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Learning to Learn: A Qualitative Exploration of the Learning Habits of Grade 5

Harrison Galabay Nonan
Isabela Colleges, Incorporated
Baculod Elementary School, Cauayan City, Isabela, Philippines
harrisonnonan222@gmail.com

Abstract

Learning habits developed during the elementary years influence how learners organize tasks, sustain attention, respond to difficulties, and progressively assume responsibility for their own learning. While studies on self-regulated learning have established the importance of planning, monitoring, strategy use, motivation, and reflection, fewer studies have examined how elementary learners themselves describe the everyday habits through which these processes are enacted in authentic school and home contexts. This qualitative study explores the learning habits of Grade 5 learners at Baculod Elementary School in Cauayan City, Isabela, Philippines. Specifically, it seeks to understand the routines and strategies learners employ in accomplishing academic tasks, the factors that support or constrain their learning habits, the ways they respond to learning difficulties, and the meanings they attach to habits they perceive as helpful to their learning. A qualitative descriptive approach is proposed, using purposive sampling and age-appropriate semi-structured interviews with Grade 5 learners. Data will be analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis involving familiarization, coding, construction and refinement of themes, and interpretive synthesis. The inquiry is anchored in self-regulated learning theory while remaining open to contextually grounded practices that may extend beyond conventional classifications of learning strategies. The study is expected to provide a learner-centered understanding of learning habits and generate implications for classroom instruction, home-school support, and interventions designed to strengthen independent and reflective learning among upper elementary pupils.

Keywords: learning habits; self-regulated learning; Grade 5 learners; elementary education; qualitative research; learning strategies

Corresponding author: Harrison Galabay Nonan

I. Introduction

Learning in elementary school extends beyond the acquisition of subject content and the completion of classroom requirements. As children progress through the grade levels, they are increasingly expected to organize their schoolwork, maintain attention, manage time and learning materials, respond to challenging tasks, seek appropriate assistance, and determine whether they have actually understood what they are studying. Over time, these repeated behaviors develop into learning habits that can shape how learners engage with academic demands. Such habits are particularly important during the upper elementary years, when learners begin to assume greater responsibility for their schoolwork and gradually shift from highly teacher-directed learning toward more independent forms of learning.

Learning habits refer to the recurring practices and strategies learners use to prepare for, engage in, and evaluate learning activities. These may include following a study schedule, preparing materials in advance, rereading lessons, practicing exercises, taking notes, managing distractions, asking questions, seeking support, checking answers, and revisiting concepts that remain unclear. Evidence suggests that such habits are educationally significant. Quílez-Robres et al. (2021), in a longitudinal study of elementary pupils, found that study habits were significantly associated with academic achievement and, together with cognitive variables, contributed to the prediction of learners' academic performance. In the Philippine context, Muhat and Bentor (2022) likewise reported meaningful relationships among study habits, learning approaches, and the academic performance of Grade 1 learners, suggesting that productive learning practices begin to develop even in the early years of schooling. Lanosnia et al. (2022), studying Grade 4 pupils under modular distance learning, further showed that children's study behavior was influenced by their learning circumstances, including differences associated with family income and the quality of submitted learning outputs.

The concept of learning habits is closely related to **self-regulated learning (SRL)**, which describes learners' active management of their cognition, behavior, motivation, emotion, and learning environment. Panadero (2017), in his review of six major models of self-regulated learning, explained that SRL encompasses cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, behavioral, and emotional dimensions and provides an integrative framework for understanding how learners become increasingly strategic and independent. In this view, productive learning is not simply a matter of working harder but of knowing how to plan, select appropriate strategies, monitor progress, manage motivation, and reflect on outcomes. Cleary, Callan, and Pawlo (2020) similarly described self-regulated learning as a cyclical, goal-directed process involving planning, strategic action, motivational beliefs, monitoring, and evaluation. These perspectives provide a useful conceptual basis for understanding learning habits because many everyday study practices represent observable expressions of broader self-regulatory processes.

Recent research confirms that self-regulation is already evident and measurable among elementary learners. Ebbes et al. (2024), working with pupils in Grades 3 to 6, identified five important dimensions of self-regulated learning: **planning, monitoring, cognition control, emotion/motivation control, and reflection**. Their findings demonstrate that upper elementary learners are capable of engaging in multiple forms of regulation while completing academic tasks. However, the presence of these capacities does not necessarily mean that children use them consistently or effectively. Torrington, Bower, and Burns (2023) found that elementary learners engaged extensively in cognitive strategies during an online research activity but devoted substantially less time to explicit planning and monitoring. This suggests that young learners may be able to complete tasks and use learning strategies without necessarily reflecting systematically on how well those strategies are working.

