

## ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF ARM STRENGTH TRAINING PRACTICES IN THE PENCAK SILAT COMMUNITY CASE STUDY AT TAPAK SUCI MARTIAL ARTS SCHOOL

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore arm strength training practices within the Pencak Silat community, focusing on Tapak Suci Martial Arts School at Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method with an ethnographic approach, allowing an in-depth exploration of training techniques, routines, and practitioner experiences. The findings reveal that Tapak Suci's traditional training methods—such as bodyweight exercises, striking hard objects, and lifting natural weights—are still widely practiced and play a crucial role in building endurance and mental resilience. However, these methods lack structured progression and explosive power development, which are essential for modern competitive fighting. The study also finds that modern training techniques, including resistance band exercises, weightlifting, and plyometric drills, offer scientifically-backed advantages in muscle strength enhancement. The integration of both traditional and modern methods can create a more effective and well-rounded training program, optimizing fighter performance while preserving Pencak Silat's cultural identity. In conclusion, while traditional training methods remain fundamental, their integration with modern sports science techniques provides greater efficiency, strength gains, and injury prevention. Future research should explore long-term impacts of combined training approaches and assess how practitioners culturally adapt to modern techniques while maintaining the essence of traditional martial arts training.

**Keywords:** ethnographic, study, training, school, martial



## INTRODUCTION

Martial arts have long been an integral part of human culture serving various purposes ranging from self-defense to physical fitness and personal discipline. Across the globe, numerous martial arts styles have developed, each reflecting the values, philosophies, and traditions of the societies in which they originated (Sari, 2024). Among these, Southeast Asia is home to a rich heritage of traditional martial arts, with *Pencak Silat* standing out as one of the most renowned. *Pencak Silat* is not merely a form of combat but a deeply rooted cultural practice that integrates physical training, mental discipline, and spiritual growth. *Pencak silat* teaches about honesty, courage, discipline, and respect for opponents, as well as providing lessons on how to overcome challenges in life with a steadfast and enthusiastic attitude (Pancasasti et al. 2021). Behind the elegant movements and deadly attacks, there is a deep philosophy and noble values (Darmawan et al. 2023).

*Pencak Silat* is a martial art inherited from the ancestral culture of the Indonesian people to defend their lives, people always defend themselves from natural threats, animals, and other perceived threats (Kumala, Ali, and Putra 2023). As an indigenous martial art of Indonesia and Malaysia, *Pencak Silat* has gained recognition worldwide, with international competitions, structured training programs, and dedicated communities working to preserve and evolve its practices (Asmuddin 2024). Strength training plays a crucial role in martial arts, enhancing an athlete's ability to execute techniques with precision, power, and endurance. Among the various strength conditioning regimens, arm strength training holds significant importance in *Pencak Silat* due to the extensive use of upper body movements in blocking, striking, grappling, and weapon-based combat (Kumala, Ali, and Putra 2023). Traditional training methods in *Pencak Silat* often blend modern scientific principles with indigenous physical conditioning techniques. The ethnographic study of arm strength training in *Pencak Silat* provides a valuable insight into how cultural elements influence training methodologies, the significance of rituals in physical preparation, and the impact of traditional practices on athletic performance (Heryana 2020).

Despite the widespread practice of *Pencak Silat* there is a lack of systematic documentation regarding specific training methods, particularly those aimed at strengthening the upper body (Ramadhan, 2023). Strong arm muscles can be a valuable

asset for a silat practitioner, helping them better execute various movements and techniques, including straight punches, kicks, and defensive techniques. Developing arm muscle strength is not only important for improving performance in pencak silat practice but also has a significant impact on everyday life. Greater muscle strength means greater ability to generate the power necessary for various physical activities, including throwing punches, lifting weights, and performing other physical tasks (Nelson and Haris 2023). Strong arm muscles can improve overall quality of life, help in performing physical tasks that involve lifting, pushing, or pulling, and increase the body's resistance to injury (Musdalifah and Arnando 2023). Arm muscle power is crucial for delivering powerful and effective punches. In pencak silat matches, the ability to deliver a devastating blow can mean the difference between victory and defeat (Drajat 2024). Good arm muscle power also allows athletes to better execute pencak silat techniques. With strong arm muscles, they can perform movements more fluidly and with greater control (Ariesta et al. 2024). While many martial arts disciplines have adopted contemporary sports science approaches to enhance performance, traditional *Pencak Silat* training often remains underexplored in academic research. The reliance on inherited knowledge from masters and practitioners makes it challenging to standardize training regimens, leading to variations in techniques and effectiveness.

