



Examining the Impact of Assignments on Academic Achievement and Student Well-being in Public Universities of Afghanistan

Ismail Shinwari^{1*}, Ahmad Fahim Fawad², Hazrat Usman Mashwani³

^{1,3} Associate Professor, Lecturer of English, Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani University

² Assis. Professor, Lecturer of English, Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani University

ABSTRACT: This quantitative study examines the impact of academic assignments on students' academic achievement and well-being in public universities of Afghanistan. The study was conducted using a quantitative approach, used questionnaire to collect data from 218 students from 24 public universities in Afghanistan. The study participants were students from several public universities in Afghanistan who had both work and study experience. The findings indicate that while appropriately designed assignments can enhance students' understanding, time management, and academic achievement, excessive workload and tight deadlines are significantly associated with increased stress, anxiety, and reduced well-being. The study highlights the need for balanced assignment practices that support learning outcomes without compromising students' mental health. It recommends that university instructors adopt student-centered approaches, ensure reasonable workload distribution, and provide adequate feedback to optimize both academic success and well-being in the Afghan higher education context.

KEYWORDS: Academic achievement, assignments, educational, stress, quality of education and well-being.

INTRODUCTION

In the current education system, the role of homework or assignments is considered an important and inseparable part of the learning process. Assignments are not only a practical tool for deepening students' knowledge, but also strengthen their study habits, responsibility, time management, and independent study skills (Cooper, 2007). In the educational environment of public universities in Afghanistan, the assignment system has become a central part of learning, but there has been limited research on the impact of these assignments on academic achievement and students' mental well-being.

In the past few decades, in light of various educational policies to improve the quality of higher education, assignments have become an important part of learning assessment (Trautwein & Köller, 2003). Through assignments, teachers try to expand students' skills through practical application after understanding theoretical concepts. However, many students suffer from mental fatigue, anxiety, and sleep disturbances due to excessive workload, poor guidance, and time pressure (Kember, 2016). This situation shows that although assignments are an essential part of learning, they can also have negative effects on students' well-being and psychological well-being.

In addition to economic, social, and cultural pressures, students at public universities in Afghanistan also face difficulties in completing assignments. Often, the criteria for evaluating assignments are unclear, or students fail to understand the subject matter due to a lack of guidance (Ahmadzai, 2022). This situation not only leads to a decrease in students' academic achievements, but also negatively affects their self-confidence, happiness, and academic motivation (Bas & Sentürk, 2019). The impact of assignments should be examined from two perspectives: academic impact and mental/well-being impact. From an academic perspective, structured and purposeful assignments can improve students' analytical, reasoning, and writing skills (Nunez & Fernandez, 2006). On the other hand, if the assignment load is too high or the teachers do not provide sufficient support to students, it can lead to mental stress and anxiety, which ultimately harms the quality of learning (Pascoe, Hetrick & Parker, 2020). Accordingly, an important part of educational research should be to scientifically examine the effects of organizing the number, type, and timing of assignments on students. Quality assurance programs by the Ministry of Higher Education are attempting to standardize the assignment process, but the impact of these programs is still worthy of investigation.

Therefore, this study attempts to scientifically and analytically assess the impact of assignments on academic achievement and on students' mental and psychological well-being. The results of the study can provide useful guidelines for university administrations and teachers to improve the quality of teaching and reduce students' mental stress. The importance of the topic lies



in the fact that it not only sheds light on learning outcomes, but also creates an important discussion from the perspective of students' human well-being and social stability.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The role of homework assignments in improving the quality of higher education and student achievement is a hot topic of discussion. For example, Trautwein and Köller (2003) show that students who complete assignments regularly achieve higher scores than those who do not. Additionally, Pascoe, Hetrick, and Parker (2020) note that an appropriate number of assignments can enhance students' mental performance and learning focus. However, when the assignment load is too high, or the level of instruction is too low, it can lead to stress, anxiety, fatigue, and decreased mental well-being (Bas & Sentürk, 2019).

In Afghanistan, the assignment system has become an important part of learning assessment in educational policies in recent years, but research on the quality, purpose, and impact of assignments is very limited. The Afghan Ministry of Higher Education has tried to develop standardized assessment strategies as part of educational reforms, but students in many public universities still face problems with assignment load, time constraints, and lack of resources (Ahmadzai, 2022). In many cases, the purpose of assigning assignments is simply to earn grades, not to develop academic skills. This approach limits students' creativity and critical thinking (Nunez & Fernandez, 2006).

