

Improving Concentration in Pencak Silat Athletes through Meditation Training

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Received : November 1, 2024

Accepted : February 12, 2025

Published : February 28, 2025

Citation: Fransiska, N.Y., Natasha, N., Vision, N., Susanti, R.N. & Mayangsari, D. (2025). Improving Concentration in Pencak Silat Athletes through Meditation Training. Sinergi International Journal of Psychology, 3(1), 14-23.

ABSTRACT: Meditation is an effective technique for increasing focus and concentration, especially in the context of sports. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of meditation training in improving the concentration abilities of pencak silat athletes. Using an experimental approach, the training was carried out in three sessions divided into two meetings. Training success was measured using a pre-test and post-test design. The research results showed a significant increase in the athletes' ability to focus and concentrate after participating in the training. These findings support previous research results which state that meditation can increase concentration and self-control in athletes, so that they are able to execute strategies and techniques more effectively in competitions.

Keywords: Meditation, Focus, Pencak Silat, Mental Training, Athlete



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INTRODUCTION

Sport is a physical activity carried out by various groups of society, from children to adults, both men and women. One of the sports that has high cultural value is pencak silat. Pencak silat is a traditional Indonesian martial art that combines physical, mental and spiritual elements. This sport not only emphasizes self-defense techniques, but also the development of character and noble values. In fact, pencak silat has been recognized internationally as part of Indonesia's cultural heritage (Muhtar, 2020; Wisahati & Santosa, 2010).

In the context of achieving sports achievements, sports management has an important role. Sports management is a series of systematic activities designed in a planned manner to achieve the goals of a sports organization through mature stages, so that sports activities and achievements can be achieved optimally (Pranata et al., 2023). To achieve optimal performance, an athlete needs to develop various supporting aspects, including physical aspects (physical build-up), technique (technical build-up), mental (mentality build-up), and maturity as a champion (Muharram & Puspodari, 2020). Among these aspects, psychological aspects such as mental readiness are very

important elements and have a unique role in supporting athlete performance (Kiswanto, 2016).

According to Arifianto et al. (2021), athlete achievements are the result of a structured and programmed process, which is influenced by various internal and external factors. Internal factors include the skills and training programs implemented (Raibowo et al., 2021), while external factors include social support, crowd pressure, match management and referee leadership. These external factors can become stressors which have an impact on increasing anxiety and disrupting athletes' concentration (Sari & Kurniawan, 2018).

In practice, during matches, coaches or spectators often shout calls such as "concentrate" or "focus" as encouragement for athletes to maintain concentration. This reflects the importance of concentration in supporting athlete performance, especially in sports that require high accuracy. Concentration is defined as the ability to selectively maintain attention on important aspects of a match situation, while filtering out irrelevant stimuli (Akbar et al., 2019; Eysenck & Keane, 2020).

Based on an interview with a pencak silat athlete with the initials FL, it is known that he often experiences problems concentrating when competing. Several factors that influence this are excessive cheering from the audience and feelings of anxiety when facing opponents who are considered superior. This causes a decrease in self-confidence and disruption of focus on match strategy, so that the performance shown is not optimal.

Concentration is closely related to the state of mind and emotions. One technique that can help maintain focus and mental stability is meditation. Meditation is a spiritual practice that can improve physical, emotional, mental and spiritual balance (Iskandar, 2008). According to Subandi (2002), meditation is the process of calming the mind by keeping attention focused on a particular object. Research by Dewi et al. (2018) showed that meditation and relaxation techniques can improve the kick accuracy of pencak silat athletes. Likewise, Ifandi and Verawati (2022) found that meditation practice could significantly increase concentration in pencak silat athletes.

Relaxation meditation has been proven to be effective in reducing anxiety, increasing concentration, and supporting optimal psychological conditions for athletes (Komarudin, 2020). Techniques such as positive affirmations and focused breathing also support the development of self-confidence and mental readiness to face competitive pressure (Ifandi & Verawati, 2021). Integrating meditation into an athlete's training routine can help form a more positive mindset and be ready to face the challenges of competition.

Based on the phenomena described, interviews with athletes, as well as support from previous research, the author sees the importance of interventions aimed at increasing athlete concentration. This problem, if not addressed, has the potential to hinder performance when competing. Therefore, this study aims to design and test the effectiveness of meditation training as a strategy to increase concentration in pencak silat athletes.

