

Effect Of Emotional Regulation On Student Disengagement Among Secondary School In The Ibadan Metropolis

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Abstract: Student Disengagement, a negative attitude of students towards participation in academic activities that manifests in form of absenteeism, low effort, decreased achievement and increased dropout rates among in-school adolescents has been a major concern among the stakeholders in the educational sector. Studies have shown that in-school adolescents disengage from academic activities in Nigeria, particularly in Ibadan, due to lack of interest in school activities, nonchalant attitudes toward their academic pursuits leading to high rate of dropout. Previous studies on student disengagement focused largely on causative and predictive factors of disengagement, with little attention paid to intervention. This study, therefore, was designed to determine the effect of Emotional Regulation Therapy in managing student disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria. The moderating effect of Academic Self-efficacy was also examined. The pretest-posttest control group quasi-experimental design with a 2x3 factorial matrix was adopted. The simple random sampling technique was used to select two Local Government Areas (LGAs) Ibadan South-East and Ibadan North-East in Ibadan and one Secondary School in each of the LGAs. Sixty in-school adolescents who gave their consent and scored above the threshold of 30 using Davidson, Blackstock, Bye, Clothier, Klupp, Nickson, Turner and Williams' Student Disengagement Indicator Scale ($\alpha=0.89$). The schools were randomly assigned to ERT (30) and Control (30) groups. Student Disengagement ($\alpha=0.88$) and Academic Self-Efficacy ($\alpha=0.89$) scales were also used to measure students disengagement as well as self-efficacy. The intervention lasted for eight weeks. The data collected were analysed using Analysis of covariance and Bonferroni post-hoc test at 0.05 level of significance. There was a significant main effect of treatment on student disengagement $F_{(1, 53)} = 169.758, p < .05, \eta^2 = 0.762$. The participants in the control group experienced increased student disengagement ($\bar{x} = 72.18$), more than those in the Emotional Regulation Therapy ($\bar{x} = 59.27$) groups. There was no significant main effect of Academic Self-efficacy on student disengagement. There was no significant interaction effect of treatment and Academic Self-efficacy on student disengagement. Emotional regulation therapy reduced student disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria. Counselling and educational psychologists should be encouraged to make use of this intervention when dealing with the concept of among students.

Keywords: Student disengagement, In-school adolescents, Emotional regulation therapy Academic self-efficacy The Ibadan Metropolis

Introduction

Student disengagement is a state in which students lack interest, motivation and involvement in their academic pursuits, which could lead to reduced achievement and disconnection from the learning process. Formal schools are institutions where students learn to appropriate what the society wants them to contribute for the betterment of themselves and the society. Students who realise this idea view schooling as essential to their long-term wellbeing. They participate in academic and non-academic activities at school, they internalize education into their way of lives thereby develop a sense of belonging. These students tend to have good relations with teachers, school staff and with other students. However, some students do not share this sense of belonging and do not believe their school experiences have strong bearing on their future. Gradually they withdraw from school life and become disengaged. At times, students who are disengaged from school activities exhibit disruptive behaviour and exert a negative influence on other students. Student disengagement can manifest as decreased participation, increased absenteeism, declining grades, and reduced overall academic achievement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris, 2004). Students often experience various emotional challenges that can hinder their abilities to regulate their emotions and participate effectively in learning. Disengagement is often associated with negative emotional experiences, stress, anxiety and depression, which can further hinder students' ability to regulate their emotions and engage effectively in learning (Skinner, Kindermann, and Furrer, 2009).

One of the challenges facing the contemporary teachers is student disengagement. Each school year in and out, there are students who show indifference to educational activities (Jablon and Wilkinson, 2006). There are students who withdraw easily in the face of challenges and difficulties. During a learning activity, they involve in the discussion making irrelevant comments in order to disorientate the class and attract "negative" classmates' and teachers' attention. Disengaged students risk peer rejection and thus feel marginalized (Curby, *et al.*, 2014). Students who are bored, restless, disruptive, and disengaged risk withdrawal of support or increasing coercion from teacher (Findlay, 2013). Disengagement has been cited as a major cause of deviant behaviour at school, truanting, and low academic achievement (Harris, 2008). There is a great deal of evidence that dropping out of school is a process of gradual disengagement from learning that occurs over many years and often begins in elementary school (Appleton, Christenson and Furlong, 2008). Student disengagement, as a social phenomenon, has taken concerning dimensions. Educators and research community have become alarmed at increasingly high levels of student disengagement (Findlay, 2013).

