

Parental Tendency Towards Taking Responsibility: The Case of Homework

By

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate parents' approach towards homework and their tendency to take responsibility in public primary schools in Istanbul. In this respect, the differentiation regarding the parental tendency to take responsibility was investigated with respect to parents' age, gender, socioeconomic status, job, level of education, the number of children they have, the time they spend with their children and the time they spend with their children while doing homework. This study is a correlational research. The universe of research consisted of parents whose children were students in public primary schools in Istanbul. In the study, a personal information sheet and a questionnaire developed by researcher-Tendency toward Taking Responsibility Questionnaire (SAYA) were used. The personal information sheet was developed to gather information about parents' age, gender, socioeconomic status, job, level of education, the number of children they have, the time they spend with their children and the time they spend with their children while doing homework. The results showed that parents who were above age of 46 did not worry about their children's not doing their homework. These parents did their children's homework when their children could not. Parents graduated from high school, on the other hand, were the most worried parents when their children did not do their homework. The proportion of parents who had more than 4 children is the biggest to check their children's homework. Half of the time spent for the children by the parents was for doing homework. Parents who defined their relation with their children as average talked with their children about homework.

Key words: Homework, taking responsibility, parent-child relationship

1. Introduction

Homework is essential to prepare for class and to enhance classroom learning. It provides opportunities for enhancing student achievement as well as parent-child relationship. Homework is important as it provides continuous studying between school and home. Homework is like windows which offer the opportunity to observe the process of education. The attitude of the family towards homework could affect their children's attitude.

Educators assigning less homework at home and more studying at school believe that home environment, interest of families and their educational level affects homework. The studies reported that the children whose families help them with their homework were more successful (Küçükahmet, 1999).

Homework has historically been an acceptable means to have students practice skills and read new material to discuss in class. And with nightly homework offering a chance to complete more tasks, it is hard to resist (Sallee & Rigler, 2008:47). Homework is one of the learning techniques that allow the child to practice. Particularly, homework on subjects previously taught or introduced provides the opportunity to develop children's skills on understanding the subjects. Moreover, homework facilitates communication between the school and family (Akyol, 2010:53).

It is well documented that the family plays a major role in children's educational achievement (McLoyd, 1998). In general terms, parental involvement can be defined as the dedication of resources by the parent

to the child within a given domain (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994:238). Parental involvement in education can take many forms. For example, parents may be involved by communicating with the school, volunteering at school and participating in school decision making procedures or supporting learning at home (Epstein, 1995).

Although children have more social interaction beyond their family after attending school, parents still have a great impact on development of their children. Çelenk (2003) highlighted that school-age children spend almost three quarters of a day with their parents. Therefore, the importance of parent-child interaction has increased in school years.

Some forms of parent involvement in homework may be adaptive in that homework completion and learning are facilitated, and the development of positive attitudes and self-regulatory study skills associated with academic achievement may even be supported (Hoover, Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Schools are invited to follow good practice examples described in the guidelines, but the concentration on good home-school relations, leaflets for parents and whole school policies in model schools does not fully acknowledge or explore the many reasons. Why parent might find supporting homework difficult, nor does it recognize that homework support is a complex issue which frequently leads to conflict and anxiety within the family (Solomon, 2002:604). The extent to which parents are involved in their children's schooling and homework is often policed by the staff and institutional practices of the school. If the staff determine that the parents /caregivers are unable or incapable of supporting homework, they might decide not to allocate any homework (Felix, Dornbrak & Scheckle, 2008:103).

Cooper (1989) reviewed eight studies examining the relationship between achievement and parent involvement in homework. There is yet no reliable evidence on whether parent involvement in homework affects student achievement. Diaz (1989) highlighted that students with a lower level of success could be explained by parents' lesser support to and interest in their children's education. Galloway & Sheridan (1994) ; Epstein (2001) reported that higher student achievement was more likely related to parent-child interaction; Children whose parents were concerned with their homework got higher grades from reading and mathematics classes, got engaged in classroom activities more often and completed their homework. Positive associations with learning outcomes have been reported when parents' homework help is autonomy supportive, well structured, characterized by positive affect, accompanied by positive beliefs and emotionally supportive (Knollmann & Wild, 2007). Besides, parental involvement in their children's homework gave children the ideas of collaboration between their school and family (Fantuzzo, Tighe & Perry, 1999). Powell (2001) mentioned that parents have become aware of their children's developmental stage, their ability and the importance of parents on development of children.

