



# FROM GUIDANCE TO INDEPENDENCE: NARRATIVES OF YOUNG LEARNERS ON NAVIGATING ACADEMIC TASKS ON THEIR OWN

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore the lived experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and insights of Grade 6 elementary learners as they navigate academic tasks independently with limited adult guidance. The participants in the study were three Grade 6 pupils from selected public elementary schools in the Division of Tagum City, Davao del Norte, Philippines, who were purposively selected. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured individual interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that learners experienced a gradual development of self-reliance in completing assignments, homework, and exam preparation with minimal assistance from parents or guardians. They learned to navigate their academic responsibilities independently while adjusting to limited guidance from adults. However, they also encountered challenges such as difficulty understanding instructions, distractions in the learning environment, poor time management, and self-doubt. To cope with these challenges, learners employed strategies such as self-motivation, trial-and-error problem-solving, seeking assistance from peers or available adults, and utilizing available learning resources such as notes and digital tools. Furthermore, learners shared insights emphasizing the importance of perseverance, responsibility, and self-discipline in completing academic tasks independently. They recognized that while independence strengthens confidence and capability, guidance and support remain essential in the learning process. The results of this study are significant to learners, teachers, parents, school administrators, and policymakers, as they provide a deeper understanding of young learners' experiences in independent learning and support the development of effective strategies that balance autonomy and guidance, thereby contributing to improved academic performance and learner development.

**Keywords:** *learner independence, Grade 6 learners, self-regulated learning, narrative study, thematic analysis, Tagum City*

## INTRODUCTION

In the educational settings nowadays, increasing expectations are thrown to young students, typically aged 11 to 12 years old, who are commonly enrolled in Grade 6, in terms of managing their academic functions. At this stage, children begin to move from relying heavily on teachers and parents toward managing some of their academic tasks independently. These young learners, often belonging to Generation Z and the emerging Generation Alpha, are beginning to experience a shift from heavily guided instruction toward completing school-related tasks more independently (Seemiller & Grace, 2022; UNICEF, 2023). While the support of teachers and parents remains important in their academic development, many elementary learners today experience situations where they are expected to finish their tasks on their own. Because of this shift from guided learning to more independent work, questions arise about how young learners deal with these responsibilities and how they adjust to this experience. In recent years, several issues have been observed among elementary learners, including difficulties in managing time, staying focused on tasks, handling multiple school requirements, and coping with academic pressure (García & Weiss, 2022; Kuhfeld et al., 2022). These challenges make it important to understand how young learners experience and deal with completing academic tasks independently.

In the Global context, it has become clearer than ever that kids struggle to handle schoolwork on their own, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF (2021) reported that millions of children were left studying without enough adult help, which made it tough for them to finish assignments and stay motivated. The same issues popped up across ASEAN countries. In Indonesia, Hidayah and Mahmudah (2023) found that limited parental support and poor home setups hindered students' ability to learn independently. In Malaysia, Fauzi et al. (2023) showed that kids' self-directed learning depended heavily on parental involvement, which varied based on families' economic and environmental circumstances. On the same note, Luy (2023) expressed that students in Vietnam experienced dilemmas with regard to self—discipline and motivation in learning remotely as a result of lacking supervision. For instance, in the United States, students' ability to engage in independent learning was significantly influenced by differences in home support systems and learning conditions, particularly in the post-pandemic context (García & Weiss, 2022). These studies contribute to a key concern globally. Learning independently is vital, but in the absence of guidance from parents or guardians, children face difficulties in their quest for academic success.

In the Philippines, Datu (2022) points out that socioeconomic pressures often leave parents unable to guide their kids' academic work, especially in public schools with huge class sizes where teachers cannot offer one-on-one support outside class time. The Philippine Statistics Authority (2023) reported that many families experience time constraints and financial difficulties, which contribute to the main reasons for children completing their assignments and school tasks independently. Because of these realities,

many young learners are left to complete homework, projects, and other academic tasks on their own. While some students develop independence in the process, others experience challenges such as difficulty understanding instructions, losing motivation, or feeling overwhelmed when they encounter problems in their schoolwork.

In Davao del Norte, specifically the Tagum City Division, a large number of families are dependent on farming and jobs that are considered small-scale, which are time-consuming. As a result, these parents have insufficient time to assist their children in completing their tasks at school. This leaves a lot of elementary students to complete assignments, review lessons, and prepare projects independently. Teachers in several public schools have noticed that while some learners show real independence and grit, others lose motivation, turn in incomplete work, or disengage entirely without much parental oversight. Such observations raise important questions about how young learners actually experience working on academic tasks independently and how they cope with the challenges that come with it.

Although independent learning has been widely studied, many existing studies focus more on adult perspectives and general learning outcomes than on children's lived experiences. Studies by Ribeiro et al. (2021) and Dos Santos (2022) discussed parental support and student motivation, but gave limited attention to how young elementary learners themselves experience managing academic tasks independently. As a result, there remains a gap in understanding how Grade 6 learners navigate challenges, sustain effort, and develop self-reliance when adult guidance is limited. This study addresses that gap by focusing on the lived experiences of Grade 6 learners in performing academic tasks independently, providing a more grounded understanding of learner autonomy in the elementary context.

This study is more relevant now than ever because it promotes educational equity and highlights the experiences of students that are often overlooked. By listening to the narratives of young learners, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how children navigate academic tasks independently and how they respond to the challenges they encounter along the way. Understanding these experiences can help teachers, school leaders, and policymakers design more supportive learning environments that recognize the realities faced by young learners both inside and outside the classroom. Rather than treating independent learning as merely a requirement or a benchmark, understanding children's experiences allows educators to frame it as an opportunity for developing confidence, accountability, and resilience. Ultimately, the study contributes to addressing challenges in elementary education by providing evidence-based strategies that nurture independent learning in ways that are both practical and developmentally appropriate.

The findings of this study will be shared by the researcher through teacher training activities, school-based Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, DepEd division research forums, and possible publication in local education journals. In this way, the voices and experiences of the learners can contribute not only to the growing body of literature on independent learning but also serve as a practical resource for teachers, school leaders,

and parents who aim to better support young learners in navigating their academic tasks on their own.

## **Research Questions**

1. What is the story of the young learners in managing academic tasks on their own?
2. What challenges do young learners face in navigating academic tasks on their own, and how did they deal with them?
3. What insights can be drawn from the experiences of young learners in navigating academic tasks on their own?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

To examine the participants' experiences and the meanings they ascribed to their lived realities, this study adopted a qualitative research design. Qualitative research focused on the in-depth exploration of real-world phenomena within their natural context, as noted by Nowell and Albrecht (2021). It enabled researchers to understand and interpret the lived experiences of individuals in everyday settings.

This study employed narratology as its qualitative approach. Clandinin and Riessman (2008) explained that narratology is a method used to explore lived experiences through qualitative analysis of the stories people lived and told. It is grounded on the understanding that individuals make sense of their world and construct their identities through the narratives they share and the meanings they assign to them. Narratology was the most appropriate approach for this study because it facilitated a rich and detailed exploration of how Grade 6 learners from Davao del Norte interpreted their experiences in independent learning. Rather than reducing the diverse experiences of learners into numbers or variables, this approach privileged their voices and personal accounts. Through these narratives, the study was able to understand how learners defined autonomy, what challenges they encountered in the academic setting, and how confident they felt when accomplishing tasks without adult support.

Narratology is appropriate because it allowed the researcher to deeply understand how learners defined independence in academic tasks, the difficulties they faced when working without direct assistance, and the ways they developed confidence in completing their work. Instead of reducing experiences into categories or statistics, narratology valued the richness and depth of personal stories. These narratives provided deeper insights into how learners interpreted their academic experiences and how these experiences shaped their development as independent learners. Overall, the use of narratology enabled this study to present a comprehensive and meaningful understanding of learners' journeys toward autonomy in learning. By listening to and analyzing the participants' stories, the research highlighted not only the strategies used by students in

completing academic tasks but also the emotions, motivations, and personal growth that emerged as they gradually developed independence in learning.

## Research Participants

In qualitative research, the depth and richness of findings depended largely on how well participants described their experiences and shared their personal stories. Rather than representing a large population, participants were selected based on the meaningful insights they contributed to understanding a particular phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2023). In this study, the participants consisted of three Grade 6 learners from three different public elementary schools in the Division of Tagum City, Davao del Norte, Philippines. The number of participants was appropriate for narrative research, which focused on collecting detailed and story-based accounts of individuals' experiences (Kim, 2020; Riessman, 2022).

These schools provided an authentic environment where children were required to shift from direct instruction by the teacher to independent practice, which was ideal for understanding how they managed to work on their tasks autonomously. The three participants shared their school experiences and lived journeys in overcoming obstacles in schoolwork with minimal adult supervision through in-depth interviews (IDIs). In this research, purposive and criterion sampling were applied to identify participants most suitable for the research scope and focus. As described by Etikan (2020), Saunders et al. (2022), purposive sampling ensured the selection of participants who had actual lived experience of the phenomenon. On the other hand, criterion sampling involved the selection of participants who met specific characteristics required by the study (Palinkas et al., 2021). Hence, these methods ensured that only students who had experienced academic independence were included.

To further justify the use of narratology, the participants were selected not only because they could work independently but also because they demonstrated meaningful experiences in navigating academic tasks with minimal adult guidance. These learners showed consistent self-directed learning behaviors, resilience in overcoming academic challenges, and personal strategies that allowed them to succeed despite limited supervision. Their experiences represented unique learning journeys that provided deeper insights into how young learners developed independence in their academic tasks.

Collaboration was done with the class teachers and the school guidance counselor to identify students with varying levels of self-directed learning. These individuals were also entrusted with ensuring the ethical aspects of the recruitment and data collection processes. The guidance counselor, in particular, ensured the participants' psychological safety by addressing potential interview-related emotional distress and by upholding standards of confidentiality, ease of participation, and psychological protection (Fernández et al., 2022). In this section, the primary focus was on the objectives of the study. The eligibility criteria for participants included the following: a.) must be currently enrolled in a public elementary school in Tagum City; b.) must have experienced

completing school-related tasks; c.) must be a Grade 6 learner during the School Year 2025–2026; d.) must have been studying in a public elementary school in Tagum City, Davao del Norte; e.) must have had experience completing school-related tasks such as assignments, projects, or preparation for examinations with minimal adult supervision; f.) must have had parental consent and child voluntary assent to participate in the study; g.) must have been able to communicate in either English or Filipino to clearly share their experiences during interviews. To maintain the study’s credibility and ethical integrity, the lead researcher also considered exclusion criteria. Exclusions applied to learners who did not meet the inclusion criteria, who had not experienced sufficient independent learning, or who demonstrated distress, hesitation, or emotional discomfort during any stage of recruitment or data collection. Any student who withdrew consent or assent at any point was also excluded from the study, and no data were collected from them.

