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Evaluating Student Engagement Through Student-Centered Learning Approaches In A Sports Marketing Course Among Undergraduate Students

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Abstract: *Student-centered learning is widely recognized as an effective approach for enhancing student engagement and academic performance in higher education. This study aims to evaluate the relationship between student-centered learning constructs, namely teaching methods, assessment, and lecturer roles, with student performance among Sports Management students taking the Sports Marketing course at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). A quantitative research design was employed using purposive sampling involving 70 respondents. Data were collected through an adapted questionnaire consisting of 18 items, with high internal reliability recorded at Cronbach's alpha of 0.949. The data were analysed using Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis through SPSS version 29. The results showed that all three constructs had a significant positive relationship with student performance at the 0.05 level of significance, with assessment displaying the strongest correlation coefficient of 0.727. Multiple regression analysis indicated that assessment was the only significant predictor of student performance, explaining 56% of the variance. The findings suggest that assessment plays a more prominent role in influencing student performance compared to teaching methods and lecturer roles. It is therefore essential for higher education institutions to emphasize structured guidance, reflective debriefing, and continuous mentoring through effective assessment practices to promote engagement and enhance learning outcomes.*
Keywords: *Student-Centered Learning, Assessment, Teaching Method, Lecturer Role, Sports Marketing*

INTRODUCTION

Students' engagement has become one of the most critical predictors of success in higher education internationally, influencing academic achievement, student retention, motivation, and future employability. When students feel actively involved and empowered in their learning community, they tend to reinvest that motivation into their studies, resulting in both immediate and long-term benefits that, in turn, continue to strengthen their engagement (Bond & Bedenlier, 2019). This cyclical relationship highlights that student engagement is not merely a by-product of learning but a central component of the educational process itself. Engaged students demonstrate higher levels of attention, persistence, and enthusiasm in their academic tasks, which, in turn, lead to deeper understanding and stronger academic performance. Academic engagement mediates the relationship between academic self-efficacy and academic performance. (Meng & Zhang, 2023). Therefore, enhancing student engagement through active

learning strategies, supportive teaching practices, and collaborative environments is vital to sustaining continuous motivation and long-term educational success. The global importance of fostering engagement provides a foundation for examining how many strategies could be implemented within the Malaysian educational context.

Active learning strategies, such as group discussions, problem-solving tasks, and case-based learning, have been consistently shown to enhance students' motivation, classroom participation, and academic persistence within Malaysian higher education, where blended and interactive approaches further strengthen cognitive and emotional engagement. The collective findings from recent Malaysian studies suggest that active learning strategies yield multidimensional benefits for student engagement. Specifically, when instructors implement collaborative, case-based, and technology-enhanced learning approaches, students exhibit stronger participation, sustained motivation, and improved academic performance, underscoring the effectiveness of modern pedagogical practices in fostering engagement and retention. (Ahmed et al., 2024; Awang-Hashim et al., 2023; Md Nawi et al., 2021). These observations highlight the critical role of student-centered learning in promoting physical and intellectual learning, thereby setting the stage for evaluating its effectiveness in Malaysian higher education.

Student-centered approaches are increasingly recognized as effective strategies to enhance engagement. Despite the increasing emphasis on student-centered learning, numerous challenges remain in ensuring meaningful engagement among students. One pressing issue is that engagement is often uneven, with some students actively participating while others remain passive, limiting the overall effectiveness of the approach. This problem highlights the need to evaluate how well student-centered methods are being implemented in practice and whether they truly foster deeper engagement. Therefore, this study aims to explore student engagement in relation to student-centered learning approaches, to identify existing strengths, address gaps, and uncover opportunities to improve overall learning outcomes.

Despite the growing adoption of student-centered learning (SCL) in Malaysian higher education, existing studies have predominantly examined SCL as a holistic construct or focused on isolated teaching strategies without systematically comparing the relative influence of its core components. In particular, limited empirical research has simultaneously examined teaching methods, assessment practices, and lecturer roles as distinct predictors of student

performance within discipline-specific contexts such as sports marketing. Furthermore, studies in the Malaysian context remain scarce, especially those employing quantitative approaches to determine which SCL component most strongly predicts academic performance. Addressing this gap, the present study evaluates the relationships between teaching methods, assessment, lecturer roles, and student performance among Sports Management students enrolled in a Sports Marketing course at higher learning institution, thereby extending prior research by offering evidence-based insights into the most influential elements of student-centered learning.

