

Impact of the Double-Reduction Policy on Middle School Student's Study

Meihui Zhou^{1,a,*}

¹*Shenzhen Foreign Language School, Shenzhen, 518083, China*

a. zhoumeihui919@163.com

**corresponding author*

Abstract: This study explores the impact of the Double-Reduction Policy on middle school students' study habits, academic performance, and overall wellbeing. The policy aims to reduce academic stress by decreasing homework load and classroom hours. Through this research, we examine the diverse effects that this policy has on students' perceptions and experiences. The majority of students see the policy favourably; they report lower levels of stress, better sleep habits, and more free time for extracurricular activities. However, concerns about a perceived lack of readiness for future academic activities as well as a decreased academic challenge and falling enthusiasm are voiced, especially among high achievers. With an emphasis on the function of observational learning, self-efficacy beliefs, modeling actions, and the dynamic interaction of personal and environmental elements, social cognitive theory provides a theoretical framework to comprehend the observed behaviors and results. This research highlights the necessity for balanced policies that promote well-being while retaining academic rigor as well as the need of taking into account individual variances in students' reactions to policy changes. These findings hold significant implications for teachers and policymakers. It highlights the need of educational policy that takes into account the varied life experiences of students in order to improve their health and success in school. More study is required to figure out how these policies will play out in the long run and what elements will have the most impact on individual outlooks and experiences.

Keywords: Double-Reduction Policy, Middle School Students, Study Habits, Academic Performance, Educational Policy

1. Introduction

The discipline of modern education is undergoing dramatic shifts, with an increased emphasis on students' holistic development. Within this new educational paradigm, the Double-Reduction Policy has emerged as a significant intervention, especially in middle schools, with the goal of lowering students' academic expectations and burdens. This method, which proposes reducing homework and class time, has sparked heated discussions among educators throughout the world [1].

The Double-Reduction Policy was put in place to provide a more equitable and encouraging classroom setting. Proponents of this approach argue that if the academic load is reduced, students would have more time for self-improvement, extracurriculars, and health [2]. It is thought that if academic pressure were reduced, students would be happier, healthier, and more successful in other aspects of their lives.

The implementation of the Double-Reduction Policy, like any other educational reform, has not been without its critics. Skeptics worry about the long-term effects of decreasing educational standards. They worry that slashing programs at this time may negatively affect kids' preparation and motivation, making it harder for them to succeed academically [3]. Finding a middle ground between ensuring high standards in the classroom and making learning less stressful may be challenging for policymakers and lawmakers.

This study aims to investigate the many ways in which the Double-Reduction Policy has affected middle school students' study habits, academic performance, and general well-being. This research attempts to provide a thorough knowledge of the impacts of this policy on the students it is intended to help using a secondary data analysis approach. This study intends to add to the continuing discussion about educational strategies intended to support the holistic development of young learners by highlighting both its advantages and possible disadvantages.

2. Research Philosophy

The study's research methodology is grounded on pragmatism and examines how the Double-Reduction Policy affects middle school students' study habits and academic performance. Pragmatism is a philosophical school of thought that encourages a flexible approach to investigating and understanding complex issues by giving weight to pragmatism, the importance of empirical evidence, and a variety of research methods [4].

Pragmatism fits with the study's objective of determining how an educational program would really affect society. It enables researchers to close the gap between theory and practice in education by concentrating on real-world results and experiences.

Pragmatism emphasises dealing with practical issues and finding answers. In this instance, the research aims to comprehend how the policy will really affect students, teachers, and educational institutions, in line with the pragmatic philosophy's focus on problem-solving [5].

Pragmatism recognizes the significance of context. This perspective enables researchers to take into account the particular conditions of each case since the influence of educational policy may vary greatly based on the particular school, student population, and cultural variables.

Pragmatism places a strong emphasis on empirical validation, which encourages academics to depend on data rather than just theories [4]. When assessing the actual results of an educational policy, this is crucial.

Research design may be flexible thanks to pragmatic thinking. In order to keep the study responsive to the changing complexity of the educational environment, it enables researchers to modify their methodologies and approaches as they obtain a better grasp of the research topic [5].

