



**APPLICATION OF EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND  
ACCEPTANCE-COMMITMENT THERAPIES IN ENHANCING  
ACADEMIC SURVIVAL OF PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL  
STUDENTS IN IBADAN METROPOLIS, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract:**

The public secondary school students are exposed to challenges such as low parental support, poor parental background, lack of conducive school environment, teachers' negative attitude; poor finance to meet up basic needs at school and these resulted in inability to successfully complete their studies. The simple random sampling technique was used to select three local governments in the Ibadan Metropolis. Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses that were stated in this study. There was a significant main effect of treatments on academic survival ( $F_{2, 30} = 5.725, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.436$ ), there was no significant main effect of academic self-efficacy in improving academic survival among participants ( $F_{2, 30} = 0.075, p > 0.05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .001$ ). ACT and ERT were efficacious in improving academic survival among participants.

**Keywords:** emotional regulation, acceptance-commitment therapies, academic survival, public secondary school students

**1. Introduction**

Optimum academic success by children and wards is perhaps one of the most gratifying experiences of parents and guardians. Albeit this wish is often cut short as a result of the inability of most students to meet up with what it takes to achieve the expected success in both internal and external examinations. The capacity of some students to survive the daily academic rigours may be low and thus unable to compete favourably with other students in their schools. According to Oyeleye (2021), the inherent ability to cope favourably with academic rigours is the academic survival.

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Several students have emerged successful in life, while others failed despite being exposed to the same conditions of learning (Hampton, 2020). What could have been responsible for the variation in academic outcome among students even with the same economic, family and social backgrounds? Why would a public secondary school student succeed and another fail, despite similar demographic features? The most plausible answer to these questions is the capacity of each student to develop academic survival skills.

Academic survival, therefore, is the competence that enables students to stand out and achieve success despite the different challenges and difficult circumstances, like poverty, failing school system, being raised by single parent, unfriendly environment and other constraints (Hampton, 2020). Academic survival skills involve acquisition of some specific techniques which would help in the application of certain behaviours, and attitudes which highly optimize the chances of academic success. Hampton (2020) identifies seven features of a successful learner which is tagged, "The Academic Survival Skills" and includes self-respect, ability to have a command of Standard English, self-motivation, goal-setting ability, time management skills, awareness of consequences and respect for others.

Emotional regulation is the ability to modify an individual's arousal and emotional state for the promotion of adaptive behaviour (Conner *et al.*, 2019). Emotion regulation therapy (ERT) helps to teach clients emotion regulation skills that would help them to notice and respond to emotional cues occurring in their lives and also helps to build life which is a reflection of a balanced life despite the challenges confronting them (Renna *et al.*, 2017). Emotional regulation disorders have been seen to cause problems like depression; aggression and anxiety in individuals with distress disorders and they are also common among people with autism (Conner *et al.*, 2018). Emotion Regulation Therapy is a treatment for improving motivational responses and regulatory characteristics of people with distress disorders. The therapy is derived by integrating established principles from contemporary cognitive behavioural therapies with findings from affect science (Renna *et al.*, 2018). Currently, emotion regulation therapy is a theoretically derived manual intervention that is administered over the course of sixteen weeks. However, in this research, eight weeks was spent by the researcher.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is an intervention which aims to change the function that emotional reaction, thought or behaviour has on the individual (Kiuru *et al.*, 2021). It is also called third wave, process-based cognitive behavioural therapy. The aim of ACT is for the creation of a mind that is open to new opportunities, flexible and aware of the consequences of whatever action that is taken (Ostadian and Fadie, 2017). According to the ACT model, the problems or ineffective actions of the public secondary school students could be due to their entangled mind processes, resulting in self-awareness that is poorly developed, weak skills to pursue one's lifetime goals, failure to see from the perspective of others and tackle challenging life events.

This study is built on the constructivist theory. The constructivist theory can be traced back to the ideas of John Dewey in 1938. He argues that if students only passively perceive a problem without experiencing its consequences in an emotional, meaningful and reflective way, they might have difficulty of adapting or revising their habits or constructing new habits or could just do so superficially. Dewey was of the opinion that education could be best presented in an atmosphere that focused on learning by doing (Morado, Melo and Jarman, 2021).

Academic self-efficacy is defined as beliefs about one's capabilities to initiate learning and carry out behaviours at designated levels (Bandura, 1977; Okoro, 2020). It is the confidence that an individual has in their ability to organize and execute a specific course of action to accomplish a task or solve a problem (Adigun and Nzima, 2021). Students with high academic self-efficacy have the likelihood of persevering in the midst of academic challenges resulting in higher level of self-belief and positive academic outcome (Leal, 2023). In essence, academic self-efficacy could help students in public secondary schools to boost their academic survival skills, by serving as an impetus which drives them to take action that could result in positive outcome in their examinations.

This study anchored on constructivism theory by John Dewey. He opines that learning is a social activity, and it is what people do together, by interacting with each other. Vygotsky (1978; 1987) argue that community plays an essential role in the process of making meaning. In essence, the environment in which children grow up has significant influence on how they think and what they think about. Therefore, all learning and teaching involves negotiating and sharing socially constituted knowledge. Vygotsky believes that the development of students' cognitive capacity stems from social interactions from guided learning within the purview of proximal development as these students and their colleagues co-construct knowledge. Few studies that have been conducted on academic survival were purely survey and they took place outside Nigeria (Hampton, 2020; Cassidy, 2016; Foulks, and Morrow, 1989). The fact that these studies were non-intervention studies and carried out outside Nigeria made the current study unique to the Nigerian context.