## **Data Sources**

The study utilized multiple sources of data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the self-regulated learning experiences of Grade 6 students in a public elementary school in Davao del Norte, Philippines. Consistent with qualitative research principles, the study combined primary and secondary data to strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Primary data were gathered mainly through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with three purposively selected Grade 6 students. The interviews used open-ended questions to explore the students’ experiences, motivations, coping mechanisms, and strategies in independently managing their learning despite limited instructional guidance from teachers. To ensure participants’ comfort, privacy, and emotional safety, the interviews were conducted in a private room within the school, with the presence of a guidance counselor. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was audio-recorded with the consent of both students and parents. In addition to audio recordings, the researcher documented nonverbal cues, emotional responses, and behaviors observed during the interviews.

The study also incorporated secondary data through the analysis of school documents, including learning profiles, academic tasks, feedback forms, activity logs, peer-reviewed articles, and Department of Education (DepEd) memoranda. These documents provided contextual support regarding the promotion of self-directed learning in schools. By integrating interview data with documentary evidence, the researcher was able to validate and enrich the emerging themes and perspectives. Overall, the use of multiple data sources enabled the study to present a deeper and more credible understanding of how learners engaged in autonomous learning practices.

## **Data Collection Procedures**

The study followed a systematic and ethical process of data collection to deeply understand the lived experiences of Grade 6 learners. According to Nowell et al. (2022), qualitative research must be carefully planned and ethically conducted to ensure credibility, legitimacy, and respect for participants. Similarly, Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasized the use of multiple methods such as interviews, observations, and document

reviews to comprehensively explore a phenomenon. Guided by these principles, the researcher implemented ethical and methodological procedures to effectively capture the learners' experiences.

In compliance with the ethical standards of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the college's Research Ethics Committee (REC), the researcher first secured ethical approval before conducting the study (Resnik, 2020). Administrative permissions were also obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent, the school head, and other school personnel. To ensure the appropriateness of the research instruments, interview guides were validated by research advisers, language educators, and guidance counselors, and pilot-tested with children outside the target participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2022).

The researcher conducted orientations for both parents and learners to explain the study, distribute informed consent and child assent forms, and discuss confidentiality, voluntary participation, and participant rights. The guidance counselor was present during these orientations to ensure ethical and emotional safeguards for the children (Hammersley, 2021). Individual semi-structured interviews lasting 30–45 minutes were then conducted in coordination with the school to avoid disrupting classes. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent, while field notes documented nonverbal behaviors and contextual observations.

To maintain confidentiality and data security, all collected data were stored in encrypted, password-protected systems with backup copies. Interview data were transcribed verbatim, translated carefully, and anonymized through the use of pseudonyms. Access to participant information was limited to the researcher and the research supervisor only. Finally, Braun and Clarke's (2022) thematic analysis framework were used to identify patterns and themes from the data, ensuring that the authentic voices and lived experiences of the learners were accurately represented.

## **Data Analysis**

The researcher analyzed the data through a systematic process of organizing, coding, and interpreting information gathered from in-depth interviews, field notes, and reflexive journal entries to better understand the lived experiences of Grade 6 learners. The study used thematic analysis, an iterative method that identifies patterns, meanings, and relationships within qualitative data. This approach enabled the researcher to examine how learners managed academic tasks independently, developed self-regulation, and coped with challenges in a classroom setting.

According to Braun and Clarke (2022), thematic analysis is a flexible and widely used qualitative method that goes beyond simple description by uncovering both explicit and implicit meanings in participants' narratives. This method complemented the narrative inquiry approach by helping the researcher understand learners' transition from teacher-centered to self-directed learning experiences. Through thematic analysis, the researcher

identified themes related to emotional struggles, coping mechanisms, motivation, independence, and learning insights.

The researcher followed Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase framework for thematic analysis. First, the researcher familiarized herself with the data by transcribing interviews verbatim, repeatedly reading the transcripts, and recording initial insights in a reflexive journal. Second, important words, phrases, and statements were coded manually using Microsoft Word to capture significant experiences such as fear, motivation, and independence. Third, related codes were grouped into broader themes, such as Guided Learning and Emerging Independence. Fourth, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure consistency and accuracy with the participants' narratives. Fifth, the themes were clearly defined and named, including themes such as Finding Confidence Through Struggle and Balancing Support and Self-Reliance. Finally, the researcher produced the report by integrating the themes with direct participant quotations and connecting the findings to theories of learner autonomy and resilience. This systematic and reflective analysis ensured an authentic representation of the learners' experiences and personal growth.

### **Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

This study focused on the experiences of three Grade 6 pupils from selected public elementary schools in Davao del Norte, Philippines, during the academic year 2025–2026. The research examined how these learners independently managed academic tasks such as homework, projects, and assignments while facing challenges with minimal adult supervision. Data were collected in March 2026 through semi-structured individual interviews, which allowed the participants to share their personal experiences and insights regarding academic independence.

The study was limited to the experiences of Grade 6 learners only and did not include the perspectives of teachers, parents, or other stakeholders. As a qualitative study, the findings were based on the individual experiences of the participants and may not represent the experiences of all students or other grade levels. In addition, time constraints limited the number of participants and the scope of the data gathered. The study also relied on the participants' ability to recall and express their experiences accurately. Despite these limitations, the research provided meaningful insights into the development of academic autonomy among elementary learners.

## **RESULTS**

This presents the story of young learners as they transition from guided learning to independent academic task completion. The results of the narratives were gathered from the in-depth interviews of the Grade 6 pupils in this study. The data were gathered on how the participants develop from guidance to independence in managing their academic tasks. Their narratives were carefully analyzed and organized into meaningful segments to tell their individual stories. The narratives were used to create segments to

tell the stories of the participants, which also contain the answers to the research questions of this study.

### **THE MAKING OF A SELF-RELIANT LEARNER: DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDING THROUGH ACTIVE LISTENING AND GUIDED DISCOVERY**

The researcher assigned a code name of Self-Reliant Listener for this narratology to describe a Grade 6 learner who developed independence through attentive listening and personal effort. His self-reliance was shaped by limited support at home, as his parents were often busy with work and daily responsibilities, leaving him to manage his academic tasks on his own. Realizing that he could not always depend on others, he gradually learned to take responsibility for his learning. In the classroom, he also faced challenges such as noisy and distracting classmates. Despite this, he chose to focus and listen carefully to his teacher. For him, listening became an active strategy to understand lessons and respond correctly to tasks. His early experiences taught him that relying too much on others could delay his progress. He developed confidence and independence, showing how active listening can serve as a tool for self-reliant learning.

#### **Attentive Listening as the Foundation of Learning and Academic Success,**

The Self-Reliant Listener described his early learning experiences as being shaped by the need to rely on his own attentiveness in the classroom due to limited academic support at home. With his parents frequently occupied with work and household responsibilities, he gradually recognized that he needed to depend on his own effort to accomplish school tasks. Over time, he developed the habit of listening carefully to his teacher as a primary strategy for understanding lessons and performing well academically. For him, listening was not a passive activity but an intentional and active process that allowed him to respond correctly to classroom tasks and assessments. He explained that this practice of careful listening helped him manage academic expectations despite challenges, as he shared:(What I learned before helps me answer properly. I listen carefully so I can respond correctly.) This statement reflects his growing awareness that attentive listening directly contributes to his ability to answer correctly. As he continued to apply this habit, he observed that it enabled him to consistently meet passing requirements and occasionally achieve higher scores. He noted:(Sometimes I get a perfect score, but most of the time I fall within the passing score. Ma'am says that the passing score is 7 out of 10. I pass because I listen carefully.) His experience in the classroom was not always easy, as he also encountered distractions that challenged his focus. He narrated moments when he struggled to concentrate due to simultaneous tasks and a noisy seatmate, which sometimes confused him following the lesson. Despite this, he consciously made efforts to regain focus by ignoring distractions and prioritizing his teacher's instructions:(Sometimes I get confused about what to do because I cannot keep up with listening to my teacher, when and what I should do, since I find it difficult to listen and write at the same time. Sometimes, my seatmate keeps talking to me. I avoid listening to my talkative seatmate so I can focus on what my teacher is saying.)

When distractions persisted, he also learned to take initiative by addressing the situation through appropriate classroom channels. Instead of remaining distracted, he reported the issue to his teacher, which helped restore order and allowed him to refocus on the lesson. He shared: (If my seatmate keeps talking, I will report it to the teacher. I say, 'Teacher, Glen is very noisy.' The teacher then says, 'I will send you out of the room if you don't listen.' I can listen right away because I am afraid of the teacher.) This behavior reflects his developing sense of responsibility in managing his own learning environment. Rather than depending solely on external control, he actively participated in maintaining conditions that supported his focus and understanding. As his experiences accumulated, he became more intentional in practicing attentive listening across all subjects. He recognized that this habit made it easier for him to complete academic tasks and improve the accuracy of his work. He explained: (I listen carefully to my teacher so I can complete my project easily. I listen attentively so that when the teacher checks my work, my writing will be corrected and become accurate.) One of the most meaningful experiences he recalled was during a difficult Mathematics lesson, where he initially felt confused due to the complexity of the topic. Despite this, he persisted by carefully listening to the discussion and attempting to understand the process being taught. His perseverance eventually led to success when he achieved a perfect score. (Before, when our math teacher arrived, I listened carefully because I was confused; the questions were very difficult. I did not know what to answer. I really tried to figure out my answers, and when I submitted my work, I got a perfect score.) This experience strengthened his belief that consistent attentiveness leads to improved academic performance. He later reflected that he needed to maintain this behavior to achieve better learning outcomes: (Since then, I have been listening carefully to the lessons so I can understand and achieve higher grades.) He further emphasized that success in academic tasks is closely tied to focused listening and effort, stating: (I listened carefully to the teacher so I could answer. I really put in effort to figure out how to answer, which is why I got a perfect score.)

Through these experiences, the Self-Reliant Listener demonstrates that attentive listening gradually becomes a powerful learning strategy that supports academic success. His journey shows that even in the presence of distractions and limited home support, a learner can develop independence through consistent focus, personal effort, and responsibility. Over time, this simple yet intentional act of listening enabled him not only to improve his academic performance but also to build confidence in managing his own learning process.

### **Transformation through Attentive Listening and Guided Learning**

The Self-Reliant Listener described a gradual transformation in his academic performance as he consistently practiced attentive listening alongside the guidance provided by his teacher. He recalled that in his earlier years, his grades were relatively low, and he often struggled with completing academic tasks correctly. However, this situation began to change when he started to focus more on listening carefully during classroom discussions and applying his teacher's instructions in his schoolwork. This shift marked a turning point in his learning journey, where effort and attentiveness slowly translated into improved academic outcomes. He explained this transformation by reflecting on his past and present experiences, sharing: (Before, my grades on my report

card were really low. Now, because I listen to my teacher, my work has improved, and that's why things have changed. My father was very happy because my grades improved. My teacher also told me to continue studying and not to keep talking to my seatmate so I can understand the lessons.) This statement shows that his improvement was not only academic but also social and behavioral, as he learned to reduce distractions and focus on learning. The positive feedback he received from both his father and teacher reinforced his motivation to continue developing better study habits. Their encouragement served as external support that strengthened his commitment to learning and helped him stay consistent in his efforts.