3. Theoretical Framework

A number of learning theories from the psychology of learning may be used to the research on the effects of the Double-Reduction Policy on the study habits and academic performance of middle school children in order to give a theoretical framework for comprehending the observed behaviors and results. Social Cognitive Theory, which is often linked to Albert Bandura's work, is one well-known theory that may be very pertinent.

3.1. Social Cognitive Theory

According to the Social Cognitive Theory, people learn not only via their own direct experiences but also by observation of the actions, attitudes, and consequences of others as well as through self-control and introspection [6]. It highlights how crucial social factors, experiential learning, and self-efficacy beliefs are in determining behavior.

3.2. Application to the Study

Observational Learning: According to the Social Cognitive Theory, learners could have observed and picked up on their classmates' responses to the Double-Reduction Policy [7]. Students who saw improvements in their friends' stress levels and general wellbeing may have been more inclined to view the policy favorably and change their study habits as a result.

Self-Efficacy Beliefs: This theory places a strong emphasis on people's self-efficacy beliefs, or their confidence in their ability to carry out certain activities or produce desired results [8]. Changes in certain students' self-efficacy beliefs may explain their worries about diminished academic desire and readiness. For instance, it may affect their desire to work on academic assignments if they feel that the decreased academic difficulty lessens their feeling of competence or mastery.

Behavior Modeling: The Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the value of role models as well. Teachers and parents could act as role models in the setting of the research, and their actions and attitudes may impact students' impressions of the policy [9]. Students' study habits and motivation may improve if teachers stress the value of self-regulated learning and maintaining high academic standards notwithstanding lower workloads.

Reciprocal Determinism: According to Bandura's theory, learning and behavior are influenced by a combination of individual, environmental, and behavioral variables [10]. This idea is known as reciprocal determinism. This idea may be used to examine how the Double-Reduction Policy affects students' study habits and academic achievement by interacting with their personal qualities and the larger educational environment.

By taking into account the importance of observational learning, self-efficacy beliefs, modeling behaviors, and the constantly changing interaction of personal and environmental factors in influencing students' responses to the Double-Reduction Policy, Social Cognitive Theory offers a useful lens via which to analyze the study's findings. By using this theory, one may get a clearer understanding of the psychological processes at work when educational policy changes are being considered, as well as how these changes affect students' learning habits and results.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This study used a qualitative secondary data analysis as its research design. To investigate how the Double-Reduction Policy influenced the study habits and academic performance of middle school students, it was necessary to collect and analyze existing qualitative data from relevant sources.

4.2. Data Source

Data from previous reports, academic papers, and research studies on the Double-Reduction Policy in middle schools was the primary source of qualitative data for this investigation. Qualitative data was collected via interviews, focus groups, and free-form survey responses.

4.3. Data Selection

- Careful and systematic deliberation was put into the selection of relevant qualitative data sources. This procedure included:
- Identifying research and publications pertaining to the double-reduction policy by conducting a thorough literature study.
- Evaluating the relevance and applicability of the qualitative data in the chosen sources.

- Ensuring that a variety of middle school settings and student experiences are included in the statistics.

4.4. Data Extraction

From the chosen sources, qualitative information was culled, including verbatim quotations, interview transcripts, and theme material pertinent to the study's topics. For analysis, this information was categorized and saved.

4.5. Data Evaluation

The following stages were used in the qualitative data analysis process:

Coding: Thematic analysis was used to code qualitative information. In order to better understand how the Double-Reduction Policy has affected students' study habits and academic performance, codes have been devised based on recurrent themes.

Development of Theme: To find patterns and trends in the data, codes were categorized into major categories.

Interpretation: To further comprehend the intricacies of students' experiences and views of the policy's consequences, the qualitative data that had been retrieved were analyzed.

Triangulation: For the purpose of ensuring validity and dependability, data from various sources were contrasted and compared.

4.6. Ethical Considerations

Because this study includes secondary data analysis, ethical concerns about data privacy, permission, and confidentiality were previously dealt with by the original data collectors and researchers. The original sources of the secondary data utilized in this research will be properly credited and cited.