## 2. Objectives

- 1) Investigate the main effect of treatments in improving academic survival among the participants.
- 2) Examine the interaction effect of treatment and academic self-efficacy on academic survival among the participants

### 2.1 Hypothesis

**Ho1:** There is no significant main effect of treatments in improving academic survival among the participants.

**Ho2:** There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and academic self-efficacy on academic survival among the participants.

### 3. Method

The research was a quantitative study. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used. Three local governments were randomly selected in the Ibadan Metropolis. Simple random sampling technique was used for the selection of one school in each local government. In Ibadan North, Oba-Akinbiyi High School, Mokola, was selected for Intervention Group 1, in Ibadan North West, Army Barracks Grammar School, Letmuck Barracks was selected for Intervention Group 2, and in Ibadan South West, IMG High School Apata, was selected for the Control Group. The researcher screened 30 students who have been randomly selected across the three SS 2 classes of Science, Commercial and Arts, to get those with high dropout rate. 14 participants made the group (male = 8, female = 6). Kazdin's (1989) Academic Survival Skills scale with reliability coefficient of 0.724 was used for the assessment of participants before and after the interventions and B ulke, Grunschel and Dresel (2020) Dropout Intention Scale (DIS) with reliability coefficient of 0.919 was the screening instrument, Solberg, O'Brien, Villarreal, Kennel and Davis (1993) academic self-efficacy with reliability coefficient of 0.747 was the moderating variable used in the research. The method of data analysis used in this study was analysis of covariance (ANCOVA).

### 4. Results

There is no significant main effect of treatments in improving academic survival among the participants.

**Table 4.1:** Summary of 3x2x3 Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) of Treatments on Academic Survival

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	3522.16 <sup>a</sup>	16	220.14	2.31	.01	.34
Intercept	15366.73	1	15366.73	160.89	.00	.69
Covariate	149.06	1	149.06	1.56	.23	.02
Treatment	1093.69	2	546.85	5.73	.01	.44
Academic Self-Eff.	7.15	1	7.15	.075	.79	.00

**Ho1:** There is no significant main effect of treatments in improving academic survival among the participants.

The results from Table 4.1 showed that there was significant main effect of treatments in improving academic survival among the participants ( $F_{2, 30} = 5.73, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.44$ ). This is in contrast to the pre-test difference among the three groups which was not significant as expected. Relying on the result, the mean difference of the

participants exposed to either of the two therapies had better improvement on academic survival than those that were not exposed to any treatment (i.e., control group). This suggests that hypothesis one which proposed no significant mean group difference is invalid and stand rejected. This indicates that alternative hypothesis will rather be valid. Therefore, ACT and ERT were efficacious in improving academic survival among participants.

**Ho2:** There is no significant main effect of academic self-efficacy on academic survival among the participants.

The result in Table 4.1, in consonance to the null hypothesis stated above, the result confirmed no significant main effect of academic self-efficacy in improving academic survival among participants ( $F_{2, 30} = 0.08, p > 0.05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .001$ ). Furthermore, the  $\eta^2 = .001$  indicates that the main effect of academic self-efficacy statistically accounted for 0.1% change in improving academic survival among the participants. This result suggested that the null hypothesis should be accepted. Therefore, there is no significant main effect of academic self-efficacy in improving academic survival among participants. Since no significant main effect was observed, post-hoc analysis was not conducted.

## 5. Discussion

The study revealed that there is a significant effect of treatments (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Emotional Regulation Therapy) on academic survival. This shows that ACT and ERT are effective in improving the academic survival of students in secondary school, although at different levels. This is consistent with the findings of Renna *et al.* (2018) that emotional regulation therapy which focuses on the motivational responses of students with low survival skills in their studies has the potency to guarantee academic success. This implies that, ERT helps to deal with emotions of students and how the emotions can be adjusted at the right time as well as right quality to achieve the academic goals. This therefore lays credence to the significance of the environment of the students as advocated by the constructivism theory in helping to shape the academic survival competence of the public secondary school students.

The study revealed that there is no significant effect of academic self-efficacy on the academic survival of students. This is contrary to the findings of Bal-Taştan *et al.* (2018) who found that, there is significant effect of the teacher's self-efficacy and motivation on students' academic achievement in science education. This implies that students have not been able to develop positive behaviours by themselves which can help them accomplish tasks in schools. In essence, academic self-efficacy is a construct that helps public secondary school students to improve on their survival capacity. However this research opines that academic self-efficacy does not produce significant effect on academic survival. In essence, other factors could contribute to academic survival of the students than academic self-efficacy.

## 6. Conclusion

In hypothesis one, it was found that there was significant main effect of treatments in improving academic survival among the participants. Therefore, ACT and ERT were efficacious in improving academic survival among participants. Accordingly, there is significant main effect of treatments in improving academic survival. The mean score of experimental groups ACT and ERT were statistically different in improving academic survival, with ACT maintaining higher mean score than ERT, while the control group did not have any significant difference on the outcome variable. In hypothesis two, there was no significant main effect of academic self-efficacy in improving academic survival among participants. Therefore, there is no significant main effect of academic self-efficacy in improving academic survival among participants.

### 6.1 Recommendations

- 1) That ACT and ERT should be applied on students in public secondary schools, especially those that have the likelihood of not completing their studies.
- 2) That students' academic self-efficacy should be enhanced by applying a combination of ERT and ACT to develop the ability of the public secondary school students to believe more in the ability to succeed in their studies.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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