

*Ustaz Hanafi: A Transformative Figure in Malay Silat Through the Education of the Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia (PSSCM)*

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The Asian Conference on Education 2023  
Official Conference Proceedings

**Abstract**

Ustaz Hanafi, the late Founder, President, and Guru Utama of the Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia (PSSCM), was a well-known figure among the members of the organization and the Malay martial arts community. This study aims to examine Ustaz Hanafi's character as a Silat master in PSSCM. Interviews were conducted with 15 active members who had studied under Ustaz Hanafi during the early days of PSSCM. The findings revealed that Ustaz Hanafi possessed a firm and serious demeanour as a Silat master, which was crucial for effectively transmitting and preserving the knowledge of the martial art. Despite the organization being in its infancy in Kuala Lumpur, Ustaz Hanafi's compassionate nature as a teacher fostered a strong bond with his students, ensuring their continued dedication and participation in PSSCM. The philosophy of Ustaz Hanafi's Silat education aimed to cultivate individuals who would contribute to their religion, nation, and country. His distinctive character set him apart from other contemporary Silat masters and allowed him to transform many troubled individuals within PSSCM into better versions of themselves. This paper explores in detail how Ustaz Hanafi's character contributed to the growth and development of PSSCM as a prominent martial arts organization. His leadership, combined with his strict yet caring approach, propelled the organization forward and established its reputation as it stands today. Ustaz Hanafi's legacy as a Silat master continues to inspire and shape the values of PSSCM, fostering a community of dedicated practitioners who strive to make a positive impact.

Keywords: Malay Silat, Martial Art, Transformative Figure, Education

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## **Introduction**

Ustaz Hanafi is a transformative figure in the world of Malay Silat, particularly through his role as the founder and 1<sup>st</sup> Guru of the Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia (PSSCM). His influence extends beyond just the physical aspects of Silat, as he emphasized the importance of upholding moral values and respecting one's cultural heritage. Ustaz Hanafi sought to instil a sense of national pride and a strong moral compass in the youth practicing Silat through education within the PSSCM. His teachings encompassed not only the physical discipline of martial arts but also emphasized the significance of moral education and the preservation of cultural traditions. Ustaz Hanafi's dedication to nurturing individuals into well-rounded citizens echoes a sentiment shared by other educators, conveying a holistic approach to personal and national development. According to (Jayanti & Kumalasari, 2022), culture, education, and religion are interrelated. Ustaz Hanafi recognized the importance of integrating religion, culture, and patriotism in shaping the character of individuals and promoting unity within society.

Historically, Silat Cekak was reborn in 1965 with the involvement of 20 students, including Ustaz Hanafi. It was initially introduced as a Silat organization in 1964 under the name Perkumpulan Seni Sari Budaya Sri Kedah and later as Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Kedah Malaysia in 1971. Subsequently, Ustaz Hanafi strengthened Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia by establishing the legally recognized association PSSCM in 1975 under the Registrar of Societies in Malaysia. Ustaz Hanafi founded PSSCM with the aim of extending the teaching of Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia to communities across Peninsular Malaysia, with a particular focus on students in higher education institutions. This expansion is evident in the initiation of classes in Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Institut Teknologi MARA (ITM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (UPM) from 1974 to 1976 (Ahmad & Janudin, 2023). Presently, the number of classes continues to grow in higher education institutions, extending to include education institutions at the middle and elementary school levels. Through the years, his philosophy in teaching students is still relevant and aligns with the national education philosophy. Ustaz Hanafi's approach aligns with Malaysia's national education philosophy, emphasizing holistic development to create well-balanced individuals with intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical harmony. The philosophy aims to produce knowledgeable, competent citizens with high moral standards, fostering personal well-being and contributing to family, society, and the nation at large (Malaysia, 2013).

Researchers have undertaken numerous studies to explore the cultivation of positive values contributing to the development of commendable character traits within PSSCM members. One of the earliest studies was conducted by (Ismail, 2002) that discussed the role of Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia in cultivating the self-identity of its members. He asserted that PSSCM, as a non-governmental organization active in safeguarding positive native culture, plays a crucial role in addressing the fading identity of the Malay nation. As a curriculum subject in higher education institutions, Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia has effectively honed the soft skills of university students through their involvement in diverse events that extend beyond the exclusive focus on martial arts (Aizat & Nurazreena, 2013; Maoinsar, M. Zaid, & W. Mohar, 2017). The spectrum of soft skills developed by PSSCM includes communication skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, teamwork skills, continuous learning and information management, entrepreneurial skills, professional ethics and morality, and leadership skills. In addition to these skills, Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia is proficient at nurturing the Islamic spiritual aspect of its Muslim members, aligning its practices with

