




The Effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy on Difficulties in Emotion Regulation and Distress Tolerance in Students with High Academic Stress

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Introduction, paragraph beginning “University students are exposed to a broad range of academic, interpersonal, financial, and developmental pressures...”, the conceptualization of academic stress is generally appropriate but remains somewhat descriptive. The authors should strengthen the theoretical framing by explicitly linking academic stress to a specific theoretical model (e.g., transactional stress theory or cognitive appraisal theory), thereby enhancing conceptual rigor and positioning the study within a clearer theoretical paradigm.

In the paragraph “One of the major psychological variables associated with academic stress is difficulty in emotion regulation,” the discussion of emotion regulation is comprehensive; however, it lacks differentiation between trait and state emotion regulation processes. Clarifying whether the study targets stable individual differences or context-dependent regulatory processes would improve construct validity and interpretation of outcomes.

In the paragraph “Following the initial screening process, 30 students... were selected using purposive sampling,” the combination of purposive sampling and random assignment raises concerns about external validity. The authors should clarify the sampling frame and discuss potential selection bias, particularly given the small sample size.

In the Measures section (“The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS)... was used”), the authors report prior psychometric properties but do not provide reliability coefficients (e.g., Cronbach’s alpha) for the current sample. Reporting internal consistency for this specific dataset is essential for methodological rigor.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the paragraph “Another important psychological construct closely related to academic stress and emotional functioning is distress tolerance,” the operational definition of distress tolerance is appropriate, but the authors do not adequately distinguish between behavioral and perceived distress tolerance. Given that the DTS primarily measures perceived tolerance, this limitation should be explicitly acknowledged in this section to avoid conceptual ambiguity.

In the paragraph “Recent evidence indicates that academic stress, emotion regulation difficulties, and distress tolerance are interconnected psychological processes...”, the authors propose a causal chain but do not empirically test mediation or moderation relationships. The manuscript would benefit from reframing this as a theoretical assumption rather than an implied tested model, or alternatively, incorporating mediation analysis if data permit.

In the paragraph “Among the contemporary psychological interventions designed to enhance emotional functioning... ACT has gained substantial empirical support,” the authors provide a general overview of ACT but omit a structured description of its six core processes (acceptance, defusion, present-moment awareness, self-as-context, values, committed action). Including these explicitly would improve theoretical completeness and align the manuscript with standard ACT literature.

In the paragraph “Empirical studies have provided growing evidence regarding the effectiveness of ACT...”, the literature review is adequate but somewhat selective. The authors should critically evaluate inconsistent findings or boundary conditions (e.g., populations where ACT is less effective) to avoid confirmation bias and improve scholarly balance.

In the final paragraph of the Introduction (“Despite the growing body of evidence supporting the effectiveness of ACT...”), the research gap is stated but not sufficiently operationalized. The authors should explicitly articulate the novelty of combining emotion regulation difficulties and distress tolerance as joint outcomes, rather than treating them as parallel variables.

In the Methods section, paragraph “The present study was an applied research project conducted using a quasi-experimental method...”, the authors describe the design but do not justify the choice of quasi-experimental methodology over randomized controlled trial design. A rationale addressing feasibility constraints or ethical considerations would strengthen methodological transparency.

Response: Revised and uploaded the manuscript.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.