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Parental involvement in homework to foster self-regulated learning skills: a qualitative study with parents from selected higher quintile schools

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ABSTRACT

The lack of parental involvement and poor self-regulation among learners have been identified as significant factors affecting the ongoing high rates of failure and dropout in schools situated in the lower socioeconomic strata. In South Africa, the extent and quality of parental involvement vary widely across different school quintiles and are closely linked to the socioeconomic status of the families. Nevertheless, certain elements may either facilitate or hinder parents' participation in their children's homework, with the aim of fostering self-regulated learning abilities. This qualitative research engaged eight parents, who were strategically selected through snowball sampling from two primary schools and three secondary schools, reflecting their children's places of education. The research aimed to explore the methods by which parents of students in higher quintile schools assist in cultivating self-regulated learning competencies in their offspring via involvement in homework. Data collection was conducted through individual semi-structured interviews. Findings reveal that the participants' authoritative, autonomy-supportive parenting styles, alongside their educational backgrounds and socioeconomic standing, enable them to instil a range of self-regulated learning skills in their children. However, it was noted that several crucial skills associated with volition, self-reflection, and self-regulation in learning remain underdeveloped. The insights gained from this study present actionable strategies that schools and educators can adopt to guide and support parents in enhancing their children's self-regulated learning skills through active involvement in homework tasks.

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1. Introduction

Salac and Florida (2022) define parental involvement as the dynamic interaction between parents and their children, both at home and within the educational setting, which significantly contributes to the students' academic success. This concept encompasses four key dimensions: parents' aspirations and expectations for their children's academic achievements, participation in school-related activities and programmes, creation of a home environment conducive to learning, and ongoing dialogue with children regarding their educational experiences (Sibanda, 2021). Numerous studies have underscored the vital role of actively engaged parents in providing both substantial academic support and nurturing home environments that are instrumental in enhancing students' academic performance (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017).

Homework serves as a crucial link between educational institutions and the home environment, extending and integral to classroom instruction (Mays et al., 2012). It offers students the chance to practice independence, seek assistance when needed, establish productive study habits, develop resilience through coping strategies, manage their time efficiently, and refine their learning strategies (Muljana

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et al., 2023). Moreover, homework plays a pivotal role in boosting academic achievement and nurturing the essential self-regulated learning (SRL) skills or self-regulatory processes vital for success beyond the academic realm (Odabas, 2022; Ramdass & Zimmerman, 2011).

SRL is the process by which students actively take control of their learning journey, managing their cognitive, metacognitive, emotional-motivational, and behavioural aspects to reach their academic goals (Fuentes et al., 2019). The ability to self-regulate in educational settings enhances problem-solving capabilities, academic success, internal motivation, and interest in tasks. Numerous studies have highlighted the critical role of SRL in both educational achievements and broader societal engagement (Bandura, 2015).

Epstein et al. (2018) provided a holistic approach to parental involvement, outlining multiple facets such as parenting practices, communication, volunteer work, home-based learning, participatory decision-making, and community collaboration (Epstein et al., 2018). The focuses of this present study on, that is, identifying drivers and barriers to parental involvement in homework, resonates with Epstein et al. (2018) advocacy for a supportive home learning environment. Additionally, the investigation into the contribution of parents in higher quintile schools to their children's SRL capabilities aligns with Epstein's perspective on the profound impact of familial engagement on student outcomes.

In the same vein Muljana et al. (2023) aver that parental engagement in their children's educational activities not only boosts the youngsters' eagerness and motivation to learn but also significantly impacts their academic accomplishments. Yet, a prominent issue faced by numerous South African schools is the lack of parental involvement (Matshe, 2014; Sibanda, 2021). In response, the Department of Basic Education, alongside school principals and educators, fervently encourages parental involvement as a strategy to counteract the enduringly high dropout and failure rates (Mlachila & Moeletsi, 2019).

Several determinants, including the socioeconomic status and educational levels of parents, as well as unengaged parenting styles, have been identified as contributors to the scant level of parental involvement (Şengönül, 2022). For instance, parents from more affluent backgrounds are in a position to furnish their children with essential resources and a conducive learning atmosphere, thereby fostering academic success. Such parents play a pivotal role in shaping positive academic identities for their children by offering encouragement, affirming their intelligence, and setting high expectations for both their scholarly achievements and overall life outcomes (Harris & Robinson, 2016). Moreover, their financial capability allows them to place their children in elite private or high-calibre public schools (Harris & Robinson, 2016), where academic performance is further bolstered by superior infrastructure, ample resources, and active parental engagement (Spaull, 2013).