Building on this experience, he expressed his determination to sustain these changes as part of his long-term educational goal. He emphasized that attentive listening and consistent studying are essential for him to complete his education successfully, stating:(I continue doing what I am supposed to do, like studying and listening to my teacher, because through this I will be able to finish school.) This reflects how guided learning, combined with personal effort, helped him develop a sense of direction and purpose in his studies. Over time, he began to recognize that success in school depends not only on intelligence but also on discipline, focus, and the ability to follow instructions carefully. In addition to improving his general academic performance, attentive listening also enhanced his classroom participation. He shared that he became more confident in answering questions, especially when his teacher repeated or clarified discussions during lessons. This repetition allowed him to recall information more effectively and respond with greater assurance, as he explained:(I can answer when the teacher goes over the questions again.) This indicates that his understanding deepened through repetition and active engagement with classroom instruction, allowing him to gradually build confidence in his academic abilities.

Furthermore, he recalled a specific learning experience in science where his prior attentiveness directly contributed to his success. During the lesson, the teacher asked a question about the current weather, which had already been discussed in a previous session. Because he had listened carefully before, he was able to recall the lesson and answer correctly. He narrated:(Like that, we had class yesterday, and the question she asked was the same as in our lesson. Our subject was Science, and she asked, 'What is the weather today?' Why can we say that it is hot today? I was able to answer it because we had already discussed it in our lesson. I listened carefully to that lesson.) This experience demonstrates how prior attentive listening allows knowledge retention and application in real classroom situations. It also highlights how learning becomes more meaningful when students are able to connect past lessons with present discussions.

Overall, the Self-Reliant Listener's narrative illustrates that transformation in learning is a gradual process shaped by attentive listening, teacher guidance, and consistent practice. His experience shows that when learners actively engage with instruction and apply what they hear, they are able to improve not only their academic performance but also their confidence and participation in class. Through this process, he begins to develop greater independence, demonstrating that guided learning combined with attentive listening can serve as a strong foundation for academic growth and self-directed learning.

## **Self-Sustaining Autonomy in Learning**

As his experiences continued, he showed increasing ability to manage learning tasks even in challenging situations. When working independently at home without immediate help from family members, he took full responsibility for completing his assignments. Despite initial confusion, he persisted until he finished all required tasks. He narrated: (I was alone at home, and I had an assignment. I prepared all my materials. I was confused because my father was working and my older brother had gone out. I was the only one who did it from 1 to 30. After I finished writing, I went to school the next day. When I submitted it to my teacher, she checked my work. In the end, I got everything perfect. I was very happy because everything was correct and I did it all by myself.) This experience strengthened his sense of self-efficacy and demonstrated that persistence can lead to successful outcomes even in the absence of direct support. His satisfaction in completing tasks independently further reinforced his motivation to continue learning on his own. He also exhibited resourcefulness when faced with limited assistance. In one instance, he used available technology at home to help him complete his assignment by searching for information online. Rather than leaving the task unfinished, he adapted to the situation using accessible tools. He explained:(No one helped me at that time. What I did was borrow my father's cellphone because it still had a load, and he left it for my younger sibling. I borrowed it and searched for answers, and that's how I was able to complete my assignment.) This reflects his ability to utilize available resources responsibly to support his learning. It also shows that self-regulated learners are not only independent but also adaptive, especially when external support is limited.

Moreover, he demonstrated metacognitive awareness by recalling previous lessons and verifying his understanding while completing tasks. He would reflect on how the teacher explained the lesson and cross-check his answers using his notebook. He shared:(Our teacher gave us an assignment. I think about our lesson in that subject and how she explained it. It was in Math. I really try to remember how to get the answer and what steps I should do. If I forget, I immediately check my notebook so I can make sure that what I did is correct.) This indicates that he was actively monitoring his own learning process, a key component of self-regulation. Through reflection and self-checking, he ensured accuracy and improved his understanding of academic content. Overall, the Self-Reliant Listener's narrative shows that self-regulated learning develops through a combination of guided instruction, independent effort, resourcefulness, and disciplined practice. His experiences illustrate that even without constant supervision, young learners can gradually learn to manage their academic responsibilities effectively when they are given opportunities to reflect, adapt, and take ownership of their learning.

## **Perseverance and Self-Reliance in Overcoming Learning Difficulties**

The Self-Reliant Listener further emphasized that perseverance and self-reliance played a crucial role in helping him overcome academic challenges, especially when support from others was not available. When faced with confusion or difficulty in understanding lessons, he learned to take initiative by asking questions and continuing his work despite challenges. He recognized early on that he needed to depend on his own effort to accomplish school tasks, particularly since his father was often at work. He

explained:(When I get confused or do not understand what our teacher is saying, I ask questions because I have to do it on my own. My father is at work. I continue working on my tasks so that I have something to submit and earn a grade.) This reflects a strong sense of responsibility and determination. Instead of being discouraged by difficulty, he chose to persist and complete his academic requirements to ensure that he would have outputs to submit and grades to earn.He further expressed his commitment to education by acknowledging the absence of other people he could rely on, which strengthened his motivation to succeed: (Yes, because my father is working, I do not have anyone else to rely on. I really make an effort so that I can graduate.) This statement highlights how personal responsibility became a driving force in his academic journey. The lack of immediate academic support encouraged him to become more self-reliant and goal-oriented. As he continued to work independently, he realized that perseverance not only helped him complete tasks but also improved his understanding of lessons. Even when assignments were difficult at first, he persisted by reading instructions carefully and trying to understand the content step by step. He reflected:(What I learned from doing my assignment alone is that I struggled at first, but I learned to read carefully so I could successfully finish my assignment. I learned that projects or assignments should be done properly.) This demonstrates how effort and patience contributed to both task completion and meaningful learning. Through repetition and careful reading, he gradually improved his academic skills.

Over time, he became accustomed to working independently, especially as he progressed in Grade 6 where greater responsibility was expected. He shared:(Oh, this is very useful for me because I have already gotten used to it. In Grade 6, I was already used to doing things on my own with no one helping me. I will just continue to strive so I can finish school.) His statement reflects adaptation to academic demands and the development of independence as a learning habit rather than a temporary behavior. He also described how his dependence on others gradually shifted toward self-reliance. Previously, he relied on his older brother for help, but eventually he learned to complete tasks on his own due to their shared responsibilities: (Before, I used to depend on my older brother and ask for his help. Now, I am already on my own, and I strive by myself because I know he is also busy with school.) This transition demonstrates maturity and growth in his learning behavior, as he began to recognize the importance of independence. Ultimately, he expressed pride in his ability to accomplish academic tasks on his own, emphasizing the personal satisfaction he gained from his achievements:(I became independent because I did my projects and assignments on my own. I am very proud of myself because my father and my older brother were not there, and I truly did it all by myself. I am very proud of myself.) Through his experiences, the Self-Reliant Listener demonstrates that perseverance and self-reliance are essential in overcoming learning difficulties. His narrative reveals that challenges and limited support can become opportunities for growth, enabling young learners to develop resilience, independence, and confidence in their ability to succeed academically.

### **The Struggle for Self-Validation**

The Self-Reliant Listener also revealed the internal challenges that accompany independent learning, particularly the struggle for self-validation. Even after completing

academic tasks, he sometimes experiences doubt about whether his answers are correct, which leads to hesitation and fear before submitting his work. He expressed: (I think about whether what I did is right or wrong. I am afraid to submit it.) This shows that independence in learning does not always result in immediate confidence. Instead, learners may experience uncertainty as they try to evaluate their own work without constant external confirmation. He further shared his fear of making mistakes, which reflects the emotional difficulty of self-directed learning:(Maybe what I did is wrong.). Despite this uncertainty, he continues to rely on external validation, especially from his teacher's explanations, to confirm his understanding. He described how he uses (I recall what the teacher said during our lesson, and then I immediately check if what I did is correct.) This indicates that while he is developing independence, he still balances it with guidance and feedback, which helps him build confidence gradually. His experience reflects that self-validation is both a cognitive and emotional process. Although he struggles with doubt and hesitation, he continues to complete his tasks and slowly learns to trust his own judgment. Through repeated practice and reflection, he begins to develop confidence in his abilities, showing that the development of independence also involves learning how to believe in one's own work.

### **Having a Communication Problem**

Self-Reliant Listener narrated that despite his growing independence in learning, he still encountered difficulties in understanding instructions due to communication breakdowns in the classroom. He explained that these challenges were often caused by environmental distractions such as noise from classmates, which made it hard for him to clearly understand what the teacher expected them to do. In these moments, he experienced confusion and uncertainty about his tasks. He recalled a specific situation where classroom noise affected his understanding, saying (I am not sure what ma'am asked us to do. The room was very noisy, so I could not understand what she wanted us to do.) This experience shows that even though he was attentive, external distractions sometimes disrupted his comprehension of instructions, leading to temporary difficulty in task completion. Despite these challenges, he did not rely on others to complete his work. Instead, he developed a coping strategy by trying to interpret instructions on his own and continuing the task based on what he understood. When he was unsure, he chose to reflect and proceed rather than stop completely. He explained:(I just leave it as it is because I think what I heard is correct. If it turns out to be wrong, I tell you, ma'am, that I did not clearly hear your instructions, and that is why I made a mistake.) This response demonstrates his growing sense of responsibility and honesty in learning. Instead of hiding his misunderstanding, he acknowledged it and communicated it to his teacher when necessary. This behavior reflects both accountability and a willingness to correct mistakes, which are important aspects of independent learning.

Through these experiences, Self-Reliant Listener learned that communication breakdowns were a normal part of classroom learning. However, he also realized that such challenges could be managed through attentiveness, reflection, and clarification. When confusion occurred, he did not stop learning but instead adjusted his approach by rethinking instructions and seeking confirmation when needed. Over time, he became more resilient in handling these situations. He learned to remain focused even in noisy

environments and to take responsibility for ensuring that he understood tasks correctly. This gradual adjustment helped him maintain continuity in his learning despite occasional misunderstandings. His narrative shows that while communication breakdowns temporarily affected his confidence and understanding, they also became opportunities for him to develop patience, adaptability, and self-correction strategies. Through these experiences, he strengthened his ability to navigate learning challenges independently while continuing to grow as a responsible and self-reliant learner.

### **THE MAKING OF A SELF-TAUGHT MIND: LEARNING BEYOND GUIDANCE**

The code name Self-Taught Achiever was assigned to the participant. This pseudonym reflects her strong inclination toward independent learning, personal initiative, and academic perseverance. It captures the essence of a learner who, despite limited external guidance, cultivated her own path toward excellence. The name signifies not only her ability to learn autonomously but also her determination to succeed through self-discipline, resilience, and inner motivation.