The development of effective learning habits is therefore not automatic and may benefit from deliberate instructional support. Wang and Sperling's (2020) systematic review of self-regulated learning interventions in mathematics found that interventions integrating cognitive, metacognitive, and motivational strategies tended to improve both learners' self-regulation and academic performance. Similarly, Lee et al. (2023) examined teacher-led self-regulated learning interventions among upper elementary pupils in writing, mathematics, and reading and found that learners who received strategy instruction embedded within an SRL framework demonstrated greater use of regulatory strategies, stronger academic performance, and fewer task-irrelevant thoughts. These findings underscore the importance of helping elementary pupils recognize not only what strategies are available but also when and why particular strategies should be used.

Teachers play a particularly important role in developing these habits. Dignath and Veenman (2021), through a systematic review of classroom observation studies, found that explicit instruction of self-regulated learning strategies remained relatively uncommon despite evidence supporting its educational value. They emphasized the importance of combining direct strategy instruction with classroom environments that provide learners opportunities to regulate their own learning. More recently, Sins et al. (2024) reported that a professional development program designed to help primary teachers explicitly promote self-regulated learning increased teachers' use of SRL strategy instruction, although such explicit teaching generally remained limited. These findings indicate that learning habits are partly shaped by the opportunities,

modeling, guidance, and feedback provided within classrooms.

The quality of classroom relationships and instructional interactions also contributes to how children regulate their learning. De Ruig, de Jong, and Zee (2023), in a narrative review of 30 studies, found that well-organized and emotionally supportive classroom environments, together with high-quality instructional support, were associated with important aspects of elementary learners' metacognition and self-regulation. Sulla, Monacis, and Limone (2023) similarly concluded from their systematic review that teacher guidance, monitoring, prompting, and support can facilitate learners' socially shared regulation of learning, particularly during collaborative academic activities. These studies reinforce the idea that learning habits should not be interpreted solely as individual traits because children's ways of learning emerge through continued interaction with teachers and peers.

The family and home learning environment may likewise shape learners' study routines, persistence, and independence. Children often depend on parents, siblings, or other family members for reminders, explanation of difficult tasks, access to learning materials, and the structuring of study time. Broader evidence concerning autonomy support also highlights the importance of significant adults in students' learning. A large-scale meta-analysis by Bureau et al. (2023), synthesizing evidence across numerous studies, found that perceived autonomy support from teachers and parents was positively related to outcomes that included motivation, engagement, self-beliefs, self-regulated learning, and academic performance. This suggests that learners are more likely to develop productive learning practices when adults provide appropriate guidance while also allowing children opportunities to make decisions and assume responsibility.

Learning environments have also become increasingly influenced by digital technology. Mobile devices, search engines, educational applications, instructional videos, messaging platforms, and other digital resources can support independent study, yet they can simultaneously introduce distractions and increase the need for self-regulation. Breitwieser et al. (2023) found that helping children create specific study plans and providing prompts through a mobile intervention supported more regular vocabulary-study routines. At the same time, Torrington et al. (2023) demonstrated that being able to navigate digital environments does not necessarily mean that elementary learners effectively plan and monitor their own learning. Thus, children's learning habits increasingly involve the ability not only to access resources but also to regulate attention, technology use, and study environments.

Research on metacognition likewise supports the importance of explicitly developing learners' awareness of their own learning processes. Muijs and Bokhove (2020), in an evidence review of metacognition and self-regulation, concluded that learners can benefit when they are taught to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning systematically. Their review emphasizes that effective learning involves learners becoming increasingly capable of identifying what they understand, recognizing what remains difficult, choosing appropriate strategies, and evaluating whether those strategies are effective. This perspective is particularly relevant to Grade 5 learners, who are at a developmental stage in which academic tasks become more complex while expectations for independent task completion also increase.

Taken together, recent studies show that productive learning habits involve an interplay among cognitive strategies, planning, motivation, persistence, help-seeking, environmental management, monitoring, and reflection. However, much of the available research has examined these processes through surveys, standardized measures, experimental interventions, structured learning tasks, or observational approaches. For instance, Ebbes et al. (2024) developed and validated a task-specific questionnaire for upper elementary learners, while Lee et al. (2023) investigated the effectiveness of structured classroom interventions, and Torrington et al. (2023) analyzed learners' behaviors during an online task. These studies provide important evidence about the measurable dimensions and outcomes of self-regulated learning, but they reveal less about how children themselves describe the routines, choices, difficulties, and adjustments involved in their everyday learning.

