

## **The Effectiveness of Imagery Training on Enhancing Mental Focus in Pencak Silat Athletes**

**Dessita Maharani Astuti<sup>1</sup>, Dhayinta Bening Ayu P<sup>2</sup>.,  
Khansa Naila Hana Salsabila<sup>3</sup>, Ruth Natalia Susanti<sup>4</sup>, Dewi Mayangsari<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>1234</sup>Universitas Muria Kudus, Indonesia

<sup>5</sup>Universitas Trunojoyo, Indonesia

Correspondent: [dewi.sari@trunojoyo.ac.id](mailto:dewi.sari@trunojoyo.ac.id)<sup>5</sup>

Received : January 31, 2025

Accepted : April 12, 2025

Published : May 30, 2025

Citation: Astuti, D.M., Ayu, D.B., Salsabila, K.N.H., Susanti, R.N., & Mayangsari, D. (2025). The Effectiveness of Imagery Training on Enhancing Mental Focus in Pencak Silat Athletes. *Sinergi International Journal of Psychology*, 3(2), 75 – 83.

**ABSTRACT:** Abstract: This research aims to explore the effectiveness of imagery training in increasing the focus of pencak silat athletes. Mental focus is a crucial element in sports performance, because good mental readiness can influence the outcome of a match. This study used an experimental design with the subject an athlete with the initials SA who was known to have difficulty maintaining focus when competing. The imagery training was conducted in two sessions, each lasting 1–2 hours, over the course of two days. Focus was measured using a Likert-scale questionnaire adapted from Nugroho (in Diana, 2019), which included five statements assessing the subject's attention, distraction levels, and visualization ability. The research results showed a significant increase in athletes' ability to focus after participating in imagery training. Quantitatively, the post-test results showed a shift from Agree (S) and Strongly Agree (SS) on distraction-related items in the pre-test to Disagree (TS), indicating reduced internal and external distractions. Meanwhile, focus-related items shifted to Strongly Agree (SS), reflecting improved concentration and visualization. This finding is in line with previous research which states that imagery techniques can be an effective tool in training athletes' mental focus.

**Keywords:** Training Imagery, Mental Focus, Pencak Silat



This is an open access article under the  
CC-BY 4.0 license

## **INTRODUCTION**

Athletes are individuals who specifically carry out physical activity regularly and systematically to achieve certain sporting achievements through intensive, structured and directed training. An athlete is someone who is trained to take part in sports competitions with the aim of achieving maximum performance, which involves various aspects such as physical, technical, tactical and mental (Susanto, 2020).

Sport is an activity that can improve physical condition, mood and productivity. Not only does it function in maintaining and developing physical fitness, exercise also plays an important role in maintaining overall health quality (Corbin & Le Masurier, 2014). Apart from that, sport is a competitive means that can produce achievements, as well as a medium for discovering and developing talent in various sports (Zensari & Iriawan, 2019).

One of the sports that is developing in Indonesia is pencak silat. Pencak silat is a traditional Indonesian martial art that consists of various basic movements and fighting techniques. In Indonesia, the organization that supports pencak silat is the All Indonesian Pencak Silat Association (IPSI), which was initiated by Mr Wongsonegoro and inaugurated on May 18 1948 in Surakarta. IPSI aims to unite and develop all pencak silat schools in Indonesia (Rosalina, 2020).

As the nation's cultural heritage, pencak silat has now developed into a competitive sport that is contested at national and international levels. In competitions, a pencak silat athlete is required to demonstrate technical skills, physical endurance, tactical strategy and optimal mental readiness. However, in reality, athletes often face various obstacles that can affect their performance when competing, such as psychological pressure, physical injuries, lack of mature strategies, limited facilities, and inadequate training support (Aziz et al., 2002).

From the results of an interview with one of the research subjects, it was discovered that cheers from spectators or opposing supporters often caused problems with concentration and triggered feelings of nervousness during the match. This nervousness makes his mind restless, so he often loses focus in the middle of a match. In fact, the movements or moves he has mastered can be forgotten while in the arena. The subject realized that a lack of focus was the main obstacle in achieving maximum performance, because the doubts that arise when he is nervous often cause him to miss important moments to attack or defend. Even though he has participated in several competitions, the subject has not succeeded in winning, and he believes that difficulty maintaining focus is one of the main causes.