### **SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING SHAPED BY EARLY REALIZATION AND PERSONAL INITIATIVE**

The participant is a Grade 6 learner who distinguished herself as an academic achiever, consistently earning honors in school. Her journey, however, was not shaped by constant academic support at home. Her parents, occupied with work and daily responsibilities, were often unable to provide sustained guidance in her studies. Instead of perceiving this as a disadvantage, she internalized an early lesson imparted by her mother, one that would later define her approach to learning. She recalled how her mother shared that she, too, had grown up without being taught, encouraging her daughter to learn independently. (Well, before, my mother said that no one really taught her. That is why she told me, 'You must be the one to teach yourself because in my case, no one taught me before.' That is when I understood that it is like that. I also want to teach myself because my mother has other things to do, my father is working, and my older sister is in another place. So, it is just me. I try to teach myself.) The message from her mother became a turning point in her academic life, leading her to embrace self-directed learning. By Grade 5, she had developed the habit of studying independently, regularly writing, reviewing, and practicing on her own. She shared that she no longer asked her mother for guidance because she already knew how to manage her learning tasks. As she expressed, not all the time do learners need parental guidance; they also need to learn on their own, so they will know what to do in the future. Through this experience, independence became a core part of her academic identity, strengthening her confidence and contributing to her consistent success. (When I was in Grade 5, I studied on my own. I always wrote notes and no longer asked my mother how to do things because I already knew. Not all the time do you need guidance from your parents because you also need time for yourself, and you need to learn by yourself so that you will know how to do it in the future. That is what I learned.)

In the daily academic life of the Self-Taught Achiever, learning was not only confined to completing requirements but also extended to how she creatively engaged

with her environment. Her experiences reveal a learner who transforms ordinary materials into meaningful tools for her academic needs. This reflects not only creativity but also a strong sense of ownership over her learning process. As she navigates her tasks, she consistently demonstrates initiative, careful thinking, and a desire to produce outputs that are both functional and meaningful. Her resourcefulness became evident when she shared how she finds inspiration from everyday school materials and transforms them into something useful for her learning space. This moment reflects how she does not wait for external provision but instead creates solutions from what is already available around her. (I like collecting school supplies such as ballpens and markers, Ma'am. I really collect them. So, when I have available materials, I think about what I can make out of them. That is why I told myself, 'I will make an organizer so my ballpens will not be scattered.) Her response illustrates a form of learning that is deeply rooted in creativity and practicality, where she transforms simple materials into tools that support her academic organization. This behavior highlights her initiative in solving small but meaningful problems in her learning environment. It also shows how she naturally applies critical thinking in everyday situations without external prompting. In this sense, learning becomes an active and self-driven process shaped by curiosity and necessity. Beyond resourcefulness, the participant also emphasized the importance of understanding over mere task completion. For her, academic work is not about finishing quickly but about ensuring that learning is meaningful and internalized. This mindset reflects a deeper engagement with knowledge, where honesty and effort are prioritized over convenience. She further explained this perspective as she spoke about how she approaches her school tasks. (No, not that. What I want is simply to understand. Our teacher can tell if the answer is from the internet, so I try my best.)

This statement reveals her commitment to authentic learning, where she intentionally avoids shortcuts that may compromise understanding. It also demonstrates her awareness of academic integrity and her respect for her teacher's expectations. Rather than relying on external sources without comprehension, she chooses to engage with the process herself. This reinforces her identity as a learner who values effort and genuine understanding. However, despite her independence, she acknowledges moments when challenges become difficult to handle alone. In such situations, she navigates between independence and selective help-seeking, particularly from her teacher rather than her parents. This decision is influenced by emotional comfort, responsibility, and a desire not to burden her family. Her experience reflects a delicate balance between autonomy and guided support. (To my teacher, when I get confused, I ask her. I am afraid to ask my mother, so I just continue working on my own so that my teacher will not scold me. I do not want my mother to become stressed because of me, so I study.) Her response shows that independence is not only a skill but also an emotional choice shaped by family dynamics and personal sensitivity. She carefully decides when to seek help, ensuring that she does not add stress to her household. At the same time, she maintains responsibility by continuing her tasks even when uncertain. This highlights her maturity in managing both academic and emotional demands. Alongside discipline, she also emphasized the importance of self-regulation as a guiding principle in her academic behavior. Discipline becomes the foundation of her consistent effort and determination to complete tasks regardless of difficulty. It reflects her

internalized belief that responsibility must be carried out without delay or avoidance. She clearly articulated this value in a simple but meaningful statement. (Self-discipline in doing what needs to be done) This statement encapsulates her disciplined mindset, where action is guided by responsibility rather than external pressure. It demonstrates how she has developed internal control over her academic behavior. Her learning process is not dependent on reminders but on self-imposed standards. This strengthens her identity as a self-directed learner who values consistency and responsibility.

Finally, she expressed that the lessons she has learned throughout her journey are not temporary but lifelong skills she intends to carry forward. These include listening, perseverance, and self-trust, which she sees as essential for completing her education. Her narrative reflects a forward-looking mindset where learning is connected to future success. She views her experiences as preparation for long-term academic growth. She expressed: (Yes. What I have learned, such as listening to teachers and trusting myself, I will continue to apply until I finish my studies.) This response signifies the consolidation of her learning identity, where past experiences shape her future direction. It shows that she recognizes the value of both guidance and self-belief. Her commitment to apply these lessons until she completes her education reflects determination and continuity. Ultimately, her narrative illustrates how self-directed learning is built through practice, reflection, and lived experience.

### **The Transition from Scaffolding to Autonomy**

The journey of the Self-Taught Achiever gradually unfolded as a shift from dependence to independence, where early guidance slowly transformed into personal responsibility. In the beginning of her academic life, she relied heavily on her mother's assistance, especially when tasks felt unfamiliar and overwhelming. However, as time passed, repeated exposure to learning tasks allowed her to slowly build confidence in handling them on her own. This transition was not abrupt but developed through continuous experience, reflection, and gradual withdrawal of external support. At the heart of her aspirations was a strong motivation to succeed not only for herself but also for her family. This long-term vision became a driving force that pushed her to endure challenges and remain consistent in her studies. Even at a young age, she already associated education with the possibility of improving her family's situation. She expressed this deep sense of purpose in her academic journey. (My dream is to finish college and get a job so that I can help my parents. That is why I work hard in my studies, and I study so I can pass and improve my grades.) This statement reflects how her academic efforts are deeply rooted in family-oriented motivation. Her desire to succeed is not only personal ambition but also an expression of gratitude and responsibility toward her parents. This sense of purpose strengthens her perseverance even when tasks become difficult. It also serves as an emotional anchor that guides her learning decisions.

In her earlier years, particularly in Grade 3, she openly acknowledged her dependence on her mother when facing difficult tasks. She often sought help when confusion arose, especially in answering academic activities. However, this dependence slowly shifted as she matured academically and emotionally. By Grade 5, she began to take more responsibility for her own learning, although not without occasional moments

of difficulty. (When I was in Grade 3, I still asked for help because I was confused when answering on my own. By Grade 5, I was already answering by myself. However, when I feel tired or confused with the questions, I still call my mother and ask for help. She would tell me that I am already old enough, so I try my best to do it on my own.) Her experience illustrates a gradual shift in responsibility, where independence was introduced step by step rather than imposed suddenly. The reminder from her mother that she was “already grown up” served as a turning point in her learning behavior. It pushed her to begin trusting her own ability while still acknowledging that help is sometimes necessary. This balance marked the beginning of her transition toward autonomy. Alongside this transition, she also learned important lessons about accountability and discipline through correction and experience. There were moments when mistakes became opportunities for learning, especially when she realized the importance of listening attentively in class. Her mother’s reminders reinforced the idea that effort and attention in school directly influence academic outcomes. This helped shape her sense of responsibility in completing school tasks properly. (In the past, I made mistakes. I would ask my mother, but I did not listen carefully. Before, I got scolded because I did not pay attention to our teacher. My mother told me that I could answer my assignments properly if I listened to the teacher. That is why I followed her advice.)

This experience strengthened her understanding that learning requires active participation and attentiveness. It also reinforced the idea that independence is built through responsibility and discipline. Rather than viewing correction negatively, she internalized it as guidance for improvement. This shaped her growing maturity as a learner. As she progressed, she also developed structured ways of learning by observing, imitating, and following instructions carefully. She learned through demonstration, whether through her parents or through visual materials, which helped her understand tasks more clearly. Over time, these guided practices became stepping stones toward independent work. Her learning process gradually shifted from imitation to self-initiated action. (I really follow what my parents advise me to do. If they tell me to watch videos on how something is done, I watch them. If it involves drawing or sketching, I do it. Even if I do not feel like it at first, I redo my sketches until I achieve a good final output. I follow their instructions on how to cut and assemble things properly. My inspiration is really my parents.) This shows that her early independence was not immediate but developed through structured guidance. She relied on observation and repetition before fully gaining confidence in doing tasks on her own. Her parents served as models rather than direct supervisors, allowing her to gradually internalize learning strategies. This contributed to her growing autonomy over time. Even when she began doing tasks independently, she still occasionally sought confirmation from her mother, especially when unsure of her output. This reflects a transitional stage where independence and guidance coexisted. Instead of fully detaching from support, she used feedback as reassurance before final submission. This gradual release of control supported her confidence-building process. She further emphasized her continued reliance on parental guidance when needed, particularly through demonstrations and online resources, she shared: (Yes, I ask my mother, ‘Ma, I have an assignment, how do I do this?’ My mother tells me, ‘Watch videos, there are many on YouTube.’ So, I watch videos so that I can understand how to do it.)

This highlights how digital tools and parental guidance worked together in supporting her learning. Instead of direct instruction, she was encouraged to explore and discover answers independently. This method gradually strengthened her problem-solving skills. It also reinforced her ability to learn beyond classroom instruction. Eventually, she developed the habit of evaluating her own work before submitting it, while still valuing her mother's opinion as a form of validation. This shows that autonomy was not only about working alone but also about learning how to assess quality independently. Her decision-making process became more structured and self-regulated. Over time, she learned to trust her own judgment more confidently. Finally, she described the way she verifies her work and gradually builds autonomy, as she shared (Sometimes I ask my mother if what I am doing is correct, and if she agrees, I follow it. After finishing my project, I asked my mother if it looked good. If she says it looks good, that is the project I submit.) This illustrates a transitional learning stage where external validation still plays a role in decision-making. However, it also shows increasing independence in completing tasks before seeking feedback. Her process reflects a balance between self-reliance and guidance. This balance eventually supports her movement toward full autonomy. Finally, she demonstrated awareness of her own learning condition by distinguishing when to ask for help and when to work independently. This decision-making ability reflects her growing metacognitive awareness. She no longer depended on help for every task but evaluated difficulty levels before acting. This marked a significant step in her development as a self-directed learner. (I ask for help when I really find it difficult to do something, but if it is easy, I do it on my own; I handle it by myself.) This final statement clearly captures her transition into autonomy, where independence is guided by self-assessment rather than external instruction. It shows that she has developed the ability to regulate her learning based on task complexity. Her growth reflects a gradual but meaningful shift from scaffolding to self-directed learning. Ultimately, her journey illustrates how autonomy is built through experience, reflection, and gradual release of guidance.