This limitation is especially important because children's reported learning practices may be deeply context-dependent. A learner may study effectively at school but struggle to establish routines at home; another may depend heavily on family assistance, while another may prefer to work independently. Some may use digital resources productively, whereas others may experience technology primarily as a distraction. Learners may also differ in how they respond to difficult lessons, mistakes, time pressures, peer influence, household responsibilities, or limited learning resources. Such experiences cannot be fully captured through achievement scores or predefined questionnaire categories alone. A qualitative approach provides an opportunity to investigate the meanings learners attach to these practices and to understand why particular habits are maintained, changed, or abandoned.

This issue has particular relevance to Philippine public elementary schools, where learners' study practices occur within diverse family, linguistic, technological, and socioeconomic contexts. Philippine studies such as those of Muhat and Bentor (2022) and Lanosnia et al. (2022) provide evidence that study habits and learning behaviors are related to academic experiences among younger pupils, but these investigations relied primarily on quantitative and survey-based approaches. Consequently, there remains limited qualitative evidence describing learning habits from the perspectives of elementary

pupils themselves, particularly in localized public-school settings.

The present study addresses this gap by exploring the learning habits of Grade 5 learners at **Baculod Elementary School, Cauayan City, Isabela**. Rather than classifying pupils according to predetermined categories of "good" or "poor" study habits, the study seeks to understand how learners themselves describe their everyday routines, learning strategies, management of time and distractions, responses to academic difficulty, help-seeking practices, and ways of determining whether they have understood a lesson. By foregrounding learners' voices, the study recognizes children as active participants in the learning process and examines learning habits as practices shaped by individual agency as well as by teachers, peers, family members, school expectations, and the broader learning environment. In doing so, the inquiry aims to contribute a contextually grounded understanding of how Grade 5 pupils gradually **learn how to learn**.

Although recent literature demonstrates the importance of learning habits and self-regulated learning, three important gaps remain. First, existing studies are dominated by quantitative measures, experimental interventions, and structured assessments, leaving less evidence about how elementary learners experience learning habits in everyday situations. Second, children's own voices are relatively underrepresented because learning behaviors are frequently examined through questionnaires, achievement measures, teacher observations, or intervention outcomes rather than through learners' detailed accounts. Third, learning habits are strongly shaped by context, yet relatively limited qualitative research has examined these practices among learners in Philippine public elementary schools. Therefore, the present study provides a qualitative and context-sensitive exploration of how Grade 5 learners at Baculod Elementary School develop, use, and interpret the habits that support their learning.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the learning habits of Grade 5 learners at Baculod Elementary School, with particular attention to the strategies, routines, supports, challenges, and adaptive practices they use in managing their learning.

Rather than measuring the frequency of predefined learning behaviors, the study seeks to understand how learners themselves make sense of the ways they learn.

1.3 Research Questions

The study is guided by the central question:

How do Grade 5 learners at Baculod Elementary School experience and describe their learning habits?

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What learning routines and strategies do Grade 5 learners use in accomplishing school-related tasks?
2. How do learners organize and regulate their time, attention, materials, and learning activities?
3. How do Grade 5 learners respond when they encounter difficult lessons or academic tasks?
4. What personal, family, peer, school, and environmental factors influence their learning habits?
5. How do learners perceive the contribution of their learning habits to their understanding, task completion, and academic experiences?

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore how Grade 5 learners at Baculod Elementary School describe, interpret, and make sense of their everyday learning habits. Participants were purposively selected from officially enrolled Grade 5 learners to capture varied learning experiences, with participation based on voluntary assent and parental or guardian consent. Data were gathered through age-appropriate semi-structured interviews conducted individually in a safe and familiar school setting, allowing learners to respond in Filipino, English, Ilokano, or another language they were most comfortable using. With permission, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and translations were prepared in a way that preserved the intended meaning of participants' responses. The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, beginning with repeated reading of the transcripts, followed by initial coding of meaningful statements related to routines, strategies, challenges, support systems, motivation, and reflection; related codes were then grouped into broader patterns, reviewed, refined, and developed into interpretive themes. Trustworthiness was strengthened through sustained engagement with the data, appropriate probing, reflexive

documentation, an audit trail of analytic decisions, and attention to differing participant experiences. Ethical safeguards were observed throughout the study by maintaining confidentiality, using participant codes, securing informed consent and learner assent, ensuring voluntary participation, and emphasizing that participation or withdrawal would not affect learners' grades, treatment, or school privileges.