In South Africa, the quintile system functions as a metric for categorising schools based on local unemployment rates and the educational levels of the surrounding communities. Schools are assigned to quintiles ranging from one to five, reflecting the socioeconomic conditions of their neighbourhoods, with quintiles one to three denoting areas of poverty, and quintiles four and five indicating regions of greater wealth and affluence (White & Van Dyk, 2019). In their analysis concerning the unmet high-performance targets outlined in The National Strategy for Mathematics, Science, and Technology Education, Spaull and Kotze (2015) discovered that students from schools in quintiles four and five generally outperform their counterparts in quintiles one to three, the latter of which ranks at the lower end in both national and international assessments. This disparity underscores the challenges faced by schools in the lower quintiles, which accommodate the 75% of learners from poorer backgrounds in South Africa (Spaull, 2013). The options available to these economically disadvantaged parents are often constrained by what they can afford, rather than the quality or reputation of the schools (Parmaswar, 2014).

Parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, unlike their more affluent counterparts, often face financial constraints that limit their ability to support their children's homework activities. Their educational limitations impede their capacity to offer the necessary cognitive support. Furthermore, their lack of proficiency in language and insufficient academic knowledge and skills contribute to a sense of inadequacy in communicating with educators (Parmaswar, 2014). Such parents are less likely to engage in the type of critical thinking discussions that cultivate a learning-friendly social environment, essential for academic achievement (Harris & Robinson, 2016). While they may provide emotional and motivational encouragement, their social networks often lack the resources to offer substantial help. Additionally,

their ability to assist with homework is frequently compromised by the demands of work or family commitments (Parmaswar, 2014).

Conversely, parents with higher socioeconomic status also report frustrations with the time and energy demands of homework amid their own demanding careers and active lifestyles, leading to limited direct engagement with their children's schoolwork (Van Voorhis, 2011). Regardless of socioeconomic background, many parents express concerns over obstacles to their involvement, such as unclear homework instructions, educators' failure to clarify assignments, homework that seems unrelated to the classroom learning, or their children's uncertainties about how to approach their assignments (Van Voorhis, 2011). Thus, the extent and effectiveness of parental involvement are often dictated by everyday logistical challenges, including balancing work and family responsibilities (Miller & Keeler, 2017; Van Voorhis, 2011).

Against this background, this study looked specifically at parental involvement in homework in higher quintile primary and secondary schools. Despite this mounting research on parental involvement to improve academic performance, no studies could be found that have explored how parents with learners in higher quintile schools develop their children's SRL skills with their involvement in their children's homework. Additionally, this study aimed to glean insights into the effective practices employed by parents in these higher quintile schools.

The following primary research question emerged:

How does the active participation of parents from higher quintile schools in their children's homework contribute to the cultivation of self-regulated learning (SRL) skills in their children?

The three secondary research questions derived from the primary question of the study are: (1) *What parenting styles are demonstrated by parents in the selected higher quintile schools in this study?* (2) *What specific SRL skills do these parents focus on with their parental involvement in their children's homework?* (3) *What contextual factors do these parents perceive as either hindering or facilitating their engagement in homework and academic tasks for their children?*

2. Theoretical conceptual framework

This study viewed SRL through the lens of the social cognitive theory. The author drew on the SRL model of Zimmerman and Moylan (2009) and literature on SRL development, parenting styles, and parental involvement in homework.

2.1. Self-regulated learning

Zimmerman (2008) defines SRL as a proactive, cyclical process in which learners are active participants in their own learning process. During the learning process, they analyse tasks, plan strategically, set their own goals, and apply and adapt task strategies while constructing their own meaning by accessing prior knowledge and seeking for assistance and information from their environment.

A key feature of Zimmerman and Moylan (2009) cyclical three-phase model of SRL is that it shows how personal, environmental, and behavioural determinants influence one another reciprocally (Schunk et al., 2016). Within the scope of this research, personal determinants encompass factors such as the parenting styles and educational levels of parents, which support their engagement in their children's homework. Environmental determinants encompass aspects like socioeconomic status that impact the capacity for parental involvement. Behavioural determinants involve the ways in which parents exhibit motivational and cognitive support during homework activities. An additional pivotal aspect of the social cognitive theory underscored by this model is the significance of observational learning and modelling in the development of learners' self-regulation. Through observing role models, including teachers and parents, learners vicariously acquire new academic skills and behaviours (Schunk et al., 2016).