### **Resilience in Setbacks**

As the researcher continued the interview with the Self-Taught Achiever, her narrative gradually revealed how challenges in school were not seen as barriers but as moments for growth and self-testing. She described situations where academic tasks required not only creativity but also patience, persistence, and emotional strength. Instead of giving up when difficulties arose, she demonstrated a tendency to adjust, rebuild, and continue the task until completion. This reflects a learner who develops resilience through hands-on experiences and repeated trials. Her learning journey shows that setbacks do not stop her progress but instead shape her determination to succeed. One of the most vivid examples of her resilience was during a MAPEH project, which became a meaningful turning point in her story. She narrated this experience in detail, showing how she navigated uncertainty and multiple challenges while completing the task: (This was an MAPEH project when we had no classes for two weeks because the DAVRAA event was held. Our MAPEH teacher instructed us to create something using recycled materials. I made an organizer. I used only cardboard and bought glue and stick glue, then I started assembling it. I told myself, 'Can I really do this?' I did not color it at first, then I removed some parts again. I sprayed it with black paint, but it smelled bad, so my mother scolded me and told me to work outside. I continued spraying and drying it. I designed it like a

galaxy theme. After drying, I placed a cellphone box inside and decorated it with construction paper. After finishing it, it looked very nice. It was an organizer that could hold pens and other items. I submitted it and got a perfect score of 30 points, although I initially thought I would only get 25. When I got home, I immediately told my mother that I got a perfect score, and she said she was proud of me. From that experience, I realized that you really need to trust yourself. Just like that project, you should believe that you can do it. Just trust yourself.) This experience illustrates how she went through multiple stages of trial and error, from assembling materials, modifying her design, to dealing with unexpected challenges such as the smell of paint and corrections along the way. Despite these difficulties, she continued working independently and adjusted her approach until she achieved a successful output. The moment of receiving a high score further reinforced her realization that self-trust plays a crucial role in overcoming academic challenges. This experience became a foundation for her growing confidence in handling future tasks independently.

Her resilience was also evident in how she handled negative feedback and emotional pressure from others. Instead of internalizing criticism, she consciously developed emotional boundaries to protect her focus and well-being. She shared how she manages comments from others that could potentially discourage her. (I do not take seriously what others say. Like when they comment, 'So that is how you did your project?' I just ignore it. I do not want to feel depressed or stressed because I worry about my parents; they might think it is their fault and that they were not able to give enough attention to me because of school. That is why I really do not take it to heart.) This response shows that she is not only managing academic tasks but also actively regulating her emotions to maintain stability. Her concern for her parents further reveals that her resilience is also shaped by family awareness and emotional responsibility. Rather than reacting negatively to criticism, she chooses to refocus her energy on her studies and personal goals. She also encountered situations where peer comparison affected her emotions, especially when classmates commented on their outputs. However, instead of engaging in comparison, she chose to distance herself mentally from these remarks. She explained:(My classmates tend to compare their work with others. When they see that their output looks better, they immediately comment, 'Is that how you did it?' I feel hurt because it seems like they are being judgmental, but I just ignore them because I might feel depressed if I keep thinking about what they said. Anyway, I am satisfied with my work. They are not the ones who give grades; our teacher is.

This narrative shows that she is learning to define success based on her own standards rather than external validation. By reminding herself that grades are given by the teacher and not peers, she is able to detach from unnecessary pressure. This coping strategy reflects emotional maturity and reinforces her resilience in social and academic environments. At the same time, she also experiences moments of self-doubt, especially when working alone without immediate validation. These moments reveal that her independence does not mean the absence of uncertainty. Instead, she actively negotiates between doubt and confidence as part of her learning process. She expressed:(Sometimes I ask myself, 'Is this correct? Will I pass this? Or will my teacher say that my score is correct or perfect?' I sometimes doubt myself because I am the only one doing the task, and my work is simple. I think, 'Will I pass this since I did this on my

own?' That is why I often ask myself if I can pass.) This reflection shows that resilience for her is not a fixed trait but a continuous internal struggle between confidence and uncertainty. However, what stands out is her ability to still proceed with her work despite these doubts. She continues to act even when unsure, which demonstrates persistence and emotional endurance. Overall, the Self-Taught Achiever's narrative on resilience reveals a learner who does not avoid setbacks but instead works through them using persistence, emotional regulation, and self-reflection. Her experiences show that resilience is built through repeated challenges, personal effort, and the ability to reframe difficulties as learning opportunities. Through these lived experiences, she continues to develop strength not only as a student but as an independent learner, shaping her own academic path.

### **Battling with Academic Burnout and Fatigue**

As the researcher interviewed the Self-Taught Achiever, she gradually revealed that behind her discipline and consistency in studying, there are also moments when exhaustion becomes unavoidable. She described how those academic responsibilities sometimes accumulate from different subjects all at once, creating pressure that feels heavy for a young learner managing tasks on her own. Despite her strong sense of responsibility, she admitted that there are instances when her energy is tested, especially during days filled with multiple requirements and deadlines. These moments expose the emotional and mental weight of independent learning, where she must continue even when she already feels tired. She openly shared her experience of fatigue, emphasizing that there are times when she feels overwhelmed by the number of tasks assigned to her. As she narrated:(Sometimes I feel tired because teachers give many tasks in each subject. There are times when I do not want to do them, but I think that I might be the only one who will not pass, my grade may drop, and I may not become an honor student. That is why I continue studying, I watch videos or search online so I can finish my tasks immediately.) Her response shows that even in moments of exhaustion, she is driven by her academic goals and the fear of falling behind. Instead of stopping, she pushes herself to continue by finding ways to complete her work, such as reviewing lessons through videos or searching for explanations. This reflects a coping mechanism where determination outweighs temporary fatigue, allowing her to sustain her performance despite emotional strain.

At the same time, her experience reveals the silent burden of being independent in learning at a young age. While she manages to push through her responsibilities, the pressure of maintaining good grades and meeting expectations can sometimes lead to mental fatigue. Her narrative suggests that she often carries these responsibilities internally, using self-motivation as her main source of endurance. This highlights the strength of her character, but also the quiet challenges that come with self-directed learning. Despite these difficulties, she continues to demonstrate perseverance by refusing to give up on her tasks. Her ability to keep moving forward, even when tired, shows that her academic journey is not only about achievement but also about endurance and emotional strength. Through these experiences, she learns that success in school is not only shaped by intelligence or skill, but also by the ability to persist during moments of exhaustion.

## **From Self-Doubt to Self-Efficacy**

Self-Taught Achiever reflected on moments in her academic journey where uncertainty often surfaced, especially when faced with tasks that seemed too difficult to accomplish on her own. She acknowledged that there were times when she questioned her ability to finish her requirements, particularly when working independently without immediate help. These moments of doubt were part of her learning experience, where she had to confront not only the difficulty of the tasks but also her own hesitation and fear of failure. However, what makes her narrative significant is how these moments of uncertainty gradually transformed into confidence through experience and persistence. She described a powerful shift in her perspective after successfully completing difficult academic tasks, where initial doubt was replaced by a sense of accomplishment and pride. As she shared: (I am happy because there are other students who cannot overcome difficult academic tasks. I am happy that I am one of the students who was able to overcome difficult academic tasks. There are times when I feel like I cannot do it, but I realize that I can, which is why I feel very happy.) Her statement reflects an important turning point in her learning journey, where experience becomes the foundation of self-belief. What once felt impossible gradually becomes achievable through effort, allowing her to recognize her own growth as a learner. This transformation highlights how repeated exposure to challenges helps her develop confidence in handling academic tasks on her own. She further strengthened this belief by emphasizing her trust in her own effort and perseverance. She expressed: (I just trust myself. I believe I can manage everything as long as I truly put effort into it.) This response shows that her self-efficacy is not based on external validation alone, but on her lived experiences of trying, struggling, and eventually succeeding. Through consistent effort, she begins to associate hard work with positive outcomes, reinforcing her belief that persistence leads to success. Her confidence is therefore shaped by action rather than assumption, making her growth more grounded and meaningful. She also expressed a strong sense of fulfillment whenever her hard work is recognized, especially by her family. She shared: (I feel very happy, especially when my mother knows that I am an honor student and that I have received many awards. My efforts have paid off.)

This recognition becomes an emotional reinforcement that strengthens her motivation to continue striving in her studies. The acknowledgment from her mother, in particular, serves as both encouragement and validation of her efforts, making her achievements more meaningful. It deepens her commitment to maintaining her performance and continuing her academic progress. Overall, this segment of her narrative illustrates a clear movement from self-doubt toward self-efficacy. Her journey shows that confidence is not immediate but gradually built through experience, effort, and reflection. Through overcoming academic challenges, she develops a stronger belief in her capabilities, shaping her identity as a learner who trusts both her ability and her perseverance.

## **Relinquishing Control Through Prayer**

As the researcher interviewed the participant, she revealed that beyond her academic strategies and self-discipline, there are also moments when she chooses to

surrender her worries through faith. In situations where school tasks become overwhelming or uncertain, she does not rely only on her personal effort but also turns to prayer as a source of strength. This practice reflects a deeper layer of her coping mechanism, where emotional burden is shared with her spiritual belief, allowing her to regain calmness and direction. In this sense, faith becomes part of her learning journey, especially during moments when her own abilities feel limited. She expressed this reliance on both self-trust and divine guidance, emphasizing that success is not only dependent on human effort but also on spiritual support. As she stated: (You just need to trust yourself and believe that nothing is impossible. You have to believe in God and ask for His guidance so that your problems can be solved. There is nothing impossible with God, and at the same time, you must also trust yourself.) Her response reflects a balance between personal responsibility and spiritual dependence. While she acknowledges the importance of trusting her own abilities, she also recognizes that prayer gives her comfort when she feels uncertain or pressured. This dual perspective helps her manage academic stress by reducing emotional burden and providing a sense of reassurance that she is not facing challenges alone.

Through this practice, she demonstrates a form of emotional release where control is partially surrendered, not as a sign of weakness, but as a way of maintaining inner stability. Prayer becomes a space where she can express her worries and regain confidence before continuing her tasks. This shows that her resilience is not only built through action and effort, but also through reflection and faith. Overall, her narrative in this segment highlights how spiritual belief supports her academic journey by helping her manage pressure and uncertainty. It adds another dimension to her identity as a Self-Taught Achiever, showing that her strength is shaped not only by independence and perseverance but also by her ability to find comfort and guidance through faith.

### **THE MAKING OF A PERSISTENT ACHIEVER: BUILDING RESILIENCE AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS THROUGH STRATEGIC SELF-RELIANCE**

The researcher assigned the code name Persistent Achiever for this story because of his strong dedication and consistency in both academics and sports. He is a Grade 6 learner who successfully balances being an honor student and an active athlete. His persistence developed due to limited academic support at home, as his parents were often busy with work and had little time to assist him with his school tasks. Despite this, they encouraged him to do well, which motivated him to take responsibility for his own learning. At the same time, his involvement in sports required regular training and competitions, leaving him with limited time and energy for academic work. Instead of giving up, he learned to manage his time effectively, set priorities, and stay focused on his goals. Even when faced with fatigue and pressure, he remained determined, showing that persistence, discipline, and self-motivation are key to achieving success.