9. Results and Findings

The thematic analysis of the interview data is intended to illuminate how Grade 5 learners understand and enact learning in their everyday academic lives. For purposes of demonstrating the expected structure of the final manuscript, the following section presents five provisional themes: (1) Establishing Personal Routines and Organizing Learning Tasks; (2) Learning Through Repetition, Practice, and Meaning-Making; (3) Seeking Help as a Strategy for Overcoming Learning Difficulties; (4) Managing Distractions, Motivation, and Persistence; and (5) Monitoring Understanding and Learning from Mistakes. These themes reflect major dimensions commonly associated with self-regulated learning, including planning, cognitive strategy use, environmental regulation, help-seeking, motivational regulation, monitoring, and reflection. However, the final thematic labels and supporting quotations should emerge from the actual dataset rather than being imposed in advance.

9.1 Participant Profile

The participants of the study consisted of Grade 5 learners officially enrolled at Baculod Elementary School during **2025-2026**. To protect their identities, participant codes such as **P1, P2, P3, and so forth** should be used throughout the presentation of findings. The final manuscript should report only participant characteristics directly relevant to the interpretation of the findings and should avoid information that could permit individual learners to be identified.

9.2 Theme 1: Establishing Personal Routines and Organizing Learning Tasks

The first emerging theme, **Establishing Personal Routines and Organizing Learning Tasks**, suggests that learning among Grade 5 pupils is not confined to what occurs during formal classroom instruction but is supported by routines that learners establish before engaging with academic work. The learners may describe preparing school materials, deciding which assignment to complete first, studying after arriving home, finishing household responsibilities before beginning schoolwork, reviewing lessons in the evening, or completing more difficult activities before easier ones. An illustrative response might be expressed by one learner as, "*Pag-uwi ko po, nagpapahinga muna ako nang kaunti, tapos ginagawa ko muna iyong mahirap na assignment para hindi ko makalimutan. Kapag tapos na, saka ko ginagawa iyong mas madali*" ["When I get home, I rest for a while, then I do the difficult assignment first so I will not forget it. When I finish, I do the easier ones"] (P1, quotation). Another learner may explain, "*I prepare my notebook and books first because sometimes I waste time looking for them. I check what the teacher asked us to do, then I start with the one that is due first*" (P3, quotation), while another may state, "*Hindi po ako may schedule talaga, pero alam ko na pagkatapos kumain at maligo, doon na ako gumagawa ng assignment*" ["I do not really have a written schedule, but I know that after eating and taking a bath, that is when I do my assignments"] (P5, quotation). Such accounts would indicate that planning among children does not always take the form of formal written schedules or explicit goal-setting; rather, it can be manifested through recurring routines, prioritization, preparation of materials, and sequencing of activities. This finding would be significant because it broadens the understanding of self-regulation among elementary pupils: children may already demonstrate rudimentary forms of forethought even when they do not identify their actions using terms such as "planning," "time management," or "goal setting." From the perspective of Zimmerman's self-regulated learning framework, these behaviors correspond to the forethought phase, during which learners anticipate task requirements, establish goals, and organize resources before performing an academic task. The experiences also align with the contemporary conceptualization of elementary self-regulated learning proposed by Ebbes and colleagues, whose task-specific instrument for upper-elementary learners identifies planning, monitoring, cognitive control, emotion/motivation control, and reflection as distinguishable components of self-regulation. Importantly, the routines described by learners should not automatically be interpreted as fully developed self-regulation because a child may simply follow a routine established by parents or teachers; instead, the analytical issue is the extent to which learners increasingly assume responsibility for organizing these behaviors themselves. This distinction is important because research involving elementary learners has shown that planning and monitoring are not necessarily spontaneous processes even when children are capable of completing academic tasks. Torrington, Bower, and Burns found that elementary learners undertaking an online research task devoted substantially more activity to cognitive strategies than to explicit planning or monitoring, suggesting that young students may engage productively with learning activities without consistently regulating the processes surrounding them. Thus, if the actual interviews reveal comparable experiences, the finding would suggest that Grade 5 learners possess emerging organizational habits but may still benefit from explicit scaffolding in setting goals, prioritizing tasks, estimating the time required for activities, and reviewing whether their planned approach

has been effective. Rather than requiring rigid schedules, teachers may help children make their existing informal routines more deliberate by introducing simple planners, assignment checklists, learning goals, and end-of-task reflections. Evidence that planning itself can support children's study routines is also found in research showing that creating a concrete learning plan helped children maintain more regular study patterns. In this sense, the learning routines of Grade 5 learners may represent an important developmental transition from externally organized learning toward increasingly self-directed regulation.

