



Islamic Value Internalization through Pencak Silat: A Pesantren-Based Pathway to Student Character and Social Development

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Islamic Value Internalization through Pencak Silat: A Pesantren-Based Pathway to Student Character and Social Development

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Abstract

Structured extracurricular activities can support character development when values are embedded in repeated practice, adult modelling, and peer interaction. This qualitative case study examined Islamic value internalization through Persaudaraan Setia Hati Terate (PSHT) pencak silat at Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Islamic Boarding School, Singkut 1, Sarolangun, Indonesia. Nine purposively selected informants comprised the main trainer, an assistant trainer, the vice principal for student affairs, an Islamic Education teacher, and five student members. Data from participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation were analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, with triangulation and member checking supporting credibility. Six values were identified: religiosity, discipline, responsibility, Islamic brotherhood, respect, and self-control. Internalization occurred through habituation, trainer role modelling, moral-religious advice, and spiritual routines integrated into training. Participants associated these practices with stronger worship awareness, disciplined conduct, responsibility, emotional control, respectful interaction, and social concern. The findings suggest that pesantren-based martial arts can function as a structured student-development environment when physical training is integrated with moral reflection, spiritual practice, and prosocial norms; the qualitative design supports perceived and observed change rather than causal effects.

Keywords: Islamic Value Internalization; Pencak Silat; Extracurricular Education; Pesantren; Self-Control; Social Development.

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INTRODUCTION

Character formation does not occur only in the classroom. Extracurricular activities give students repeated opportunities to follow rules, work with peers, take responsibility, and practise values in situations that are less formal than ordinary lessons. Research has shown that the developmental value of extracurricular participation depends on the duration and breadth of participation as well as the quality of the activity setting [1], [2]. Ecological and positive youth-development perspectives likewise place everyday relationships and organized activities among the settings through which adolescents develop competence, identity, and social connection [3], [4].

Physical activity and sport are one form of organized participation that can support adolescent development. Reviews have linked youth sport with psychological and social benefits such as social connectedness, self-perception, and mental wellbeing, although the size and direction of these benefits vary across populations and program designs [5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10]. Martial arts are especially relevant because training combines bodily skill with rules, hierarchy, attention, and interpersonal restraint. School-based and experimental studies have reported gains in self-regulation under some training conditions [11], [12]. At the same time, the wider literature shows that positive outcomes are not automatic; instructional climate, training philosophy, instructor behaviour, and the framing of aggression all matter [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18].

Pencak silat gives this discussion a specifically Indonesian cultural setting. UNESCO recognizes the traditions of pencak silat as intangible cultural heritage and describes mental-spiritual, self-defence, artistic, and social dimensions within the tradition [19]. Persaudaraan Setia Hati Terate (PSHT), one of Indonesia's major pencak silat organizations, places brotherhood, sport, self-defence, arts and culture, and spirituality within its educational orientation [20], [21]. Recent studies of pencak silat have also identified discipline, cultural identity, social responsibility, and locally grounded character values as important parts of training [22], [23], [24]. Pencak silat can therefore be examined not only as a sport, but also as a social practice through which values are taught and rehearsed.

The pesantren setting adds another layer to that process. Character education in Islamic boarding schools is woven through formal lessons, religious routines, communal living, authority relationships, and everyday expectations of conduct [25], [26], [27], [28], [29]. Research on Islamic value internalization in madrasah learning has similarly shown how repeated instruction, modelling, and school interaction can shape character and social development [30]. Martial-arts training, however, introduces a different learning situation because students encounter bodily discipline, immediate correction, peer dependence, and rules governing the ethical use of physical skill.

Previous studies have therefore explained important parts of the problem without fully connecting them. Research on pesantren generally emphasizes religious habituation, institutional culture, and moral instruction, while studies of martial arts more often examine psychosocial outcomes. Less attention has been given to what happens when these two educational environments overlap: how religious meanings are carried into physical routines, how trainers model the values they teach, how peers reinforce them, and how students begin to

treat repeated rules as personal habits. This process, rather than the geographical location alone, is the main gap addressed in the present study.

Against this background, the study examines PSHT training at Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Islamic Boarding School, Singkut 1, as a setting in which religious education and martial-arts practice meet in everyday student life. The analysis identifies the Islamic values emphasized in training, traces the practices through which those values are internalized, and examines the behavioural and social changes described by students and school personnel. Its contribution lies in explaining the process through which moral instruction, bodily practice, trainer example, and peer relations become connected within one extracurricular environment. The study is interpretive and does not estimate causal effects.