Zimmerman and Moylan (2009) model intricately map out the various processes and sub-processes (SRL skills) exhibited by self-regulated learners. Furthermore, it illustrates the SRL skills that parents can exemplify and cultivate in their children through active involvement in homework tasks.

The forethought phase, as the initial stage in Zimmerman and Moylan (2009) SRL model, encompasses the preparatory processes and sub-processes that learners engage in prior to undertaking a learning task. Task analysis is the first SRL skill. With this skill, self-regulated learners set various objectives and devise strategic plans regarding how, when, where, and with whom the task will be completed (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009). The objectives set during this phase significantly shape their motivational beliefs, self-efficacy perceptions, effort levels, persistence, interest in the task, perceived value of the task, goal orientations, and expectations of outcomes associated with academic tasks (Zimmerman et al., 2015). Learners who anticipate positive outcomes from their academic endeavours tend to demonstrate greater commitment to these tasks, show heightened interest, and appreciate the value of their educational experiences more deeply (Schunk et al., 2016).

The volitional phase encompasses SRL processes that occur during the learning effort. Within this phase, learners' motivational and self-efficacy beliefs influence their choice of task strategies, academic time management, and self-monitoring capabilities as they work to complete tasks (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009). They organise their learning environments for optimal concentration, attention, and focus. A critical component of this phase is self-observation, where learners assess their progress towards task completion. Reflection, along with activities such as reading, re-reading, and the adaptive application of strategies, constitutes the practice of self-instruction. Proficient self-regulated learners also make a practice of documenting strategies that facilitate their progress, further enhancing their learning efficacy (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009).

During the self-reflection phase, learners engage in a critical assessment of their performance, comparing the outcomes of their efforts to either externally established benchmarks or their personal objectives (Zimmerman et al., 2015). When students attribute suboptimal academic results to factors beyond their control, such as perceived inadequacies in teaching or inherent academic limitations, it can lead to a decline in their motivation to engage in learning activities (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009). Conversely, if learners conduct a self-assessment and derive satisfaction from their learning endeavours, this positive feedback loop reinforces their self-efficacy. Such an outcome not only enhances their future planning and goal-setting endeavours but also motivates them to invest greater effort in subsequent tasks.

2.3. The role of parents as models

Salisu and Ransom (2014) identify various modelling approaches teachers can employ to develop SRL skills among students, approaches that are equally beneficial when adopted by parents. Through disposition modelling, parents can demonstrate their personal attitudes, values, and practices related to SRL skills, effectively transmitting these dispositions to their children. Task and performance modelling involves children observing their parents as they undertake and execute tasks, offering a visual example of how to approach and manage activities and prompting metacognitive monitoring. When parents articulate their thought processes and demonstrate SRL skills—such as planning, goal-setting, and self-questioning—during routine activities, they promote metacognitive monitoring. Additionally, parents can employ scaffolding techniques, providing tailored support that evolves with their children's growing competencies, thereby facilitating the development of SRL skills.

Martinez-Pons (2002) outlines several strategies through which parents can model activities that nurture self-regulatory behaviours in their children. These strategies include the promotion of indirect guidance methods, such as creating a supportive learning environment that emphasises the importance of focus and striving for excellence in tasks. Encouragement and rewards are pivotal when children recognise and fulfil their responsibilities and exhibit self-regulated behaviours. Moreover, parents exemplify motivation, goal setting, and perseverance through their approach to problem-solving and assessment of their performance. The effectiveness with which parents can embody these SRL skills is significantly shaped by factors such as their parenting style, education level, and socioeconomic status.

2.4. Parenting styles and the development of SRL skills

Parenting styles are some of the predictors of children's learning, growth and development, and nurturing of SRL skills (Malebese, 2013). Baumrind (1991), originally categorizes parenting into three

styles—authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive – based on the degree of parental control and responsiveness to children’s needs. In the realm of academic support, the most frequently discussed parenting styles include authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful. Parenting styles commonly mentioned in the context of academic support are the authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles (Silinskas & Kikas, 2019).

Pomerantz et al. (2007) have further delineated four distinct dimensions of parenting styles as they relate to homework. The first dimension contrasts autonomy support with control, particularly in decision-making contexts. The second, referred to as ‘person focus’, differentiates parents who encourage their children to concentrate on mastering the content from those who only emphasise achievement. Mislabeled earlier, the correct third dimension is process versus outcome focus, where the process aspect highlights parents’ efforts to make learning enjoyable and exciting for their children, and the outcome aspect centres on children’s innate abilities. The fourth dimension contrasts positive versus negative affect and beliefs concerning children’s capabilities. This includes positive emotional engagement, such as acknowledging their children’s feelings of tiredness, fear, or excitement about homework, against negative responses like disinterest or non-involvement in educational activities.