Modern athletes face an increasing dilemma between adhering to traditional training methods and incorporating modern fitness science to optimize performance. Some believe that traditional strength training techniques in *Pencak Silat* provide unique advantages, as they are tailored to the movements and philosophy of the martial art (Rusdin 2024). Others argue that these methods lack empirical validation and may not be as effective as contemporary strength training practices. This divergence creates a pressing need to investigate the ethnographic aspects of *Pencak Silat* training, particularly how practitioners develop and sustain arm strength using culturally embedded methodologies. The research method used in this study is descriptive qualitative with an ethnographic approach to gain an in-depth understanding of arm strength training practices in the *Pencak Silat* community, particularly at the *Tapak Suci* Martial Arts School, Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember (Sugiyono 2019). Ethnographic research aims to explore the subject's perspective through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and analysis of cultural practices within the

community (J. Creswell 2017). The researcher actively engages in the training environment to observe how arm strength training methods are applied, how practitioners adapt to these methods, and how cultural elements influence their training practices. This approach allows for a holistic understanding of how the traditions and philosophies of *Pencak Silat* shape the physical training patterns practiced within the *Tapak Suci* community (Sugiyono 2021). Additionally, this study employs documentation techniques such as field notes, interview recordings, and photo and video recordings of training activities to support a more comprehensive analysis.

Data collection is conducted through participant observation, where the researcher directly attends training sessions to document the techniques, intensity, and variations of arm strength training used by practitioners. In addition, in-depth interviews are conducted with coaches, senior practitioners, and *Pencak Silat* athletes to understand their perspectives on the effectiveness of the training methods used and the challenges they face in improving arm strength (J. W. Creswell and Creswell 2018). The collected data is then analyzed using thematic analysis, where key patterns in training practices are identified and categorized based on technical aspects, cultural influences, and adaptations to modern sports science advancements. The validity of the data is strengthened through source triangulation, comparing observation results, interviews, and documentation to ensure the accuracy of research findings. By employing this method, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of arm strength training practices within the *Pencak Silat* community and how traditional methods can evolve alongside modern fitness science advancements.

## **METHOD**

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Arm strength training is an integral part of the physical conditioning of fighters at *Tapak Suci* Martial Arts School, Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember. Based on participant observation, it was found that the training methods used still heavily rely on traditional techniques passed down through generations. These training methods include various forms of bodyweight exercises, such as push-ups, planks, dips, and repetitive strikes against hard objects like punching bags or wooden surfaces as a form of hand strengthening. Additionally, training with natural elements, such as pounding sand, lifting water-filled buckets, and using bamboo as a resistance tool, is also a core part of their routine.



**Figure 1.** Documentation of Tapak Suci Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember

An interview with the head coach revealed that these traditional methods are considered more aligned with the philosophy of *Pencak Silat*, which emphasizes natural endurance and body balance. According to the coach, this approach not only builds muscle strength but also enhances stamina and agility, which are crucial in combat

situations. Moreover, traditional methods are believed to shape the fighters' mental discipline, making them more patient and resilient throughout their training process. However, when asked about the use of modern sports science-based training methods, such as weightlifting or resistance bands, the coach admitted that the implementation of these modern techniques remains very limited within the school. In an interview with several senior *Pencak Silat* practitioners, they explained that although traditional methods have been practiced for a long time, many of them feel that these exercises are not always sufficient to optimally improve arm muscle strength. Some even attempt to supplement their training with modern methods on their own, such as using dumbbells or resistance training outside of the official training sessions. However, they stated that not all practitioners have access to such facilities, leading many to continue relying on traditional training methods.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study has explored the ethnographic aspects of arm strength training practices within the Tapak Suci martial arts community at Universitas Muhammadiyah Jember, focusing on the integration of traditional and modern training methods. The findings indicate that traditional training methods, such as bodyweight exercises, striking hard surfaces, and lifting natural weights, remain the foundation of arm strength development in Tapak Suci. These methods are deeply embedded in the philosophy of endurance, patience, and discipline, emphasizing mental and physical resilience. However, despite their effectiveness in building natural strength and durability, traditional methods often lack the structured progression and explosiveness needed for modern competitive martial arts. The study also found that modern sports science-based training, including resistance training, weightlifting, and plyometric exercises, offers a more systematic approach to enhancing muscle power, endurance, and punching effectiveness.

The combination of these two approaches can create a more comprehensive and optimized training system, ensuring that fighters retain their cultural identity while benefiting from scientific advancements in strength conditioning.

Based on the findings it is recommended that future research explores deeper integration methods to bridge the gap between traditional and modern training in

Pencak Silat communities. Further studies can analyze longitudinal impacts of combined training approaches on athletic performance, injury prevention, and physiological adaptation in martial artists. Additionally, further exploration of cultural acceptance and resistance among traditional martial arts practitioners may provide insights into how to introduce modern training elements while preserving heritage and authenticity. This research serves as a foundation for the future evolution of Pencak Silat training, offering a balanced approach that maintains traditional values while embracing scientific advancements for optimal fighter development.

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