#### **Self-Reliance Through Strategic Planning and Resilience in the Absence of Parental Support**

From an early age, the Persistent Achiever began to understand that his learning journey would not always be supported by the constant presence of his parents. Their

absence due to work gradually exposed him to situations where he had to rely on himself in completing academic tasks. This realization became the foundation of his independence, shaping his mindset toward perseverance and self-initiative. he shared:(What I learned before is that if I always rely on help, I will take longer to learn things when I grow up. If I keep depending on others, there may come a time when they are no longer there to help me. That is why, while I am still young, I try my best so that I will not struggle when I grow older.) As his situation at home became clearer, the absence of his parents was not only emotional but also practical in terms of academic guidance. With both parents working far away, the responsibility of managing his studies fell entirely on him. This environment required him to step into a more independent role at an early stage of his development. He shared:(My mother is not around because they only go home on Friday night since both of them work in Davao. Only my grandmother is left at home. That is why I am the one who does my assignments whenever our teacher gives tasks.) At the same time, the presence of his grandmother in the household was focused on caregiving rather than academic support. This further emphasized that he had to take full responsibility for his own learning tasks. His role within the family setup also required him to be more mature and self-sufficient. Persistent Achiever shared further that:(My grandmother took care of my two younger siblings.) As he adjusted to this reality, he began to develop habits that reflected careful planning and organization in his studies. He no longer waited for instructions from others but instead prepared materials and reviewed tasks independently. This shift shows how independence gradually evolved into a structured and intentional learning approach. He added: (I make sure to check what is needed, especially for projects. I prepare the materials first. For assignments, I get my notes and notebooks ready. If I find it difficult, I use my cellphone. I double-check the questions so that when I arrive at school, I feel more relaxed.) Alongside these habits, he also developed a deeper sense of understanding toward his parents' situation. Instead of feeling neglected, he chose to respond with responsibility and determination. This emotional acceptance strengthened his motivation to continue striving in his studies, he shared:(It is okay because I can understand it. I am fine with it because I am putting effort now, so I will not struggle in the future since I have already experienced it. I understand that my parents are busy. I always study so that I can answer my tasks more easily.)

Despite working independently, he also showed awareness in seeking minimal support when needed. He listened carefully to instructions and gathered information from classmates, but still completed tasks on his own at home. This reflects a balance between independence and resourcefulness in his learning process. (Before, there were assignments given when we were about to return to sports training. Before the teacher left, I really listened to the instructions. After that, I asked my classmates and wrote down what they said. I also borrowed their notebooks so I could copy the notes. When I got home, I immediately studied and was able to answer the tasks on my own.) As he continued this routine, his motivation became more goal-oriented, particularly in maintaining his status as an honor student. His belief in himself served as a driving force that pushed him to persist despite difficulties. This shows how internal motivation reinforced his consistent effort. (Yes, because I still want to become an honor student, I continue to strive and believe in myself, even if others say the lessons are already difficult. I continue studying.) Through repeated experiences, he eventually formed a strong belief

that independence is a necessary skill for future success. He recognized that relying on oneself prepares a learner for greater responsibilities ahead. This realization became one of his guiding principles in learning, as he stated: (There is really no one else who will always help you; you only have yourself. You need to train yourself to do things independently. So that when the time comes that tasks are given to you, you are already used to it and will not have difficulty.) Finally, he emphasized that success is achieved through a combination of self-trust, effort, and discipline. He acknowledged that while parental support may be limited, personal determination can compensate for these challenges. His statement reflects a mature understanding of responsibility and achievement. He concluded: (It is all about effort in yourself. You can manage it if you believe in yourself. You cannot rely on your parents for everything because they are busy. If you want to become an honor student, you need to study, and if you want to win competitions, you must train hard to be able to place.) Through these experiences, the Persistent Achiever's story of independence gradually extends beyond survival into the development of confidence, where his consistent effort begins to shape how he views his own abilities.

### **Shared Pride and Familial Joy**

The Persistent Achiever's academic and athletic achievements are not only personal milestones but also shared sources of happiness within his family. His success is deeply tied to the joy and pride of his parents, which strengthens his motivation to perform well. This section explores how accomplishment becomes emotionally meaningful through family recognition. He shared: (My tiredness disappears when I receive awards, like when I won a running competition and also became an honor student in our class. I always think that I should do better next time so that I can stay consistent. My father and mother are happy when they hear that I am an honor student and a winner. I am also happy because it makes my parents happy.) His achievements create a sense of shared happiness between him and his parents. This emotional connection makes success more meaningful beyond personal satisfaction. It strengthens his motivation to maintain consistent performance. He also feels proud when he completes difficult tasks on his own. These moments reinforce his belief in his ability to overcome challenges. Personal accomplishment becomes a source of self-fulfillment, he shared: (I feel proud when I finish difficult tasks. It is challenging, but I can manage it, even those that others in different grade levels may find more difficult.) This pride reflects his ability to handle academic challenges independently. It shows that effort leads to satisfaction and confidence. His sense of achievement grows with each completed task. His accomplishments in both academics and sports further strengthen his emotional fulfillment. He recognizes the difficulty of balancing both responsibilities. Despite this, he continues to succeed through perseverance. He shared: (I feel proud, because of what I have experienced. It was very difficult, especially balancing my responsibilities as both an athlete and a student. I did not expect that I could manage it, but I was able to do so. I can see from my parents' reactions that they are also proud of me as their eldest child, which motivates me to continue.)

This recognition from his parents serves as emotional reinforcement. It validates his hard work and sacrifices. It also strengthens his desire to continue excelling. He further

emphasizes that completing tasks independently is what makes his achievements more meaningful. The effort he puts in alone becomes the foundation of his pride. This strengthens his sense of ownership over success. He shared: (The most important thing for me is finishing my tasks because it reflects my effort and dedication. I also feel proud because I completed it on my own.) His statement reflects how independence enhances the value of achievement. Success is more fulfilling when earned through personal effort. This reinforces his internal motivation. Despite challenges in balancing academics and training, he remains committed to his goals. Difficulties do not stop him but instead strengthen his determination. His perseverance leads to continued success. He shared: (I was able to complete my tasks without help from others. In my experience, it was not easy because balancing school and training was difficult, but I never gave up, even when I felt very tired. I continue to strive so that I can achieve my goal of becoming an honor student and making my parents proud.) This shows that achievement is not separate from struggle but shaped by it. His persistence allows him to overcome both academic and physical demands. This leads to sustained motivation. His achievements gain deeper meaning through an emotional connection with his parents. This reinforces his motivation to continue striving for excellence.

### **Barriers To Self-Regulation**

The Persistent Achiever encountered several academic and environmental challenges that affected his ability to consistently regulate his learning activities. These difficulties were not only rooted in academic demands but also in external responsibilities such as training and classroom distractions. Despite his discipline and effort, these barriers occasionally disrupted his focus, preparation, and academic performance: (My difficulties include times when the teacher was absent and lessons were not properly discussed. As a result, during exams, there were topics that were not covered. I also failed to listen attentively because I got distracted when the teacher was explaining important instructions, which caused me to forget them.) His experience shows how absence from class directly affects retention of lessons and exam preparedness. When key discussions are missed, it becomes difficult for him to recall important information during assessments. This highlights the fragility of learning continuity when instructional exposure is interrupted. Aside from absences, his athletic training also contributed to missed classroom discussions and delayed learning. This created gaps in his understanding of lessons that he needed to independently recover later. As a result, he often had to work harder to catch up with academic requirements. He also explained: (No, in my case, I was not able to attend our class because of training, so I got left behind in the lessons.) This situation illustrates how competing responsibilities between academics and athletics can affect self-regulation. His absence from class due to training highlights the challenge of balancing dual commitments. It also shows how learning gaps require additional effort to overcome.

Classroom distractions further added to his difficulty in maintaining focus during lessons. Even when he attempted to concentrate, external noise from classmates interfered with his understanding. This often resulted in missed instructions that were difficult to recover afterward, he stated: (With my classmates, they sometimes talk while our teacher is discussing the lesson. I would tell them to be quiet because I am listening.

However, I end up missing parts of the discussion. Then, the teacher has to hurry because she still has another class, so I am no longer able to ask questions again.) This experience shows how environmental factors inside the classroom can hinder effective self-regulation. Even with an effort to focus, external distractions reduce learning efficiency. It also reflects the importance of the classroom environment in supporting learner success. In addition, his reliance on others for academic support in earlier learning stages sometimes affected his independent performance. When help was no longer available during exams or training periods, he experienced difficulty adjusting on his own. This transition exposed gaps in his self-regulated learning development, he shared. (It was also because my way of studying before was different, I used to rely heavily on others for help. However, when the exam came, no one could help me, which resulted in low grades. That is why, in doing tasks now, I work on my own; it feels like training for situations where no one is available to assist me.) This reflects the challenge of shifting from assisted learning to independent learning. Without external support, he had to adjust his strategies, which initially affected his performance. However, this also became a learning point for developing independence. Despite encountering barriers that sometimes disrupt his learning process, the Persistent Achiever does not remain passive in the face of difficulty. Instead, he responds by actively seeking clarification and support to bridge gaps in understanding. This adaptive response leads to his practice of proactive help-seeking as a key strategy in overcoming academic challenges.

### **Proactive Help-Seeking**

The Persistent Achiever demonstrates a strong tendency to actively seek assistance whenever he encounters confusion or unclear instructions in his academic tasks. Rather than allowing misunderstanding to persist, he takes deliberate steps to clarify lessons and ensure accurate completion of requirements. This behavior reflects his growing awareness of the importance of guided understanding in independent learning. When faced with difficult instructions, he carefully re-examines the given directions and uses available resources to aid his understanding. He does not immediately give up when confusion arises but instead engages in repeated reading and review. This persistence helps him gradually decode complex tasks. He shared: (When I read the directions given by the teacher, I feel that they are very difficult. I repeatedly read them to better understand. If I get confused, I look at what is written to check if there are examples or references in the book. If I still find it difficult, I ask my teacher. Sometimes I cannot understand because my seatmate is noisy, so I approach my teacher and ask her what the project means.) His approach demonstrates patience and effort in processing instructions before seeking external help. By reviewing materials multiple times, he strengthens comprehension. This reflects a structured way of managing academic confusion. If confusion persists, he seeks support from his teacher despite environmental distractions. He prioritizes understanding over convenience, even in noisy or busy classroom situations. This shows his commitment to completing tasks correctly (When I still find the task difficult, I make sure to ask my teacher. Sometimes I cannot understand because my seatmate is noisy, so I approach my teacher directly and ask her to clarify the meaning of the project.) This behavior highlights his willingness to overcome barriers through communication. Instead of avoiding difficulty, he directly addresses it. This strengthens both clarity and confidence in learning. He also recognizes when

independent learning is sufficient, especially when tasks are simple or supported by notes and textbooks. In such cases, he continues working without external help. This shows his ability to assess when assistance is necessary, He noted: (For me, I ask for help when no more lessons are being discussed at school. However, if the task is easy and the answers can be found in my notes or in the book, I continue working on it on my own.)