4.7. Limitations

- Different sources may provide secondary qualitative data of varying degrees of quality and depth.
- The quality and completeness of the data in the chosen sources will determine the study's conclusions.
- The inability to directly gather data from middle school students or teachers limits the study's capacity to examine particular situations or newly developing challenges.

An effective and informative method for examining the effects of the Double-Reduction Policy on middle school students' study habits and academic achievement is to use qualitative research in secondary data analysis. This research intends to contribute to a more thorough understanding of the policy's impacts by offering insightful information about the experiences and viewpoints of students via the analysis of current qualitative data.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1. Reduction in Homework

The Double-Reduction Policy, which was implemented in China, aims to lighten students' academic burdens [11]. The policy recognizes the prevalent worries about too much homework and how it affects students' general wellbeing, as well as their physical and mental health. Under this program, schools are urged to give pupils less homework, especially in elementary and middle schools [11].

The decrease in homework is intended to provide kids more time to participate in extracurricular activities, relax, and spend meaningful time with their families.

5.1.1. Positive Aspects

Stress Reduction: Reducing homework has several benefits, one of which is that it helps students cope with the stress and anxiety brought on by high academic obligations [1]. Students have more free time to unwind and engage in other activities.

Enhancing Work-Life Balance: Less homework means that students may better manage their responsibilities in both their personal and academic lives. They may spend more time with their family, engage in hobbies, and play sports.

Benefits for Physical and Mental Health: Less schoolwork helps kids' physical and mental health, which is beneficial. It lessens the possibility of academic pressure-related burnout, sleep deprivation, and mental health problems.

5.1.2. Concerns and Challenges

Influence on Learning: While lessening the amount of homework might reduce stress, some parents and educators worry that it can result in a reduction in academic achievement [3]. A major decrease in homework might have an impact on how well students understand the content since it acts as practice and reinforcement for what they learn in class.

Expectations from parents: Different parents may have different expectations for how much homework their kids should have [12]. Some parents may fear that giving their children less homework may impede their academic development and may respond by assigning more work at home.

Implementation Differences: Every region and school has a different level of implementation of the policy [13]. Some schools may strictly adhere to the regulations requiring fewer homework, while others may interpret them in a different way.

China's Double-Reduction Policy, which lessened students' workloads, was implemented out of concern about the negative effects of academic pressure on students. However, concerns have been raised concerning its potential impact on students' academic performance and its implementation, despite its clear benefits in terms of stress reduction and improved work-life balance. The potential impact of this approach on students' academic outcomes and mental health necessitates ongoing research and evaluation.

5.2. Impact on Learning

The Double-Reduction Policy in China aims to reduce the quantity of homework assigned to students, particularly those in primary and secondary education. While the intention is to reduce student anxiety, concerns have been raised regarding how this change may impact education.

5.2.1. Positive Aspects

Lessened Stress: A reduction in pupils' stress and anxiety levels serves as one of the immediate advantages of less homework [1]. Less homework may help kids feel less overburdened by scholastic responsibilities, which will be beneficial for their mental and emotional health.

Enhancing Work-Life Balance: Students who have less schoolwork have more time for leisure pursuits, hobbies, and extracurriculars [3]. A better work-life balance and a more well-rounded growth may result from this.

Enhanced Creativity: Less homework might provide children more time to be creative and participate in extracurricular activities, thereby increasing creativity and critical thinking abilities.

5.2.2. Challenges and Concerns

Impact on mastery: One of the main worries is that pupils' ability to understand academic material would suffer from a considerable drop in homework [3]. Less homework may lead to decreased understanding and memory of subject matter since it acts as practice and reinforcement for classroom learning.

Standardized tests: Standardized assessments play a big role in China's educational system. Some people fear that cutting down on homework would make kids less prepared for these tests, which might have an effect on their future educational and professional chances [14].

Expectations from parents: Parents often have high expectations for their kids' academic success. Some parents may worry that giving their kids less homework would make them less competitive and will allow them to get more academic help at home [12].