9.3 Theme 2: Learning Through Repetition, Practice, and Meaning-Making

The second theme, **Learning Through Repetition, Practice, and Meaning-Making**, captures the concrete strategies learners may use when attempting to understand, remember, or master lessons. Rather than referring to abstract concepts such as "cognitive strategies," Grade 5 learners are likely to describe learning in practical terms: reading a passage repeatedly, copying important information, memorizing key concepts, answering practice questions, solving similar mathematics problems, reviewing notebooks, highlighting important words, saying information aloud, watching instructional videos, or explaining ideas in their own words. One illustrative participant might explain, *"Kapag hindi ko po maintindihan iyong binabasa ko, binabasa ko ulit. Minsan tatlong beses hanggang maintindihan ko kung ano ang ibig sabihin"* ["When I do not understand what I am reading, I read it again. Sometimes three times until I understand what it means"] (P2, quotation). Another might state, *"In Math, I look at the example first and then I try to solve another problem by myself. If my answer is wrong, I go back to the example"* (P4, quotation), whereas another learner may report, *"Mas natatandaan ko po kapag sinusulat ko ulit iyong importanteng words at binabasa ko nang malakas"* ["I remember better when I write the important words again and read them aloud"] (P7, quotation). These accounts would demonstrate that children's learning habits involve different combinations of rehearsal, elaboration, retrieval, practice, and use of external resources. Repetition may initially appear to be a simple or surface-level learning behavior, but its meaning depends upon how it is used: rereading mechanically without evaluating comprehension differs substantially from rereading a difficult section, comparing it with examples, and attempting to explain its meaning. Likewise, copying notes may function merely as reproduction, or it may become part of a larger process of organizing and remembering information. The interpretive significance therefore lies not simply in identifying the strategy but in understanding the learner's purpose for using it and whether the learner adjusts the strategy when it fails. Research on elementary self-regulated learning supports the centrality of cognitive strategy use in children's independent academic activity. Torrington et al. found that elementary learners completing a digital research task devoted the greatest proportion of their activity to cognitive strategies such as reading, rereading, and summarizing information. Their findings are especially relevant because they show that young learners may possess and employ several direct learning strategies even when higher-order planning and monitoring are used less frequently. Similarly, the validated model reported by Ebbes et al. includes cognitive control as a distinct component of self-regulated learning among upper-elementary pupils, alongside planning, monitoring, motivation-emotion regulation, and reflection. If the Grade 5 learners in the present study describe changing their approach according to the nature of the subject for example, practicing repeatedly in mathematics but summarizing and rereading in language subjects such variation would indicate an emerging awareness that learning strategies need to fit task demands. This is a particularly important developmental outcome because "learning to learn" is not equivalent to mastering one universal study technique; rather, it entails developing a repertoire of strategies and learning when each is useful. Conversely, if learners rely heavily on memorization and repetition without discussing comprehension, self-questioning, or strategy adjustment, the finding may identify a potential instructional need. Teachers could model strategies such as summarizing in one's own words, generating questions, retrieving information without looking at notes, creating examples, explaining concepts to classmates, and comparing possible solutions. The aim would not be to eliminate familiar habits such as rereading or practice but to transform them into more reflective and purposeful forms of learning. In this way, learners' reported study behaviors can be interpreted as evidence of both existing cognitive resources and opportunities for strengthening metacognitive control over those resources.

9.4 Theme 3: Seeking Help as a Strategy for Overcoming Learning Difficulties

The third theme, **Seeking Help as a Strategy for Overcoming Learning Difficulties**, reflects the inherently social character of children's learning and challenges the assumption that independent learning means completing academic tasks without assistance. Learners may identify teachers, parents, older siblings, classmates, relatives, friends, or digital resources as sources of support when they cannot understand instructions or solve a problem by themselves. One illustrative learner might state, *"Kapag hindi ko talaga maintindihan, tinatanong ko po si Ma'am. Nahihiya ako minsan, pero mas mahirap kapag hindi ko talaga*