There has been a considerable volume of research predicting disengagement and its effects. The literature suggests that there are risk factors for both students disengagement and poor achievement that are evident when children enter school, and these risk factors are cumulative and predictive of longer-term life outcomes (Kola and Kehinde, 2019; Odedokun, 2014; 2016). It is not an uncontested viewpoint though, some studies have promoted debate about whether or not risk factors associated with earlier stages of schooling or personal background factors can predict accurately later levels of student disengagement from school (Gleason and Dynarski, 1998). Such work makes the point that student disengagement during the secondary school years is not simply the consequence of family-related risk factors, such as poverty, low parental education or poor cognitive ability. It goes on to indicate that many children who grow up in poor families, or have behaviour problems and cognitive difficulties during their primary school years, can still have good outcomes, graduating from high school.

Inadequate teaching methods which are lack of variety in instructional techniques fails to cater for diverse learning styles, making it challenging for some students to remain engaged. A monotonous teaching approach that does not cater to diverse learning styles can hinder students' motivation to participate (National Research Council, 2000). Demanding social and emotional challenges is another factor; adolescence is a period of significant emotional and social development. Adolescents face various social and emotional issues, such as peer pressure and mental health concerns, which can impact their engagement in school (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2020). Students may be dealing with personal problems, social pressures, or mental health issues that hinder their ability to focus on academics. A sense of isolation can lead to decreased motivation and participation in school activities.

A lack of support from teachers, peers, and family members can lead to disengagement and disconnection from the school community (Aina and Ayodele, 2018). The widespread use of technology, particularly smartphones and social media, if not well managed could distract students from their studies and affect their focus (Rosen, Carrier, and Cheever, 2013). Intense academic pressure, excessive workload, and the fear of failure can create high-stress levels for students, ultimately leading to burnout and disengagement. Academic pressure and fear of failure can lead to heightened stress levels among students, potentially resulting in disengagement (Chukwuedo, Mbagwu, and Ogbuanya, 2021; Hagenauer and Volet, 2014). Disconnected School Environment is another factor of disengagement, schools that fail to provide a positive and nurturing environment may contribute to student disengagement (Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson and Schaps, 1995). Addressing the emotional factors underlying student disengagement can lead to improved academic outcomes and overall well-being. Therefore, the focus of this study is to investigate the effects of Emotional Regulation Psychotherapy on student disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Emotional regulation refers to the ability to manage and control one's emotions in adaptive ways. It involves recognizing and understanding emotions, regulating their intensity and duration, and responding effectively to emotional experiences. Research has shown that emotional regulation plays a vital role in psychological well-being, academic performance, and interpersonal relationships (Gross, 2015; Zeman *et al.*, 2006). Students who struggle with emotional regulation may exhibit disengagement behaviour such as reduced motivation, withdrawal, and difficulty concentrating (Brackett *et al.*, 2011).

Emotional regulation interventions encompass various techniques, such as cognitive reappraisal, expressive writing, mindfulness-based practices, and emotion-focused coping strategies. These techniques aim to enhance students' ability to regulate emotions, cope with stress, and improve overall emotional well-being. Researches have shown that effective emotional regulation skills are associated with increased academic engagement and positive learning outcomes (Eisenberg *et al.*, 2019; Gross, 2015). Emotional regulation encompasses various processes, such as recognizing, understanding, and managing emotions. According to Gross's (1998) influential model, emotional regulation includes five key components: situation selection, situation modification, intentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation. Successful emotional regulation allows individuals to respond adaptively to emotional situations and avoid overwhelming negative emotions.