The subject's statement is in line with the opinion of Ihsan & Suwirman (2018) who stated that one of the common problems in pencak silat competitions is the athlete's inability to anticipate the opponent's attack and launch a counterattack quickly. This is often caused by athletes' poor concentration.

Concentration or focus is a condition in which a person's consciousness is focused on a certain object for a certain period of time. Focus is the ability to maintain attention on one thing and ignore irrelevant internal and external stimuli. Internal stimuli, such as disturbing thoughts or feelings of anxiety, and external stimuli, such as cheering spectators or inappropriate referee decisions, can influence an athlete's focus (Hidayat, 2022). Nusufi (2016) added that concentration is a person's ability to focus attention on a chosen stimulus (goal), which indicates that focus always begins with attention focused on one target.

One effective method for increasing focus is imagery training, which is a technique of using mental imagination to simulate certain situations or actions. This technique helps athletes prepare psychologically before competitions. Various studies show that imagery training can improve athletes' performance in various sports because this technique strengthens mental skills such as concentration, emotional control, and visualization of goals. In the context of pencak silat, imagery training can help athletes imagine attack and defense patterns, thereby increasing mental readiness when facing an opponent (Morris, Spittle, & Watt, 2005).

Setyawati (2014) stated that imagery is an important mental skills training technique and can be applied for various purposes, ranging from improving performance, concentration, to supporting

the recovery process from injury. To be effective, imagery needs to be part of a regular and structured training program.

Research conducted by Zalzabilla et al. (2024) on pencak silat athletes at SMP YP 17 shows that athlete success is determined by various interconnected elements, both internal (such as physical, technical, tactical and psychological conditions) and external (such as social and environmental support). One of the psychological exercises that has been proven to be effective in supporting focus and emotional control is imagery training. This technique is important to include in a mental training program to convert stress into optimal performance.

The imagery training in this research aims to increase the mental focus of pencak silat athletes. Specifically, this study wanted to see changes in focus levels before and after training, as well as evaluate the effectiveness of imagery in helping athletes maintain concentration during competitions. The benefits of this training include increased concentration, better mental readiness, and the ability to deal with pressure when competing.

Based on the background above and supported by the results of interviews and previous research findings, the author sees a need to provide imagery training as a solution to the concentration problems experienced by pencak silat athletes. It is hoped that imagery techniques can help improve athletes' overall focus and performance.

## METHOD

Imagery training was held at the Psychology Faculty Building, Muria Kudus University for two meetings. Each session lasts between 1 and 2 hours, and each session consists of five activities focused on one subject with the initials SA. SA is an 18 year old male student who is active as an athlete in the sport of pencak silat. He revealed that one of the biggest challenges he faced as an athlete was the difficulty of maintaining focus during competitions. The feeling of nervousness that appears before or during a match often makes him lose concentration. Based on this, SA was chosen as a training subject with the aim of helping improve his mental focus when facing matches.

Before the training begins, several preparatory stages are carried out, including: determining the training subject, determining the training location, designing the training method, compiling the training module, and holding the training for two days. The method used in this training is the experimental method. According to Sugiyono (2019), the experimental method is a research method used to determine the effect of certain treatments on other variables under controlled conditions. The research design used was a pre-experimental design. Arikunto (2010) states that pre-experimental design (non-design) is a simple experimental design and is often considered an experiment that does not fully meet the criteria for true experimental research.

Indicators of success in this training include athletes being able to remain calm and focused even when facing pressure or external disturbances, athletes being able to maintain focus throughout the duration of a match or training without being easily distracted, athletes being able to quickly restore focus after experiencing disturbances, either from internal stimuli (negative thoughts) or external stimuli (such as the sound of spectators or opponents' movements).