Problem Statement

Although Malaysia has taken steps to promote student-centered learning across higher education, several challenges persist in its implementation. Many students remain accustomed to traditional, lecturer-centered teaching methods and continue to exhibit a spoon-fed mentality, depending heavily on instructors for direction and answers. Many students prefer spoon-feeding because it gives easy access to "right answers"; this preference can impede self-directed learning. (Khan, 2018). This dependency often results in passive classroom behavior, where students are reluctant to participate, think critically, or engage in independent inquiry. Muslim et al. (2018) stated that a rigid adherence to existing learning styles and an unwillingness to adopt new approaches have become key factors contributing to the decline in students' engagement. Such attitudes indicate that many learners are not yet ready to fully embrace the autonomy and active involvement required in student-centered environments. As a result, the effectiveness of student-centered learning depends not only on institutional support and teaching strategies but also on transforming students' learning culture and mindset toward greater independence and self-directed engagement. Therefore, this study seeks to examine student engagement within the context of student-centered learning approaches, aiming to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for enhancing learning outcomes.

Literature Review

Student-Centered Learning

Student-centered learning (SCL) is an umbrella term for pedagogical approaches that shift the emphasis from teacher-led transmission of content to learners' active participation, choice, and responsibility for meaning-making. SCL is grounded in constructivist theory and related frameworks such as self-determination theory, and typically includes strategies such as problem-based learning, case-based instruction, collaborative work, peer teaching, and

formative feedback that scaffold learner autonomy and reflection. SCL is frequently described as an educational approach that requires active teaching and learning strategies. (Elena Glava et al., 2024). These strategies place learners at the core of the educational process by encouraging SCL approaches. Problem-based learning engages students in a real-world situation that demands inquiry and critical thinking, while case-based study allows them to apply knowledge to practical scenarios, leading to analytical reasoning and decision-making. Generation Z demonstrated strong preferences for learning experiences that emphasize practical application and real-world scenarios (Seibert, 2021). Collaborative and group work promote peer interaction and communication skills, supporting social constructivist principles that view knowledge as co-constructed through dialogue. (Rahmat, 2025) Meanwhile, peer teaching enhances accountability and reinforces understanding as students explain concepts to others, and formative feedback provides continuous guidance that enables reflection and self-regulation. (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2005; Tullis & Goldstone, 2020) Together, these SCL strategies cultivate learner autonomy, adaptability, and sustained motivation toward active participation in the learning process. This study is grounded in constructivist learning theory and social constructivism, which posit that knowledge is actively constructed through engagement, interaction, and reflection rather than passively received from instructors. Within this theoretical perspective, student-centered learning emphasizes learners' active involvement in meaning-making, supported by appropriate teaching strategies, authentic assessment, and facilitative lecturer roles. Accordingly, teaching methods, assessment practices, and lecturer roles are conceptualized as instructional mechanisms that shape learning experiences and influence student performance outcomes**.**

Teaching method, assessment, and lecturer roles

Guided by Piaget's constructivist and Vygotsky's social constructivist principles, the present study operationalizes student-centered learning through three key dimensions: teaching methods, assessment, and lecturer roles, each representing a theoretically grounded pathway through which active learning and engagement translate into academic performance. Student-Centered Learning (SCL) emphasizes active engagement through practical experience rather than passive reception of information. Within this paradigm, learning by doing is operationalized through instructional methods such as problem-based learning (PBL), group discussion, case-based learning, and role play. These approaches act as active agents who

construct understanding through participation, reflection and collaboration rather than passive learning. (Che Mat & Jamaludin, 2024).

Teaching method like problem-based learning will encourage students to react and investigate to solve the real problems, thereby developing critical thinking and self-directed learning skills. It aligned with the Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist view that knowledge is aligned with through two-way communication. Empirical studies show that these active teaching methods increase motivation, creativity, and conceptual understanding when compared to traditional lecture-based instruction. (Che Mat & Jamaludin, 2024b; Li et al., 2022; Martín-Alguacil & Avedillo, 2024; Sukackė et al., 2022). In higher education settings, such strategies bridge theory with practice, enabling students to internalize complex concepts through experience and reflection is one of the best learning experiences.

Assessment in SCL moves beyond summative examinations toward authentic and formative approaches that reflect real-world application. Techniques such as project-based evaluation and topical presentation assessment are designed to capture learning processes (planning, collaboration, iteration) rather than mere outcomes. (Vijayalakshmi et al., 2022). These forms of assessment align with the principle of assessment for learning, emphasizing feedback, reflection, and continuous improvement rather than judgment. Authentic assessment situates learners in professional-like contexts, requiring them to apply theoretical knowledge to practical challenges. (Ajjawi et al., 2020). For example, students in sports or management disciplines might design an event plan, simulate a coaching session, or present analytical solutions as part of their coursework. Through these activities, assessment becomes an extension of the learning experience itself, reinforcing engagement, accountability, and self-regulated learning. Consequently, the assessment which focused on student-cantered learning approach act as essential mechanisms that help students identify learning gaps, revise their understanding, and strengthen professional readiness.