Muhaimin's three-stage account of value internalization provides the main analytical lens: value transformation, value transaction, and transinternalization [31]. Value transformation refers to the communication of moral and religious meaning; value transaction develops through interaction, correction, and guided practice; and transinternalization is reflected when a value is no longer treated simply as an external rule but appears in habitual conduct. This reading is compatible with developmental research that emphasizes repeated action, feedback, relationships, and meaning-making in the growth of self-regulation and positive youth development [3], [8], [11], [32]. The framework is used to interpret the case evidence rather than to test a causal sequence.

The study addresses three questions: (1) Which Islamic values are internalized through PSHT extracurricular activities in the pesantren? (2) How are those values introduced, practised, and reinforced during training? and (3) What behavioural and social changes are described or observed among participating students? These questions place the emphasis on the internalization process and on the educational meaning of the activity within the wider life of the pesantren.

METHODS

Research Design

A qualitative single-case study was used to examine value internalization within one PSHT extracurricular program. The case was treated as a bounded educational setting consisting of training routines, trainer-student interaction, spiritual activities, and participants' accounts of behavioural change. This design was chosen because the study sought to understand how values were experienced and practised in context rather than to estimate prevalence or causal effects. The organization of the analysis follows established principles for transparent qualitative reporting [33], [34], [35].

Research Setting

The study was conducted at Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Islamic Boarding School, Singkut 1, Sarolangun Regency, Jambi, Indonesia. The school combines Islamic religious education with PSHT extracurricular training, so religious routines, institutional discipline, peer life, and martial-arts practice occur within the same educational environment.

Participants and Sampling

Participants were selected purposively because of their direct involvement in PSHT activities or their knowledge of student religious and behavioural development in the pesantren. Nine informants took part: one rayon leader who also served as the main PSHT trainer, one assistant trainer, one vice principal for student affairs, one Islamic Education teacher, and five student members. The students were selected on the basis of active participation in training, length of membership, and involvement in PSHT spiritual activities. The combination of trainer, school-staff, teacher, and student perspectives provided information-rich accounts of the same bounded process [36].

Table 1. Participant and Evidence Profile

Participant / Source	N	Evidence Contributed to the Analysis
Rayon leader / main PSHT trainer	1	Training aims, spiritual orientation, values emphasized, and program rules
Assistant PSHT trainer	1	Training routines, discipline, trainer modelling, and day-to-day coaching
Vice principal for student affairs	1	Student conduct and compliance with school/pesantren rules
Islamic Education teacher	1	Religious participation, respectful conduct, and behaviour outside training
Student PSHT members	5	Experienced routines, peer relations, developing habits, and perceived changes

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation focused on routine training, spiritual activities, and interaction between trainers and students. Interviews explored the Islamic values emphasized in the program, the ways those values were taught and practised, factors that supported or hindered internalization, and changes noticed in students' conduct. Documentary material included the pesantren profile, PSHT membership information, training-program materials, activity photographs, and other supporting records. Using the three sources together allowed statements from interviews to be considered alongside observed routines and documentary evidence.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification [37]. The material was first grouped around recurring values, internalization practices, and behavioural expressions. Evidence was then compared across participant roles and across observation, interview, and documentary sources. The resulting categories were checked repeatedly against the available evidence before the main themes were formulated.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Credibility was strengthened through source triangulation, technique triangulation, member checking, and continued observation. Accounts from trainers, the vice principal for student affairs, the Islamic Education teacher, and students were compared with one another, while

interview material was checked against observation and documentation. Member checking was used to confirm interview interpretations with informants. These procedures are consistent with commonly used standards for qualitative quality and reporting [33], [34], [35]. Interview evidence is presented with participant codes rather than personal names so that individual identities are not disclosed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Six Islamic values were embedded in everyday training

Across interviews, observation, and documentation, PSHT was consistently described as more than technical martial-arts training. Six values appeared repeatedly in the evidence: religiosity, discipline, responsibility, Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah), respect for teachers and parents, and self-control. Each value was tied to an observable routine or social expectation. Religious practice shaped the opening and closing of training; rules and punctuality structured discipline; obligations during practice reinforced responsibility; greetings and mutual help enacted brotherhood; the trainer-student relationship reinforced respect; and instruction about the proper use of martial skill placed self-control at the centre of physical competence.