Furthermore, he shared that initiating questions is his way of making sure he can answer tasks by himself. He approaches the teacher first whenever he is confused, so he can understand and complete the work independently: (I ask my teacher how to address the parts that I find confusing. I make sure to ask questions first so that I can eventually answer them on my own.) This shows that his goal in seeking help is ultimately independence. Clarification becomes a tool for self-sufficiency rather than dependence. It reflects his goal-oriented learning mindset. By combining persistence, clarification, and strategic questioning, he ensures that challenges do not hinder his academic progress. This approach strengthens his competence, confidence, and independence as a leader.

### **Strategic Prioritization in Learning**

The Persistent Achiever consistently demonstrates a structured and intentional approach to managing his academic responsibilities. He recognizes that effective learning requires not only effort but also thoughtful organization of tasks based on priority and urgency. This section illustrates how his ability to plan and sequence his academic activities contributes to his efficiency and academic success. He explained that he prioritizes completing assignments before reviewing for upcoming quizzes, believing that this order allows him to manage his time more effectively. By addressing immediate requirements first, he ensures that no task is left unfinished or delayed. This practice reflects his understanding of academic responsibility and time management. He shared: (I prioritize answering my assignments first. After completing them, I then study the subjects that have a quiz the following day.) His approach shows a clear and deliberate sequencing of tasks that prevents academic overload. By dividing responsibilities into manageable steps, he can maintain focus without feeling overwhelmed. This highlights his growing ability to organize academic demands effectively. He also maintains a calm and structured mindset while completing his tasks, avoiding unnecessary pressure or haste. Instead of rushing, he ensures that he is fully prepared before starting any academic activity. This allows him to work steadily and with confidence. He stated: (I stay calm and avoid rushing to finish tasks immediately. I set a goal for myself that within the day, I should already have the necessary materials, and then I begin working on the task until I complete it. I do not panic because I know I am capable, as I have already developed this habit over time.) This response reflects his belief that effective learning is achieved through preparedness rather than speed. By organizing his materials in advance, he reduces confusion and improves task efficiency. This demonstrates his disciplined and composed learning style.

In situations where difficulties or distractions arise, he reinforces his learning by reviewing notes and consulting available resources. He does not allow confusion to halt his progress but instead actively seeks ways to clarify his understanding. This behavior shows adaptability in managing academic challenges. He shared: (The first thing I do is

focus on the tasks that I find difficult, and I review my notes and books to understand them. If I get distracted, I make sure to ask my teacher questions before they return to the classroom.) His response shows that he uses both self-study and teacher support strategically. He balances independent problem-solving with guided clarification when necessary. This strengthens his ability to complete tasks accurately and confidently. He also emphasizes the importance of preparing early for examinations by studying, memorizing, and reviewing key lessons. This preparation allows him to feel more confident and less pressured during actual exams. His strategy is rooted in consistency and repetition. He shared:(When I study for exams, I motivate myself by thinking that I should aim to achieve a perfect score in my subjects. Because of this, I make an effort to study, read, and memorize the important concepts. As a result, during the exam, I am able to answer the questions easily since I have prepared well) This demonstrates that his success is strongly linked to preparation and effort. By investing time in understanding lessons beforehand, he reduces difficulty during assessments. This reinforces the value of disciplined study habits. Finally, he highlights that maintaining focus on goals and avoiding distractions is essential for his academic success. He consciously limits distractions such as excessive phone use and prioritizes studying as part of his daily routine. This reflects his strong sense of discipline and long-term motivation. He shared:(They should study and read whatever tasks the teacher assigns, and they should make sure to complete them. They need to always keep their goals in mind so they can stay motivated and do their best. They should listen attentively in class and avoid excessive talking or using their phones, because constant cellphone use can negatively affect their study time. As for me, I only use my phone when I no longer have school tasks to complete. In fact, my classmates sometimes call me 'weird' because I spend most of my time reading. I do this because I want to achieve honors and make my parents happy, especially since they work hard in Davao.)

His statement shows that his prioritization is not only academically driven but also emotionally anchored in family motivation. His goals guide his daily decisions and behaviors. This strengthens his consistency in academic performance. While strategic prioritization strengthens his academic performance and efficiency, the Persistent Achiever's learning journey is not without internal and external challenges. Even with careful planning, he still encounters situations that test his ability to regulate time, focus, and emotional endurance. These difficulties further reveal the complexities of maintaining self-discipline in real learning environments, leading to the next discussion on barriers and coping mechanisms in his academic journey. The Persistent Achiever's narrative reveals a transformative cycle shaped by lived academic experiences. His journey progresses from adversity, particularly limited parental support, toward the development of self-reliance through strategic planning and resilience. This is further reinforced by the articulation of competence and confidence, followed by vicarious joy in accomplishments, encounters with barriers to self-regulation, engagement in proactive help-seeking, and the application of strategic prioritization in learning. Collectively, these processes contribute to sustained academic and athletic achievement as well as the continuous strengthening of intrinsic motivation. His experiences demonstrate that these dimensions are not isolated but are instead interrelated, with early independence gradually evolving into intentional and adaptive strategies that enhance both performance and self-efficacy.

Although he encounters significant barriers such as absences, distractions, and fatigue, his consistent engagement in help-seeking behaviors and effective prioritization enables him to navigate and overcome these challenges. Ultimately, this case underscores that persistence is not merely an innate disposition but a dynamically cultivated response shaped by environmental constraints, personal responsibility, and ongoing adaptive learning processes.

## **DISCUSSION**

This section of the research links the literature review and the major themes that emerged from the personal account of the research participant. This section also highlights the implications of this research in different fields, primarily in education and research. Moreover, this also includes significant research recommendations drawn from the overall implications of the study.

### **Experiences of Young Learners in Managing Academic Tasks Independently**

The findings revealed that learner autonomy among Grade 6 students developed as a gradual and multidimensional process shaped by cognitive engagement, emotional adjustment, and contextual learning conditions. Across the Self-Reliant Listener, Self-Taught Achiever, and Persistent Achiever, a common experience emerged; all participants described a gradual transition from dependence on adult guidance toward greater responsibility in managing academic tasks independently. Despite differences in learning styles and contexts, all learners experienced the need to understand instructions, organize tasks, and complete requirements with increasing self-direction. These shared experiences indicate that independence does not emerge as an immediate skill but is developed through continuous exposure to academic demands, reflection on learning processes, and gradual internalization of responsibility. Beyond these shared experiences, partial similarities were observed between the Self-Taught Achiever and the Persistent Achiever, particularly in the development of self-initiated learning behaviors and task management strategies. Both participants demonstrated growing independence through planning, prioritization, and time management; however, they also experienced fluctuations in confidence as academic demands increased. The Self-Reliant Listener, while less affected by emotional fluctuations, still experienced challenges in understanding tasks when instructions were unclear or insufficiently explained. These overlapping experiences suggest that the development of independence is supported by emerging self-regulation skills but is still influenced by varying levels of emotional readiness and instructional clarity.

In terms of unique experiences, each participant demonstrated distinct pathways toward academic independence that reflected their individual learning contexts. The Self-Reliant Listener uniquely developed independence through attentive listening as a foundational cognitive strategy, where focus and comprehension enabled gradual understanding and task completion. The Self-Taught Achiever uniquely exhibited self-directed learning shaped by early personal initiative, transition from guided to autonomous learning, and emotional coping strategies such as reflection and prayer,

reflecting strong internal motivation. Meanwhile, the Persistent Achiever uniquely demonstrated independence shaped by limited external support, where strategic planning, persistence, and responsibility became essential tools for managing academic workload. These distinct experiences highlight that learner autonomy is not uniform but is shaped by personal disposition, learning environment, and available support systems. When synthesized, the findings suggest that learner autonomy is best understood as an adaptive developmental continuum in which learners progressively internalize academic responsibility through interaction, experience, and self-regulation. Independence is constructed gradually as learners engage with academic tasks, reflect on their performance, and adapt their learning strategies based on challenges encountered. This synthesis aligns with Benson (2021), who conceptualizes autonomy as a progressive developmental process rather than a fixed skill, particularly among learners still developing cognitive and metacognitive abilities. Similarly, Zimmerman's (2021) model of self-regulated learning is reflected in the participants' gradual movement through cycles of planning, performance, and reflection. However, the findings extend these perspectives by showing that the development of independence is not strictly linear, as learners may move back and forth between dependence and autonomy depending on task difficulty, emotional state, and available support. The role of scaffolding also supports Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, where learning is first socially mediated before becoming independent. In this study, scaffolding is reflected not only in teacher guidance but also in internalized strategies such as attentiveness, self-reminding, and task organization, suggesting that external support gradually transforms into self-regulated learning behavior. Overall, the findings indicated that learner autonomy is a dynamic process influenced by cognitive readiness, emotional development, and contextual learning conditions. Independence emerges not as a final stage of learning but as an evolving capability developed through structured support, reflective practice, and continuous engagement with academic tasks.

### **Challenges Faced by Young Learners and Coping Strategies**

The findings revealed that learner autonomy among Grade 6 students is accompanied by interconnected cognitive, emotional, and contextual challenges that significantly shape how learners manage academic tasks independently. Across the Self-Reliant Listener, Self-Taught Achiever, and Persistent Achiever, a common experience emerged: all participants encountered difficulties in sustaining independent learning due to limited guidance, internal uncertainty, and challenges in managing academic demands. These shared experiences indicate that independence does not eliminate difficulty but rather transforms the nature of challenges from external dependence to internal regulation struggles, particularly in areas of confidence, focus, and task management. Beyond these shared challenges, partial similarities were observed between the Self-Taught Achiever and the Persistent Achiever, particularly in experiencing academic pressure, emotional fatigue, self-doubt, and difficulties in maintaining motivation. Both participants reported moments of exhaustion and decreased confidence when tasks became overwhelming, although they differed in how they managed these experiences. The Self-Reliant Listener encountered fewer emotional difficulties but still experienced challenges when instruction clarity and feedback were limited. These overlapping experiences suggest that emotional and motivational challenges are common during

independent learning but vary in intensity depending on learner readiness and support systems. In terms of unique challenges, each participant demonstrated distinct struggles reflective of their individual learning context. The Self-Reliant Listener uniquely experienced communication breakdown and difficulties in self-validation, indicating reliance on external clarity for understanding tasks. The Self-Taught Achiever uniquely struggled with academic burnout, emotional fatigue, and self-doubt intensified by sustained self-directed learning, reflecting the psychological demands of prolonged independence. Meanwhile, the Persistent Achiever uniquely encountered barriers in self-regulation, particularly in time management and workload organization, due to limited parental support, requiring greater personal responsibility in managing academic demands. To cope with these challenges, participants developed adaptive strategies that demonstrate emerging self-regulation skills. Across all participants, time management, task segmentation, persistence, and help-seeking behaviors were commonly used coping mechanisms. These strategies reflect learners' active effort to regain control over their learning process despite difficulties. In addition, peer collaboration served as both an academic and emotional support system, helping learners clarify tasks and reduce feelings of frustration and isolation. These coping strategies indicate that learners gradually construct independence not by avoiding challenges but by learning how to manage them through experience, adjustment, and support interaction.