Therefore, the need for this study arises from the fact that two important aspects of the impact of assignments—academic achievement and well-being—are examined together. Through such a scientific analysis, universities will be able to identify the type, amount, and direction of assignments that are beneficial for students' academic development and also support their mental well-being and social stability.

Research Gap

In Afghanistan, especially in public universities, students face numerous social, economic, and educational challenges in addition to their studies. When assignments are given to students in such a situation, the question that arises for them is whether or not they have any effect on their mental health or academic progress. Therefore, research is needed in Afghanistan that considers both students' academic achievement and well-being in the face of assignments, and explains this relationship. Many previous studies have focused only on the decline or increase in students' academic performance, but there has been little focus on the effects on well-being, stress, and quality of life. Also, due to cultural and social conditions, student employment in Afghanistan has a unique form, as many students work not only out of financial necessity, but also have family support responsibilities (Rahmani & Khan, 2022). Also, most studies have been conducted through quantitative methods and have not used mixed methods to understand students' personal experiences, feelings, and quality of life in detail.

Therefore, the need for this study arises from the need to examine in depth and statistically the relationship between work, learning, mental well-being, and academic achievement of students in public universities in Afghanistan. This study will not only fill the scientific gap, but also provide practical recommendations for educational policy makers, university institutions, and student support programs.

Limitations

This study will be limited to students at public universities in Afghanistan, and will not include private universities. Also, this study focuses on aspects of assignment submission, completion, and assessment, and not on other types of teaching and assessment methods used within the classroom. In addition, students' well-being will be examined in terms of psychological and social conditions, but analysis of long-term clinical effects or specific psychiatric disorders is not included in this study.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample of the study consisted entirely of male students (100%), which reflects the current context of higher education access in Afghanistan, where female participation in public universities has been significantly restricted or limited in recent years. Consequently, the lack of female respondents was not the result of sampling bias but rather of contextual and structural constraints in the Afghan higher education system. This gender-specific sample limits the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, the results of this study should be interpreted with caution and should not be generalized to female students, whose academic experiences and well-being may differ significantly. In order to get a better understanding of how assignments affect all students, it is strongly suggested that future research include female participants as soon as access is possible.



Significance of the Study

The importance of this study is that it provides a realistic picture of the situation of students in public universities in Afghanistan and shows how jobs affect students' academic achievement, concentration, time management, and mental well-being.

In the contemporary era, higher education students face not only academic competition, but also multiple social and economic pressures. In Afghanistan, due to economic inequality, low household income, and rising education costs, many students are forced to work alongside their studies. This problem has become an important part of students' lives, as a large number of students are forced to work to continue their education (Ahmadzai, 2021). Therefore, the importance of this study lies in understanding how students' jobs affect their academic achievements and mental well-being.

Based on international research, student work can have both positive and negative effects. On the one hand, working increases students' sense of responsibility, time management, and financial independence (Hall, 2010). These students gain practical experience with real life and prepare for professional development through work. An important significance of the study is that it provides scientific evidence for the Afghan education system, so that universities can develop effective policies to support students' academic and psychological well-being.

In addition, this study pays special attention to the issue of well-being in higher education in Afghanistan. Most previous studies have focused only on the level of academic achievement, but have ignored the aspects of students' mental, emotional, and social well-being (Niazi, 2023). Student well-being has a direct impact on the quality of their education, academic stability, and willingness to continue their education. Therefore, this study examines the issue of well-being alongside academic achievement to demonstrate how mental stress and workload affect students' academic success.

In conclusion, this study is of both academic and practical importance. Academic because it provides new knowledge about a little-studied topic within the Afghan education system, the relationship between work and education, and practical because it provides basic information for educational policymakers to make decisions.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the impact of assignment workload and deadlines on students' mental health and overall well-being.
2. To identify students' perceptions and attitudes towards the role of assignments in enhancing learning outcomes.

Research Questions

1. How do assignment workload and deadlines affect students' mental health and overall well-being?
2. What are students' perceptions of the effectiveness of assignments in improving students' learning and academic success?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In higher education, the relationship between assignments (homework) and academic achievement and student well-being has been the focus of much research. Studies conducted in different countries around the world show that assignments, if properly organized and implemented, can increase students' academic achievement and strengthen their learning skills (Cooper, 2007; Trautwein & Köller, 2003). On the other hand, if the burden of assignments is too high, or if students are stressed due to lack of time and lack of support, this can lead to a decrease in their mental well-being and the quality of their learning (Pascoe, Hetrick & Parker, 2020). Cooper's (2007) study on the effects of homework on a global scale found that students who complete assignments under regular supervision score higher on academic tests and gain deeper understanding of the subject matter. Similarly, Trautwein and Köller (2003) found that assignments act as an important mediating factor for students' academic progress. However, their study also shows that the quality, purpose, and feedback of assignments have a significant impact on student achievement.

