

To Assign or Not to Assign: A Qualitative Study of Teachers' Views on Homework for Junior High Learners

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Abstract: Homework remains a widely used instructional tool in basic education, yet its value is often debated. This study aimed to explore the perspectives of junior high school teachers regarding the practice of assigning homework. It focused on identifying the challenges they encounter, the coping mechanisms they employ, and the insights they hold about the educational value of homework. A qualitative research design using phenomenology was employed to capture the lived experiences of eight junior high school teachers, with two teachers representing each grade level. Data were collected through in-depth interviews guided by a semi-structured interview guide. Thematic analysis, based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, was used to analyze the data. Five major challenges were identified: lack of student motivation, limited home resources, time constraints in curriculum coverage, issues in parental involvement, and variation in students' academic abilities. Teachers addressed these challenges through strategies such as designing engaging, low-cost, and differentiated homework; integrating tasks with daily lessons; and improving communication with parents. From these experiences, three key insights emerged: homework must be context-sensitive, effective communication supports success, and flexibility is crucial in overcoming homework-related barriers. The study reveals the need for responsive and inclusive homework practices that consider the lived realities of students in public schools.

Keywords: Homework, Teacher Perspectives, Junior High School, Phenomenology, Coping Strategies, Educational Insights, Qualitative Research, Philippines.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This study explored junior high school teachers' perspectives on homework, focusing on their experiences and insights. Motivated by debates about homework's effectiveness, the research aimed to understand teachers' views since they designed and implemented homework policies. The findings helped educators and policymakers improve teaching strategies and homework practices in junior high education.

Research on homework's role in student learning shows mixed findings internationally. Some studies indicate homework improves academic achievement, especially in higher grades, while others warn that too much homework can cause burnout. Countries like Poland and the U.S. have introduced limits or bans on homework to reduce student stress, whereas nations like China and South Korea emphasize heavy homework to meet high academic standards, raising concerns about well-being.

In the Philippines, homework is common in junior high schools, but little research exists on teachers' views about its effectiveness and challenges. DepEd policies, such as

discouraging weekend homework, aim to prevent student overload, yet implementation varies. In Cotabato City, local schools have their own homework practices, but studies on teachers' perspectives there are lacking. This highlights the need for localized research to inform relevant educational strategies that align with national policies and local student needs.

This study filled a critical gap by examining junior high school teachers' perspectives on homework in Davao City, addressing ongoing debates and diverse practices globally and in the Philippines. It aimed to offer insights into the benefits and challenges of homework to guide more effective, context-specific educational practices and policies.

The study aimed to explore junior high school teachers' perspectives on the educational value and drawbacks of assigning homework. Using a qualitative approach, it sought to provide insights that could inform more balanced and context-sensitive homework practices and policies, highlighting both the benefits and challenges of homework in junior high education.

This study sought to understand junior high school teachers' perspectives on assigning homework by examining the challenges they encounter, the coping mechanisms they employ, and the insights they hold regarding its value and impact on student learning. Through these research questions, the study aims to uncover both the difficulties teachers face in implementing homework and the strategies they use to manage these challenges. Additionally, the study explored teachers' reflections on homework's effectiveness, providing a well-rounded view of their experiences and perspectives.

- What challenges do junior high school teachers encounter when assigning homework to junior high school learners?
- What coping mechanisms do teachers utilize to address the challenges associated with assigning homework to junior high school learners?
- What insights do teachers have regarding the educational value of homework assignments for junior high learners?

The literature review revealed mixed perspectives on homework, highlighting its benefits in reinforcing learning and developing responsibility, but also its challenges. Teachers see homework as important, yet its effectiveness depends on quality feedback, student needs, and home environments. Cultural and contextual differences affect how homework is viewed and completed. While homework can be valuable, concerns about stress and equity call for balanced and thoughtful assignment practices.

The researcher used Constructivist Learning Theory and Self-Determination Theory as frameworks in studying junior high teachers' perspectives on homework. Constructivist theory, from Piaget and Vygotsky, highlights how learners build knowledge through experiences and social interaction, helping explore how teachers design homework to promote meaningful, engaging learning. Self-Determination Theory, by Deci and Ryan, focuses on intrinsic motivation through autonomy, competence, and relatedness, allowing the researcher to examine how homework can foster student motivation and ownership.