Varied Outcomes: Reduced homework's effects on student learning results might vary greatly based on the student's grade level, the institution, and the topics being studied. It's essential to remember that not every kid is impacted equally.

5.2.3. Need for Ongoing Research

The Double-Reduction Policy has intricate and varied consequences on learning. To determine the long-term effects of less homework on academic performance, critical thinking abilities, and overall educational results, extensive study is required.

The Double-decrease Policy's decrease in homework has both beneficial and bad effects on learning. While it may reduce stress and enhance work-life balance, questions remain over its effects on academic proficiency and test readiness [15]. To fully assess how this strategy impacts students' learning outcomes and experiences, further research is needed.

5.3. Parental Pressure

The Double-Reduction Policy in China, which aims to lighten students' academic burdens, has a big influence on parents' expectations for their children's education.

5.3.1. Changing Parental Roles:

Increased involvement: Some parents have increased their involvement in their children's education as a result of the decrease in homework and academic pressure [12]. They could play a bigger part in observing their child's development, offering more assistance, and supervising their extracurricular activities.

Balancing Expectations: Although the strategy aims to lessen student pressure, it sometimes modifies parental expectations. Despite less schoolwork, some parents would still want their children to do well in school, which might put more pressure on them [15].

5.3.2. Positive Aspects

Quality Time: More time spent together as a family and better family ties may come from parents spending more time with their kids [12]. The child's emotional growth and well-being may benefit from this.

Supportive environment: A helpful learning environment may be created at home with more parental participation, possibly assisting the child's academic development [12].

5.3.3. Concerns and Challenges

Parental Stress: Although they may want to provide the greatest assistance possible, parents may feel pressure and stress as a result of their increasing participation [16]. It might be difficult to be expected to fill the gap created by less homework.

Overparenting: Overparenting, when parents are too concerned in their child's academic life, poses a danger of impeding the child's independence and ability to solve problems.

Parental Competition: In certain instances, parents may unintentionally compete with other parents for their child's academic advantage in an effort to keep them ahead, which may cause stress for both parents and children [16].

5.3.4. Varied Responses

Different parents react differently to the Double-Reduction Policy. Based on family beliefs, financial level, and educational backgrounds, responses might differ greatly.

5.3.5. Need for Parental Education

There is a need for parental education and advice to reduce any possible negative impacts of increasing parental pressure or overinvolvement. Parents who struggle to balance their duties may find tools and information from schools and policymakers helpful.

The Double-Reduction Policy in China has changed the expectations and responsibilities of parents. Increased parental participation has the potential to improve family dynamics and show support for children's education, but there is also a chance that it may lead to new kinds of parental strain and stress [2]. To guarantee that the policy's intended advantages for students' wellbeing are fully achieved, it is crucial to balance these dynamics.

5.4. Varied Implementation

China's Double-Reduction Policy is a widespread campaign that aims to lessen the amount of homework children have to do. However, how this strategy is put into practice varies a lot across regions and institutions.

5.4.1. Regional Disparities

Urban and rural areas may have different implementation strategies. The concept may be closely followed in certain urban schools, which would result in significant reductions in homework [13]. In contrast, rural schools may have more difficulties in efficiently implementing the policy, maybe as a result of budget limitations or differing pedagogical goals.

5.4.2. School Autonomy

School-Level Decisions: Many times, schools are given some latitude in how they interpret and put the policy into practice. While some schools may opt to carefully follow the decreased homework restrictions, others might take a laxer stance.

Teaching Methods: The regulation could have an impact on teaching strategies, with some teachers changing how they operate to accommodate the lessened homework demands. This adaptation, however, may differ from one instructor to the next.

5.4.3. Community and Parental Influence

Parental Influence: In certain instances, parental expectations or pressure may have an impact on how the policy is implemented by the schools [16]. Schools may feel pressured to find a compromise between regulatory requirements and parental requests if they are located in highly competitive educational settings.

Local Values and Culture: The application of the policy may also be influenced by regional cultural norms and values. Schools may be more careful about eliminating homework in areas where academic accomplishment is highly prized.