alam kung ano ang gagawin" ["When I really cannot understand it, I ask Ma'am. Sometimes I feel shy, but it is harder when I really do not know what to do"] (P6, quotation). Another might explain, "*I ask my older sister because she already studied our lesson before. But I tell her not to give me the answer. I ask her how to do it*" (P8, illustrative quotation), while another may say, "*Minsan po tinatanong ko iyong seatmate ko kapag hindi ko narinig iyong instruction. Pero kapag pareho kaming hindi alam, saka kami nagtatanong sa teacher*" ["Sometimes I ask my seatmate when I did not hear the instruction. But if both of us do not know, then we ask the teacher"] (P10, quotation). These responses would show that help-seeking is not necessarily evidence of weakness or dependence; it can instead operate as an adaptive self-regulatory behavior when learners recognize a limitation in their understanding, identify an appropriate source of assistance, and use that assistance to continue the task. The distinction between adaptive and dependent help-seeking is analytically important. A learner who first attempts a task, identifies what is unclear, asks a specific question, and then independently applies the explanation demonstrates a more self-regulated form of assistance-seeking than one who immediately requests the answer without attempting to understand the process. The possible presence of embarrassment or hesitation, as illustrated by P6, further indicates that access to assistance is affected not only by availability but also by learners' perceptions of classroom safety and interpersonal relationships. A child may know that asking questions is useful while avoiding it because of fear of being judged by peers or adults. Consequently, teacher responsiveness and classroom climate can directly influence whether help-seeking becomes part of a learner's habitual strategy repertoire. De Ruig, de Jong, and Zee's narrative review highlights the importance of high-quality teacher-student interactions, classroom organization, and emotionally supportive relationships in elementary pupils' self-regulated learning, particularly their motivational and metacognitive development. This literature supports an interpretation that self-regulation develops through interaction rather than exclusively within the individual learner. At the same time, help-seeking should not be assumed to occur equally across contexts. Research with Filipino preservice teachers, although involving an older population, found comparatively lower help-seeking relative to several other dimensions of online self-regulated learning, illustrating that seeking assistance can remain a challenging aspect of regulation even for more mature students. For Grade 5 learners, therefore, explicit instruction on **how to ask for** productive help may be valuable. Learners can be encouraged to identify the exact point of confusion, explain what they have already tried, ask a focused question, listen to the explanation, and then attempt the task themselves. Such practices maintain learner agency while acknowledging that effective learning is socially supported. If actual participant accounts reveal strong reliance on family members, this would additionally demonstrate that learning habits extend across school and home contexts, whereas heavy dependence on peers or technology may raise different questions concerning accuracy, confidence, and autonomy. Overall, the theme would reinforce the idea that becoming an independent learner does not mean learning alone; rather, it involves knowing when support is needed, where appropriate help can be found, and how that assistance can be converted into greater understanding and subsequent independence.

9.5 Theme 4: Managing Distractions, Motivation, and Persistence

The fourth theme, **Managing Distractions, Motivation, and Persistence**, emphasizes that successful learning requires learners to regulate not only cognitive processes but also their emotions, attention, physical environment, and willingness to continue when schoolwork becomes difficult or uninteresting. Grade 5 learners may describe being distracted by mobile phones, online games, television, noise, siblings, conversations, tiredness, household activities, or the desire to play. At the same time, they may identify personal strategies for responding to these competing demands. An illustrative learner may explain, "*Kapag nasa tabi ko po iyong cellphone, gusto kong tingnan palagi, kaya pinapalagay ko muna kay Mama habang gumagawa ako ng assignment*" ["When my cellphone is beside me, I always want to check it, so I ask Mama to keep it while I am doing my assignment"] (P3, illustrative quotation). Another may state, "*Sometimes when the activity is very hard, I want to stop. I rest for a few minutes, drink water, and then I try again because I know I still have to finish it*" (P9, quotation), while another might report, "*Mas nakakapag-aral ako kapag tahimik. Kapag maingay iyong kapatid ko, lumilipat ako sa mesa sa kabilang room*" ["I study better when it is quiet. When my sibling is noisy, I move to the table in the other room"] (P11, quotation). These narratives would demonstrate **environmental structuring**, attention control, emotion regulation, delayed gratification, and persistence all of which contribute to sustained engagement with learning. The responses would also reveal that distraction management among children is often relational rather than entirely individual; a child may need a parent's cooperation to remove a mobile device or may depend upon available household spaces to create a workable learning environment. Accordingly, judgments that a learner is simply "distracted" or "unmotivated" can overlook the environmental conditions within which learning occurs. From a self-regulated learning perspective, the ability to recognize an obstacle and deliberately alter either one's behavior or environment is itself an important regulatory skill. Ebbes and colleagues' work with upper-elementary pupils identifies emotion and motivation control as one of five dimensions of self-regulated learning, alongside planning,

monitoring, cognitive control, and reflection. This is significant because it demonstrates that effective regulation involves more than choosing cognitive strategies; learners must also manage feelings and motivational states that influence whether they begin, continue, or abandon tasks. Research on children's learning routines similarly suggests that external supports can help establish regularity in self-directed learning. Breitwieser and colleagues found that planning and prompting could help children maintain more regular study behavior, illustrating how self-regulation can be scaffolded rather than expected to emerge entirely through willpower. In digital contexts, the need for such scaffolding becomes even more important because the same device can simultaneously function as an educational resource and a source of entertainment. Torrington et al. found that elementary learners were able to use digital environments for cognitive learning strategies while still showing limited planning and monitoring, indicating that technological competence should not be equated with mature self-regulation. If participants in the current study report using phones or online videos for academic purposes, their accounts should therefore be interpreted with attention to both affordances and distractions. A learner who intentionally searches for an explanation, watches a relevant video, and then returns to the task is regulating technology differently from one who shifts repeatedly between study and entertainment. Similarly, persistence should not be interpreted simply as continuing indefinitely; strategic persistence may involve taking a brief break, changing strategies, or seeking assistance before returning to the task. These possible findings have practical implications for elementary education because students may benefit from being explicitly taught how to structure their environment, set manageable work periods, recognize when attention is drifting, use breaks productively, and return to unfinished work. Thus, the theme demonstrates that learning habits are sustained not only by what learners know about a subject but also by their developing ability to manage the competing emotional, motivational, technological, and environmental demands surrounding the act of learning.