II. METHOD

This study used a qualitative phenomenological design to explore junior high teachers' lived experiences with assigning homework. Phenomenology, which focuses on understanding the meaning individuals give to their experiences, allowed for an in-depth, detailed examination of teachers' perspectives. This approach helped uncover the underlying structures of their experiences, providing a rich and comprehensive understanding of homework assignments within their educational context.

In this qualitative study on junior high teachers' perspectives about homework, the researcher followed four key philosophical assumptions. Ontologically, a constructivist stance was adopted, viewing reality as subjective and shaped by individual experiences.

Epistemologically, an interpretivist approach focused on understanding the meanings teachers assign to their experiences, emphasizing co-constructed knowledge. Axiologically, the researcher acknowledged the influence of personal values and maintained reflexivity to minimize bias. Methodologically, semi-structured interviews were used to gather rich, flexible insights, allowing for an in-depth exploration of teachers' views on homework.

In this qualitative study, the researcher acknowledged that reality is subjective and shaped by each teacher's unique experiences and context, reflecting the constructivist paradigm that values multiple, equally valid realities. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of teachers' diverse perspectives on homework assignments.

The researcher selected eight junior high school teachers from Makalangot High School in Arakan, Cotabato, using purposive sampling. Two teachers from each grade level were chosen based on criteria including at least two years of teaching experience and involvement in assigning homework. This method ensured the participants could provide rich, relevant insights aligned with the study's objectives.

The researcher used an interview guide with open-ended questions to explore junior high school teachers' experiences and perceptions of homework assignments. This tool provided a consistent framework for interviews while allowing flexibility for participants to share their views freely, enabling the exploration of specific topics and emerging themes.

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with junior high school teachers using a structured interview guide of open-ended questions to explore their perspectives on homework assignments. Interviews were scheduled at convenient times in private settings to encourage open dialogue and were audio-recorded with consent to ensure accurate data collection.

The researcher analyzed the interview data using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework. This involved transcribing and familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, identifying and grouping codes into themes, reviewing and refining these themes, defining and naming them, and finally producing a detailed report. This process ensured a thorough and organized exploration of junior high school teachers' perspectives on homework assignments.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results revealed that junior high school teachers at Makalangot High School faced several interconnected challenges when assigning homework. A major issue was students' lack of motivation and compliance, with many failing to complete tasks or submitting low-quality work. Teachers also struggled with students' limited access to learning resources at home, hindering independent completion of assignments. Time constraints to cover the

curriculum often led teachers to assign homework merely to catch up rather than to reinforce learning. Parental involvement varied widely, with some parents either

neglecting to support their children or doing the assignments for them.