In Student-Centered Learning environments, the lecturer's role evolves from an information transmitter to a facilitator, mentor, and learning designer. This transformation is central to enabling students to learn by doing. Lecturers must design learning experiences that integrate active tasks, guide group dynamics, and scaffold inquiry-based learning processes. (Ling Lee & Yew Tee, 2021; Wai Jing & Thian Li, 2021) As facilitators, lecturers provide ongoing feedback and reflection opportunities that help students connect practical experience

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to conceptual understanding. Ling Lee & Yew Tee (2021) emphasize that effective facilitation in Malaysian higher education relies on structured guidance, reflective debriefing, and continuous mentoring. Moreover, lecturers serve as assessors who implement formative evaluation strategies and encourage students to take ownership of their learning journey. To fulfill these roles, educators must cultivate skills in learning design, questioning techniques, and feedback literacy to understand the learners needs. Ultimately, the lecturer's role is to create a supportive environment where experiential learning activities translate into deeper understanding, collaboration, and professional competence; the essence of SCL.

METHOD

Participants

The participants consisted of 70 undergraduate Sports Management students enrolled in the Sports Marketing course at the Faculty of Sports Science and Recreation, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that respondents had direct exposure to student-centered learning activities implemented in the course. Inclusion criteria required students to have completed at least one semester of the course, ensuring adequate experience with the teaching methods, assessment practices, and lecturer facilitation examined in this study. This non-probability sampling technique enables researchers to deliberately choose participants who can provide rich, relevant, and in-depth data aligned with the research objectives (Memon, Ramayah, Thing, & Cheah, 2020).

Instruments

This study utilized an adapted survey questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection. All the responses were gathered from this instrument according to the specific construct: teaching method, assessment, and lecturer roles. Each questionnaire items were evaluated using a 7-point Likert scale, starting from "strongly disagree" (scale 1) to "strongly agree" (scale 7). Once the structure of the questionnaire was finalized, the data collection took place by using an online survey through Google Forms. The researchers met the participants face-to-face and took about 10 minutes to complete the survey. Following the data collection procedure, the team proceeded to data analysis by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29.0.

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To ensure the internal consistency across all the constructs, a reliability test was conducted in this study. Cronbach's Alpha was used to ensure the consistency of items, as it measures the same construct (Edelsbrunner, Simonsmeier, & Schneider, 2025). The overall Cronbach's Alpha value presented for the instrument was 0.949 for all 18 items, demonstrating excellent reliability. An often-reported acceptable range of Cronbach's alpha is a value of 0.70 or above (Taber, 2021). Each construct showed excellent internal consistency, reflecting the questionnaire's relevance to carrying out further studies.

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.949	18

Table 1. *Reliability Statistics*

Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine the strength and direction of relationships between student-centered learning constructs and student performance. Multiple regression analysis was subsequently conducted to determine the relative predictive contribution of teaching methods, assessment, and lecturer roles to student performance. These analytical techniques are appropriate for identifying both associative and predictive relationships among continuous variables in educational research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of all the respondents indicated that males (67.1%) while females accounted for 32.9%. In terms of academic performance, most respondents had a CGPA between 3.00 to 3.49 (57.1%), followed by 34.3% with a CGPA above 3.50. While a smaller proportion reported a CGPA between 2.50 to 2.99 (7.1%), and only 1.4% recorded a CGPA below 2.50. For learning styles, kinesthetic learners were the most prevalent (65.7%), followed by visual learners (25.7%) and reading/writing preference (8.6%). For preferred classroom activities, almost half of the respondents favoured roleplay or simulation to facilitate learning (48.6%), while 28.6% preferred group discussions. Problem-based learning (BBL) was chosen by 12.9%, with a smaller proportion indicating a preference for online forums or interactive tools (4.3%), peer teaching (4.3%), and individual presentations (1.4%).