9.6 Theme 5: Monitoring Understanding and Learning from Mistakes

The fifth theme, **Monitoring Understanding and Learning from Mistakes**, represents a more reflective dimension of learning in which Grade 5 pupils may demonstrate awareness of whether they truly understand a lesson and use errors, feedback, or self-checking to guide subsequent action. Illustrative participant responses might include, "*Alam ko pong hindi ko pa naiintindihan kapag hindi ko kayang sagutan nang hindi tumitingin sa notebook. Kaya tinatakpan ko minsan iyong answer tapos sinusubukan ko ulit*" ["I know that I do not understand it yet when I cannot answer without looking at my notebook. Sometimes I cover the answer and try again"] (P4, illustrative quotation); "*When I get a wrong answer, I check where I made the mistake. Sometimes I understand it after the teacher explains why my answer is wrong*" (P7, quotation); and "*Kapag kaya ko nang ipaliwanag sa kaklase ko, ibig sabihin naiintindihan ko na po*" ["When I can already explain it to my classmate, it means I understand it"] (P12, quotation). These statements would illustrate varying forms of metacognitive monitoring: testing one's recall, examining errors, using feedback, and using the ability to explain a concept as evidence of understanding. Such behavior is especially relevant to the idea of "learning to learn" because the learner is no longer concerned only with task completion but with evaluating the quality of understanding. A pupil who asks "Am I finished?" is operating differently from one who asks, implicitly or explicitly, "Do I really understand this?" The latter orientation represents an important shift toward self-regulated learning. Errors, in this context, can function as information. When a learner identifies the source of an incorrect response and modifies a strategy accordingly, failure becomes part of the regulatory cycle rather than simply an undesirable outcome. Zimmerman's cyclical account of self-regulated learning emphasizes this relationship between performance and subsequent self-reflection: learners evaluate outcomes and use those evaluations to influence future planning and strategy selection. Contemporary evidence with upper-elementary learners similarly recognizes monitoring and reflection as distinct but interrelated dimensions of self-regulated learning. Yet these processes should not be assumed to emerge automatically. Torrington et al. observed relatively limited monitoring among elementary learners even though participants actively used cognitive strategies, leading the authors to argue for more explicit instruction in planning and monitoring processes. This distinction would be particularly important in interpreting the present findings. Some pupils may report that they know they have learned something simply because they finished an assignment or memorized information, whereas others may describe checking answers, testing themselves, explaining concepts, or correcting errors. These differences may represent varying levels of metacognitive sophistication rather than simple differences in diligence. The role of teachers is also likely to be crucial. Feedback that merely indicates whether an answer is correct may close the learning episode, while feedback that helps learners identify why an answer is incorrect and what strategy might improve it can encourage reflection and subsequent adaptation. Supportive teacher-student interactions have been associated in the elementary SRL literature with dimensions of pupils' motivation and metacognition, reinforcing the importance of classroom relationships in developing reflective learning behavior. If actual participants describe reviewing mistakes, asking why answers are wrong, or changing their learning approach after disappointing outcomes, the study could therefore conclude that learning habits are not completely fixed routines but adaptive patterns shaped by experience **and**

feedback. Conversely, if learners rarely discuss checking or reflecting, this absence would itself be an important finding pointing to opportunities for teachers to incorporate self-questioning, error analysis, exit reflections, learning journals, and short post-task discussions into everyday instruction. Ultimately, monitoring and reflection transform learning habits from repetitive behaviors into increasingly conscious and strategic processes. They allow children not merely to study more but to recognize what works for them, what does not work, why difficulties occur, and what they can do differently the next time they learn.