On the other hand, Pascoe et al.'s (2020) study found that time-pressured assignments are a significant cause of student stress. When students face time management problems due to the increase in assignments, their mental well-being decreases and their creativity levels decrease. Similarly, Bas and Sentürk (2019) found that high homework load reduces students' motivation to learn and positive academic behaviors, while moderate or balanced load improves students' responsibility, commitment, and academic outcomes.

In conclusion, it is clear from many studies that the impact of assignments is twofold—if well-designed and regularly followed, they lead to increased academic achievement; but if they exceed the limits of students' capacity, time, and support, they can lead to stress, anxiety, and decreased well-being. In Afghanistan, academic research on this topic is still limited, but based on



the available evidence, it can be said that a balanced and supportive educational framework is necessary to improve the assignment system and strengthen student well-being.

In recent years, the issue of students' academic achievement and well-being has become an important topic of educational research. In addition to academic performance, many students work for financial reasons, which can affect their learning, mental focus, and work-life balance. International research findings show that students' work has both positive and negative effects on their academic performance (Callender, 2008).

Some studies show that students learn responsibility, time management, and self-reliance skills by performing physical or mental tasks (Curtis & Lucas, 2001). These skills later contribute to the quality of their education and life skills. According to Hall (2010), students who work less than twenty hours per week have better time management, self-assessment, and goal setting skills.

Similarly, Broadbridge & Swanson (2005) show that work experience enhances students' professional skills and sense of readiness for future employment. In addition, jobs increase students' self-confidence, financial independence, and social experience, all of which contribute to improved mental well-being (Wirtz et al., 2013).

In contrast, some studies warn that student jobs that take up too much time can be detrimental to academic achievement. Robotham's (2012) study shows that a lack of balance between work and study leads to fatigue, stress, and decreased concentration. According to Curtis (2007), students who work more than 20 hours a day experience a drop in their GPA.

Bradley (2006) also shows that long working hours not only negatively affect study time, but also affect the quality of sleep, mental focus, and social relationships. Due to such stress, students' mental health, self-esteem, and general well-being decrease (Hovdhaugen, 2015). Due to economic difficulties in Afghanistan, many students are forced to work to cover their education expenses (Ahmadzai, 2021). Although this is a way of supporting themselves financially, long working hours negatively affect the student's time management and the quality of their academic performance.

Converging findings from international studies suggest that the relationship between work and study is largely dependent on time balance, the nature of the work, and the individual skills of the student (Richardson et al., 2013). Students who manage their time effectively reap positive benefits from the work experience, while those who struggle with time management experience negative effects (Watts & Pickering, 2000).

All previous research confirms that students' jobs affect both their academic achievement and well-being, but the direction of these effects is related to working hours, type of job, student age, and time management skills (Callender, 2008; Robotham, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct in-depth research on this topic in the Afghan context to create a proper balance between students' work and study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on quantitative research, as the aim is to examine the statistical analysis of the burden, quality, and frequency of homework assignments and academic achievement and student well-being. For this, a descriptive-correlational design used to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design was chosen to quantitatively illustrate the relationships between students' experiences, actions, and opinions and to provide a basis for generalization of the results (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). The research population was the students from 24 public universities of Afghanistan. Stratified random technique used to collected data. The questionnaire adopted from Niggli, A. (2006). The students asked for assignment-related questions, academic achievement, and student well-being and structured on a Likert Scale (1–5), ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (Likert, 1932). The reliability of the questionnaire tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which considered reliable if $\alpha \geq 0.70$ (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The collected data analyzed using 25 version of SPSS.