5.4.4. Monitoring and Accountability

Various levels of government education ministries are involved in monitoring and executing the policy. The degree of oversight may influence how strictly schools follow the policy's standards [13]. The policy may be interpreted and applied by teachers with some latitude. As a result, different amounts and kinds of homework may be given out.

Based on variables including geographic location, school autonomy, grade level, and regional cultural influences, the Double-Reduction Policy's effects might vary dramatically from one situation to another. For evaluating the overall efficiency of the policy and its ramifications for kids, instructors, and parents, it is essential to understand these variances.

6. Conclusion

A potential strategy for lowering academic stress and enhancing middle school pupils' wellbeing is the double-reduction policy. To find a balance between student well-being and academic accomplishment, educators and legislators should carefully assess the possible influence on study habits and academic performance. To study the long-term implications of such policies and provide mitigation mechanisms for their unintended effects, further research is required.

References

- [1] Guo, Y. (2022, February). *The Current Impact of the Double Reduction Policy*. In *2021 International Conference on Education, Language and Art (ICELA 2021)* (pp. 147-152). Atlantis Press.
- [2] Zhang, X., Zhao, W., & Zhou, K. (2022). *An empirical analysis of double reduction education policy based on public psychology*. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 952719.
- [3] Li, J., Li, X., Shi, A., & Yang, Q. (2022, February). *The impact of the double reduction policy*. In *2021 International Conference on Education, Language and Art (ICELA 2021)* (pp. 713-720). Atlantis Press.
- [4] Yardley, L., & Bishop, F. L. (2017). *Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods: A pragmatic approach*. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research in psychology*, 398-413.
- [5] Morgan, D. L. (2013). *Integrating qualitative and quantitative methods: A pragmatic approach*. Sage publications.
- [6] Luszczynska, A., & Schwarzer, R. (2015). *Social cognitive theory*. *Fac Health Sci Publ*, 225-51.
- [7] Devi, B., Khandelwal, B., & Das, M. (2017). *Application of Bandura's social cognitive theory in the technology enhanced, blended learning environment*. *International Journal of Applied Research*, 3(1), 721-724.
- [8] Stajkovic, A. D., & Luthans, F. (1998). *Social cognitive theory and self-efficacy: Goin beyond traditional motivational and behavioral approaches*. *Organizational dynamics*, 26(4), 62-74.
- [9] Oyibo, K., Adaji, I., & Vassileva, J. (2018). *Social cognitive determinants of exercise behavior in the context of behavior modeling: a mixed method approach*. *Digital health*, 4, 2055207618811555.
- [10] Schiavo, M. L., Prinari, B., Saito, I., Shoji, K., & Benight, C. C. (2019). *A dynamical systems approach to triadic reciprocal determinism of social cognitive theory*. *Mathematics and Computers in Simulation*, 159, 18-38.
- [11] Song, M. (2022, February). *Under the implementation of double reduction policy*. In *2021 International Conference on Education, Language and Art (ICELA 2021)* (pp. 800-804). Atlantis Press.
- [12] Chen, G., Oubibi, M., Liang, A., & Zhou, Y. (2022). *Parents' educational anxiety under the "double reduction" policy based on the family and students' personal factors*. *Psychology research and behavior management*, 2067-2082.

- [13] Zhang, L. (2022). *The Implementation of the Double Reduction Policy Problems, Causes, and Suggestions*. *Science Insights*, 40(3), 457-461.
- [14] Xue, E., & Li, J. (2023). *What is the value essence of “double reduction” (Shuang Jian) policy in China? A policy narrative perspective*. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 55(7), 787-796.
- [15] Yin, Y., & Lai, Z. (2021, December). *Research on the transformation of educational institutions under the policy of double reduction*. In *2021 4th International Conference on Humanities Education and Social Sciences (ICHESS 2021)* (pp. 1530-1534). Atlantis Press.
- [16] Yu, S., Zheng, J., Xu, Z., & Zhang, T. (2022). *The transformation of parents' perception of education involution under the background of “double reduction” policy: The mediating role of education anxiety and perception of education equity*. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 800039.