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**VAK LEARNING STYLE AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT: A
PERSPECTIVE FROM MALAYSIA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the learning style and its relationship with student engagement. Many reveal that static in existing learning style or not willing to adopt others learning style has become one of the reasons for decreasing students' engagement. To increase student engagement, instructor must identify first the needs of student, then proceed with match the student learning style and instructor's delivery method. The Visual-Auditory-Kinaesthetic (VAK) is selected due to present purposes; VAK is the simplest learning style. The findings from this research may provide valuable insight in suiting or matching the best learning styles with the study environment, then help to increase the level of student engagement and, hence improve students' academic performance. The objective of this study is to identify the relationship between VAK learning styles and student engagement, and 2) to recognize the learning styles that preferred among business student in private university. Data were collected from respondent by using the questionnaire method. The data was tested for its construct reliability and correlation was conducted to test the hypothesis. The findings show that Visual learning style has stronger relationship with student engagement.

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Keywords: VAK, learning style, student engagement, private university, Malaysia.



1. Introduction

Student engagement reflects student motivation towards their learning process (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). In previous literature, student engagement able to improve students' achievements (Klem & Connell, 2004). This scenario telling that it is crucial for higher institution to have high level of student engagement.

Learning style plays a major role in attracting or stimulating students engagement; it might help the students to improve their study achievement. (Bryson & Hand, 2007). The success of students' learning style depends on how well the students adapt and respond to the learning environment (MacKeracher, 2004). In view of instructor, they are advised to utilize a dynamic learning instructing in order to obtain the best result (McLaughlin et al., 2014). This paper uses VAK learning style. VAK is a well-known learning style theory and is accepted globally due to its benefits in all levels of learning and training (Gholami & Bagheri, 2013). VAK learning styles include Visual, Auditory, and Kinaesthetic. Oxford (1995) outlined that Visual learning style associates to eye-related behaviour such as 1) reading books, any written manuscripts, or 2) watching visual channels including videos. He also referred Auditory as an individual that engage with oral-related activities. Those individuals are more attractive to discussion session, enjoy to participate in conversation and work group. Kinsella (1995) highlighted that Kinaesthetic learning style are involve with physical movement. For example, a field trip visit, where in this event, the learners are required to do some actions such as do interview, do some observations and make report. It can be said that Kinaesthetic learner focuses on hands on learning style.

2. Problem Statement

Many higher institution faced a problem related to student engagement (Taylor & Parsons, 2011). In addition, some scholars in pedagogical reveal that the lower the student engage in a classroom, the lesser the impact of student achievement in class. It shows that voluntarily participation in class is highly needed (Dasari, 2009; Zainal Abidin Sayadin, 2007; Tani, 2005); the instructor/ teacher or lecturer needs to play a smart role in gaining students' participations in class. In recent years, disengagement between students and learning activities in the class has become an issue within Malaysia context (Dasari, 2009; Thang & Azarina Alias, 2007; Zainal Abidin Sayadin, 2007). Previous scholars referred this disengagement behaviour as 'negative passive behaviour' (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani, 2011). Siti and Nik highlight that this negative behaviour refers to student that choose to be quiet, avoid from involve in any of class activities, and have no study interest at all. Surprisingly, Lim (2017) also highlights that this negative passive behaviour may due to the teaching style (one way teaching). Again, instructor skill plays a role in suiting students' need and students' learning style. Hence, it assists to gain more numbers of student to be engaged in the class as well as the activities within class. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the relationship between learning style and student engagement in context Malaysia private university in east coast Peninsular Malaysia.

3. Research Questions

In this paper a research question is developed. This research question is the keystone for this paper. The research question (RQ) is as follow:

RQ 1: Does VAK learning styles relate to student engagement?

This research question is derived to explore on how learning style able to improve the student engagement; the answer from this RQ1, may provide the direction of relationships for each of these VAK learning style. This is important due to identify which of these learning style able to improve student engagement. Furthermore, it is important as well to prove that VAK learning style able to improve student engagement; to support findings in previous literature.

4. Purpose of the Study

The exploration of VAK learning style within student engagement area may provide some benefits in terms of theoretical and practical perspective. From context of theoretical, it would expand the existing literature and enrich it with various findings pertaining to exercising VAK learning style in stimulating student engagement. Meanwhile, in aspect practical, this paper may suggest to higher institution the best alternative to be practiced in the classroom as a way to improve level of student engagement.

5. Research Methods

Self-administered survey is used in this research. The survey were distributed to two well-known private universities in east coast Peninsular Malaysia: Pahang. The two universities are DRB Hicom University and Universiti Tenaga Nasional. The respond were received from 342 respondents; 150 from DRB Hicom University and 192 from Universiti Tenaga Nasional. This research uses Pearson Bivariate Correlation due to its focus that is to find the relationship between two variables. The two variables are learning style and student engagement. This Bivariate analysis able to analyse data objectively and systematically, ultimately produce less likely biased and more consistency result. This result able to explain the decision in detail and are generally useful.

5.1. Hypotheses development

In consistent with the findings in literature review, several hypotheses were developed. The hypotheses are as follows:

H1: There is relationships between Visual learning styles and student engagement.

H2: There is relationships between Auditory learning styles and student engagement.

H3: There is relationships between Kinaesthetic learning styles and student engagement.

6. Findings

Findings from this research reveals the analysis on the relationship between Learning Style and Student Engagement. The Correlation Table displays the result of this relationship.

6.1. Assessment on relationship between Learning Style and Student Engagement.

In this section, it illustrates the findings on correlation between Learning Style and Student Engagement. Table below shows the detail.

Table 01. Correlations analysis for learning style

		Visual	Auditory	Kineasthetic	Engagement
Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.620**	.472**	.504**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	342	342	342	342

All the hypotheses were supported. All p-values are less than 0.0, indicating that the correlation between all learning styles (Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic) and student engagement are highly significant.

7. Conclusion

In sum, the finding confirms that VAK learning style associates with student engagement. This indicates that VAK might be a tool that can be used in a classroom to transform from the negative passive behaviour to positive active behaviour. If no action taken to shifting from negative to positive behaviour, it may dragging the students generate a pool of passive students.

This present study provides significant note that diversified in teaching skills are needed to enhance student engagement. Following this, the process of identifying students' needs in aspect of learning outcome need to be considered. This process then is expect to assist higher institution to get a perfect match between teaching skill and learning style. This relationship is essential in generating student engagement.

7.1. Limitation

The present finding reveals that Visual has the strongest relationship with student engagement as compared others. But this relationship alone is not concrete enough in describing that Visual is the most preferred VAK learning style. The lacking in this paper, no further analysis had been done in identifying which of the VAK learning style is most preferred by the student.

7.2. Further research

In relation with the note mentioned in limitation, this paper suggests that it is important to identify which of the VAK learning style is most preferred by the student.

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