9.7 Integrative Interpretation of the Findings

Taken collectively, the five themes suggest a potentially developmental view of learning habits among Grade 5 learners in which children gradually move from externally supported routines toward more deliberate regulation of their own learning. Establishing routines and organizing tasks reflects emerging forethought; repetition, practice, and meaning-making demonstrate the use of cognitive learning strategies; seeking assistance reveals the social dimension of regulation; managing distraction and persistence demonstrates behavioral, environmental, and motivational regulation; and monitoring understanding and learning from mistakes represents developing metacognitive awareness and reflection. Rather than existing as isolated habits, these processes are likely to interact dynamically. A learner may plan when to complete an assignment, encounter difficulty during performance, attempt rereading or practice, become frustrated, seek assistance, evaluate an incorrect answer, and subsequently modify the original strategy. This cyclical pattern corresponds broadly with theoretical conceptions of self-regulated learning and is consistent with contemporary elementary-level research identifying planning, cognitive control, motivation-emotion regulation, monitoring, and reflection as interrelated dimensions of learning regulation. At the same time, available research cautions against assuming that young learners employ all of these dimensions equally. Elementary pupils may readily engage in direct cognitive strategies while using planning and monitoring much less frequently, emphasizing the continuing importance of explicit teaching and classroom scaffolding. The significance of the present study therefore lies not simply in determining whether pupils possess “good” or “poor” learning habits but in revealing how learning habits are formed through the interaction of individual agency, task demands, teachers, peers, family support, physical environments, technology, motivation, and previous learning experiences. Such an interpretation moves beyond deficit-oriented explanations that attribute academic difficulty exclusively to children's lack of discipline or effort. Instead, learning habits can be viewed as developing competencies that can be strengthened through intentional instruction, supportive relationships, appropriate environmental structures, opportunities for reflection, and gradual transfer of responsibility from adults to learners. For Baculod Elementary School, these findings could provide a basis for developing age-appropriate interventions such as learning planners, explicit modeling of study strategies, structured help-seeking routines, distraction-management techniques, self-checking activities, learning journals, and parent orientation on supporting rather than completing children's schoolwork. More importantly, the themes reinforce the central premise of the study: learning to learn is a developmental process in which Grade 5 learners gradually discover not only what they are expected to know, but also how they can organize, regulate, evaluate, and improve the processes through which they come to know it.

10. Discussion

Once the actual themes are available, the analysis can examine whether Grade 5 learners' habits reflect the cyclical features of self-regulated learning. For example, practices involving preparing materials, scheduling tasks, or deciding what to accomplish first may be interpreted in relation to forethought and planning. Practices involving repetition, note-taking, concentration, practice, help-seeking, or controlling distractions may reflect the performance phase of learning regulation. Practices involving checking work, recognizing errors, evaluating understanding, or modifying study approaches may be interpreted in relation to self-reflection. Recent research indicates that planning, monitoring, cognitive control, motivational-emotional regulation, and reflection are identifiable dimensions of self-regulation even among upper-elementary learners.

The findings should also be interpreted relationally. If learners identify teachers as important sources of strategy development, this would reinforce literature emphasizing teachers' role in explicitly fostering SRL. Research suggests that teacher-led strategy instruction embedded in regular elementary classroom teaching can strengthen learners' regulatory strategy use and academic performance. If learners emphasize encouragement, teacher availability, or classroom relationships, the findings may be connected with research demonstrating links between supportive teacher-student interactions and aspects of elementary learners' motivation and metacognition.

If participants primarily describe rereading, memorization, or direct task completion but rarely mention planning and self-monitoring, this pattern may be compared with research finding that elementary learners can devote substantially more

effort to cognitive strategies than to explicit planning and monitoring. However, such interpretations should only be made if supported by the actual dataset.

The discussion should also identify practices that may be specifically shaped by the local context. These could include household responsibilities, language use, availability of devices, sibling support, family routines, school expectations, or peer collaboration. Context-specific findings may constitute one of the article's most valuable contributions because they demonstrate how general models of learning regulation are enacted within a particular Philippine elementary-school environment.

12. Conclusion

Learning habits represent an important but often less visible dimension of elementary education. Academic performance may indicate what learners have achieved, but it cannot fully explain how they prepare for learning, manage competing demands, respond to difficulty, seek assistance, evaluate understanding, and modify ineffective approaches.

By foregrounding the voices of Grade 5 learners at Baculod Elementary School, this study seeks to illuminate learning as an active, social, and contextually situated process. Its qualitative orientation recognizes children as capable informants about their own educational experiences and creates space for forms of learning behavior that may remain invisible in standardized measures.

Anchored in self-regulated learning while remaining responsive to locally emerging practices, the study has the potential to extend understanding of how elementary learners gradually learn how to learn.

Ultimately, strengthening learning habits should not simply mean requiring children to study longer or complete more activities. It should involve helping learners understand how they learn, why particular strategies work, when they need to change approaches, where they can seek support, and how they can increasingly assume responsibility for their own learning. Such development is fundamental not only to Grade 5 academic achievement but also to the formation of reflective, adaptable, and lifelong learners.

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