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Homework during Holidays: A Study

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Abstract

Generally, parents and students appreciate the importance and value of homework. Homework, when used appropriately, can reinforce students' learning, contribute to their progress and cultivate a healthy disposition towards learning. However, the appropriate amount of homework has to be carefully calibrated. Children have varying learning interest and pace of learning, and may take different amount of time to complete the same piece of work. Nevertheless, students and teachers have found homework to be a useful feedback mechanism to check whether students have mastered concepts and skills, and are able to apply them to different contexts. The school holidays provide a good opportunity for students to consolidate their learning and work on areas which they are weaker in. Some amount of revision and consolidation of learning during the school holidays can help students to be better prepared for the next stage of learning when the new school term starts. But too much of homework may hamper the free activities during holidays, students may get stressed and limit students opportunity to spend time with family. Through this paper an effort has been made to study need and necessity of homework during holidays from students' perspective based on the data gathered through descriptive survey method and observation method among the students of Guwahati city, Assam.

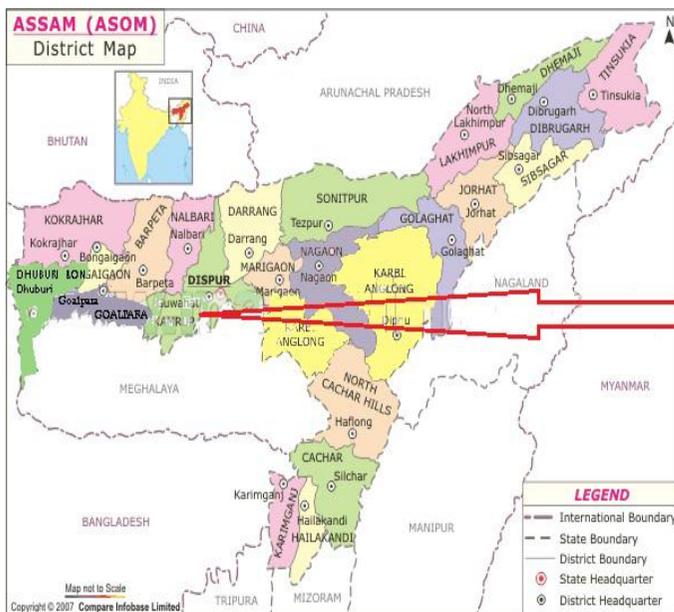
Keywords- Homework, Holidays, Need, Desirability, Students' perspective

Introduction: Homework, or a homework assignment, is a set of tasks assigned to students by their teachers to be completed outside the class. Common homework assignments may include a quantity or period of reading to be performed, writing or typing to be completed, problems to be solved, a school project to be built (such as a diorama or display), or other skills to be practiced. It is proven when kids keep engage themselves in curricular activities in form of homework over the holidays they don't forget material as easily. So, summer and winter break homework gives students opportunity to review their progress in educational tasks comfortably in home environment. But, scholars like that of Homework scholar *Harris Cooper* concluded after a comprehensive review that homework does not improve academic achievements for grade school students. Cooper analyzed dozens of students and found that kids who are assigned homework in middle and high school actually score "somewhat" better on standardized tests, but that kids who do 60 to 90 minutes of homework in middle school and more than 2 hours in high school actually score worse. A balanced amount of homework may lead to improvement in learning skills though excessive homework during holidays discourage motivation in learning, sometimes turns students into machine in the hands of school authority with little emphasis on their needs. A review by researchers at Duke University of more than 60 research studies on homework between 1987 and 2003 showed that,

within limits, there is a positive interaction between the amount of homework which is done and student achievement. The research synthesis also indicated that too much homework could be counterproductive.

Homework is often overwhelming for all who are involved. Feeling the burden of too much homework, it is not uncommon for students to copy their peers' homework, submit it incomplete or not attempt the assignment at all. Currently, the relationship between homework and academic achievement is not defined, but a plethora of non-academic benefits for all student populations demonstrate an overall positive effect. Hence, nevertheless, homework will always be useful and necessary. For providing homework especially for long holidays it is always necessary to study what students think, what they plan or what they would like to do on their vacation and outline the framework of assigning homework accordingly. Present study tries to provide an exposure to students' views on these grounds.