Conversely, poor emotional regulation is associated with increased student disengagement. When students struggle to manage their emotions, they may experience heightened stress, anxiety, or frustration, which can hinder their ability to focus on learning tasks and interact with peers and teachers (Baker *et al.*, 2019; Galla, 2016). Emotional regulation also plays a crucial role in cognitive functioning.

This study explores academic self-efficacy as moderating variables. Academic self-efficacy, a concept rooted in Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory, refers to an individual's confidence in their ability to successfully complete academic tasks and attain specific educational goals. It is shaped by past experiences, social influences, and self-assessment of one's capabilities. Self-efficacy may be defined as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986). In educational settings, academic self-efficacy plays a crucial role and is defined as learners' judgments about their ability to successfully attain educational goals (Elias and MacDonald, 2007). Self-efficacious students perform better academically because they monitor and self-regulate their impulses and persist in the face of difficulty (Komarraju and Nadler, 2013). Academic self-efficacy also leads to improved grades, both directly and indirectly, because self-efficacious students tend to set higher goals for their academic achievement (Pajares, 2002). Research on Lent's model has further confirmed the key role of self-efficacy as a predictor of academic self-efficacy (Lent *et al.*, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

Student disengagement has become a persistent and multifaceted problem within the field of education that warrants careful examination and intervention. It is characterized by a range of behaviours and attitudes, including reduced motivation, declining interest in learning, absenteeism, and academic underachievement. This phenomenon not only jeopardizes students' academic success but also has long-term consequences for their personal and professional development. Disengaged students may experience increased stress, anxiety, and decreased self-esteem due to academic struggles and a lack of motivation. These negatively impacts their overall well-being and mental health. High levels of student disengagement contribute to lower graduation rates, which have broader societal implications, including reduced workforce readiness and economic productivity.

Although emotional regulation is recognized as essential skill for overall well-being and academic success, there is limited empirical evidence addressing their effectiveness in mitigating student disengagement, which is a critical issue affecting educational outcomes and long-term socio-emotional development in secondary schools. Hence, the study investigates the efficacy of Emotional Regulation Psychotherapy in reducing student disengagement among secondary school students in the Ibadan Metropolis.

Objectives of the Study

The study examined the efficacy of emotional regulation psychotherapy on student disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan and to see the moderating effect of academic self-efficacy

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

H0₁: There is no significant main effect of the treatments (emotional regulation therapy) on student disengagement among secondary school students the Ibadan Metropolis.

H0₂: There is no significant main effect of academic self-efficacy on student disengagement among secondary school students the Ibadan Metropolis.

H0₃: There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and academic self-efficacy on student disengagement among secondary school students the Ibadan Metropolis.

Methodology

Design

The study adopted a general strategy which is pretest-posttest, quasi-experimental design that has a 2X3 factorial matrix in which the samples (students) were randomly selected; they were also randomly divided into two groups and lastly the treatments were randomly allotted to the groups. Essentially, the row is made up of the one intervention (emotional regulation) and the control. This was crossed with academic self-efficacy which was mixed at three levels (high, moderate, low).

Population, Sampling Technique and Sample

Participants in this study are Senior Secondary School II students. They were chosen from two schools in two local governments in Ibadan city. Multi-stage sampling method was adopted to select sample for this study. Simple random sampling procedure was first adopted in selecting two local governments which were used in the study. Then from each of the two local governments, one secondary school was selected randomly. Finally, from each of the two selected schools, forty (40) participants were randomly selected. One of the schools was randomly assigned to the experimental groups and the other school was assigned the control group.

Instrumentation

The instruments used were:

Student Disengagement Indicator Scale (SDIS) for screening

Student Disengagement Scale (SDS)

Self-efficacy Scale by Jinks and Morgan (1999)

Student Disengagement Indicator Scale (SDIS) for screening

The Student Disengagement Indicator Scale (SDIS) by Handelsman, Briggs Sullivan and Towler (2005) was used as a screening tool in the study. It consists of 20 items with five response options, which ranged from very characteristic of me (5) to not at all

characteristic of me (1). Examples of the items in the scale include: coming to class every day; finding ways to make the lesson interesting to me. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of the instrument is 0.91. The test-retest reliability of the instrument yielded 0.89.