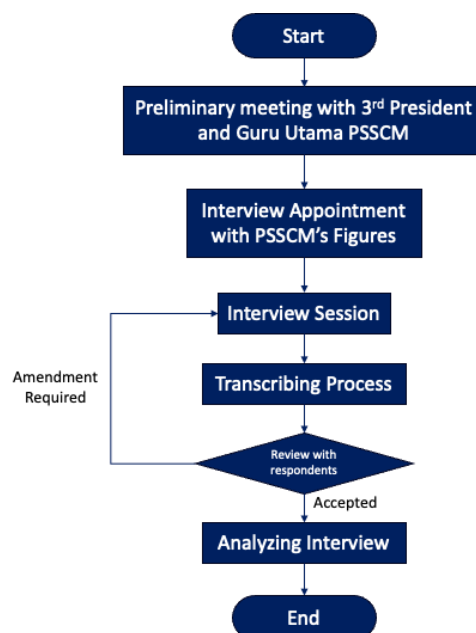
Islamic teachings and Malay culture (Ahmad, Ab Majid, Aziz, & Ahmad, 2019; Ezani & Salleh, 2021). Furthermore, PSSCM fosters a sense of volunteerism among its members, contributing to community development and empowerment in Malaysia (Janudin & Samah, 2020).

Despite the existing studies, there is a noticeable gap in research focusing on the character of Ustaz Hanafi and its impact on fostering positive values among PSSCM members. Hence, this manuscript seeks to undertake a qualitative investigation into the characters of Ustaz Hanafi. Through interviews with a cohort of 15 individuals who shared a close relationship with Ustaz Hanafi between 1975 and 1986, this study aims to uncover the fundamental aspects of his character as Guru Silat Cekak. The ultimate goal is for these findings to present Ustaz Hanafi as a role model, influencing both present and future PSSCM members.

## Methodology

The study is undertaken in several stages, beginning with a preliminary meeting involving the 3rd President and Guru Utama of PSSCM, Datuk Haji Maideen Kadir Shah, and several prominent figures from PSSCM. This initial phase is followed by scheduling interview appointments with these figures, conducting the actual interviews, transcribing the recorded sessions, and subsequently analyzing the interview content through transcription. Figure 1 illustrates the flow chart of this interview process.

Approximately 15 respondents, who have learned Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia from Ustaz Hanafi and are currently active members of PSSCM, were interviewed for the study. These respondents hail from diverse backgrounds and various states in peninsular Malaysia, collectively amassing over 40 years of experience in PSSCM.



**Figure 1: Flowchart of the research**

## **Result and Discussion**

### **Affectionate Teacher and Assimilation of Islamic Teaching Through PSSCM**

The initial thematic analysis, derived from interviews with 15 esteemed figures in PSSCM, depicts Ustaz Hanafi as a compassionate instructor who simultaneously imparts Islamic teachings through PSSCM. Safaran notes that although Ustaz Hanafi is a stringent teacher, he shows genuine concern for his students without any discrimination. Abdul Karim echoes this sentiment, affirming that Ustaz Hanafi, while strict, employs an accessible teaching approach, emphasizing his warm-hearted nature. Supporting this viewpoint, Izham & Roziyah emphasize in their interviews that Ustaz Hanafi underscores the importance of a strong teacher-student relationship, having close connections with his own students. Zainol adds that Ustaz Hanafi consistently urges all instructors to be warm and approachable to attract new students to learn Silat Cekak.

Ustaz Hanafi's character as a teacher was very outstanding by giving the father-figure vibes towards all his students. Almost all the interviewees responded that Ustaz Hanafi was a strict teacher but at the same time he was approachable and cared for each and every one of his students. This kind of teaching approach was very effective according to (Bhavna Barmi et al, 2023) because by showing affection, only then the teacher will be able to connect with his student on emotional level and build trust. Developed in the 1950s by psychologist and educator Benjamin Bloom, Bloom's Taxonomy stands as a widely embraced pedagogical instrument, playing a pivotal role in shaping the planning and assessment of the teaching and learning process. This methodology categorizes learning objectives into three distinct domains—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor—and establishes a hierarchy that delineates a progressive cycle of learning (Santos et al, 2024). This underscores the importance of emphasizing the emotional connection between teachers and students to ensure the optimal delivery of education.

The second thematic analysis focuses on the integration of Islamic Teaching through PSSCM. According to Rosman, Ustaz Hanafi is adept at guiding individuals who have deviated from Islamic teachings through Silat. Roziyah also noted that Ustaz Hanafi consistently underscores the concept of "tawakkal", where individuals entrust the course and outcome of a task to Allah after demonstrating their determination (Alan & Isi, 2023). To further support this perspective, Sabariah highlighted Ustaz Hanafi's extensive knowledge of Islamic teachings, particularly the concept of tawhid, which signifies belief and the testimony that there is no God other than Allah (Tetelepta et al., 2023).