Location: Guwahati is the largest city of Assam and one of the fastest developing cities of India. Guwahati city of country India lies on the geographical coordinates of 26° 11' 0" N, 91° 44' 0" E with an area of 216 km². As per provisional reports of Census India, population of Guwahati in 2011 is 963,429; of which male and female are 502,255 and 461,174 respectively. Guwahati Literacy Rate according to 2011 census report, total literates in the city is 798,726 of which 426,401 are males while 372,325 are females. Average literacy rate of Guwahati city is 91.11 percent of which male and female literacy was 92.89 and 89.16 percent.



Map of the area taken for the study (Guwahati City)

Need of the Study: Traditionally students assumed a receptive role in the education but since the 19th century, with the advent of progressive education together with the efforts of educationists and psychologists in the development of child psychology and utilizing principles of child psychology for maximum educational growth traditional teacher centred education has been replaced by child centred education. In such type of education child is the main pivot in educational process. Child-centred education is based on the assumption that education meeting the developmental and individual needs, interest of the child brings optimum development to the child's personality. Needs

and interests of the students are to be given due consideration from the initial stage of preparing educational goals till execution and evaluation process in such type of education. Child-centred education is not supposed to avoid students' perspectives in planning of lesson, delivering lesson, planning of homework assignment, evaluation and in providing feedback.

The benefits of homework has been debated by teachers and parents for years as the very word evokes very negative connotations to every involved, students, parents and teachers. Although many people think of homework as doing more harm than good by causing copious amounts of unnecessary stress to everyone, others believe that it has great advantages for children by encouraging them to think more independently outside the classroom. Holidays for some students are days of fun and recreation which they want to spend without study burden, while another group of students may like to engage themselves in school activities or assignments simultaneously with other fun activities.

This situation calls for proper study of students' attitudes and views on desirability of assigning homework during holidays with a view to explore their specific interest areas assigning homework in which may yield greater motivation.

Objectives:

- To study the desirability of students in assignment of homework during holiday period,
- To analyze the views of students on varied aspects of homework.

Delimitation of the Study:

Following are the delimitation in the development of present study-

- The study restricted to a particular area i.e. Guwahati city in Assam.
- In the study attention is given to students from class 6 to 8 only.
- The study was conducted on 50 samples.

Methodology and Procedure: In present study the investigator has used- **Descriptive Survey Method** and **Observation Method** to explain educational phenomena in terms of the condition or relationship that exist, opinion that are held by students, effects that are evident and trends that are developing among students on their views on homework during holidays.

○ **Sample:**

To meet the objectives of present study 50 students were selected from class 6, 7 and 8 studying in different schools in Guwahati City through one of the non-probability sampling methods i.e. Judgement Sampling Method on the basis of available information thought to be representative of total population.

○ **Tools:**

The present study is carried by using following tools-

- **Questionnaire-** The investigator in this study collects necessary information from the sample with the help of two questionnaire schedules comprising of 12 questions for the students related with desirability, need, opinion, suggestions on homework during summer/winter break.
- **Interview-** The investigator collects needed information by verbal interaction with the sample group to meet the objectives of present study.

Major Findings of the Study: Analysis and Interpretation of the findings drawn from the study has been presented as follows-

- ◆ While studying responses regarding views on desirability of homework 50% students believe homework for holidays is important and desirable while for 30% students it is not desirable but they are interested in homework only to secure good rank or grade. Rests of the pupils consider it should be avoided.