METHOD

The training was carried out by a group of psychology faculty students, namely Shofiatu Qothrun Nada (202260018), Rahma Nadia Wahyudi (202260021), Aryunani Oktavia K. (202260030), Agustina Nur Pratiwi (202260033), Ismawati (202260034), M. Yusril Izha Mahendra (202260035),

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The meditation training in this study consisted of three sessions, each one hour long, and carried out in two meetings. The training activity took place at the Psychology Faculty Building, Muria Kudus University. The subject of this research was a 16 year old female teenager with the initials FL, who was an active student at Al-Ma'ruf Vocational School and a pencak silat athlete from the organization "Persaudaraan Setia Hati Terate." Based on initial interviews, the subject expressed difficulty in maintaining focus when competing, especially when facing opponents who were considered superior and under the pressure of cheering from the audience. This experience makes subjects tend to focus on small mistakes, thereby reducing overall performance. Based on these considerations, subjects were selected to receive meditation training intervention with the aim of improving the ability to focus and concentrate during the game.

Before implementing the training, researchers carried out several preparation stages, including: (1) determining target subjects; (2) selection of training locations; (3) determining intervention methods; and (4) designing training modules. After all preparation stages were completed, the training was carried out in a structured manner in two meetings.

This research uses experimental methods. According to Arikunto (2010), the experimental method is a way to find a cause-and-effect relationship between two variables through deliberately and controlled setting of conditions. In Nazir's (2005) view, an experiment is research carried out by manipulating certain variables while controlling other variables, in order to observe their effect on the subjects being studied.

Indicators of training success are determined through three main aspects, namely: (1) the subject's ability to maintain focus without being distracted by external factors such as cheering from the audience or performance pressure; (2) increased sense of calm and relaxation when facing competitive situations; and (3) increased confidence in displaying optimal and consistent performance during matches. Measuring success is carried out using a pre-test and post-test approach, where the pre-test is given before training and the post-test after the training is complete.

The instrument used to measure concentration is the Grid Concentration Exercise developed by Harris and Harris (1998) in Putra and Jannah (2017). This instrument consists of 100 boxes containing random numbers from 0 to 99. This test is used to assess the subject's ability to focus in completing visual tasks quickly and accurately, thus providing an objective picture of changes in concentration levels before and after intervention.

Test Procedures:

1. In carrying out this test, the sample sits in the place provided
2. *The testee fills in the biodata provided*
3. *Testee sort the numbers from the smallest value to the largest value by connecting the numbers with a horizontal line, vertical.*
4. The time given to fill is one minute
5. Scoring is taken from the correctly connected numbers, achieved by the sample.

No	Criteria	Information
1.	21 and above	Very good concentration
2	16-20	Good concentration
3.	11-15	Medium concentration
4.	6 - 10	Lack of concentration
5.	5 Down	Very poor concentration

***Table 1** Concentration Test Scoring Norms*

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The intervention in this study was given to a 16 year old pencak silat athlete with the initials FL. Based on the results of interviews and observations, it was discovered that FL had difficulty maintaining concentration during the match. FL revealed that he often loses focus, especially when he hears cheers from the audience who are more supportive of their opponents. This pressure has a negative impact on his overall performance. Loss of concentration is the main obstacle in displaying previously prepared strategies and techniques.

This phenomenon is in line with the focus theory proposed by Orlick (1996), which states that concentration is the ability to focus attention on important elements of the task being carried out. The inability to focus attention, especially in stressful competitive situations, will interfere with an athlete's performance.

Based on the problems faced by FL, the intervention provided is in the form of meditation training which includes three main techniques, namely: musical meditation, relaxation meditation, and focused breathing. This training is based on the findings of Ifandi and Verawati (2021) which show that meditation training significantly influences increasing concentration in pencak silat athletes. The aim of this training is to help athletes improve their concentration abilities and develop focus and technical skills so they are able to perform at their best in every match.

The intervention was carried out in two meetings. At the first meeting, the first session began with opening and introductory activities, which included a general explanation regarding the importance of focus and concentration in supporting sports achievements. After that, a pre-test was carried out to measure the athlete's initial concentration level before training was given. Next, athletes receive a meditation training module as a guide to the material to be studied.

In the second session, the researcher delivered more in-depth training material which included: (1) music meditation techniques, (2) relaxation meditation techniques, and (3) focused breathing techniques. These three techniques are explained theoretically and directly practiced by the subject. The aim of this training is to help athletes understand and master meditation techniques that can be used to reduce stress, reduce anxiety, and increase overall focus and self-awareness.