Religiosity was visible in ablution before training, Surah Yasin recitation, prayer before and after sessions, and spiritual guidance from trainers. The rayon leader (I-01) explained that these practices were intended to place martial-arts training within worship and closeness to God. The assistant-trainer account (I-02) emphasized the spiritual aspect of training so that martial ability would not be misused. Discipline was expressed through punctual attendance, appropriate training attributes, orderly participation, and compliance with instructions. The vice principal for student affairs (I-04) reported that students who were active in PSHT were more compliant with school rules, while the Islamic Education teacher (I-05) described them as more orderly in religious activities. Brotherhood was visible in handshakes, mutual assistance, cooperation, and expectations of respect across social differences.

Table 2. Islamic Values and Field Evidence

Value	Practice Recorded in the Study	Meaning in the Training Context	Participant-Level / Observational Evidence
Religiosity	Ablution, Yasin recitation, prayer, spiritual guidance	Places physical training within worship and moral accountability	Observed in training; I-01 linked the routines to worship; I-02 emphasized spirituality to prevent misuse of martial skill
Discipline	Punctuality, required attributes, orderly participation, compliance with instructions	Turns organizational rules into repeated self-management	Observed during training; I-04 reported stronger compliance with school rules among active members

Value	Practice Recorded in the Study	Meaning in the Training Context	Participant-Level / Observational Evidence
Responsibility	Following training obligations and accepting responsibility for conduct	Connects skill development with accountable behaviour	Trainer and school accounts emphasized responsibility as part of membership and conduct
Ukhuwah / brotherhood	Handshakes, mutual assistance, cooperation, respect across social differences	Builds reciprocal support and group belonging	Observed in peer interaction; I-06 emphasized friendship/cooperation; I-07 emphasized respect across social backgrounds
Respect	Courtesy toward trainers, teachers, parents, and peers	Reinforces relational ethics through authority and example	I-05 reported more courteous interaction; I-09 emphasized the trainer as a behavioural example
Self-control	Emotional restraint and warnings against misuse of fighting skills	Frames martial ability as controlled capacity rather than aggression	Trainer and student accounts connected martial skill with restraint and responsible use

Habituation and Trainer Example Connected Instruction with Practice

Four practices repeatedly appeared in the internalization process: habituation, trainer role modelling, moral-religious advice, and spiritual routines. Habituation was created through repeated ablution, prayer, Yasin recitation, cleaning the training area, greeting trainers and peers, and following training rules. Student I-08 described these routines as obligations at first, but as practices that gradually became ordinary habits in daily life. This account is important because it shows a shift from compliance with an external rule toward personal acceptance of the practice.

Trainer behaviour gave those routines a visible model. Observations recorded discipline, responsibility, and courtesy in the way trainers led activities, and student I-09 described the trainer as respected because he demonstrated good conduct before giving instructions to others. Advice and spiritual guidance then connected the routines with broader meanings such as respect for parents and teachers, responsible social relations, self-control, and moral accountability. In Muhaimin's terms [31], value transformation occurred when these meanings were explained, value transaction developed through interaction and guided practice, and transinternalization became visible when the practices were described as part of students' everyday conduct.

Table 3. Practices and Stages Of Value Internalization

Mechanism	Evidence Recorded in the Case	Role in Internalization	Internalization Stage
Moral-religious advice	Advice on worship, morals, respect, responsibility, social conduct, and self-restraint	Gives explicit meaning to the values expected in training	Value transformation
Trainer role modelling	Trainers demonstrate punctuality, responsibility, courtesy, and controlled conduct	Provides a visible example against which students can judge their own conduct	Transformation to transaction
Habituation through routines	Repeated rules, cleaning, greetings, prayer-related routines, and disciplined practice	Moves values from verbal instruction into repeated action	Value transaction
Spiritual routines	Ablution, Yasin recitation, and prayer integrated with physical training	Connects bodily practice with religious reflection and identity	Transaction to transinternalization
Peer interaction and brotherhood	Mutual help, handshakes, cooperation, and shared obligations	Reinforces values through belonging and reciprocal expectations	Transaction to transinternalization

Changes were Most Visible in Discipline, Worship, Self-Control, and Peer Relations

School personnel and students described changes that extended beyond the immediate training session. The vice principal (I-04) associated active participation with stronger compliance with pesantren rules, and the Islamic Education teacher (I-05) noted more active participation in religious activities and more courteous interaction. Student I-06 reported having more friends and finding it easier to cooperate with others after joining PSHT, while student I-07 emphasized learning to respect peers without distinguishing their social background. Together with the observational record, these accounts point to changes in self-management as well as in the way students related to other people.