Table 1: Views of students on desirability of homework during holidays in Percentage

	Desirability of Homework During Holidays		
Views of Students	Desirable	Not Desirable	Should be Avoided
		50%	30%

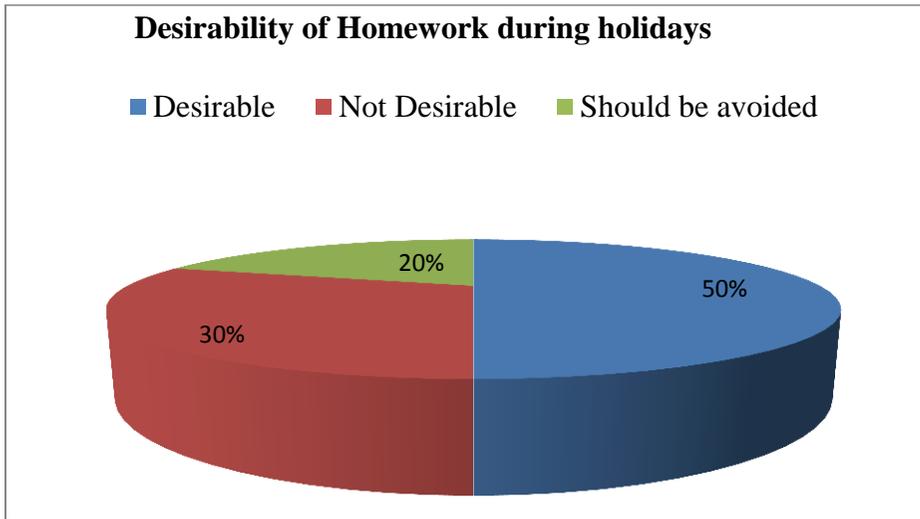


Fig.1:

◆ Students` responses on relation between homework and motivation in learning shows that 45% students responded that homework help in maintaining learning motivation throughout the holiday time. But 55% students` responded homework is not related with their learning motivation, it only serves as revision of course work already studied.

Table 2: Views of students on relationship between homework and learning motivation in Percentage

	Relationship between homework and learning motivation	
Views of Students	Yes	No
		45%

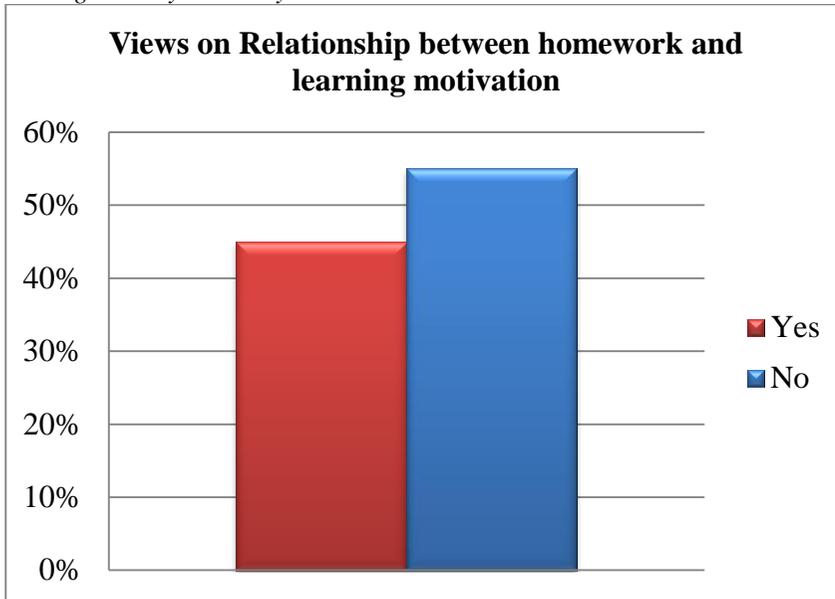


Fig. 2:

- ◆ Percentage of students completing homework given during holidays is found to be 70% while 30% admitted that they submit incomplete homework.
- ◆ 40% students agree that excessive homework stand as barrier in pursuing their interest during holidays, 25% agree that it lessens time they could spend with family and 35% students are of view that it hampers engagement in socio-recreational activities on the part of the students. All students pointed out the fact that when large portion of homework is given it spoils the spirit of zeal associated with holidays.