The authoritarian parenting style, as characterised by Baumrind (1991), involves parents who are controlling and demanding, exhibiting high levels of psychological control and low levels of emotional support in their interactions with their children (Baumrind, 1991). This approach, marked by a controlling and critical disposition, can adversely impact children’s self-efficacy and confidence, subsequently hindering the development of their self-regulated behaviours. Such parental behaviours can significantly influence the formation of children’s personality traits and their ability to adapt to their environment. Conversely, being raised by permissive parents, who may lack firm boundaries and discipline, can lead to children developing self-centred tendencies, often showing little interest in the feelings and perspectives of others.

Authoritative or authority-supportive parenting styles are marked by a high level of responsiveness, as initially outlined by Baumrind (1991) and further illustrated by Silinskas and Kikas (2019). Responsiveness is evident when parents offer emotional and motivational support, provide scaffolding for learning tasks, and encourage their children to independently initiate and manage their academic responsibilities (Vasquez et al., 2016). Drawing on self-determination theory, Silinskas and Kikas (2019), along with Vasquez et al. (2016), highlight that autonomy-supportive parenting is characterised by three foundational elements: granting autonomy, providing structure, and maintaining emotional availability for the child. This parenting approach permits children a measure of freedom, provides a clear structure for their endeavours, and ensures emotional support and responsiveness to their needs. Such parents display minimal psychological control while offering abundant emotional support, contributing to an enhanced sense of competence, autonomy, and resilience in their children (Pomerantz et al., 2007). They are attuned to their children’s physical and cognitive capabilities and expect mature, age-appropriate behaviour (Arinoldo & Arinoldo, 2007). Children raised in this environment typically exhibit independence, responsibility, and confidence (Nease & Austin, 2010). Academically, they tend to excel, show goal-oriented behaviour, possess effective self-management skills, and demonstrate strategies for coping with stress. These children work on enhancing their self-efficacy beliefs, employ diverse task strategies, and effectively manage their time, effort, and perseverance in learning (Tsemrekal, 2013).

The permissive parenting style, while fostering a sense of independence and self-regulation in children, often falls short in providing adequate guidance and involvement necessary for nurturing self-regulation and autonomy in their educational pursuits (Malebese, 2013). On the other hand, neglectful parenting is characterised by minimal to no engagement or interest in the child’s homework activities or academic progress (Abar et al., 2009). Parental involvement plays a critical role in shaping children’s social and emotional well-being, cognitive development, and academic achievements. A lack of sufficient parental involvement, particularly when it takes the form of indifference or neglect as seen in permissive or neglectful parenting styles, can adversely affect children’s social and emotional well-being. Children who suffer from inadequate parental involvement may encounter psychological issues, including anxiety, depression, difficulties in social integration within school and community settings, and diminished self-esteem (Kong & Yasmin, 2022).

2.5. Research methodology

This qualitative case study is grounded within an interpretivist philosophical orientation (Yin, 2018) chosen for its capacity to assist in exploring participants' experience, goals, beliefs, values, and motivations, thereby facilitating an in-depth understanding and interpretation of their actions and perspectives. The focus of this research is on participants from higher quintile primary and secondary schools, each representing a distinct case study of lived experiences within a contemporary real-life context (cf. Maree, 2016). The study exhibits phenomenological features, emphasising its exploratory aim to investigate and understand parents' unique parenting styles, along with their experiences and interpretations of how they foster SRL skills in their children.

For this research, the selected population comprised parents of learners in two primary and three secondary higher quintile schools situated in one province. To navigate the complexities of participant recruitment, a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques was employed. This approach was particularly advantageous given the observed reluctance among some educational institutions, teachers, and parents to participate in extensive research endeavours. Through snowball sampling, eight respondents, deemed to be rich sources of information, were successfully recruited. Opting for a smaller sample size was a strategic decision, influenced by practical considerations such as time, cost, and the feasibility of the study, a rationale supported by Young and Casey (2018).

Data was collected through a single semi-structured interview with eight voluntary participants. This group consisted of four mothers with children attending primary schools within the higher quintiles, complemented by four parents—comprising two fathers and two mothers—whose children are enrolled in higher quintile secondary schools. Among these participants, one occupies a senior administrative position at a primary school, and two primary school parents have earned postgraduate degrees in education (honours). Another participant with a master's degree has recently been appointed as a lecturer in the law faculty at a university. All four parents associated with secondary schools possess doctoral degrees in various educational disciplines. Selection criteria for participants were informed by ongoing discussions regarding enhanced learner performance and academic outcomes in higher quintile schools, as well as debates concerning superior infrastructure, resources, and the engagement of parents from more affluent socioeconomic backgrounds.