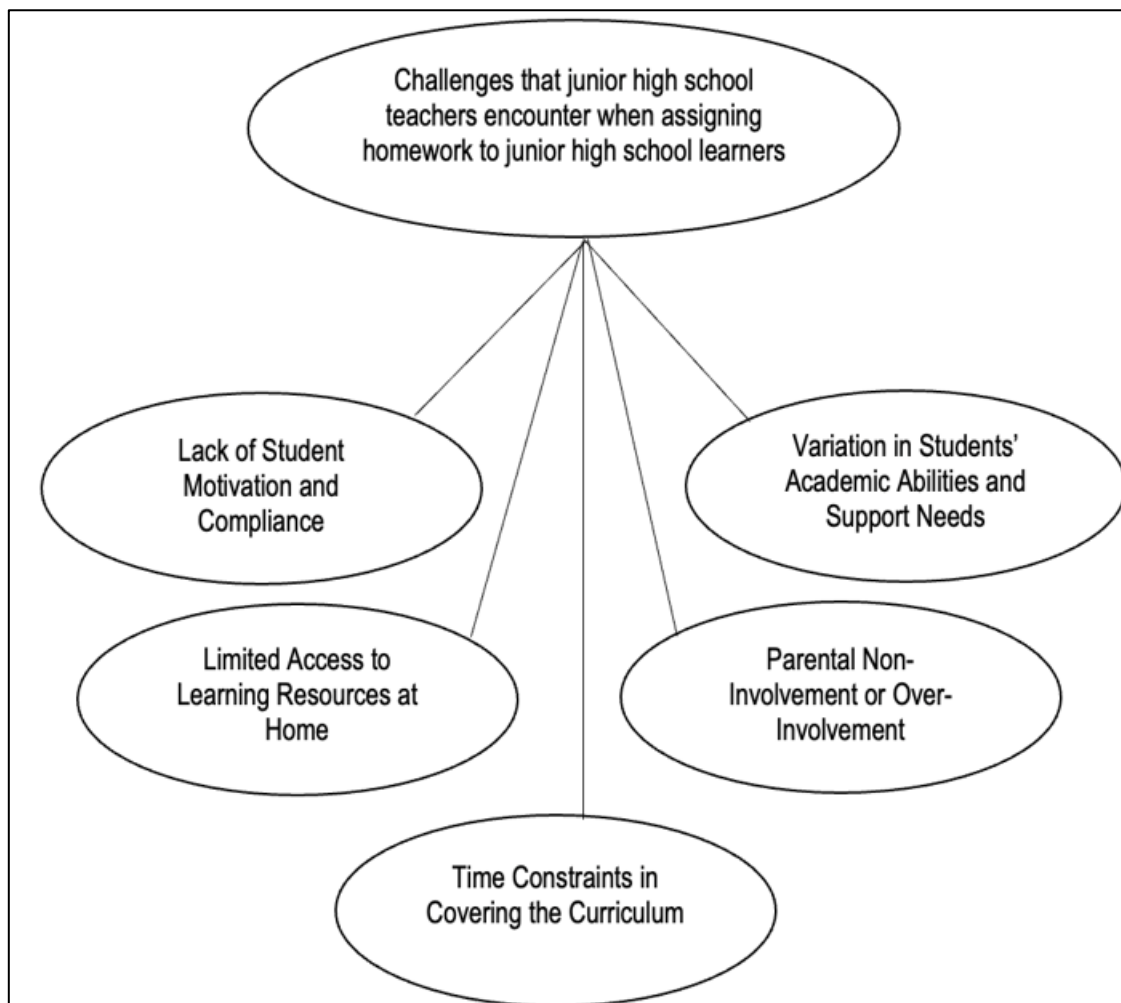


Fig 1 Challenges That Junior High School Teacher Encounter When Assigning Homework to Junior High School Learners

The findings showed that junior high school teachers used various coping strategies to overcome homework-related challenges. They designed engaging, relevant tasks to boost student motivation and created low-cost assignments to address limited home resources. To manage time constraints, teachers aligned homework with daily lessons for reinforcement. They provided clear instructions to guide parental involvement and differentiated assignments to accommodate students' varying abilities, ensuring tasks matched each learner's capacity and pace.

The findings highlighted key insights from junior high school teachers about homework's educational value. Teachers stressed the importance of adapting homework to students' diverse contexts to make it meaningful and achievable. They also emphasized the role of supportive communication among teachers, students, and parents in ensuring successful assignment completion. Additionally, teachers valued flexibility and creativity in overcoming homework challenges while maintaining academic goals.



Fig 2 Coping Mechanisms do Teacher Utilize to Address the Challenges Associated with Assigning Homework to Junior High School Learners

The study identified five major challenges faced by teachers at Makalangot High School in assigning homework: lack of student motivation and compliance, limited home learning resources, time constraints within the curriculum, varying levels of parental involvement, and differences in students' academic abilities and support needs. These challenges stem from both learner-related and contextual factors that hinder the effectiveness of homework assignments.

