

11th ASEAN Council of Physical Education and Sport (ACPES) International Conference 2025



Contribution ID: 80

Type: Oral

Evolving Silat Scholarship: Malaysia's Path from Cultural Tradition to Global Academic Recognition

Wednesday, October 1, 2025 4:45 PM (15 minutes)

This paper examines the progressive academicization of Silat in Malaysia between 2014 and 2024, highlighting its journey from a deeply rooted cultural tradition to an internationally recognized academic discipline. Anchored by Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and supported by national bodies such as PASSMAL and PESONA, Silat has been institutionalized through curriculum development, international collaborations, and scientific innovation. Using a qualitative methodology comprising literature review, expert interviews, and case studies, the study maps the integration of Silat into higher education and global research ecosystems.

Key milestones include the establishment of Silat-focused coaching certifications, the application of motion analysis technology in training, and the proliferation of Silat studies in Scopus-indexed journals. Collaborative platforms such as IMACSSS and UNESCO ICM have been instrumental in elevating Silat's academic stature and fostering cross-cultural dialogue. However, the expansion also presents challenges, such as the risk of cultural dilution and unequal knowledge partnerships.

The findings underscore the importance of safeguarding Silat's philosophical roots while embracing interdisciplinary scholarship. Malaysia's experience offers a forward-thinking model for integrating indigenous martial arts into academia—preserving authenticity while expanding global relevance. This study contributes to the broader discourse on traditional knowledge systems, cultural sustainability, and the evolving landscape of martial arts education.

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Session Classification: Cultural Perspectives in Physical Activity and Sports

Track Classification: Cultural Perspectives in Physical Activity and Sport