The interviews, lasting about 45 minutes each, delved into the parenting styles of eight participants, the impact of their involvement on developing their children's SRL skills, and the factors that facilitated or impeded their engagement with their children's homework.

Ethical clearance for the study was granted by the university overseeing the research. All ethical guidelines for conducting research were observed, including obtaining informed consent from all participants. To ensure the reliability and internal validity of the study, rigorous sampling methods were employed accompanied by a comprehensive trail of evidence, including interview schedules and audio recordings of the raw data. Additionally, ample time was allocated for participants to express their opinions, and member checking was employed to verify the accuracy of the findings.

The following section presents the analysis of the data and discusses its interpretation.

3. Data analysis and discussion

Content analysis and a thematic approach were employed for data analysis (cf. Maree, 2016). The predetermined themes, derived from the literature reviewed within the study's theoretical and conceptual framework, were organised into three main categories. Theme 1, titled 'Parental styles and types of involvement in homework', addresses the first research question. Theme 2, 'SRL skills parents perceive to prioritise with their involvement in homework', responds to the second research question by identifying the SRL skills that parents aim to develop in their children via homework activities. Theme 3, 'Perceived contextual influences that shape parental involvement to foster SRL skills with homework activities', presents insights related to the third research question, exploring the contextual factors that parents perceive as influencing their ability to support the development of SRL skills through homework. Each theme is further broken down into sub-themes to facilitate a detailed exploration of the topics.

3.1. Theme 1: Parental styles and types of involvement in homework

3.1.1. Parenting styles and dimensions of parenting styles in the context of homework engagement

The following are the most prominent questions that were formulated to ask parents to explore parenting styles and parental engagement in their children's homework:

- Looking ahead, how far do you think child will progress in his or her education?
- Do you feel you are able to assist your child with homework? Why do you feel this way?
- Is there a specific time allocated for completing homework? If so, who decided on this time?

All the participants from the primary schools exhibited authoritative, autonomy-supporting, and responsive parenting styles discussed in literature (Pomerantz et al., 2007; Vasquez et al., 2016). One participant's response reflects the collective involvement and interest in their children's education that all the other primary school participants demonstrated: *I usually start off the homework session with a few questions. I invite her to tell me more about her day, things they did at school, interesting happenings.* Each of the primary school parents provides support and motivates their children to create their own timetables, encouraging them to take initiative and assume responsibility for their tasks (cf. Martinez-Pons, 2002). This is how one participant encourages autonomy and self-regulatory practices, such as self-evaluation: *I assist them in preparation of tests by drawing up mock tests and questions so that they can evaluate their knowledge.* It is evident that the participants' responsiveness and high educational expectations create motivation and task interest in their children (cf. Baumrind, 1991).

Likewise, the parents of secondary school students demonstrated authoritative, autonomy-supportive parenting approaches. It is clear that their parenting styles are influenced by their socioeconomic status and educational backgrounds. Their feedback indicates the presence of open parent-child communication and interactions, alongside high educational aspirations (cf. Harris & Robinson, 2016). For example, one parent expressed: *She will definitely strive for the best that she can be. So, she will be in the medical field. I know that my child is consciously and continuously learning new skills, knowledge, and values. I have aspirations for her. I just want her to be happy and effective in what she does.*

The effects of these parents' parenting styles are also evident in their descriptions of their children's learning behaviour (cf. Nease & Austin, 2010; Tsemrekal, 2013). For example, another parent explained: *She decides when to do her homework, as she is very dedicated. We do not have to tell her to do homework; she does it on her own.*

3.2. Theme 2: SRL skills parents prioritise during their involvement in homework

The questions listed below were prominent questions designed to investigate the specific SRL skills from Zimmerman and Moylan (2009) model that parents emphasise through their involvement in their children's homework.:

- In what ways you assist your child with their homework?
- Is there anything specific that you usually tell your child to do before he or she starts to do their homework? Please explain why you ask your child to do these things.
- Do you believe your child can take responsibility for his or her own homework? Please explain your answer.
- Is it necessary for you to motivate your child to do their homework? Please explain why. If you do have to motivate your child, please explain how you do it.
- What are your child's study habits?
- How do you think you helped your child to develop these habits?