Table 3: Students` views on effects of excessive homework (in Percentage)

		Effects of excessive homework		
Views of Students	of	Barrier in pursuing interest	Lessen family time	Lack of socio-recreational activities
			40%	25%

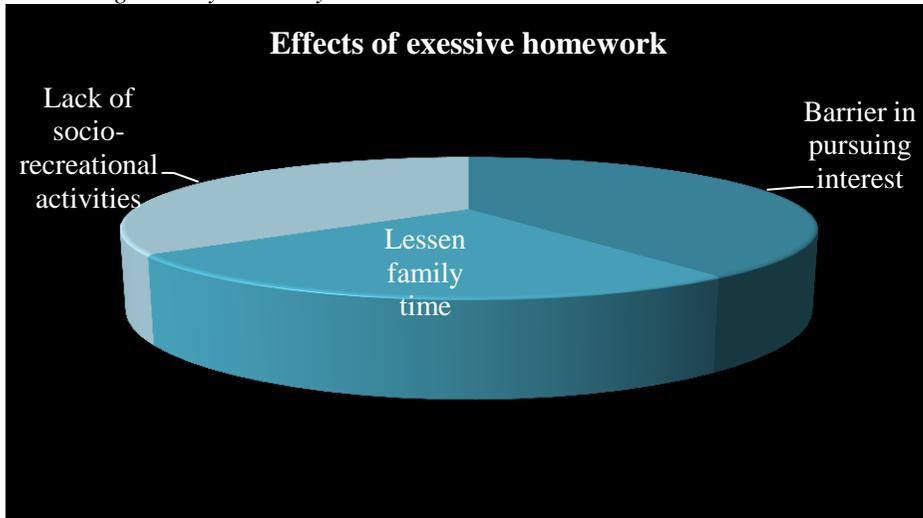


Fig.3:

- ◆ Responses of students regarding stress associated with homework shows that as high as 85% students accept that fear of punishment due to submission of incomplete homework leads to stress and anxiety among learners, while remaining 15% believe homework is not associated with stress.
- ◆ Regarding questions on reasons to support homework for holidays, it reflect a significant side of the picture as, 40% students support homework as it helps to maintain link between past and present learning, 10% students to review what is learned, 10% for improvement of learning skills and 40% to spend leisure time purposefully. This gives clear indication that, though many of the students oppose assignment of homework during holidays they do not deny positive aspects of homework.

Table 4: Students` views on reasons to support homework (in Percentage)

	Reasons to support homework			
Views of Students	Establishment of link between past-present learning	Making leisure time purposeful	Improvement of learning skills	Review of what is learned
	40%	40%	10%	10%

