



## **Exploring the Contributions of Aikido to the Well-Being of the Seminarians**

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative study aimed to investigate the contribution of Aikido practice on the overall well-being of seminarians, focusing on their transformative learning experiences. The research design incorporated elements from Merriam's framework of qualitative research. In-depth interviews were conducted with actively participating seminarians, and the collected data were analyzed using categorical analysis. The study identified various ways in which Aikido practice contributes to seminarians' well-being across different dimensions. Physically, Aikido enhances fitness, body awareness, control, and balance and coordination. Mentally, it promotes mindfulness, conflict resolution, emotional regulation, and self-control. Aikido also supports spiritual well-being through the cultivation of mind-body connection, transcendence, and self-transformation. Additionally, it aids in emotional well-being by helping individuals regulate their emotions and manage stress. In terms of moral development, Aikido fosters moral reasoning and behavior. The findings of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the transformative potential of Aikido for seminarians' overall well-being and provide practical implications for integrating Aikido into seminary training programs.

Keywords: Aikido, Well-Being, Seminarian

### **Introduction**

Aikido is a popular martial art known for its non-aggressive approach, emphasizing principles of harmony, non-resistance, and peaceful conflict resolution, making it appealing for personal development and self-improvement. Extensive research has highlighted the potential advantages of practicing Aikido, including improvements in physical fitness, emotional regulation, and mental well-being. This non-competitive

martial art offers a holistic approach to training, promoting not only physical strength and flexibility but also cultivating mindfulness, stress reduction, and emotional balance. The widespread recognition of these benefits has contributed to Aikido's global popularity as a practice that fosters overall well-being (Kim et al., 2018; Navarro et al., 2015). This study recognizes that seminarians face a range of challenges at different levels - global, national, and local - as they navigate their journey towards becoming religious leaders.

The seminary life for Catholic seminarians includes aspects of their human, spiritual, academic, and pastoral formation (Naparan et al., 2022). These challenges may vary from broader societal issues, such as changing cultural norms and religious diversity, to more specific challenges within their local contexts, such as community expectations and the demands of their religious institutions.

Understanding these challenges is crucial for comprehending the unique context in which seminarians undergo their formation. It allows researchers and practitioners to consider the impact of these contextual factors on seminarians' well-being and overall development as religious leaders. By acknowledging and addressing these challenges, the study aims to provide insights into how Aikido, as a practice, can contribute to the well-being and resilience of seminarians in the face of these complex circumstances.

The intention is to fill a gap in the existing literature by specifically examining the potential benefits of Aikido for seminarians. By conducting this research, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how Aikido practice can support seminarians in navigating the challenges they encounter, promoting their overall well-being and facilitating their growth as effective and compassionate religious leaders.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

The researchers used a qualitative case study design to examine the impact of Aikido practice on the well-being of seminarians. Through in-depth interviews, the study explored the physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of well-being influenced by Aikido. The design captured the experiences and perspectives of seminarians practicing Aikido, providing comprehensive insights into this specific population.

### **Research Environment**

This research study explores the impact of Aikido on the well-being of seminarians within their physical education program. Conducted within the seminary environment, the study delves into how Aikido influences the physical development, discipline, mental focus, and spiritual growth of the participants. The familiarity and trust established with the seminarians during the study facilitated valuable data collection, while observing their daily lives provided insights into the integration of Aikido into their routines. Ultimately,

the study aims to deepen our understanding of how Aikido specifically affects seminarians' well-being within the context of their religious training.

### **Research Participants**

The participants in this study consisted of male seminarians ranging in age from 21 to 28 years old, who were actively engaged in Aikido practice at a minor seminary in Mindanao. They were purposefully selected to represent diverse cultural backgrounds and varying levels of Aikido proficiency, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perspectives of seminarians who practice Aikido. The participants' collective Aikido practice experience totaled three years, providing a rich pool of insights regarding the potential contributions of Aikido to their overall well-being within the context of their religious training. By including participants with different backgrounds and levels of expertise, the study aimed to capture a wide range of perspectives and experiences, enriching the depth and breadth of the research findings.

### **Research Instrument**

In this study, the researchers played a critical role as the primary research instrument, utilizing a self-made interview protocol to investigate the contribution of Aikido to the well-being of seminarians. The protocol was validated by expert reviewers to ensure the reliability and validity of the interview questions. The interviews took place in a confidential and distraction-free environment within the Seminary, with participants' consent and audio-recording for accurate analysis. The use of open-ended questions allowed for in-depth exploration of seminarians' experiences and perspectives, leading to a nuanced understanding of how Aikido impacts their overall well-being in the context of their religious training.