3.2.1. Sub-theme 2.1: SRL skills parents focus on prior to homework completion

The parenting styles of primary school parents manifest in their efforts to foster task analysis, distant goal-setting, and motivational and self-efficacy beliefs in their children. These parents exemplify task analysis by meticulously going through homework and activity instructions with their children, helping

them comprehend the requirements. Following this initial analysis, they employ step-by-step explanations and segment the homework into manageable portions to facilitate understanding (cf. Martinez-Pons, 2002). This is how one parent explained: *We sit down and research the problem, find suitable ways to solve the problem and then apply the solution.*

The approach of primary school parents in setting high educational expectations and in the way they coach, guide, and model SRL skills is recognised in literature such as Harris and Robinson (2016). For instance, one parent said: *I talk to my child about the dreams I have for her for two main reasons: to inspire and motivate. She always brightens up when I refer [to] her as 'Doctor'; I think it boosts her confidence.* Another parent expressed their desire for their child to *definitely [reach] university level.*

The autonomy-supportive parents of secondary school students in this research prioritise nurturing all the SRL skills outlined in the forethought phase of Zimmerman and Moylan (2009) SRL model. Their socio-economic status and educational backgrounds afford them the capability to provide high-quality guidance and scaffolding. This support is offered both directly and indirectly through methods of disposition and task modelling, as described by Salisu and Ransom (2014). Mirroring the primary school parents, these parents also hold high educational expectations and career aspirations for their children, aligning with observations by Harris and Robinson (2016). Additionally, they are committed to fostering SRL skills in their children from a very young age, which resonates in several responses. One participant responded: *I need to motivate my child from time to time. Then I will tell him how I enjoy my work. I just hope that I will serve as a role model for him.* Another responded: *Since Grade 3, I allowed them to do their own work and to become independent from me; now they will rather figure out problems on their own.* Yet another participant explained: *We encourage her to at least try to write something, even if it is wrong. So, she is constantly working at improving herself. She is extremely motivated and driven.*

3.2.2. Sub-theme 2.2: SRL skills parents focus on cultivating during homework activities

This study explored how parents respond when their children face challenges in comprehending homework instructions or struggle with the complexity of tasks assigned.

Primary school parents reported emphasising the SRL skills that involve focusing attention, managing time, structuring the environment, seeking assistance, and taking responsibility for their own learning. While some parents adopt a prescriptive approach to scheduling homework time, others guide their children in time management and encourage them to take ownership of their academic responsibilities. One participant explained: *She knows what is expected of her and we have taught her discipline to always do her work before leisure time.*

The responses reveal that the assistance and direction provided by the four primary school parents in this study reflect autonomy-supportive parenting approaches (cf. Vasquez et al., 2016). Importantly, their elevated socioeconomic status positions them to establish supportive learning environments equipped with educational materials. Furthermore, their extensive networks and community relationships facilitate easy access to assistance from friends, colleagues, and teachers (cf. Harris & Robinson, 2016). One participant explained: *I have a network of educators at reach, and I have most of her teachers' numbers so I could call and clarify what the instructions were.* However, the feedback from the primary school parents did not disclose their methods for cultivating a variety of SRL skills, such as employing diverse task strategies, using imagery, creating interest incentives, implementing self-consequences, conducting self-monitoring, documenting progress, and performing self-observation.

The secondary school parents perceive their children to have developed the SRL skills of the volitional phase successfully over the years. They assist their children in the development of task analysis skills, as one participant mentioned: *I am able to assist her with explanations, clarifying complex concepts.* They develop metacognitive monitoring strategies that closely tie in with self-instruction, as one participant emphasised: *We help her to interpret the instructions. We will read through it together and ask questions to make her think. We guide her and then decide together on what our understanding of the instructions is.* Another parent indicated: *I do nothing for my child now; we supported them in primary school.* Another participant mentioned: *immediately after school she starts with her homework. I instilled this routine when she was still young.* Still another participant said: *They know they have a responsibility to do their work and meet their deadlines on time. I will, however, ask them from time to time and check on them to hear if they are okay and how things are at school. I trust them.*

When inquired about any home-based strategies they employed to facilitate their child's homework completion, all parents acknowledged the importance of offering emotional and motivational support. Furthermore, they unanimously agreed on the necessity of a structured learning environment, equipped with the necessary resources, to aid their children in successfully completing homework tasks. One parent indicated: *She works in a room that does not have clutter, so there is an organised space with no distraction. There are resources to assist her with information when she requires it.*

The following responses specifically support the conclusion that the secondary school parents focus on modelling help-seeking skills to their children: *I ask my colleagues that are experts or teachers of the specific subject, and we google it; we turn to the Internet for assistance, and: We have some resources at home, like magazines, books, computer and [the] Internet, that can assist.* However, none of the secondary school parents explained how they assisted their children to practise self-observation and self-recording.