In the study of Davis and Yang (2005), families highlighted that keeping parents informed by teachers about homework helped parents take an active role on children's education. However, parents could also face several obstacles while helping their children's homework such as excessive homework assignment, lack of academic resources and parents' occupation with their own businesses. Fortunately, the internet is a powerful academic resource which offers plenty of information and advice (Harpin, 2011).

Some studies have reported positive associations between parental involvement measures and family background variables such as level of education, family income, and ethnicity (Desimone, 1999; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Lareau, 1987). Epstein & Van Voorhis (2001) found no significant difference between parents from different backgrounds with respect to how often they became involved in the homework process.

Although there are popular beliefs that parental involvement in homework is in a positively high correlation with children's achievement, parents' ways of helping their children's homework determine effectiveness of parental involvement. Parents who collaborate with teachers and who ask about how to do the homework could provide children with new opportunities of learning rather than offering direct instruction. Besides, children's age and ability level as well as parents' own skills might also affect this effectiveness (Patal , Cooper & Robinson, 2008). Parents get engaged in many different types of

involvement strategies, such as providing space and materials for homework; interacting with the teacher about homework; providing general oversight or monitoring of completion; making rules about when, where, or how homework is done; responding to questions about homework and giving feedback; or actually providing direct homework instruction (Hoover, Dempsey, Battiato, Walker, Reed, DeJong & Jones, 2011).

Dudley-Marling researched this concern and noted that "the amount of time children devoted to homework limited opportunities for other family activities and created resentment among parents and children". Second, students are increasingly told to be involved in multiple activities, ranging from extracurricular to nonschool-related opportunities, to compete in a competitive marketplace of college applications (Sallee & Rigler, 2008:49).

2. Aim and Method

The Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate parents' approach towards homework and their tendency to take responsibility in public primary schools in Istanbul. In this respect, the differentiation regarding the parental tendency to take responsibility was investigated with respect to parents' age, gender, socioeconomic status, job, level of education, the number of children they have, the time they spend with their children and the time they spend with their children while doing homework.

The Design of the Study

This study is a correlational research. Whether there is a relation between parental tendency towards taking responsibility and parents' age, gender, socioeconomic status, level of education, the number of children they have, the time they spend with their children and the time they spend with children while doing homework was investigated. The universe of this research consisted of parents whose children were students in public primary schools in Istanbul. Cluster sampling method was used to obtain 435 parents (291 females and 144 males).

Data Collection

In the study, a personal information sheet and a questionnaire developed by researcher-Tendency toward Taking Responsibility Questionnaire (SAYA) were used. Personal information sheet was developed to gather information about parents' age, gender, socioeconomic status, job, level of education, number of children they have, the time they spend with their children, the time they spend with children while doing homework.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected from personal information sheet and Tendency toward Taking Responsibility Questionnaire (SAYA) was analyzed by using appropriate statistical methods. Demographic data collected by personal information sheet was presented in frequency distribution and percentage frequency tables. Moreover; chi-square test was performed for each item in the questionnaire to determine whether the items were differentiated with respect to independent variables and at least $p < .05$ was considered to indicate statistical significance. Finally, results were interpreted and discussed in line with the existing literature.

3. Findings

This study attempted to show parental approach towards homework and their tendency to take responsibility, which were investigated with respect to parents' age, gender, socioeconomic status, job, level of education, the number of children they have, the time they spend with their children and the time they spend with their children while doing homework in public primary schools in Istanbul.

In the study, the following demographic characteristics were obtained from 435 participants (144 males and 291 females): The ages of participants ranged from 36 to 40 (35%), 31 to 35 (33%), 41 to 45 (18%), 25 to 30 (10%). Participants had average (82%), low (13%) and high (5%) socioeconomic status and participants graduated from primary school (48%), high school (16%), college (16%) and middle school (14%). Participants considered their relations with their children as very good (61%), good (33%) and average (6%). While participants spent more than three hours (42%), an hour (25%), three hours (17%) and two hours (16%) with their children; they spent more than two hours (41%), an hour (35%) and half an hour (24%) with their children while doing homework on an ordinary day. None of the items in the questionnaire had significant difference with respect to socioeconomic status of participants.