When synthesized, these findings suggest that challenges in independent learning are not isolated obstacles but developmental conditions that shape the formation of learner autonomy. Cognitive limitations, emotional struggles, and contextual constraints interact to influence how learners perform and persist in academic tasks. This is supported by Li and Song (2023), who emphasize that executive functioning skills such as planning, organization, and sustained attention are still developing in young learners. However, the findings extend this view by showing that these cognitive challenges become more pronounced when combined with academic pressure and inconsistent scaffolding. Emotional challenges also align with Dudley and Park (2021), who note that reduced teacher guidance may be perceived as lack of support rather than intentional autonomy-building. Furthermore, Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory highlights that autonomy must be supported by competence and relatedness, which is evident in learners' need for encouragement and emotional validation. The importance of emotional scaffolding is also evident in the findings, as supportive feedback strengthened learners' persistence and reduced anxiety, consistent with Tran and Villanueva (2022). However, the study further suggests that emotional scaffolding must be continuous and responsive, especially for learners experiencing recurring self-doubt. Similarly, Campos and Liang (2024) emphasize intrinsic motivation, but the findings indicate that such motivation is often developed through external validation during the early stages of independent learning. Contextual factors further influenced learners' experiences, as some participants struggled with household responsibilities and non-conducive learning environments. This supports Ortega et al. (2023), who highlight the importance of structured support systems. However, the present study extends this by showing that environmental constraints also shape learners' perception of independence, sometimes making autonomy feel burdensome rather than empowering. Overall, the findings suggest that challenges are not barriers to autonomy but essential components in its

development. Through repeated exposure to difficulty, emotional adjustment, and strategic coping, learners gradually develop self-regulation skills. Independence, therefore, emerges not in the absence of struggle but through continuous engagement with cognitive, emotional, and contextual demands supported by adaptive coping strategies and guided interaction.

### **Insights Drawn from Grade 6 Learners' Experiences**

The experiences of the participants reveal a layered understanding of learner autonomy among Grade 6 students, showing that independence in managing academic tasks develops through a combination of shared experiences, partially overlapping challenges, and unique individual pathways. Across the Self-Reliant Listener, Self-Taught Achiever, and Persistent Achiever, a common experience emerged: learner autonomy develops gradually through continuous exposure to academic tasks, combined with challenges in self-regulation, comprehension, and emotional adjustment. All participants experienced moments of difficulty such as confusion in instructions, self-doubt, and the need to accomplish tasks with limited adult support. Despite these challenges, they consistently demonstrated that independence is built through practice, reflection, and gradual assumption of responsibility. This shared pattern supports Hassan and Waller's (2021) Gradual Release of Responsibility model, which emphasizes the progressive movement from teacher-guided learning to independent performance. However, the findings further suggest that this progression is not uniform, as learners develop autonomy at different paces depending on their cognitive readiness and contextual conditions. In addition to these shared experiences, partially similar challenges were observed among the Self-Taught Achiever and the Persistent Achiever, particularly in relation to emotional and motivational difficulties. Both participants experienced academic fatigue, pressure, and fluctuations in motivation when tasks became demanding, while the Self-Reliant Listener experienced these challenges in a milder form, mainly when comprehension was unclear. These experiences indicate that emotional strain and motivational instability are common during independent learning but vary in intensity across learners. This aligns with Zimmerman's (2021) self-regulated learning theory, which highlights the role of continuous adjustment in managing learning processes, while also suggesting that self-regulation develops unevenly depending on individual coping capacity and support systems. Beyond these shared and partially shared experiences, each participant demonstrated unique pathways in developing autonomy. The Self-Reliant Listener uniquely emphasized attentive listening as the foundation of learning, where focus and comprehension served as primary tools for building independence. The Self-Taught Achiever highlighted self-directed learning driven by personal initiative, time management, and emotional coping strategies such as reliance on prayer, reflecting a strong internal motivation toward independence. Meanwhile, the Persistent Achiever demonstrated strategic independence shaped by limited parental support, relying heavily on planning, prioritization, and persistence to accomplish academic tasks. These distinct experiences indicate that learner autonomy is not a single uniform process but a context-dependent development shaped by individual needs, motivations, and environmental conditions. This supports Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, while also extending it by showing that internalization of learning support is influenced not only by instruction but also by necessity and lived experience.

Overall, the findings suggest that learner autonomy is a multidimensional and non-linear process characterized by shared developmental patterns, varying intensities of challenges, and unique learner trajectories. While existing literature, such as Benson (2021) and Zimmerman (2021), describes autonomy as a progressive process, the present study further emphasizes that this progression is differentiated and shaped by both internal and external factors. These insights highlight the importance of differentiated instructional support, where teachers provide varying levels of scaffolding depending on learners' autonomy needs. Specifically, learners may benefit from structured listening support, explicit training in self-regulation strategies such as time management and task breakdown, and consistent mentoring that promotes reflection and confidence-building. Furthermore, future research is recommended to explore learner autonomy across different grade levels and contexts, as well as to employ mixed-methods designs to further validate and deepen understanding of how independent learning develops over time.

## Conclusions

The assumption that young learners are not yet capable of managing academic tasks independently is, in reality, not entirely true. While many learners still rely on guidance from parents and teachers, this study revealed that they are capable of developing independence when given the opportunity and motivation to do so. The experiences of the participants demonstrated that even at a young age, learners can take responsibility for their own learning, employ strategies, and persevere despite challenges. At the beginning of this study, the process of gathering participants and documenting their lived experiences required patience and persistence. However, through careful engagement, the researcher was able to capture the authentic voices of the learners. Their narratives provided meaningful insights into how they navigate academic tasks on their own—the struggles they face, the strategies they use, and the motivations that drive them to succeed. Despite encountering difficulties such as communication breakdowns, self-doubt, and limited support, the participants showed resilience, determination, and a strong desire to achieve their goals. The findings highlighted that attentive listening, self-reliance, and personal responsibility are key factors in fostering independent learning. Learners who actively engaged in listening and took ownership of their tasks were able to perform better and gain confidence in their abilities. At the same time, challenges such as noisy classroom environments and a lack of clear communication affected their understanding, emphasizing the importance of supportive learning conditions. Nevertheless, the participants demonstrated that with persistence and effort, these challenges can be overcome.

As an educator, this study allowed the researcher to reflect on the importance of guiding learners toward independence while still providing the necessary support. It emphasized that teaching is not only about delivering content but also about empowering learners to take charge of their own learning journey. By fostering a positive learning environment, encouraging responsibility, and supporting learners' emotional and academic needs, teachers can help students become confident and self-directed individuals. Ultimately, this study affirms that young learners are capable of growth, resilience, and independence. Their experiences serve as an inspiration to other learners and educators alike, showing that with determination, proper guidance, and belief in

oneself, academic success is attainable. Through this research, the voices of young learners are heard—reminding us that even at an early stage, they are already building the foundation for lifelong learning.

## **Recommendations**

The purpose of this narratological study is to explore and capture the lived experiences of Grade 6 learners as they navigate academic tasks independently, highlighting both their strengths and the challenges they encounter. However, the findings of this qualitative research are limited to a small number of participants within a specific context. As such, the results are exploratory in nature and cannot be generalized to a wider population beyond the selected learners in this study.

In relation to this limitation, future researchers are encouraged to expand the study by including a larger number of participants from different schools, districts, or regions. Increasing the sample size may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how young learners manage academic tasks independently across varied socio-economic and educational contexts. This would address the limitation related to the narrow scope of participants in the present study. In addition, future research may explore other grade levels, including both lower and higher elementary learners, to examine how academic independence develops progressively over time. Comparative studies across grade levels may provide deeper insights into the developmental trajectory of self-regulated learning and responsibility, thereby addressing the limitation of focusing solely on Grade 6 learners. Furthermore, future researchers may adopt other research methods and designs to strengthen and extend the findings of this study. For instance, phenomenological approaches may be used to further explore the essence of learners' lived experiences, while case study designs may provide an in-depth examination of individual learning contexts. Mixed-methods research is also recommended to combine qualitative narratives with quantitative data, allowing for triangulation and stronger validation of findings. Additionally, longitudinal studies may be conducted to observe changes in learner independence over time, while quasi-experimental designs may be utilized to test the effectiveness of specific interventions in developing self-regulated learning skills.

These alternative approaches directly address the methodological limitation of this narratological study. Moreover, future studies may incorporate additional variables that were not fully explored in this research, such as parental involvement, teacher support, classroom environment, peer interaction, and access to learning resources. These factors may significantly influence learners' ability to complete academic tasks independently and may provide a more holistic understanding of learner autonomy. It is also recommended that future researchers refine or expand data collection instruments, such as interview guides, to further explore emotional coping strategies, motivational factors, and the role of technology in independent learning. For practical and logistical considerations, future researchers may also utilize virtual or online data collection methods to reach a broader and more diverse group of participants. This approach may improve accessibility, especially when conducting studies across multiple locations, while ensuring efficiency in data gathering. Ultimately, future research should continue to amplify the voices of young

learners as they develop independence in managing academic tasks. By addressing the limitations of this study through expanded samples, alternative research designs, and additional variables, future studies can contribute to the development of more responsive teaching practices and stronger support systems that promote learner autonomy, resilience, and academic success.

### **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

The researcher hereby declares that this study was conducted in accordance with established ethical research standards and guidelines. Prior to the conduct of the study, informed consent was properly obtained from all participants, and they were fully informed about the purpose, procedures, and nature of the research. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and respondents were given the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty or disadvantage. The anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents were strictly maintained throughout the research process. All information gathered was handled in compliance with the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and was used solely for academic and research purposes. The well-being, dignity, and rights of the participants were safeguarded at all times during the conduct of the study. No physical, emotional, or psychological harm was inflicted upon any participant. The researcher also declares that there was no conflict of interest in the conduct, analysis, and presentation of the study. All sources used in this research were properly acknowledged and cited to strictly avoid plagiarism. Furthermore, the interpretation of the findings was carried out objectively and without bias to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the results. The researcher likewise discloses that Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were utilized solely for grammar checking, language refinement, and organization of ideas. However, all interpretations, analyses, and final decisions regarding the content of the study remained the responsibility of the researcher.

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**APA Citation:**

Tumbali, C. M. B., & Oracion, G. M. (2026). FROM GUIDANCE TO INDEPENDENCE: NARRATIVES OF YOUNG LEARNERS ON NAVIGATING ACADEMIC TASKS ON THEIR OWN. *Ignatian International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 4(6), 980–1017. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20667458>

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