3.2.3. Sub-theme 2.3: SRL skills parents focus on cultivating following the completion of homework

The primary school parents indicated that they engage in daily conversations with their children about the teacher's comments on homework and classroom assignments. This practice requires the children to interpret and reflect on the feedback received, fostering their ability to self-assess their work. Consequently, these parents provide their children with opportunities to independently evaluate their academic progress. Positive feedback from both teachers and parents enables learners to experience a sense of self-satisfaction, thereby enhancing their motivation (Zimmerman et al., 2015). One primary school parent mentioned: *I always ask her what the teacher said about the homework so that we may know if it is correct and ... the teacher happy about it.* Yet, most responses did not specify how the parents instructed their children to accurately attribute reasons for poor performance or failure. Only a single parent mentioned actively teaching her child to avoid negative attributions and instead take responsibility for her setbacks, aligning with the principles discussed by Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009.

The explanations provided by many secondary school parents in the study highlighted their focus on cultivating skills associated with the self-reflection phase, specifically self-judgment, self-evaluation, and the establishment of realistic attributions for failure. They emphasised the importance of teachers acknowledging their learners' effort and determination, viewing such recognition as crucial for bolstering self-efficacy and self-satisfaction. One secondary school participant explained: *If I know that the teachers are happy with their work, then I can relax.* Another stated: *I want to know if my child is acknowledged, and her efforts are recognised.* One participant specifically noted the use of teacher feedback as a tool to coach their child in reflecting on and evaluating their own progress. Another participant mentioned instructing their child to assume responsibility for failures, emphasising the importance of not attributing poor outcomes to external factors: *She studies two months in advance for the term assessments. She knows that no matter how hard one prays, the only way she can achieve is when she helps herself.*

3.3. Theme 3: Contextual factors influencing parental support for developing SRL skills in homework activities

To identify the contextual factors facilitating parental assistance with homework, parents were inquired about the aspects that simplified their involvement in their children's homework tasks. The discussions on this query are covered under sub-theme 3.1.

3.3.1. Sub-theme 3.1: Parental insights on factors enhancing engagement in homework assistance

The parents of primary school students indicated that their professional background in teaching, familiarity with the curriculum, and understanding of instructional strategies equipped them to elucidate concepts and support their children's learning. One participant said: *I have learnt to use different strategies of teaching during my practical years.* Another participant explained that the teachers at the quintile 5 school where their son was enrolled pasted homework instructions in the children's books. This homework practice alleviates confusion with homework instructions, which makes it easier for the parents to assist their children.

The parents of secondary school students highlighted factors corroborated by Harris and Robinson (2016) and Hyde et al. (2006). Among these, their professional educational backgrounds and academic

proficiency were noted as elements that ease cognitive support during homework sessions. Additionally, the parents' proficiency in English was identified as a facilitator in providing assistance, as one participant mentioned: *All her subjects are in English; I am able to explain things simplistically so that she understands, and I am always prepared to assist her.* The participants who were parents of secondary school learners also pointed out their financial capacity to procure educational materials, including magazines, books, computers, and Internet access, as a significant factor. All four these parents confirmed their ability to afford resources and supplementary tutoring in subjects where their knowledge fell short, particularly due to changes in the curriculum. One participant elucidated: *I have provided Wi-Fi and have bought my child a laptop and printer. So, she is able to access the Internet for assistance on any idea and any subject.*

The children of the secondary school parents all appear to possess strong academic capabilities. One participant mentioned: *intelligent children that learn with ease.* Another clarified: *I instilled this routine when she was still young; she developed her own work ethics over the years.* One participant described their Grade 11 son as *an independent learner.* Good communication with their children was another factor that was believed to facilitate their parental involvement.

3.3.2. Sub-theme 3.2: Factors that hinder parental involvement in homework

Parents were inquired about the challenges they face in assisting their children with homework. Despite the majority of primary school parents being educators themselves, they reported struggles with adapting to curriculum changes and deciphering unclear instructions in homework sessions. This finding diverges from Parmaswar (2014), who suggested that difficulties in providing cognitive support are predominantly encountered by parents with lower education levels. One participant mentioned: *For instance, when she doesn't understand the way I explain something or if they had used a different method of calculations in mathematics".* Another participant echoed this sentiment, acknowledging similar challenges. One primary school parent in particular noted that limited time due to work commitments and a lack of necessary resources for hands-on tasks impeded her ability to provide homework assistance (cf. Van Voorhis, 2011).