In the second training session, researchers accompanied FL athletes in participating in training activities that focused on musical meditation techniques. The main aim of this activity is to increase calm and support emotional management, which in turn is expected to improve concentration when facing the pressure of the match.

At the start of the session, athletes were asked to sit in a relaxed position and start listening to meditative music chosen by the researcher. The music used is characterized by slow rhythms, soft tones, and soothing harmonies. The researcher gave instructions for the subject to focus on the music being played, feel each strain, and observe the emotional reactions that emerged without judgment. Focus is also placed on breathing so that the athlete is more connected to the experience of the body.

After undergoing musical meditation activities, FL athletes reported an increased feeling of calm and were better able to control their emotions. He also said that this technique helped him to improve concentration and focus, both during training and when imagining match situations. These results indicate that musical meditation has a positive impact on the psychological state of athletes and supports their overall performance.

This finding is in line with the opinion of Djohan (2005), who states that music allows individuals to express themselves freely and can provide various psychological benefits, such as improving memory, creativity, emotional intelligence, and contributing to mental health. Music has been proven to play a role in stimulating healthy thoughts and increasing mental readiness.

Furthermore, Clark et al. (2006) stated that music meditation therapy can help individuals feel calm and increase concentration abilities, especially in high-pressure situations. Music therapy is a therapeutic approach that uses musical elements—such as rhythm, melody, harmony, and sound—to meet a person's various emotional, mental, social, and cognitive needs. The use of this therapy has been proven effective in reducing anxiety and blood pressure, reducing mental boredom, and increasing comfort and concentration (Siregar et al., 2022).

In the second training session, the next activity carried out was relaxation meditation with a positive affirmation approach. In this session, the researcher accompanied the subject and provided instructions regarding the stages of relaxation meditation training. FL athletes are asked to write a number of positive affirmative sentences on the paper provided. After writing, the subject is also directed to read the affirmation sentences slowly and convincingly to himself.

This activity aims to help the subject calm the mind, increase self-confidence, and strengthen focus before facing a competitive situation. This affirmation exercise is included in the form of positive self-talk, namely statements addressed to oneself to increase motivation and overcome negative mental disorders such as anxiety or pessimistic feelings (Jannah, 2016). Hamilton et al. (2011) explained that positive self-talk is a psychological strategy that can replace negative thoughts with positive suggestions, which ultimately has an impact on improving psychological function and performance. Apart from that, self-talk is also often used by athletes as a cognitive technique to maintain concentration, increase motivation, and manage emotions (Putra et al., 2016).

The main aim of this relaxation meditation session is to help athletes manage stress and increase the inner calm needed to maintain focus and concentration when competing. After following this training, FL athletes showed improvements in concentration. He said that writing and saying

affirmative sentences made him feel calmer, more confident, and able to overcome distractions during the game. In fact, FL applied this technique in a race a few days after training, and reported that he felt more relaxed and less easily distracted by crowd noise.

This finding is strengthened by research by Zainiyah (2018) which shows that positive affirmation therapy in relaxation meditation provides psychological and physiological impacts in the form of calm and positive emotional responses due to the release of anti-stress hormones. Apart from that, this therapy also affects the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, which can stimulate endorphin secretion, lower blood pressure, and reduce muscle tension (Abdul, 2011). Thus, relaxation meditation based on positive affirmations has been proven to have a positive contribution to increasing concentration and mental readiness in athletes.

The third activity in the second training session is focused breathing meditation. In this session, the researcher first practiced the focused breathing meditation technique in front of the athlete, then gave instructions for the FL athlete to follow the movements and breathing patterns exemplified. The main focus of this technique is regular, slow and deep breathing training, with the aim of calming the nervous system, reducing stress, and helping athletes maintain concentration during the game.

After training, FL athletes showed a positive response to this technique. He reports that the practice of focused breathing helps him feel calmer and more in control when in the competition arena. FL also said that he implemented this technique before attacking in a recent match, and the result was increased focus and better self-control throughout the match.

These results are supported by the findings of Davis et al. in Sari and Subandi (2015), which states that rapid and shallow breathing—which generally occurs when someone experiences anxiety—can interfere with concentration. On the other hand, deep and regular breathing has a relaxing effect and helps restore focus. Handoyo (2002) added that regulating breathing rhythm is useful in the context of performance sports because it can increase muscle strength and endurance. Meanwhile, deep breathing exercises have also been proven to help individuals experience a more stable and centered feeling (Nideffer in Satiadarma, 2002).