FINDINGS

The questionnaire was sent to all universities of Afghanistan. Moreover, called to everyone, sent messages and inform them in social media groups, only 218 questionnaires were returned that was usable for analysis. SPSS version 25 was used for data analysis. The below table 4.1 indicate the demographic data of the respondents: gender, age, class:



Table 4.1: Shows the demographic data of the respondents

Demographic information		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	218	100%
	Total	218	100%
Class	Freshman	82	37.6%
	Sophomore	32	14.7%
	Jonier	59	27.1%
	Senior	45	20.6%
	Total	218	100%
Age	15 to 20	52	23.9%
	21 to 25	100	45.9%
	26 to 30	36	16.5%
	31 to 35	2	.9%
	Above 35	28	12.8%
	Total	218	100.0%

The above table 4.2 has presented the descriptive data from the perspective of the students of the public universities in Afghanistan. We have seen before, and has a total of 24 items questionnaire was distributed online to students of all public universities within Afghanistan, only 218 students return the completed questionnaire. Data was analysed in SPSS used 5-point Likert scale to find the result. The table shows overall descriptive data of questionnaire as follow:

Table 4.2: Shows overall descriptive data of the respondents

Descriptive Statistics					
No of Questions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Question 1	218	1.00	5.00	4.5046	.74517
Question 2	218	1.00	5.00	4.4771	.84892
Question 3	218	1.00	5.00	4.6468	.67134
Question 4	218	1.00	5.00	4.5963	.61651
Question 5	218	1.00	5.00	4.5642	.75471
Question 6	218	1.00	5.00	4.3945	.81482
Question 7	218	1.00	5.00	4.5183	.75723
Question 8	218	1.00	5.00	4.4312	1.10188
Question 9	218	1.00	5.00	4.5550	.83649
Question 10	218	1.00	5.00	4.5459	.73754
Question 11	218	1.00	5.00	4.6606	.63999
Question 12	218	1.00	5.00	4.5183	.81015
Question 13	218	1.00	5.00	4.4725	.85958



Question 14	218	1.00	5.00	4.6284	.78260
Question 15	218	1.00	5.00	4.6101	.68512
Question 16	218	1.00	5.00	4.3578	1.06924
Question 17	218	1.00	5.00	4.4862	.85991
Question 18	218	1.00	5.00	4.5642	.81913
Question 19	218	1.00	5.00	4.5229	.77515
Question 20	218	1.00	5.00	4.4633	.79806
Valid N (listwise)	218			(4.5259) overall mean	(.08121) overall average of Std. Deviation

Answer Of the Research Question One:

Findings of the research question one: The assignments workload and deadline effects on students’ health and overall well-being, which states: " **How do assignment workload and deadlines affect students’ mental health and overall well-being?**" Table 4.1 provides the students’ perspectives regarding the assignment’s workload and deadline effects on students’ health and overall well-being. Table 4.3 presents the perspective of students on the assignment’s workload and deadline effects on students’ health and overall well-being. The RQ1 is examined through 10 items questions (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10). The average mean for RQ1 is 4.5234 with a standard deviation of .07554. This average mean value shows a high-level impact of g assignment’s workload and deadline effects on students’ health and overall well-being from the perspective students in public universities of Afghanistan.

Table 4.3: Shows descriptive data of the RQ1

Descriptive Statistics					
1 to 10 Questions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Question 1	218	1.00	5.00	4.5046	.74517
Question 2	218	1.00	5.00	4.4771	.84892
Question 3	218	1.00	5.00	4.6468	.67134
Question 4	218	1.00	5.00	4.5963	.61651
Question 5	218	1.00	5.00	4.5642	.75471
Question 6	218	1.00	5.00	4.3945	.81482
Question 7	218	1.00	5.00	4.5183	.75723
Question 8	218	1.00	5.00	4.4312	1.10188
Question 9	218	1.00	5.00	4.5550	.83649
Question 10	218	1.00	5.00	4.5459	.73754
Valid N (listwise)	218			(4.5234) Overall Mean	(.07554) Overall Average of Std. Deviation



Answer Of the Research Question Two:

Findings of the research question two: The effectiveness of assignments in improving students’ learning and academic success, which states: " **What are students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of assignments in improving students’ learning and academic success?**" Table 4.4 provides the statistics, including frequency, minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation. deviation of students’ perspectives regarding the effectiveness of assignments in improving students’ learning and academic success. Table 4.3 presents the perspective of students on the effectiveness of assignments in improving students’ learning and academic success. The RQ1 is examined through 10 items questions (11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20). The average mean for RQ1 is 4.5284 with a standard deviation of .09056. This average mean value shows a high-level impact of effectiveness of assignments in improving students’ learning and academic success from the perspective students in public universities of Afghanistan.