The findings are qualitative and should be interpreted accordingly. The study did not compare participants with a non-participating group or use pre-post scores and standardized psychosocial measures. The evidence therefore shows patterns that were observed and described by trainers, school personnel, teachers, and students; it does not isolate PSHT as the sole cause of those changes. This is especially relevant in a pesantren, where students are also exposed to religious routines, institutional rules, and other forms of character education throughout daily life.

Table 4. Behavioural and Social Changes Identified in the Case

Outcome Dimension	Evidence Base	Observed / Reported Expression	Contextual Interpretation
Religious awareness	Training observation; I-01, I-02, and I-05 accounts	Ablution, Yasin recitation, prayer, and stronger participation in religious activities	Religious practice was integrated into the rhythm and meaning of training
Discipline	Observation and I-04 account	Punctuality, rule compliance, orderly participation	Repeated rules connected training discipline with wider institutional conduct
Responsibility	Trainer and school accounts	Accountability for obligations and behaviour	Responsibility was taught as part of membership and the ethical use of skill
Self-control / emotional control	Trainer and student accounts	Restraint, emotion management, and non-misuse of martial ability	Control of physical ability was presented as a moral expectation
Respect	Observation; I-05 and I-09 accounts	More courteous conduct toward teachers, trainers, parents, and peers	Respect was reinforced through trainer example and repeated interaction
Social connectedness / concern	Observation; I-06 and I-07 accounts	Friendship, cooperation, mutual assistance, and respect across social background	Brotherhood was practised through everyday peer relations

Internalization Linked Meaning, Repeated Practice, and Social Reinforcement

Taken together, the findings show a recurring pattern. Values were first explained in religious and moral language, then practised through rules, bodily routines, and spiritual activities. Trainers reinforced the same values through example and correction, while peers reinforced them through greetings, cooperation, and shared obligations. Some of these practices were later described by students and school personnel as habits that carried into everyday conduct. This pattern helps explain how a value can move from verbal instruction to repeated practice and, eventually, to a more stable way of behaving.

Discussion

The main finding is that PSHT became educationally meaningful in this pesantren because physical training was not separated from moral, spiritual, and social guidance. Prayer, rule compliance, bodily restraint, cleaning, trainer-student interaction, and peer rituals were part of the same training sequence. Values were therefore encountered in action, not only in advice. This helps explain why an extracurricular activity can contribute to character formation when its routines consistently reinforce the values the institution seeks to teach.

This interpretation is consistent with martial-arts research showing that psychosocial outcomes depend on how training is organized. School-based martial-arts programs have been associated with improvements in self-regulation [11], and a randomized field experiment reported gains in aspects of children's self-regulation after Taekwondo training [12]. Other studies have pointed to possible benefits for emotional control and stress resilience [15]. At the same time, reviews caution against assuming that martial arts are beneficial in themselves because outcomes depend on pedagogy, instructor behaviour, and the way aggression and competition are handled [13], [14], [16], [17], [18]. In the present case, trainers repeatedly connected technical ability with restraint, spiritual accountability, and responsibility toward others.

The findings also fit broader research on extracurricular participation. Sustained involvement and structured roles can make extracurricular activities developmentally meaningful [1], [2], while positive youth-development research emphasizes relationships, initiative, skill practice, and opportunities to act in meaningful social settings [3], [8]. PSHT students in this study were not only told to be disciplined or respectful; they had to enact those expectations during repeated training routines and under immediate feedback from trainers and peers. The consistency between spoken values, adult example, group expectations, and routine practice appears to be a central part of the internalization process.

The pesantren environment strengthened this consistency because the same religious and behavioural expectations were already present in daily institutional life. Studies of pesantren character education describe the interaction of formal teaching, rules, religious practice, and communal living in shaping student conduct [25], [26], [27], [28], [29]. PSHT did not operate outside that environment. Ablution, prayer, respect for teachers, responsibility, and self-restraint already had meaning for students, while martial-arts training gave them another setting in which those values had to be practised under physical effort, hierarchy, and peer dependence.