Furthermore, Benson (in Satiadarma, 2000) explains that breathing relaxation not only relieves psychological tension, but also improves overall physical condition. This statement is reinforced by Weinberg and Gould (in Tiara, 2020), who emphasize that breathing is the simplest and most effective method for controlling anxiety and muscle tension which can interfere with concentration. Regular breathing exercises are also believed to increase the effectiveness of athletes' movements in competitions (Weinberg & Gould in Satiadarma, 2000).

Thus, the focused breathing technique has been proven to not only increase self-control, but also have a direct impact on increasing athlete concentration and performance in competitive situations.

Based on the results of reflections carried out by FL athletes, this meditation training had a positive impact on the ability to focus and manage emotions. Athletes note that the main benefits gained from this training are increased focus, calmness of mind, and the ability to deal more adaptively with competitive pressure. FL also said that through the meditation techniques taught, he felt better prepared to face the competition and had better self-control.

However, there are challenges faced during the training process, especially in terms of keeping the mind focused while meditating. FL revealed that at first it was difficult to direct his full attention and

avoid internal distractions, but as the practice progressed, he began to feel the benefits of consistent practice.

In his reflection, FL also expressed the hope of becoming a calmer, more focused and confident person in various situations, both inside and outside the competition arena. This training not only has an impact on cognitive aspects such as increasing concentration, but also on affective aspects, including increasing motivation and self-confidence.

Result of *self-assessment tools* used to evaluate subjective experience during training points out several important points:

1. Athletes feel more relaxed and calm after listening to meditation music.
2. Positive affirmation techniques help in changing negative thought patterns to become more constructive and optimistic.
3. Meditation sessions make athletes feel more connected to themselves and more at peace emotionally.
4. Breathing exercises have proven to be very effective in helping athletes manage stress and maintain focus in stressful conditions.

Overall, meditation training given to FL athletes shows effectiveness in increasing mental readiness and psychological performance in facing competition. These findings indicate that meditation-based interventions can be an integral part of mental training strategies for athletes, especially in sports that require high levels of calm, precision and focus.

Results		Information
Pretest	10	Lack of concentration
Posttest	13	Medium concentration

Table 2 *Pretest and Posttest Results*

This training succeeded in providing participants with new understanding and skills, especially in increasing focus and building a positive mindset. This can be seen from the posttest results which show an increase in concentration from previously low to moderate concentration. Research by Neil in the Journal of Sports Sciences shows that the application of relaxation and mindfulness techniques can help athletes improve emotional control and reduce anxiety levels, which contributes to better performance (Neil et al, 2013). Furthermore, a study by Johnson and Hrycaiko in The Sport Psychologist highlighted that relaxation techniques, such as breathing exercises and meditation, can significantly improve athletes' psychological well-being and performance (Johnson & Hrycaiko, 2008). However, further support is needed so that participants can continue to practice meditation techniques consistently. Recommendations include: Creating a daily schedule

for meditation to make it a habit, identifying the ideal time and place for meditation practice, joining a meditation community for additional support and motivation. With in-depth reflection and comprehensive evaluation, this training is expected to be a significant first step in the participants' self-development journey.

The closing activities in the training were carried out in a warm and togetherness atmosphere. The facilitator conveys affirmative statements such as "Every small step towards mental well-being is a big achievement," which aims to provide motivation and strengthen the meaning of each process that the participants have undergone.

As part of the closing, a short five minute meditation session was conducted. This activity aims to help participants, especially FL athletes, calm their minds and leave the session feeling more relaxed and with a clear mind. After that, the facilitator gave appreciation in the form of a simple reward as a form of appreciation for dedication and active participation during the entire training series.

The training ended with thanks from the facilitator and a motivational message so that participants would continue to practice meditation independently in their daily lives. This moment creates a positive impression, gratitude and enthusiasm to continue to develop, while strengthening participants' commitment to maintaining mental well-being through the techniques they have learned during the training.

CONCLUSION

The meditation training, which consisted of three sessions with a duration of one hour each and was carried out in two meetings, was proven to have a positive impact on increasing athletes' concentration abilities. The evaluation method used in this training is pre-test and post-test to measure changes in concentration levels before and after the intervention.

The results of the post-test showed a significant increase, where the athlete's concentration level which was originally in the low category increased to the medium category. Apart from that, this training was also successful in providing new understanding and practical skills that support the development of focus, managing emotions, and forming a more positive mindset in athletes.

Overall, this meditation training can be considered effective as a form of psychological intervention that is applicable in supporting the mental readiness of FL pencak silat athletes.

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