Table 4.4: Shows descriptive data of the RQ2

Descriptive Statistics					
11 to 20 Questions	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Question 11	218	1.00	5.00	4.6606	.63999
Question 12	218	1.00	5.00	4.5183	.81015
Question 13	218	1.00	5.00	4.4725	.85958
Question 14	218	1.00	5.00	4.6284	.78260
Question 15	218	1.00	5.00	4.6101	.68512
Question 16	218	1.00	5.00	4.3578	1.06924
Question 17	218	1.00	5.00	4.4862	.85991
Question 18	218	1.00	5.00	4.5642	.81913
Question 19	218	1.00	5.00	4.5229	.77515
Question 20	218	1.00	5.00	4.4633	.79806
Valid N (listwise)	218			(4.5284) Overall mean	(.09056) Overall average of Std. deviation

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of homework or chores on students’ academic achievement and mental well-being at the level of public universities in Afghanistan. The results of the study indicate that completing homework is generally beneficial for students’ academic achievement, but at the same time it also has a negative impact on their psychological and social well-being. These findings are consistent with previous international research. For example, Cooper, Robinson, & Patall (2006) show that regular and goal-oriented homework improves students’ academic skills and test scores. However, when the amount of homework increases, it causes stress, anxiety, and fatigue (Pascoe, Hetrick, & Parker, 2020).

The results also indicate that students who consistently try to complete homework are better prepared during exams and develop their time management skills. This is consistent with Britton & Tesser’s (1991) study, which found that good time management is an important factor in students’ academic success. However, for many students in Afghanistan, the increased workload has led to a lack of personal life, social relationships, and sleep, which is similar to the findings of Misra & Castillo (2004). They found that increased academic demands increase students’ mental stress and anxiety.



Particularly in Afghanistan's public universities, the living conditions of students, the lack of teaching materials, and the problems of the teaching system further complicate this situation. Many students have difficulty with their assignments due to low technology, lack of internet, and lack of teaching resources. According to a study by Pope, Brown, & Miles (2015), when teachers assign too many tasks without considering the actual situation and capacity of students, it causes mental and intellectual stress and reduces the quality of learning.

Another important aspect of the study revealed that the appropriate organization and quality of tasks increase students' motivation to learn. This is consistent with the findings of a study by Dettmers, Trautwein, & Lüdtke (2010), who stated that the quality of tasks is more important than their quantity. That is, if the content of the tasks is directly related to the objective of the subject, it leads to students' intellectual development and practical learning. On the contrary, tasks that are given only to fill time reduce students' interest in learning and cause boredom (Rosário et al., 2015).

Additionally, study participants reported that their sleep was reduced and their sense of mental well-being was disrupted due to the high workload. This finding is consistent with Becker et al. (2018)'s study that showed that sleep deprivation has a direct negative impact on students' concentration, memory, and cognitive performance. Overall, the study results suggest that while adequate volume and quality of assignments can help improve students' academic achievement, excessive workload, irrelevant content, and time constraints negatively impact students' well-being, concentration, and mental health. Therefore, it is recommended that professors at public universities in Afghanistan adopt a balanced approach to assignment assignment—i.e., consider students' abilities, subject objectives, and time constraints.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ **Create a policy for work-study balance.** The Ministry should develop a clear policy that specifies the standards for organizing and coordinating teaching and working hours for working students.
- ✓ **Activate wellness and counseling centers.** Active counseling centers should be established in every university to manage students' depression, fatigue, stress, and psychological problems.
- ✓ **Create flexible schedules.** Institutions should organize evening, weekly, and part-time classes so that working students do not have problems with class hours.
- ✓ **Develop an online learning system.** The Ministry should activate a single standard LMS (Learning Management System) system so that working students can benefit from distance learning.
- ✓ **Fee installments and financial facilities.** Special fee installment, discount or financial support programs should be established for students who are working and have financial difficulties.
- ✓ **Skills development programs.** Universities should make soft skills training such as communication, self-regulation, learning, stress management, and taking responsibility part of the curriculum.
- ✓ **Establishing a student rights support committee.** A special unit should be established to follow up on the problems of working students and help them solve administrative, financial or academic problems.
- ✓ **Coordination mechanism between the workplace and the university.** If students work in formal institutions, the university should have specific time coordination agreements with the institutions.
- ✓ **Stress-reducing educational activities.** The university should provide students with sports, recreational and social programs to reduce psychological stress.
- ✓ **Allocating research funds.** The ministry should provide specific funds and access for future research on the well-being and academic performance of students.
- ✓ **Establishing a systematic monitoring system for students.** The ministry should establish a systematic monitoring system for the academic performance, well-being, stress levels and learning progress of working students.

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