

Does Homework Help or Harm? A Case for Reconsideration

Isidora Benito (Miss Isi) · Bilingual primary school teacher (Universidad de los Andes)

In today's education system, homework is often viewed as a necessary tool for academic success; however, researchers are suggesting that it might be doing more harm than good. Homework has traditionally been an integral part of educational systems, designed to reinforce classroom learning and cultivate good study habits. However, growing concerns about student mental health, stress levels, and disparities in home environments have prompted a reevaluation of its effectiveness. Proponents argue that homework fosters discipline and enhances academic performance, while detractors emphasize its potential adverse effects on well-being and learning equity. Homework can be detrimental rather than advantageous as it exacerbates student stress, perpetuates educational inequality, and fails to significantly enhance academic performance.

Excessive homework can profoundly affect students' mental health. A Stanford University study (Parker, 2014) found that 56% of students considered homework a primary source of stress, often leading to headaches and sleep deprivation. While homework is meant to enhance learning by reinforcing classroom concepts, the increasing volume and complexity can create significant stress, anxiety, and burnout, especially among high-achieving students. This relentless pressure can undermine academic motivation and well-being, resulting in a frustrating cycle where homework, intended to foster growth, actually hampers performance. This paradox prompts a reevaluation of traditional homework practices. Educators and policymakers must find strategies that balance academic expectations with students' mental health needs, ensuring homework promotes learning without compromising well-being or success.

Homework disproportionately impacts students from disadvantaged backgrounds, limiting their educational experience. As Ramirez Herrera (2023) notes, these dynamics often create conflicts between parents and children, as parents struggle to support academic needs due to socioeconomic challenges. This friction hampers homework completion and leads to frustration and disengagement, perpetuating the educational gap. Children without adequate support fall behind their peers, affecting their long-term academic success and opportunities. To promote a more equitable educational environment, we must address these disparities. For some, homework becomes an unfair measure of learning, while others juggle caring for siblings or lack parental help entirely, widening the achievement gap.

Proponents of homework argue it instills discipline, reinforces learning, and prepares students for future academic challenges. However, Cooper et al. (2006) found that homework offers minimal academic benefits in elementary school, with clearer gains only in the higher grades. This challenges the effectiveness of extensive homework assignments, especially for younger students. Instead, meaningful classroom engagement and project-based tasks are more beneficial. By prioritizing interactive experiences that promote collaboration and critical thinking, educators can create a dynamic learning environment that leads to better understanding and retention of material. Both educators and parents must acknowledge their roles in student success, as it is essential for parents to contribute to their children's character development, preparing them for future challenges.

Although homework is seen as a key part of education, it has produced more adverse than favorable results: it affects students' mental health, widens the gaps between them and, overall, falls short in improving their performance. These educational practices increase stress due to the volume and complexity of homework, and pupils who lack support at home often end up in arguments within the household. Educators should reconsider the role of homework and shift toward a more balanced approach using limited, purposeful assignments or alternatives like in-class projects that foster learning without compromising student well-being.

References

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