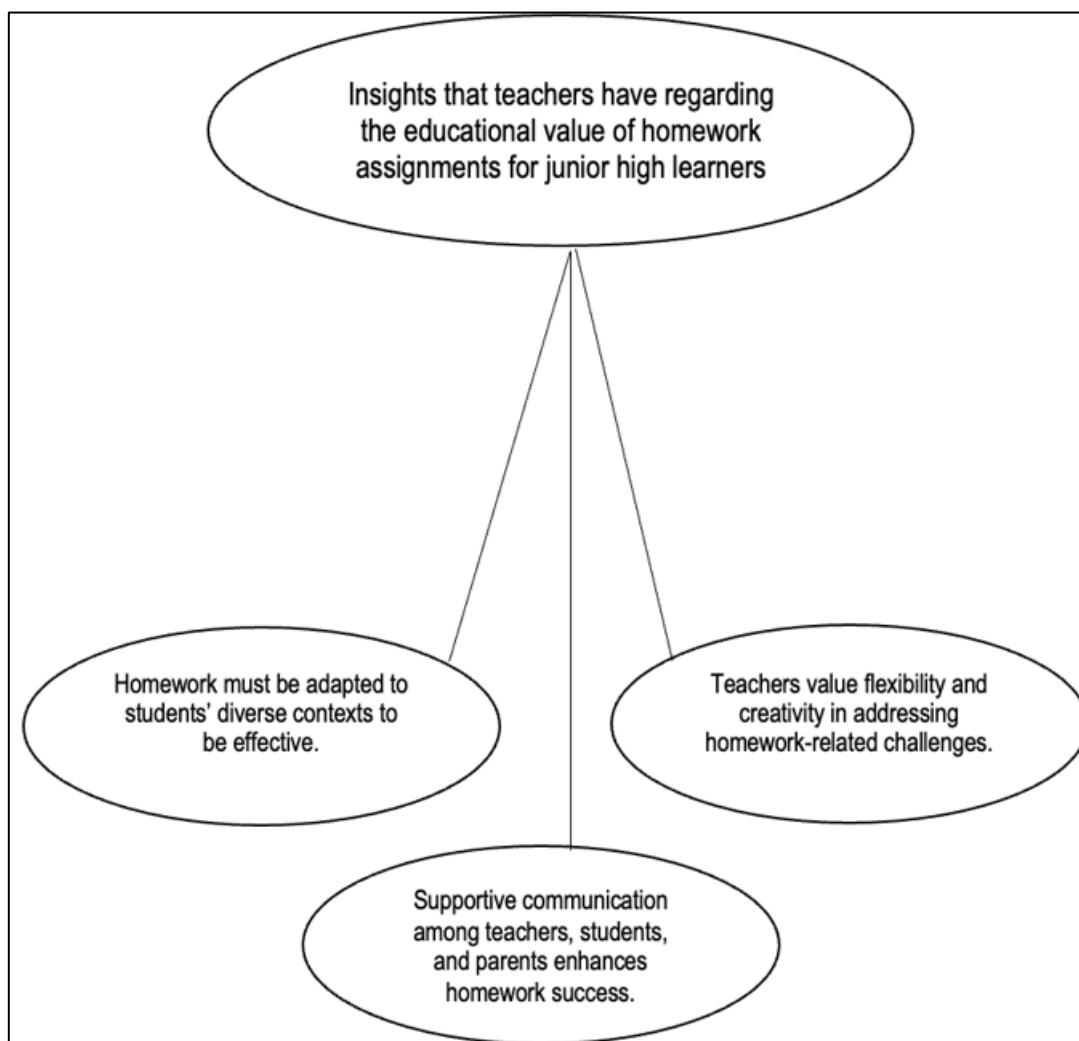


Fig 3 Insights that Teachers have Regarding the Educational Value of Homework Assignments for Junior High Learners

In response, teachers employed practical strategies to overcome these difficulties. They designed engaging and relevant tasks to increase student interest, created low-cost or no-material assignments to address resource limitations, and aligned homework with daily lesson objectives to optimize instructional time. Additionally, teachers provided clear guidance to parents to encourage appropriate involvement and differentiated assignments to accommodate varying student abilities, ensuring fairness and accessibility.

Teachers also shared key insights emphasizing the need to adapt homework to students' diverse contexts for it to be meaningful. They highlighted the crucial role of supportive communication among teachers, students, and parents in promoting homework success. Finally, they stressed that flexibility and creativity are vital in addressing homework challenges, underscoring the importance of responsive and inclusive practices in junior high education.

The challenges in assigning homework highlight that uniform approaches are ineffective in diverse public school environments. Variations in student motivation, home support, and resource availability require context-sensitive policies and classroom practices. Teachers need institutional backing through manageable curriculum pacing, professional

development, and differentiated strategies tailored to students' unique needs and abilities.

The teachers' coping strategies reveal a need for autonomy and creativity in instructional planning, suggesting that school leaders and policymakers should allow greater flexibility in homework implementation. Additionally, the findings emphasize the importance of strong collaboration between teachers and parents, supported by improved communication systems and reflective teacher training. Overall, education stakeholders should prioritize meaningful, responsive, and developmentally appropriate homework over rigid compliance.

The Department of Education should update homework policies to be more flexible and inclusive, considering students' diverse backgrounds, and include training on differentiated homework in teacher development. School heads should support flexible homework practices, encourage teacher collaboration, balance curriculum demands, and improve communication with parents.

Teachers should keep adapting homework creatively to meet students' needs and maintain clear communication with students and parents. Students are encouraged to take

responsibility for their learning by completing assignments honestly and managing their time well.

Future research should include student and parent perspectives and use varied methods to better understand homework's impact, with studies across different locations and levels to broaden findings.

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