Table 1. Chi-square results: Effects of gender on item questioning whether parents ask teachers how they could help their children while doing homework.

Groups	Do you ask teachers how you could help your children while doing homework?		Total	X ²	Sd	P
	Yes	No				
Gender	Mother	60	84	144	7,542	1 ,006
	%-Rate	41,7%	58,3%	100,0%		
	Father	83	208	291		
	%-Rate	28,5%	71,5%	100,0%		
Total		143	292	435		
	%-Rate	32,9%	67,1%	100,0%		

As shown in Table 1, the results of Chi-Square Test showed that there was a significant relationship between parents' gender and the item "Do you ask teachers how you could help your children while doing homework?" ($X^2=7,542$; $p<0,5$). While 41.7% of mothers responded yes, only 28.5% of fathers responded yes to the item. This result supported the idea that mothers have more responsibilities on teacher-parent relations, due to the fact that fathers in Turkey think that bringing up children is the mother's job. Therefore, mothers have also a bigger impact on the education of children and mothers communicate with teachers since they help their children while doing homework.

Table 2. Chi-square results: Effects of age on item questioning whether parents worry about their children's not going homework.

Groups	Do you worry about your children's not doing homework?		Total	X ²	Sd	P
	Yes	No				
Age of parents	25-30	12	33	45	19,128	4 ,001
	%-Rate	26,7%	73,3%	100,0%		
	31-35	7	136	143		
	%-Rate	4,9%	95,1%	100,0%		
	36-40	23	133	156		
	%-Rate	14,7%	85,3%	100,0%		
	41-45	9	70	79		
	%-Rate	11,4%	88,6%	100,0%		
Total	46 & more	0	12	12		
	%-Rate	,0%	100,0%	100,0%		
		51	384	435		
	%-Rate	11,7%	88,3%	100,0%		

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As shown in Table 2, the results of Chi-Square Test showed that there was a significant relationship between parents' age and item of "do you worry about your children's not doing homework?" ($X^2=19,128$; $p<0.5$). While 26, 7% of parents at the age range of 25-30 responded yes, none of the parents above age 46 responded yes to the item. It can be assumed that younger parents focus more on the education of their children and they are more ambitious about the issue.

Table 3. Chi-square results: Effects of age on item questioning whether parents do homework while their children could not complete it.

Groups	Do you do children's homework while your children could not complete it?		Total	X ²	Sd	P	
	Yes	No					
Age of parents	25-30	34	11	45	11,759	4	,019
	%-Rate	75,6%	24,4%	100,0%			
	31-35	123	20	143			
	%-Rate	86,0%	14,0%	100,0%			
	36-40	132	24	156			
	%-Rate	84,6%	15,4%	100,0%			
	41-45	75	4	79			
	%-Rate	94,9%	5,1%	100,0%			
Total	46 & more	12	0	12			
	%-Rate	100,0%	,0%	100,0%			
		376	59	435			
	%-Rate	86,4%	13,6%	100,0%			

As shown in Table 3, the results of Chi-Square Test showed that there was a significant relationship between parents' age and the item "Do you do homework while your children could not complete it?" ($X^2=11,759$; $p<0.5$). Parents above the age of 46 and %75, 6 of parents at the age range of 25-30 responded yes to this item. It can be assumed that parents become emotional when they are older; therefore, they try to avoid distressing their children at the expense of ignoring teachers' expectations and rules.

Table 4. Chi-square results: Effects of educational level on item questioning whether parents ask teachers how they could help their children while doing homework.

Groups	Do you ask teachers how you could help your children while doing homework?		Total	X ²	Sd	P	
	Yes	No					
Educational level of parents	Primary school	56	151	207	19,004	3	,000
	%-Rate	27,1%	72,9%	100,0%			
	Middle school	18	43	61			
	%-Rate	29,5%	70,5%	100,0%			
	High school	27	55	82			
	%-Rate	32,9%	67,1%	100,0%			
Total	College and higher degree	39	32	71			
	%-Rate	54,9%	45,1%	100,0%			
		140	281	421			
	%-Rate	33,3%	66,7%	100,0%			

As shown in Table 4, the results of Chi-Square Test showed that there was a significant relationship between parents' educational level and the item "do you ask teachers how you could help your children while doing homework?" ($X^2=19,004$; $p<0,5$). While 54.9% of parents who had college or higher degree responded yes, only 27.1% of parents who graduated from primary school responded yes to this item, as it can be assumed that parents with college or higher degree are more aware of the importance of homework and they are more open to learning and improving themselves.