Student Disengagement Scale (SDS)

Student Disengagement Scale (SDS) by Kember and Leung (2009) was used to measure the level of participant's disengagement. It has 35 items out of which 18 items were modified and adapted for this study. The SDQ uses a Likert-type scale with five response options, which range from Completely Disagree (1) to Completely Agree (5). Examples of the items in the scale include: the teacher try hard to help us understand the lesson; the communication between the teacher and students is good. The test-retest reliability of the instrument yielded 0.88.

Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (ASES)

The academic self-efficacy of the students was measured with self-efficacy scale by Jinks and Morgan (1999). The original version is made up of 34 items out of which 20 items were adapted by the researcher to which the respondents are to indicate the extent of their agreement or otherwise to the scale. The test is placed on five points Likert scale of Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The individual's rating for the 20 items formed a single self-efficacy score. The reported reliability and validity estimates found by the original author was found to be .82 while the test-retest reliability of the instrument yielded 0.89.

Procedure for Treatment

The treatment programme lasted for eight weeks. A forty minutes session was held in each group. The participants were randomly assigned to two groups; one experimental groups and one control group. Each of the session apart for the first and the last was divided into four parts: Review, Opening, Discussion and Closing. The first five minutes was used for reviewing the last session's work, discussion and questions that had arose. This was subsequently followed up by the researchers sharing the aims of aims of that session with the participants and then introduced the new topic through vocal teaching and expression. At the end of the session, both the experimental and control groups were subjected to post-test using the same scale to assert results derive from the treatment. Participants in the experimental groups were exposed to (Emotional Regulation Therapy). Group counselling was organised for the members of the control group one week after the post-test exercise to compensate them for participating in the study. The following is the brief description of the session:

Treatment session

Experimental Group 1-(Emotion Regulation Therapy)

Session 1: General Orientation and administration of the instrument to obtain pre-test scores.

Session 2: Concept of student disengagement and its indicators

Session 3: Identifying symptoms of student disengagement and its consequences.

Session 4: Emotional Regulation Therapy and its importance

Session 5: Emotional Regulation Components and Techniques

Session 6: Teaching of Emotional Regulation Strategies

Session 7: Application of ERT Techniques using the 4Rs

Session 8: Conclusion and administration of post-test

Control Group

Session 1 Introduction

Session 2: Teaching on "Food Hygiene and its Benefits"

Session 3: Post-test Evaluation and Concluding Remarks

Data Analysis

The data collected from the two groups was subjected Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA)

Results

Hypothesis One: There is no significant main effect of the treatment (emotional regulation) on student disengagement among in school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria

Table 1: ANCOVA summary for treatment and academic self-efficacy

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Partial Eta Squared
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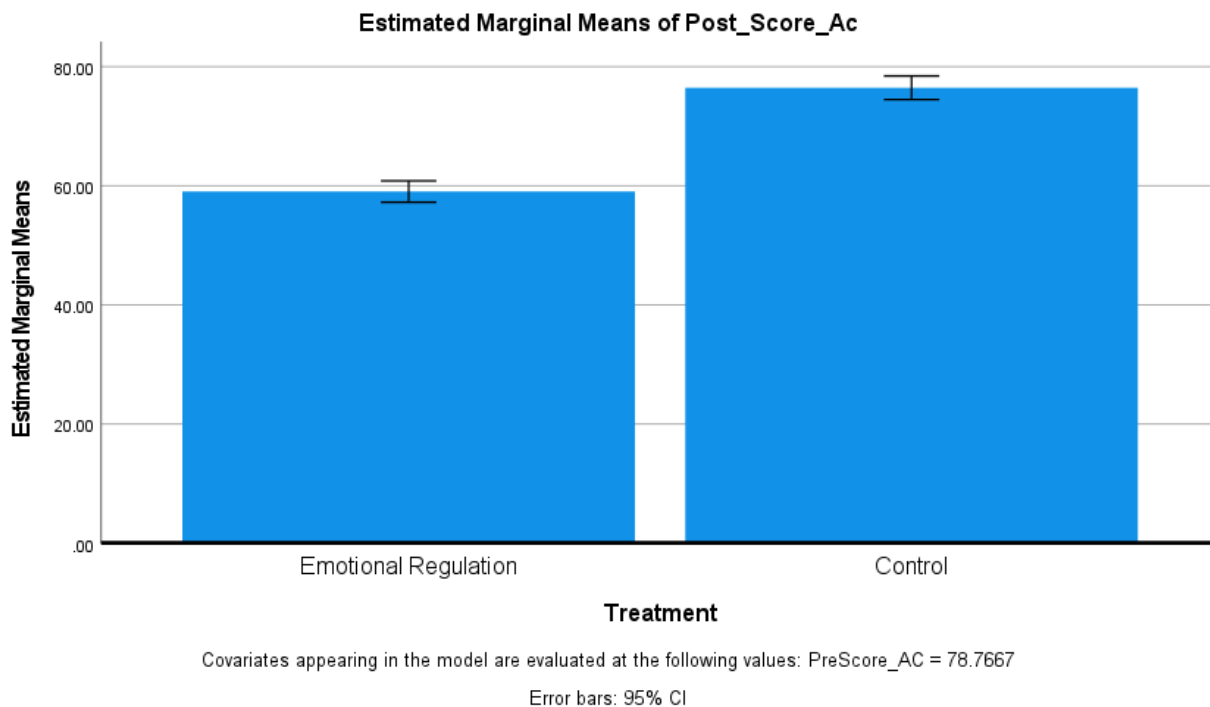
PreScore	27.523	1	27.523	1.229	.023
TRT	3800.180	1	3800.180	169.758*	.762
Acad Self-Efficacy	7.250	2	3.625	.162	.006
TRT * ACA	30.850	2	15.425	.689	.025
Error	1186.448	53	22.386		

a. R Squared = .796 (Adjusted R Squared = .772)

A 2x3 ANCOVA with overall pre-test score (covariate) shows a significant main effect of Emotional Regulation on Student Disengagement, $F_{(1, 53)} = 169.758$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = 0.762$). However, the independent moderating effect of academic self-efficacy was not established, $F_{(2, 53)} = .162$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .006$). There was also no interaction effect between treatment and academic self-efficacy, $F_{(2, 53)} = .689$; $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .025$). The adjusted R-Squared was obtained as 0.772, indicating that the model accounts for 72.2% of the total variance in the elimination of disengagement.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant main effect of academic self- efficacy on student disengagement among in school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Table 2 indicates that there was no significant main effect of academic self-efficacy on students disengagement, $F_{(2, 53)} = .162$; $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .006$). The null hypothesis was therefore accepted. The estimated marginal means were shows that participants who have low self-efficacy (68.24) did not have superior post-test learning outcome score than moderate self-efficacy (67.62) and high self-efficacy participants (67.43).



Hypothesis Three. There is no significant interaction effect of treatment and academic self efficacy on student disengagement among in school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria.

Table 4.1 indicates that there was no significant interaction effect of academic self-efficacy on student disengagement, ($F_{(2, 53)} = .689$; $P > 0.05$, $\eta = .025$). The null hypothesis was therefore accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The result showed that there was a significant main effect of the treatment (emotional regulation therapy) on student disengagement among secondary school students the Ibadan Metropolis. By implication; it means emotional regulation therapy is effective in managing student disengagement among the participants. Emotion regulation therapy has been shown to independently and significantly reduce student disengagement. Emotion regulation therapy helps students develop the internal capacity to manage distress, creating a balanced psychological approach to academic engagement. The finding is consistent with findings of other researchers such as Gross, 2015; Mennin *et al.*, 2017 who revealed that these psychotherapeutic approaches significantly influence students' ability to stay engaged in learning, particularly among adolescents who experience emotional distress. Emotion regulation therapy equips students with skills to recognize, understand, and modulate their emotions effectively. By implication, students who struggle with emotional regulation will often experience academic disengagement due to heightened stress, anxiety, and negative affect. Empirical evidence also supports the significant effect of emotional regulation therapy in reducing disengagement. For instance, a study by Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema, and Schweizer (2010) found that maladaptive emotional regulation strategies, such as rumination and avoidance, were linked to decreased academic persistence and increased disengagement. Conversely, students who participated in emotion regulation therapy demonstrated improvements in concentration, classroom participation, and academic achievement (Davis and Levine, 2013).

