

## **Patterns of learning styles and academic performance among grade 11 students of Jaffna Educational Zone**

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**Background:** It has been observed that the academic performance of G.C.E O/L students in Jaffna district is on the decline. Though academic performance is multifactorial, one of the factors influencing performance is the learning styles of students. Three of the most common learning styles are visual, auditory and kinesthetic (VAK) by which students gain information. In Sri Lanka, academic performance is considered as the main tangible learning outcome and is measured by examinations in schools. This study aimed to describe the pattern of learning styles and academic performance among Grade 11 students of Jaffna Education Zone.

**Methods:** A total of 701 students from 29 classes of schools in the Jaffna Zone participated in this study. The VAK questionnaire was used to assess the learning styles of Grade 11 students. The marks obtained by students at three term examinations for six compulsory subjects (mathematics, science, English, Tamil, religion, history) in the previous year (Grade 10) were used to assess academic performance.

**Results:** Majority of learners were unimodal (85.2%) and among them the majority were kinesthetic learners (57.1%), followed by visual learners (14.4%), and auditory learners (13.7%). The mean values of the six compulsory subjects were between 48 to 68 with highest mean marks scored for religion, followed by Tamil, history, mathematics, science and English.

**Conclusion:** There is a mismatch between the traditional auditory teaching strategy used in schools and the preferred learning style of students in Jaffna Zone. Considering the preferred learning style of students in curriculum development may improve academic performance.

**Keywords:** Learning style, academic performance, adolescents, Jaffna