Table 5. Chi-square results: Effects of education level of parents on item questioning whether parents worry about their children's not going homework.

Groups	Do you worry about your children's not doing homework?		Total	X ²	Sd	P	
	Yes	No					
Education level of parents	Primary school	14	193	207	12,727	3	,005
	%-Rate	6,8%	93,2%	100,0%			
	Middle school	10	51	61			
	%-Rate	16,4%	83,6%	100,0%			
	High school	17	65	82			
	%-Rate	20,7%	79,3%	100,0%			
	College or higher degree	8	63	71			
	%-Rate	11,3%	88,7%	100,0%			
Total		49	372	421			
	%-Rate	11,6%	88,4%	100,0%			

As shown in Table 5, the results of Chi-Square Test showed that there was a significant relationship between education level of parents and the item "do you worry about your children's not doing homework?" ($X^2=12,727$; $p<0,5$). The percentage of affirmative responses to this item was 20,7 % for high school graduates and 6,8 % for primary school graduates. This result may indicate that high school graduates give prominence to academic success due to their perspective towards academic activities; they may consider academic success as a tool to promote their social status.

Table 6. Chi-square results: Effects of number of children parents have on item questioning whether parents check their children's homework.

Groups	Do you check their children's their homework?		Total	X ²	Sd	P	
	Yes	No					
Number of children	1 child	18	60	78	16,079	3	,001
	%-Rate	23,1%	76,9%	100,0%			
	2 children	14	134	148			
	%-Rate	9,5%	90,5%	100,0%			
	3 children	15	88	103			
	%-Rate	14,6%	85,4%	100,0%			
	4 children or more	29	77	106			
	%-Rate	27,4%	72,6%	100,0%			
Total		76	359	435			
	%-Rate	17,5%	82,5%	100,0%			

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As shown in Table 6, the results of Chi-Square Test showed that there was a significant relationship between the number of children parents have and the item “do you check your children’s homework?” ($X^2=16,079$; $p<0.5$). While 27,4% of parents who had 4 or more children responded yes, only 9,5% of parents who had 2 children responded yes to this item. These results may be interpreted as an increase in parents’ sense of responsibility or as an effort to prevent the decrease in their attention on all their children.

Table 7. Chi-square results: Effects of parents’ relation with their children on item questioning whether parents talk with their children about homework assignments.

Groups	Do you talk with your child about homework assignments?		Total	X ²	Sd	P	
	Yes	No					
Parents relation with their children	Very good	22	243	265	14,010	3	,003
	%-Rate	8,3%	91,7%	100,0%			
	Good	16	126	142			
	%-Rate	11,3%	88,7%	100,0%			
	Average	8	17	25			
	%-Rate	32,0%	68,0%	100,0%			
Total	Bad	0	3	3			
	%-Rate	,0%	100,0%	100,0%			
		46	389	435			
	%-Rate	10,6%	89,4%	100,0%			

As shown in Table 7, the results of Chi-Square Test showed that there was a significant relationship between parents’ relation with their children and the item “do you talk with their children about their homework assignments?” ($X^2=14,010$; $p<0.5$). As expected, all parents who defined their relation with their children as bad responded no to this item; these parents may not be concerned with their children’s academic success. Interestingly, parents who defined their relation as average responded yes to this time at the highest percentage.

Table 8. Chi-square results: Effects of time parents with children on item questioning how much time parents spend with their children for homework

Groups	How much time do you spend with your children for homework?				Total	X ²	Sd	P
	Half hour	an 1 hour	2 hours or more					
Time parents spend with children	1 hour	60	41	6	107	159,659	6	,000
	%-Rate	56,1%	38,3%	5,6%	100,0%			
	2 hours	14	43	15	72			
	%-Rate	19,4%	59,7%	20,8%	100,0%			
	3 hours	11	30	33	74			
	%-Rate	14,9%	40,5%	44,6%	100,0%			
Total	4hours and more	21	36	125	182			
	%-Rate	11,5%	19,8%	68,7%	100,0%			
		106	150	179	435			
	%-Rate	24,4%	34,5%	41,1%	100,0%			