Several studies affirm that emotional dysregulation is a predictor of disengagement (Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers and Robinson, 2007). Emotional regulation therapy helps students identify emotional triggers, practice mindfulness, and develop healthy coping mechanisms. A study by Graziano, Reavis, Keane, and Calkins (2007) showed that children with poor emotional regulation were more likely to display inattentiveness and behavioral disengagement in class. In contrast, interventions targeting emotional regulation skills significantly improved school engagement levels. Furthermore, Gross and Thompson's (2007) Process Model of Emotion Regulation indicates that modifying one's emotional response early (antecedent-focused strategies like cognitive reappraisal) or later (response-focused strategies like suppression) can significantly influence behavior and attention. The plausible explanation for this finding is that, students who regulate their emotions effectively are more likely to stay engaged, manage academic stress, and respond constructively to challenges. Emotional regulation therapy enhances emotional competence, which helps students manage frustration, reduce avoidance behavior, and build resilience;

The result showed that there was no significant main effect of academic self-efficacy on student disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria. These finding contrasts with Wang and Eccles (2013) found that both emotional regulation and self-efficacy independently influenced student engagement, but their combined effect did not produce significant interaction results. Similarly, Skinner and Pitzer (2012) reported that while self-efficacy and emotional regulations were each important predictors of engagement, their interaction was not statistically significant. Pekrun *et al.* (2017) suggested that emotional regulation primarily affects emotional engagement, whereas self-efficacy influences cognitive engagement, indicating that these factors may operate through distinct pathways rather than interact synergistically. This suggests that emotional regulation, de-reflection, and academic self-efficacy may exert independent effects on disengagement rather than a cumulative effect.

The result showed that there was no significant interaction effect of treatments academic self-efficacy on student disengagement among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria. Empirical research supports Wang and Eccles (2013) who found that emotional regulation and self-efficacy each influenced engagement, their combined effect did not produce significant interaction results. Skinner and Pitzer (2012) established that self-efficacy and emotional regulation were both important predictors of engagement, but their interaction was not statistically significant. Pekrun *et al.* (2017) showed that emotional regulation influenced emotional engagement, while self-efficacy influenced cognitive engagement, suggesting they may operate through different pathways rather than interact. One possible explanation for this is that emotional regulation and academic self-efficacy each exert independent effects on disengagement rather than working together in a cumulative way.

Implication of Findings

The results of this research demonstrated the efficacy of emotional regulation on student disengagement among in-school adolescents. The findings have implication for the school counsellors, educators, educational psychologists and other researchers. As part of their foundational research, these professionals may identify areas in which more investigations are needed. This has the additional consequence of encouraging students who exhibit disengagement to engage in class activities more often in order to improve their academic performance.

The results of this research may also assist educational psychologists and school counsellors, who are the closest sources of psychological support by incorporating emotional regulation therapy strategies into the curriculum to promote students' ability to identify, understand, and manage emotions, which is foundational for engagement and learning. Effective emotional regulation minimizes behavioral issues, leading to more focused and cooperative classroom environments conducive to learning. As students become more emotionally regulated, teachers report fewer conflicts and better rapport, which further reinforces positive student engagement. Students with strong emotional regulation skills can handle academic stress and pressure better, leading to sustained attention, persistence in tasks, and improved academic outcomes.

The effectiveness of Emotional Regulation Therapy in addressing student disengagement underscores the need for their systematic integration into educational systems. By prioritizing emotional and psychological well-being, schools can cultivate environments where all students are empowered to engage meaningfully with their education. The long-term impact includes improved academic performance, reduced dropout rates, and the development of emotionally resilient and purpose-driven learners.

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