Gender	
N	%

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Male	47	67.1%
Female	23	32.9%

CGPA

	N	%
<2.50	1	1.4%
2.50 - 2.99	5	7.1%
3.00 - 3.49	40	57.1%
>3.50	24	34.3%

Learning style

	N	%
Kinesthetics	46	65.7%
Visual (seeing)	18	25.7%
Reading/Writing	6	8.6%

Preferred Classroom Activities

	N	%
Roleplay or simulation	34	48.6%
Group discussion	20	28.6%
Problem-based learning (PBL)	9	12.9%
Online forums or interactive tools	3	4.3%
Peer teaching	3	4.3%
Individual presentations	1	1.4%

Table2. *Demographic Profile*

Pearson Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between all dimensions of student-centered learning and student performance ($p<0.05$). Among these, the teaching method construct exhibited a substantial correlation with student performance ($r=.659$, $p<0,05$), indicating that more effective student-centered teaching strategies are associated with higher academic achievement. Assessment practices demonstrated the strongest association with student performance ($r=.727$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that well-designed, learner-focused assessments play a vital role in enhancing student learning experiences. Similarly, lecturer roles were positively correlated with student performance ($r=.686$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that the critical contribution of lecturers' facilitation and engagement in fostering students' success. These findings collectively affirm that adopting

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comprehensive student-centered learning constructs (teaching methods, assessment and lecturer roles) significantly enhance academic performance, aligned with the philosophy of 21st-century learning.

		Student Performance
Teaching Method	Pearson Correlation	.679**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.05
Assessment	Pearson Correlation	.727**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.05
Lecturer Roles	Pearson Correlation	.686**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<0.05

Table 3. *Pearson Correlation between Student-Centered Learning and Student Performance*

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis revealed that the combined predictors: Teaching Method, Assessment, and Lecturer Role, explained a substantial proportion of the variance in student performance (R = .749, R Square =.560). This suggests that 56% of the variability in student performance can be attributed to three independent variables. The overall model was statistically significant, F (3,66) = 28.030, p < 0.05, demonstrating strong predictive power. This suggests that collectively the predictors have a meaningful influence on students' performance outcomes.

Examining the individual predictors, only Assessment (B = .254, p = .031) made a statistically significant positive contribution to Student Performance. In contrast, the Teaching Method (B=.142, p = .116) and Lecturer Role (B = .114, p = .277) did not significantly predict performance within this model. These results imply that effective assessment practices may play a more critical role in enhancing student performance compared to teaching methods or lecturer roles in this context.

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Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.749[a]	.560	.540	1.50828	.560	28.030	3	66	<.001

a. Predictors: (Constant), Lecturer_role, Teaching_method, Assessment

b. Dependent Variable: Student_performance

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	191.299	3	63.766	28.030	<.001[b]
	Residual	150.144	66	2.275		
	Total	341.443	69			

a. Dependent Variable: Student_performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Lecturer_role, Teaching_method, Assessment

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.450	1.773		1.382	.172
	Teaching Method	.142	.089	.227	1.593	.116
	Assessment	.254	.116	.391	2.198	.031
	Lecturer Role	.114	.104	.178	1.097	.277

a. Dependent Variable: Student_performance

Table 4. *Multiple Regression Analysis*

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Discussion

Pearson correlation result and discussion

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed that teaching method, assessment, and lecturer role were all strongly and positively associated with student performance ($p < 0.05$), with assessment showing the highest correlation, followed by lecturer role and teaching method. Recent studies identify assessment as a central driver of learning outcomes, noting its capacity to improve self-regulated learning and foster inclusive learning environments (Dudley, D.A., 2023; Sortwell, A. et al., 2024). Additionally, research on student-centered strategies emphasized that well-structured teaching and lecturer responsibility support deeper understanding and learner motivation, especially in a graduate education context (Kerimbayev, N., 2023; Bhardwaj et al., 2025). These insights position assessment as the primary factor most directly linked to higher academic performance.

Multiple regression analysis

The multiple regression analysis showed that the combined predictors accounted for 56% of the variance in student performance, with assessment emerging as a statistically significant predictor. This outcome reinforces the growing body of evidence that assessment serves as a central mechanism for translating institutional input into measurable academic achievement. Well-designed, learner-focused assessments provide students with explicit expectations, targeted feedback, and opportunities for self-regulation, all of which are strongly linked to improving their learning outcomes (Wang et al., 2022; Yan et al., 2023). In contrast, while teaching methods and the lecturer's role may enhance the learning experience, their effects on performance may be indirect, mediated through the quality and alignment of assessment practices. Consequently, prioritizing the development of robust, feedback-rich assessment frameworks offers a more consistent and measurable route to elevate student performance than focusing solely on pedagogical delivery or lecturer facilitation.

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CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the student-centered learning literature by demonstrating that, while teaching methods, assessment, and lecturer roles are all positively associated with student performance, assessment emerges as the most influential predictor when examined concurrently. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of designing assessment practices that emphasize feedback, reflection, and real-world application to enhance student engagement and academic outcomes. For educators and institutions, prioritizing assessment alignment within student-centered learning environments may yield more consistent performance gains than focusing solely on instructional delivery. Future research should expand this investigation across different disciplines, institutions, and learning modes, as well as explore mediating variables such as motivation and self-regulated learning.

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