Measuring the success of training is carried out through pre-test and post-test, namely measurements before and after the training is given. The focus measurement instrument in this research refers to the focus aspect developed by Nugroho (in Diana, 2019), using a Likert scale as a measuring tool. The scores used in this scale consist of: 4 = strongly agree, 3 = agree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree (Sugiyono, 2019).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The imagery training is carried out in two sessions, each lasting between 1 and 2 hours. Each session consists of five activities designed to train the subject's mental focus. The subject of this training is a pencak silat athlete with the initials S. He participated in all sessions and a series of activities therein enthusiastically.

In the initial stage, subjects were asked to fill out an informed consent form as proof of their willingness to participate voluntarily in training activities. After that, the subject was asked to complete a pre-test prepared by the facilitator. This pre-test is used as a measuring tool to determine the subject's ability to focus before receiving imagery training intervention.

Next, imagery training activities began. In the first session, subjects listened to an explanation from the facilitator regarding the basic concepts and objectives of imagery training. The facilitator emphasized that imagery training is a gradual psychological process, not something that provides instant results. Consistency and active involvement of the subject is very necessary so that this training can have optimal impact.

In the next stage, subjects were asked to reflect on their experiences while participating in pencak silat competitions. The subject wrote down what he imagined and what he felt during the match he had experienced. In this reflection session, the subject revealed a number of experiences that showed the psychological discomfort experienced when competing.

Some of the things written by the subjects included: feelings of hesitation about attacking and using techniques, fear of losing and the possibility of disappointing the coach, worry about having to face a superior opponent, fear of injury, and difficulty in preparing attack techniques and taking directions from the coach. These things indicate mental obstacles that can interfere with the subject's concentration and performance when competing.

According to Supriyanto (in Dewi et al., 2018), athletes who experience decreased concentration before a match are often considered to have an immature competitive mentality. Especially in novice athletes, unstable emotions can cause concentration to not be optimal. This statement is in line with the opinion of Nurjanah et al. (2018) which states that excessive unpleasant feelings before a competition can cause anxiety, health problems, or even behavioral deviations, which ultimately reduce self-confidence and negatively affect the athlete's concentration level.

After the reflection activity was carried out, the subject was guided to do breathing meditation exercises. This exercise aims to help the subject manage the stress that usually arises before a match or an intense training session.

In the second session, subjects carried out basic technical visualization activities. In this activity, the subject is asked to sit in a comfortable position while closing his eyes, then breathe slowly and deeply, while focusing on imagining basic pencak silat techniques, such as punching movements. This activity is in line with the opinion of Naiboru et al. (2023), who stated that meditation and visualization exercises are a form of mental training that is effective in increasing athletes' focus and concentration.

Next, the subject simulated a match by watching video recordings of matches in which he had participated. While watching, subjects were asked to visualize the strategies used, recall the situations they faced, and identify areas that needed improvement. After the match simulation, subjects were directed to listen to relaxation music, which aims to increase concentration and calm before training or a match. The subject participated in this activity solemnly, practicing focus while allowing himself to calm and relax.

After the relaxation music ended, the subject continued with light stretching. This activity is intended to release physical tension while preparing the body for the next activity. According to Djohan (2022), relaxation music can help stabilize emotions, reduce nervousness, and create a sense of self-confidence. When emotions are in a stable condition, the visualization process will be more effective and constructive.

After all training sessions were completed, subjects were asked to complete the post-test and evaluation reflection sheet provided by the facilitator. Through the post-test, the facilitator can compare the condition of the subject's focus before and after the training, so that a concrete picture of the effectiveness of the method used is obtained (Hadian, 2024). Post-test results not only function as a measure of success, but also serve as a guide for trainers in designing further training programs that are more effective and suit individual needs (Oemar, 2019). With this approach, it is hoped that each athlete will be able to achieve their best potential, both from technical and mental aspects, in facing challenging sports competitions. The results of the pre-test and post-test carried out by the subject:

## Results pre-test

Statement	STS	TS	S	SS
I can easily focus on the movements of pencak silat techniques		X		
I am often distracted by other thoughts while practicing.			X	
I can imagine the movements of pencak silat techniques clearly in my mind.		X		
I find it difficult to maintain focus for long periods of time when competing				X
I can eliminate external distractions while practicing			X	