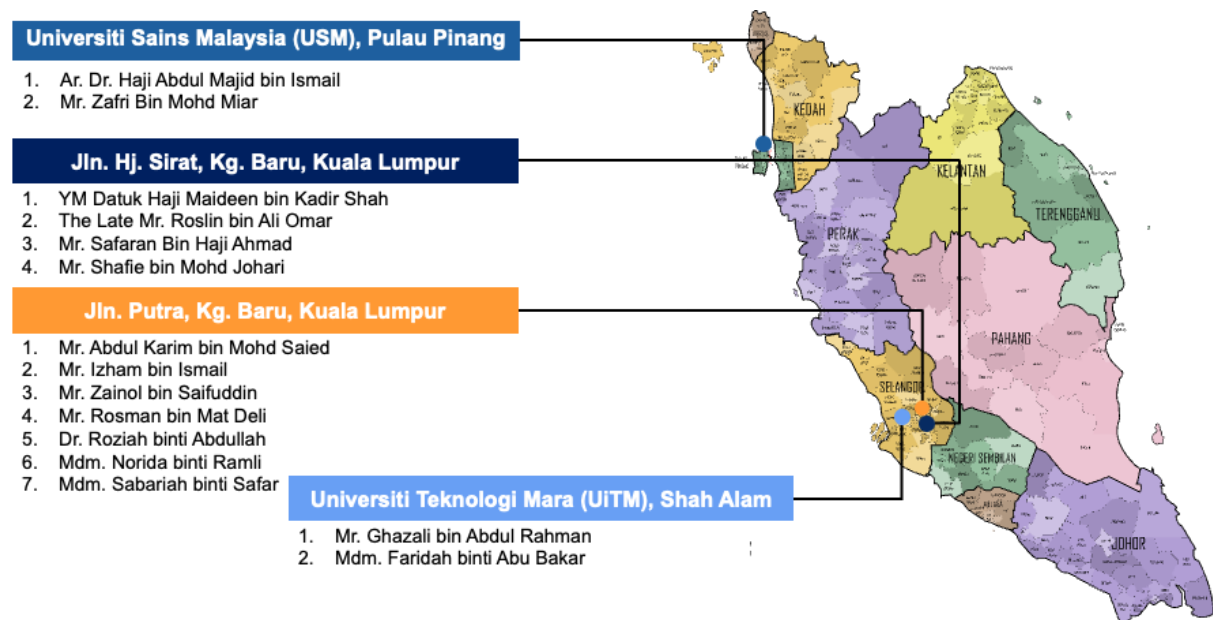
Ustaz Hanafi successfully integrated Islamic teachings into PSSCM as he had previously obtained religious education from an Islamic boarding school (pondok) before teaching Silat. Additionally, he received valuable religious instruction from outstanding teachers of that time, as documented by Halimah in 1978. Consequently, when Ustaz Hanafi later instructed Silat, he effectively incorporated his religious knowledge by blending Islamic teachings with Silat. This approach served as one of his methods for promoting and imparting Islamic principles to the Muslim community.

## Martial Art Expert and Professionalism Element in Managing PSSCM as a Leader

Ustaz Hanafi is renowned as a martial arts expert. Not only is he proficient in Silat Cekak, but he is also recognized for his expertise in Silat Sendeng. This acknowledgment comes not only from his students but is explicitly confirmed by four individuals who were interviewed. In his interview, Datuk Haji Maideen remarked, "Ustaz Hanafi has also delved into other martial arts, such as Silat Sendeng." Zafri Miar echoed Datuk Haji Maideen's sentiment, affirming that Ustaz Hanafi possesses substantial experience in Silat Sendeng.

As a distinguished leader and founding father of PSSCM, Ustaz Hanafi is regarded as a visionary figure. Abdul Majid affirmed this assertion by highlighting that Ustaz Hanafi employed the strategy of showcasing practical demonstrations to promote Silat Cekak, aiming to engage and encourage audiences to become members of PSSCM. This is evident in his introduction of Silat Cekak to established universities such as Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), formerly known as Institute Teknologi MARA (ITM). The vision of integrating silat cekak into these universities has materialized, with the establishment of seni silat cekak Malaysia as an academic subject at Universiti Sains Malaysia.

This integration is reflected in Figure 1, depicting the demographic of students who have learned silat with Ustaz Hanafi and are still active in Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia. The figure illustrates Ustaz Hanafi's strategic focus on both public and university settings. His influence extends beyond traditional boundaries, and the acceptance of silat modernization is evident among the residents of Kuala Lumpur. This sentiment is supported by Mohd Shafie, who expressed in his interview that, "Modernizing the development of silat is crucial for broader public acceptance."