### **Data Gathering Procedure**

The data-gathering procedure in this study commenced with obtaining permission from the Seminary, followed by informed consent from the participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview protocol developed by the researcher, with each interview lasting approximately 20-30 minutes. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, and ethical considerations, such as participant confidentiality and minimizing harm, were upheld throughout the process. The procedure adhered to a systematic approach, ensuring comprehensive data collection for subsequent analysis in alignment with the research questions and design.

### **Data Analysis**

After conducting the interviews, the researchers transcribed the audio recordings verbatim to ensure an accurate representation of the data. To gain a deep understanding of the content, the researcher immersed themselves in the transcriptions by repeatedly reading and familiarizing themselves with the data. During the coding process, the researchers meticulously analyzed the transcriptions, identifying recurring patterns and assigning descriptive codes that captured the essence of the content. These codes were then organized into broader categories and further refined into subcategories, providing a structured framework for data analysis. The coding scheme was continually reviewed and revised to ensure consistency and accuracy. The identified categories and subcategories were constantly compared and refined to accurately reflect the participants' experiences and perspectives. By employing categories, the analysis adopted a systematic and structured approach, enabling a comprehensive exploration of the participants' experiences. Through this analysis, a deeper understanding of the research subject was achieved, contributing valuable insights to the existing knowledge in the field.

### **Ethical Considerations of Research**

This study prioritized ethical considerations to ensure the safety, well-being, and rights of the participants. Informed consent was obtained from each participant, providing a clear explanation of the study's purpose, research questions, and procedures. Participants were informed of their rights, including the option to withdraw from the study without consequences. Confidentiality measures were implemented to protect participant identities and responses, such as anonymizing personal information and using pseudonyms. Data were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. Participation in the study was voluntary, with participants having the freedom to decline or withdraw. The study underwent ethical review and obtained approval from an institutional review board or ethics committee, ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines. Anonymity was maintained by employing various methods, such as password protection and encryption of data. The commitment to ethical guidelines demonstrated in this study enhances the validity, credibility, and trustworthiness of its findings.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### ***The Contribution of Aikido to the Physical Well-Being of the Seminarians***

Aikido is highly influential in enhancing the physical well-being of seminarians by emphasizing harmony and utilizing an opponent's energy. Regular practice of Aikido leads to improvements in physical fitness, strength, and coordination among seminarians as they engage in various techniques involving throws, joint locks, and strikes, which

engage different muscle groups and promote overall body conditioning. Aikido practice also helps develop core stability, flexibility, and balance, essential for maintaining proper posture and reducing the risk of injuries. The cardiovascular aspects of Aikido training contribute to improved stamina and endurance. Additionally, Aikido cultivates body awareness, proprioception, and mindfulness, fostering a deeper mind-body connection. These physical benefits of Aikido positively impact seminarians' overall well-being, enabling them to lead healthy lifestyles and support their spiritual and personal growth. The analysis of participant responses revealed three subcategories: *fitness and conditioning*, *body awareness and control*, and *balance and coordination*, which further illustrate the contributions of Aikido to seminarians' physical well-being.

***Fitness and conditioning.*** It refers to the activities that encompass a range of exercises and training aimed at improving physical fitness, including cardio, strength training, and flexibility exercises. The objective of these activities is to enhance health, strength, endurance, and flexibility, which, in turn, have numerous benefits such as improving mental health, reducing stress, boosting confidence, enhancing overall health, preventing diseases, improving performance, and positively impacting daily life. To enhance his mental and physical well-being, the founder Ueshiba pursued the study of Tenjin Shin'yo-ryu jujutsu under Tokusaburo Tozawa in Tokyo in 1901, Goto-ha Yagyū Shingan-ryū under Masakatsu Nakai in Sakai City near Osaka from around 1908, and judo under Sokaku Takeda beginning in 1915 in Hokkaido (Pranin, 1991).