## Result of Post test

Statement	STS	TS	S	SS
I can easily focus on the movements of pencak silat techniques			X	
I am often distracted by other thoughts while practicing.		X		
I can imagine the movements of pencak silat techniques clearly in my mind.				X
I find it difficult to maintain focus for long periods of time when competing		X		
I can eliminate external distractions while practicing			X	

The pre-test and post-test results showed a significant increase in athletes' mental focus abilities after participating in imagery training. Before training, most athletes have difficulty concentrating, are easily distracted by other thoughts, and are unable to maintain focus for long periods, especially during competitions. This is reflected in the pre-test results which show the dominance of responses in the "S" (Agree) and "SS" (Strongly Agree) categories to statements that describe a disturbance in focus.

However, after imagery training, the post-test results showed positive changes. Participants' responses shifted to the "TS" (Disagree) category for statements regarding distractions, as well as "SS" for statements describing increased concentration abilities, visualization of movements, and control of external distractions. This shows that imagery training is successful in helping athletes improve their mental control.

This increase is in line with the theory put forward by Moran (2016), which states that imagery is an effective tool for training mental focus, especially in sports that require high concentration such as pencak silat. Through detailed visualization of movements, athletes can mentally prepare themselves to face pressure in training and competitions. Apart from that, the ability to control internal and external distractions also shows that this training contributes to reducing anxiety levels and increasing self-confidence.

Similar findings were also presented by Gunawan et al. (2023), who stated that pencak silat athletes often experience nervousness, so that movements become imperfect and their pulse rate increases, which ultimately disrupts focus and reduces performance scores. This unstable psychological condition requires intervention in the form of training that can optimize performance without draining excessive energy, one of which is through imagery training.

Overall, the benefit obtained from this training is increasing the athlete's ability to manage focus optimally. Athletes become better prepared to face competitions through careful mental planning and structured strategies. Apart from that, increasing self-confidence and mental readiness are also important provisions for athletes in facing challenges on the field.



It can be concluded, training *imagery* has a positive impact on the mental performance of pencak silat athletes. By simulating real situations during training, athletes become better trained in dealing with pressure and maintaining their focus for longer periods of time. For more optimal results, this training can be integrated with relaxation techniques and adapted to the individual needs of each athlete. Ongoing evaluation is also important to ensure the impact of training can be maintained in the long term, so that *imagery* become an integral part of the athlete's mental ability development program.

## CONCLUSION

Imagery training has proven to be effective in improving the mental focus of pencak silat athletes, as shown by a significant increase in the subject's ability to focus after participating in the training session. Through an experimental method with a pre-test and post-test design, this research provides empirical evidence that imagery techniques can be used as an effective strategy in training psychological aspects which play an important role in sports performance. Imagery training has proven to be effective in improving the mental focus of pencak silat athletes, as demonstrated through pre-test and post-test improvements.

This method enables athletes to reduce internal distractions, visualize performance scenarios, and maintain focus during competitions. These results reinforce the critical role of psychological preparation in enhancing athletic performance. Coaches are encouraged to systematically integrate imagery techniques into training routines to foster both focus and confidence among athletes. Further studies may explore long-term implementation of imagery training and its combination with other psychological methods for broader mental skill development.

Based on these results, it is recommended that coaches and athletes consider integrating imagery techniques into routine training programs. This approach not only helps maximize athletes' performance potential, but also supports the development of more stable and adaptive mental aspects in facing various challenges on the competition field.

## Reference

- Arikunto, S. (2010). *Research Procedures A Practical Approach*. Rineka Cipta.
- Corbin, C. B., & Le Masurier, G. C. (2014). *Fitness for life*. Human kinetics.
- Dewi, A., Setiawan, D., & Yuliandi, R. (2018). The effect of meditation in increasing kick accuracy in pencak silat athletes in the Banyuwangi Regency PSHT Organization. *Kejaora Journal (Physical Health and Sports)*, 3(1), 154-161.
- Diana, D., Adriansyah, M. A., Muhliansyah, M., & Putri, A. P. (2019). Typical Dayak bead training to increase concentration. *Plaques: Journal of Community Service*, 1(1), 17-26.
- Djohan, D., Tyasrinestu, F., & Sualang, L. A. E. (2022). The Effect of Listening to Music on Relaxation Conditions. *Recital: Journal of the Performing Arts*, 23(3), 190-201.