The social practices within training are also important. Handshakes, mutual assistance, cooperation, and the language of brotherhood made membership a relational experience rather than an individual pursuit of martial skill. Research on youth sport has linked organized participation with belonging, social interaction, and psychological benefits [5], [9], [10]. Work on school-based social and emotional learning likewise shows the value of repeated opportunities to practise interpersonal and self-management skills [38], [39]. The present case adds a culturally specific example of how those opportunities can be built into a martial-arts program through shared routines and expectations of reciprocal respect.

Discipline and self-control were especially prominent in the accounts. These qualities are relevant beyond the training setting because self-control is associated with later educational, health, and social outcomes, and self-discipline has been linked with academic performance [32], [40]. In this study, however, self-control was not measured with a psychometric scale. What the qualitative evidence shows is how restraint was taught locally: through rules, trainer example, repeated practice, spiritual reminders, and explicit warnings against the misuse of martial skill.

Other explanations for the reported changes remain possible. Students who chose to join and remain active in PSHT may already have differed in motivation or discipline, and the boarding-school environment exposes them to several parallel forms of religious and behavioural socialization. The findings are therefore best read as a description of how

participants and school personnel understood change within the program rather than as proof of an independent program effect. Comparative and longitudinal studies would be useful for examining whether the same patterns appear across different pesantren and among students with different levels of participation.

For practice, the findings suggest that the educational value of a martial-arts extracurricular depends on how the activity is taught. Clear moral expectations, consistent trainer behaviour, safe routines, opportunities for reflection, and peer norms that reward cooperation can help keep physical skill connected to responsibility. This is consistent with research showing that martial-arts outcomes are sensitive to instructional climate and training philosophy [13], [14], [18]. In settings involving minors and physical contact, these educational aims also need to be accompanied by clear safeguarding and non-humiliating training practices.

Future research can build on this case by following students over time and by comparing participants with students who do not take part in martial-arts activities. Combining interviews and observation with measures of self-regulation, belonging, school engagement, and psychosocial wellbeing would make it possible to test whether the patterns identified here are also reflected in measurable change. Studies across different pesantren would also help distinguish features that are specific to this institution from those that may be common to pesantren-based martial-arts programs.

Taken as a whole, the case brings together three areas that are often discussed separately: Islamic value internalization, pesantren character education, and youth development through martial arts. Its main contribution is a grounded account of how spiritual routines, trainer example, peer brotherhood, and disciplined physical practice can reinforce one another in the same extracurricular setting. The findings do not suggest that PSHT will produce identical outcomes in every context; they show how value internalization was organized and experienced in this particular pesantren.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative case study shows that PSHT extracurricular activities at Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Islamic Boarding School functioned as a setting in which Islamic values were taught through both instruction and repeated practice. Religiosity, discipline, responsibility, Islamic brotherhood, respect, and self-control were embedded in spiritual routines, training rules, trainer example, advice, and peer interaction. Students and school personnel associated these practices with greater worship awareness, more orderly conduct, responsibility, emotional restraint, respectful relationships, and social concern. The study's main contribution is to show how moral meaning, bodily practice, and social reinforcement can work together in the internalization of values within a pesantren-based martial-arts activity. Because the evidence comes from one qualitative case, the findings are best understood as a context-bound explanation of process rather than as a causal estimate of program effectiveness.

LIMITATIONS

This study is limited to one pesantren-based PSHT program and nine purposively selected informants, so the findings are most transferable to settings with similar institutional and cultural characteristics. The analysis relied on interviews, observation, and documentation and did not include a comparison group, pre-post measurement, standardized measures of self-control or wellbeing, or longitudinal follow-up. Participant accounts may also reflect the wider religious and disciplinary environment of the pesantren rather than PSHT alone. Future studies should combine qualitative process analysis with comparative or longitudinal designs to examine how participation relates to self-regulation, belonging, school engagement, psychosocial wellbeing, and responsible use of martial skill.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

N. conceptualized the study, developed the research design, and led the overall research process, including data collection, statistical analysis, and primary manuscript drafting. J.M.E. contributed to instrument development, data management, and supported data analysis and interpretation.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

"The authors declare no conflict of interest."

DECLARATION OF USE OF AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

The authors used OpenAI's ChatGPT during manuscript preparation for language refinement, structural editing, and bibliographic checking. The tool was not used to generate or alter the empirical data. The authors reviewed and verified the final text, citations, and interpretations and take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

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