**Figure 2: The demographic of respondents**

Ustaz Hanafi demonstrates professionalism in teaching silat by maintaining strictness in his Silat Cekak classes while treating all students equally. This characteristic was highlighted by Safaran Haji Ahmad during his interview, as he stated, "Ustaz Hanafi was a strict teacher but deeply concerned about his students, showing no discrimination among them." This

exemplifies Ustaz Hanafi's professionalism in imparting the art of Seni Silat Cekak Malaysia. Abdul Karim Mohd Saied, in his interview, further emphasized this point, noting that Ustaz Hanafi is strict yet employs an easy-to-understand teaching approach, coupled with a warm-hearted demeanor.

### **Charismatic and Positive Personality**

The thematic analysis of the interviews revealed consistent keywords describing Ustaz Hanafi's positive personality. According to Norida, Ustaz Hanafi was characterized as strict, warm-hearted, loving and always emphasizing the importance of honesty in both heart and speech. Sabariah echoed this sentiment by highlighting Ustaz Hanafi's loving and responsible traits while maintaining a soft-spoken demeanor. Additionally, Faridah portrayed Ustaz Hanafi as a casual and easy-going individual that making him approachable across all age levels. Ghazali further remarked that anyone acquainted with him would undoubtedly be awed and captivated by his extraordinary qualities. The positive traits mentioned such as being warm-hearted, patient, wise, morally upright, honest, responsible, soft-spoken, casual, and easy-going, collectively demonstrated Ustaz Hanafi's ability to create a nurturing and supportive environment for his students.

Ustaz Hanafi's warmth and patience contributed to the creation of a safe space for learning, fostering an atmosphere where students feel comfortable expressing themselves. His wisdom and moral integrity served as guiding principles, instilling the importance of making responsible and ethical choices. Furthermore, his honesty fosters a culture of trust and openness, enabling effective communication and constructive feedback. Ustaz Hanafi's loving and caring character enhances personal development and strengthens the bond between teacher and student, promoting a sense of belonging. Moreover, Ustaz Hanafi's soft-spoken and casual demeanor contributes to a relaxed learning atmosphere, encouraging students to perform their Silat Cekak training with comfort and enjoyment. The impact of these positive traits extends beyond technical skills in Silat movement and emphasizing the transformative influence he has on PSSCM members.

The analysis suggests that Ustaz Hanafi possessed charismatic leadership qualities in spearheading PSSCM. His positive personality aligned with characteristics of charismatic leaders, described as magnetic, persuasive, and likable (Murray, 2020). According to charismatic leadership theory, such leaders have the ability to transform the needs, values, and aspirations of followers from self-interests to collective interests and led to a high level of commitment towards achieving the organization's vision and mission (House & Howell, 1992). Additionally, the work of (Nikezić, Doljanica, & Bataveljić, 2013) suggested that charismatic leaders are often regarded in theory as transformational leaders, possessing unique skills that afford them greater influence and personal charisma. Furthermore, a statistical analysis conducted by (Supratman, Entang, & Tukiran, 2021) supported the notion that a charismatic leader's personality significantly influenced the performance of subordinates within an organization. The charismatic and positive personality attributed to Ustaz Hanafi by the respondents unmistakably positions him as a transformative figure in Malay Silat, particularly within the PSSCM members. His leadership style aligns with established theories, emphasizing the profound impact of charisma on organizational commitment and performance.

## **Conclusions**

Drawing from the findings and discussions, it is evident that Ustaz Hanafi possesses extensive knowledge in Islamic teachings, expertise in martial arts, effective leadership skills, a nurturing teaching approach, and a positive personality. The esteemed Ustaz Hanafi played a transformative role in Malay Silat through his contributions to PSSCM education. His notable attributes included firmness, a harmonious rapport with students, articulate communication, genuine warmth, wisdom, and a loving disposition.

## **Acknowledgements**

Our appreciation goes out to these individuals for their valuable contributions to our research. They include:

1. The Honourable Datuk Haji Maideen Bin Kadir Shah
2. The Late Mr. Roslin Bin Omar
3. Mr. Safaran Bin Haji Ahmad
4. Mr. Mohd Shafie Bin Mohd Johari
5. Prof. Madya Ar. Dr. Haji Abdul Majid Bin Ismail
6. Mr. Zafri Bin Miar
7. Mr. Abdul Karim Bin Mohd Saied
8. Mr. Izham Bin Ismail
9. Mr. Zainol Bin Saifuddin
10. Mr. Rosman Bin Mat Deli
11. Dr. Roziah Binti Abdullah
12. Mdm. Norida Binti Ramli
13. Mdm. Sabariah Binti Safar
14. Mr. Ghazali Bin Abdul Rahman
15. Mdm. Faridah Binti Abu Bakar
16. Mr Abdul Halim Bin Saad
17. Ir. Ts. Arif Bin Mohd Zainudin
18. Mdm. Nadhirah Binti Mohd Rosdi

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