- Gunawan, H., Haetami, M., & Bafadal, M. F. (2023). The Effect of Mental Imagery Training on the Performing Arts of Pencak Silat. *Journal Physical Health Recreation (JPHR)*, 3(2), 227-234.
- Hadian, A. M., Komarudin, K., Saputra, M. Y., & Novian, G. (2024). Application of MG-M Mental Imagery Training to the Self-Confidence of Adolescent Pencak Silat Athletes. *Journal of Sports Education*, 14(4), 223-229.
- Hidayat, T. (2022). Development of Interactive Learning Media for Badminton Techniques Based on the Macromedia Flash Application. *JUPE: Mandala Education Journal*, 7(3).
- Ihsan, N., & Suwirman, S. (2018). Contribution of Concentration to Pencak Silat Kick Speed. *Indonesian Sports Science Media*, 8(1), 1-6.
- Moran, A. (2016). Expertise and mental practice. *Routledge International Handbook of Sport Psychology*, January, 421–428. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315777054-53>
- Morris, T., Spittle, M., & Watt, A. P. (2005). *Imagery in Sport*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Naiboru, N., Sormin, J. F. L., Boangmanalu, D. S. M., Wardani, F. Z., & Tampubolon, W. S. (2023). Lawn Tennis Training Program to Improve Stroke Consistency. *Journal of World Education*, 4(1), 642-649.
- Nurjanah, U., Andromeda, A., & Muâ, B. (2018). Guided Imagery Relaxation to Reduce Competing Anxiety in Pencak Silat Athletes. *Intuition: Journal of Scientific Psychology*, 10(1), 50-58.
- Nusufi, M. (2016). *Journal of Psychology, Theory and Application. unimed.ac.id Journal*, 54-61.
- Novianty, A., & Retnowati, S. (2016). Psychological interventions in primary health care. *Psychological Bulletin*, 24(1), 49-63.
- Octavianingrum, W., & Savira, S. I. (2022). The relationship between self-confidence and emotional regulation in East Java Puslatda pencak silat athletes. *Character Journal of Psychological Research*, 9(6), 50-55.
- Oemar, T. M., & Marsudi, I. (2019). Evaluation of the NTB Swimming Sports Center Puslatda Athlete Training Program. *Journal of Sports Performance*, 2(1).
- Rosalina, M., & Nugroho, W. A. (2020). Analysis of the Level of Self-Confidence and Motivation for Pencak Silat in the Population of Cirebon City in 2018. *Sports Window*, 5(2), 141-149.
- Sadiko, W., Asmara, Y., & Syafutra, W. (2023). The Effect of Concentration Training and Imagery Training on ATC Kicking Skills in PSHT Branch Pencak Silat Students, Mekarsari Village, Musi Rawas Regency. *Journal of Binagogics*, 10(1), 21-28.
- Setyawati, H. (2014). Intervention strategy to increase self-confidence through imagery training in Central Java wushu athletes. *Journal of Physical Education Health and Sport*, 1(1), 48-59.
- Sugiyono. (2019). *Qualitative Research Methods*. Alfabet
- Sugiyono. (2019). Method Study Quantitative, Qualitative And R&D, Bandung: Alfabet.



Susanto, D. M., & Lesmana, H. S. (2020). Physical condition of pencak silat athletes. *Patriot Journal*, 2(3), 692-704.

Zalsabilla, R., & Wijaya, F. J. M. (2024). The Effect of Imagery Training on the Timeliness of Pencak Silat Athletes in the Single Stance Category at SMP YP 17 Surabaya. *Journal of Sports Performance*, 7(5), 458-462.

Zensari, F. A., & Irawan, R. (2019). 2019 Survey of Badminton Club Achievement Development in Kebumen Regency. *Indonesian Journal for Physical Education and Sport*, 2, 1–7..  
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph192316250>