage.
- Epstein, M. H., Polloway, E. A., Foley, R. M., & Patton, J. R. (1993). Homework: a comparison of teachers' and parents' perceptions of the problems experienced by students identified as having behavioral disorders, learning disabilities, or no disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education*, 14(5), 40-50.
- Hallam, S. (2004). Current findings - homework: The evidence. *British Educational Research Association Research Intelligence*, 89, 27-29.
- Harniss, M. K., Epstein, M. H., Bursuck, W. D., Nelson, J., & Jayanthi, M. (2001). Resolving homework-related communication problems: Recommendations of parents of children with and without disabilities. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 17(3), 205-225.

- Heller, H.W., Spooner, F., Anderson, D., & Mimms, A. (1988). Homework: A review of special education practices in the southwest. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 11, 43-51.
- Hong, E., & Lee, K. (2000). Preferred homework style and homework environment in high-versus low-achieving Chinese students. *Educational Psychology*, 20(2), 125-137.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Bassler, O. C., & Burow, R. (1995). Parents' reported involvement in students' homework: Strategies and practices. *Elementary School Journal*, 95, 435-450.
- Jayanthi, M., Nelson, J. S., Sawyer, V., Bursuck, W. D., & Epstein, M. H. (1995). Homework-communication problems among parents, classroom teachers, and special education teachers: An exploratory study. *Remedial and Special Education*, 16, 102-116.
- Keith, T. Z. (1982). Time spent on homework and high school grades: A large sample path analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 74(2), 248-253.
- Keith, T. Z., & Cool, V. A. (1992). Testing models of school learning: effects of quality of instruction, motivation, academic coursework, and homework on academic achievement. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 7, 207-226.
- Kohn, A. (2006). Abusing research: The study of homework and other examples. *Phi Delta Kappan*, (September), 8-22.
- McDermott, R. P., Goldman, S. V., & Varenne, H. (1984). When school goes home: Some problems in the organization of homework. *Teachers College Record*, 85(3), 391-409.
- McReynolds, K. (2005). Homework encounter. *Education for Meaning and Social Justice*, 18(2), 9-13.
- Paschal, R. A., Weinstein, T., & Walberg, H. J. (1984). The effects of homework on learning: A quantitative synthesis. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 78, 97-104.
- Patton, J. R., Jayanthi, M. & Polloway, E. A. (2001). Home-school collaboration about homework: What do we know and what should we do? *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 17, 227-242.
- Simplicio, J. S. C. (2005). Homework in the 21st Century: The antiquated and ineffectual implementation of a time honored educational strategy. *Education*, 126(1) 138-142.
- Snow, C. E., Barnes, W. S., Chandler, J., Goodman, I. F., & Hemphill, L. (1991). *Unfulfilled expectations: Home and school influences on literacy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Solomon, Y., Warnin, J., & Lewis, C. (2002). Helping with homework as a site of tension for parents and teenagers. *British Research Educational Journal*, 28(4) 603-622.
- Turnbull, A. P., & Turnbull, H. R. (1990). *Families, professionals, and exceptionality: A special partnership* (2nd ed.). Columbus, OH: Merrill.
- Van Voorhis, F. L. (2003). Interactive homework in middle school: Effects on family involvement and science achievement. *Journal of Educational Research*, 96(6), 323-338.
- Van Voorhis, F. L. (2004). Reflecting on the homework ritual: Assignments and designs. *Theory into Practice*, 43(3), 205-12.
- Walberg, H. J., Fraser, B. J., & Welch, W. W. (1986). A test of a model of educational productivity among senior high school students. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 79, 133-139.
- Walberg, H. J., Paschal, R. A., & Weinstein, T. (1985). Homework's powerful effects on learning. *Educational Leadership*, 42, 76-78.