Secondary school parent participants reported facing challenges akin to those encountered by some primary school parents. They cited time constraints, a lack of sufficient knowledge in subjects such as mathematics and science, and difficulties understanding recent curriculum changes as significant obstacles to assisting with homework (cf. Miller & Keeler, 2017). This is how one participant expressed their challenges: *It is difficult to assist her in difficult subjects like mathematics. But as we cannot assist her in that, and she needs help, we indirectly assist her by paying for extra classes in this subject.* Another participant clarified her challenge as follows: *The content is quite difficult to understand if one is not working with it every day. I don't want to create confusion in my child's mind.* The experience of one participant, a single mother, resonates with findings from Harris and Robinson (2016). She expressed that her demanding career sometimes made it challenging for her to provide assistance with homework, specifically mentioning *time constraints, busy lives, stressful routine days.*

4. Conclusions

The study contributes to the current understanding of how parents in higher quintile schools influence the development of SRL skills. It underscores the beneficial impact of autonomy-supportive parenting on the cultivation of SRL skills, particularly those related to motivation in the forethought phase as delineated in Zimmerman and Moylan (2009) SRL model. Parents effectively provide academic support that is both relevant and meaningful in fostering SRL competencies. However, there is a noticeable gap in parents' awareness of certain SRL strategies applicable in the volitional phase, such as diverse task strategies, imagery, interest incentives, self-consequences, metacognitive monitoring, self-observation, and self-recording. The development of SRL skills during the self-reflection phase largely stems from children's contemplation on teacher feedback. The parents' engagement with their children's academic activities and their financial commitment to education send a clear message about the value placed on learning.

The sustained quality of parental involvement in homework is supported by personal, behavioural, and environmental factors, including their teaching experience, pedagogical content knowledge,

expertise in various school subjects, and proficiency in self-directed learning tasks like task analysis and metacognitive reflection. Their socioeconomic standing enables access to additional educational resources, including the Internet and conducive learning environments, as well as academic and social networks for further assistance. The parents attribute their children's academic success to the early development of SRL skills during their primary school years.

Challenges arise when homework instructions are ambiguous or when parents are unfamiliar with contemporary teaching methodologies, especially in subjects like mathematics, leading to frustration. Changes in the curriculum and a lack of specialised subject knowledge further hinder parental support. Time limitations due to work commitments and the absence of immediate resources for practical assignments also pose difficulties.

Consequently, the study recommends informing parents about curriculum changes, clarifying homework policies, and offering contextualised training for teachers to better guide parents.

For practical application, schools should educate parents on curriculum reforms and how this affect homework assistance. Homework policies need to detail the homework types, frequency, and necessary parental resources. Teachers should also inform parents about different parenting styles and their impacts on student motivation, SRL skill development, and overall academic performance. Tailored training for teachers in lower quintile schools could enhance their ability to advise parents on supporting their children's SRL skills.

The theoretical implications suggest a need for theoretical frameworks on parental involvement to emphasise autonomy-supportive methods for promoting SRL skills. Addressing the gap in parents' awareness of specific SRL skills for the volitional phase, including task strategies, imagery, interest incentives, self-consequences, metacognitive monitoring, self-observation, and self-recording, in theoretical models could be beneficial. Additionally, the importance of parents in facilitating self-reflection skills should be accentuated in SRL models and theories. Acknowledging the determinants that enhance parental involvement in SRL skill development is crucial for theoretical frameworks, ensuring alignment with practical recommendations to bridge the theory-practice divide.

The limited sample size restricts the generalisability of the findings. Future research could expand on parental involvement across a larger sample from higher quintile schools and include perspectives from both parents and students for a comparative analysis of SRL skill development perceptions.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

About the author



Bernadette Geduld holds a PhD in Teaching and Learning from the North West University, South Africa. She is a National Research Foundation (NRF) rated 2 scholar. Her research interests are the development of self-regulated learning skills and self-directed learning skills in the contexts of basic schooling and open distance learning institutions. This research is part of a bigger project which explores how cultural and contextual influences of parents, teachers and school management teams' impact on learners' self-regulated learning and teachers' self-directedness. This article only reports on the data collected from higher quintile school parents in one province, however it offers a broader perspective on the dynamics between parental involvement, socioeconomic factors, and self-regulated learning skills, providing valuable insights for both research and practical applications.

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