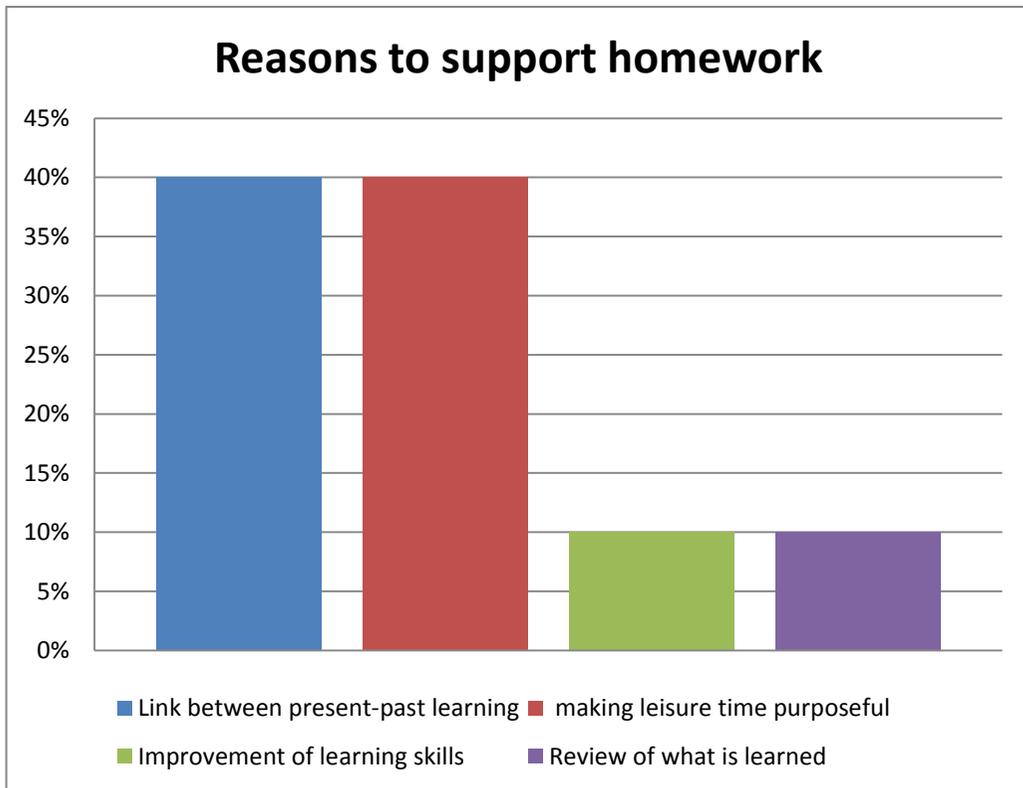


Fig 4:

Suggestions: It would be unwise to completely disallow homework during holidays. Instead of it proper planning should be considered as pre-requisite in assignment of homework so that it meet needs and interest of students and serve its purpose efficiently in maintaining learning motivation. Following points must be kept in mind by teachers while assigning homework for students-

- ✚ In setting holiday homework schools need to ensure that the homework load given is not excessive. There should be sufficient time for students to take a break from formal learning to pursue other interests, and take part in social-recreational activities with friends and bonding activities with their families during the holiday.
- ✚ Homework should be given according to developmental and psychological needs of the learners.
- ✚ Importance should be given on development of artistic and creative potentialities of students than mere practicing of theoretical knowledge.
- ✚ There should be just enough homework to refresh the brain and utilize students` spare time purposefully.
- ✚ Fear of punishment should not be associated with homework completion. It's the duty of teachers to take special care that homework pressure does not lead to stress among students.
- ✚ Homework should be suggestive not compulsory. If a student really wants to learn, they will do extra work, without it being assigned. The homework should just be suggestions; to stop students from stressing out over work that probable won't even be checked.

- ✚ Diversified optional questions and activities should be given rather than a few strict and compulsory questions for all students. Optional questions will help to select most appropriate one suiting to the interest of student.
- ✚ Teachers should also involve parents in the homework process in appropriate ways. Parents should rarely be asked to play a formal instructional role in homework. Instead, they should facilitate and monitor homework completion by helping their children understand directions; being available to respond to simple questions; offering positive feedback; providing a consistent time and place for homework completion; and contacting the teacher if there is a homework problem they cannot resolve
- ✚ Due emphasize is to be given on academic as well as non-academic activities such as along with assigning students to submit an essay for improvement of writing skills students should be asked to write about games, sports they have played or about the hobbies they have persuaded during holidays.

Conclusion: Students' views show that homework has a positive impact under certain conditions and for certain students; while for some students homework has minimal effects on student learning interest or skills. Homework has consistently been found to have a greater impact on the academic achievement of students at the higher grade levels. Though research shows positive impact of homework and completion of it in due time brings self confidence and independent attitude among students, there can be several negative consequences as well.

When homework is used as a formative assessment, students have multiple opportunities to practice, get feedback from the teacher, and improve. Evaluating homework for pinpointing problem areas makes a lot of sense, but grading homework defeats its learning purpose. It is unfair to make learners worry about getting a low grade on a task they are attempting for the first time (Cushman, 2010). "Homework becomes a safe place to try out new skills without penalty, just as athletes and musicians try out their skills on the practice field or in rehearsals. Effective homework is the rehearsal before the final event" (Christopher, 2007-2008, p. 74)

Doing homework is a great way to develop responsibilities. By being assigned work one day and knowing that it has to be done by the next day, they will develop a sense of punctuality by turning their work in on time. But teachers must carefully monitor the amount of homework assigned so that it is appropriate to students' age levels and does not take too much time away from other out of school activities.

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