As shown in Table 8, the results of Chi-Square Test showed that there was a significant relationship between the time parents spend with their children and the time parents spend for homework ($X^2=159,659$; $p<0.5$). Of all parents, 56.1 % of parents who spent an hour, 59.7 % of parents who spent 2 hours and 68.7 % of parents who spent 4 hours or more with their children spent half of that time for homework. In other words, it can be seen that half of the time spent by families with their children is for homework. In this respect, homework may be regarded as one of the basic elements that facilitate the relationship between parents and children.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Participants graduated from primary school (48%), high school (16%), college (16%) and middle school (14%). Parents had two children (34%), three children (24%), four or more (25%) and one child (18%). Participant considered their relations with their children as very good (61%), good (33%) and average (6%). While participants spent more than three hours (42%), an hour (25%), three hours (17%) and two hours (16%) with their children, they spent more than two hours (41%), an hour (35%) and half an hour (24%) with their children while doing homework on an ordinary day. None of the items in the questionnaire exhibited significant difference with respect to the socioeconomic status of the participants. The studies considered in the meta-analysis focused on the extent of parental involvement in homework. The “more-is-better” approach does not seem to apply to parental homework involvement, however (Patal & et al., 2008).

Results showed that the proportion of mothers who asked teachers how they could help their children while doing homework was higher than the proportion of fathers doing the same thing. For elementary school students, parents of males reported more direct involvement in homework, while in high school parents of females reported more direct involvement. This result may suggest that as children grow older males are expected to become more autonomous than females in their achievement-related behaviors (Pomerantz & Ruble, 1998).

Parents who are above the age of 46 did not worry about their children’s not doing homework and these parents did their children’s homework when their children could not complete it. In comparison to primary school graduates, parents who had a college degree or a higher degree asked teachers more about how they could help their children while doing homework. High school graduates were the most worried parents when their children did not do their homework. Parents who are university graduates can direct their children to access information more effectively and can communicate with school and teacher more easily. Some researchers suggest that students benefit from parental help with homework others have found no effects of parental homework help on students’ academic functioning (Levin, Levy-Shiff, Appelbaum-Peled, Katz, Komar & Meiran, 1997).

The education level of families and children’s willingness to learning at home are two effective and potential elements of homework. Parents having higher level of education would interact with schools more (Castro, Bryant, Feinberg & Skinner, 2004). Moreover, in these families, children’s quality of education would be higher (Magnuson, Sexton, Davis & Huston, 2009). Lee and Bowen (2006) found no significant difference between parents from different backgrounds with respect to how often they became involved in the homework process.

A study investigating the educational levels of mothers reported that mothers with a higher educational level structured the instructional situation better and coordinated their instructional behavior better with the child’s activity than mothers with a lower educational level did (Englund, Luckner, Whaley & Egeland, 2004).

Parents with four children and more checked their children homework the most frequently. While parents having an average level of relation with their children talked about homework with their children, parents

having a bad relationship did not talk about homework, as it can be expected. Besides, the time parents spent while doing homework was half of the overall time parents spent with their children on a day. Although there is no significant difference in terms of the amount of time allocated for the child during the day according to the results of income level, the difference could be considered in terms of the quality of time allocated for children. The quality of time allocated for children is more important than the amount of time allocated for them. Davis (1995) reported that, changes in the economic levels of families, in their social and school environments affect children's education and interest levels.

Homework might be considered as a tool to provide a time to spend with their children for parents; relations between parents and children could be strengthened through homework. To do this, teachers should assign homework and activity which requires child-parent collaboration. Homework should be assigned in a way that it provides fathers' participation as well.

Homework reveals the different abilities and the maturity of students. Therefore, homework revealing the abilities of children helps families recognize these abilities easily.

Families can have information about subjects and methods that are taught at school through homework; therefore, they can correct children's misunderstandings or mistakes and contribute to their children's success. The homework in which the family is involved can satisfy children emotionally. While doing homework, the high quality of time spent with parents can improve the communication skills of both the parents and the children. Homework checked by parents can develop children's self-esteem and help them be self-disciplined individuals. Therefore, families should be informed by schools and by teachers about the importance of homework. In this way, families can communicate with teachers more frequently and get more information about their children's progress, which may achieve an increase in parent-school cooperation.

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