P2 said, "*Aikido is an essential exercise for the body to improve blood circulation to the brain.*"

The observation from P2 highlights the significance of Aikido as a physical exercise that promotes improved blood circulation to the brain. This observation suggests that practicing Aikido contributes to enhanced blood flow, ensuring sufficient oxygen and nutrients reach the brain. P2 recognizes the importance of maintaining a healthy circulatory system, which is crucial for optimal brain function. Engaging in Aikido can enhance overall physical well-being and support cognitive health by promoting better blood circulation. This observation emphasizes the positive impact of Aikido on physiological processes and underscores its potential benefits for brain health and function. Aikido, as a martial art, provides a holistic training approach that nurtures both the body and mind, fostering strength, flexibility, and long-term well-being.

One seminary practitioner wrote,

*"Aikido trains the body and mind in limitless ways that can benefit us for many years. This martial art keeps individuals feeling and looking younger as individuals develop a strong and flexible body and a strong and flexible mind."*

***Body awareness and control.*** It refers to the crucial components of physical and

mental well-being. They involve being mindful of one's body, its posture, alignment, and sensations, and intentionally regulating movements for improved coordination and adaptability. Developing body awareness and control enhances physical performance, motor skills, safety, emotional regulation, and stress management. Activities such as yoga, mindfulness exercises, martial arts, and somatic therapies can help cultivate body awareness and control, leading to a better mind-body connection and movement abilities. By practicing and honing these skills, individuals can enhance their overall well-being and daily movement quality.

P2 said *"I am working hard to achieve self-control."* P1 also said that, *"I learned self-control and developed a good attitude from my Aikido practice."* He added that, *"I have self-control in dealing with others every day."* P4 mentioned, *"I learned self-control, love, and humility with the Aikido practice."*

The selected essay exam from the seminarian underscores the significance of respect in Aikido as a guiding principle that extends beyond the physical practice. Aikido teaches practitioners to approach their training and interactions with respect, emphasizing the value of mutual respect and consideration for others. This principle of respect permeates all aspects of Aikido, shaping not only how practitioners engage in physical techniques but also how they navigate relationships and daily life. By embodying and practicing respect, individuals can cultivate a harmonious and balanced approach to their interactions with others and promote a positive and respectful environment.

*"It's exhausting to get up early in the morning and be tempted to sleep again to avoid doing Aikido. However, as I and the other seminarians continue to practice Aikido, I am discovering its true beauty. It's the same thing as applying philosophy to one's life. It is the practice of our self-disciplining process with the support of our sensei. It is a practicing ourselves to be productive, beginning with waking up early in the morning and ending with our P.E. session. Inside and outside the mat, the most crucial rule to observe in Aikido is respect."*

One seminary practitioner wrote,

*"This kind of discipline is essential to us so that we can avoid chaos; learning Aikido is not for fighting but to protect ourselves from danger, and even do we already know Aikido is not guaranteed that we can harm them anytime. Many of us will easily forget what we learned in training, especially during the surge of emotion. The etiquette should always be the companion of every moment you enter training because your partner is not your enemy but your learning companion."*

Both the observation and the essay highlight the importance of respect, discipline, and etiquette in Aikido practice. They emphasize that Aikido is not just about fighting but encompasses self-protection, personal development, and maintaining order. The

observations and essay also recognize that knowing Aikido does not give one the right to harm others, and emotions can sometimes interfere with training. Additionally, they underscore the significance of training partners as companions in learning and the need for proper etiquette to foster a harmonious environment. Overall, these reflections emphasize the fundamental values and principles of Aikido and their impact on personal growth and transformation.

***Balance and coordination.*** These are fundamental aspects of physical ability. Balance refers to maintaining stability and an upright position, while coordination involves integrating body movements smoothly. These skills are essential for performing various activities and tasks effectively. Good balance helps prevent falls and enhances control, while coordination allows for precise and efficient movement. By developing and improving balance and coordination through stability exercises, proprioceptive training, and activities like yoga or sports, individuals can enhance their overall physical performance, reduce the risk of injuries, and improve their ability to carry out everyday tasks with ease. Consistent practice and training lead to noticeable improvements in balance and coordination over time, contributing to overall well-being. Aikido equips individuals with practical skills for falling, grabbing, and remaining relaxed in chaotic situations.

### ***The Contribution of Aikido to the Mental Well-Being of the Seminararians***

Aikido, the martial art form, significantly contributes to the mental well-being of seminararians, promoting their overall psychological health. This is evident through the following subcategories *mindfulness and presence, conflict resolution, emotional regulation, and self-control.*

***Mindfulness and Presence.*** This refers to the Aikido training, which encourages seminararians to cultivate mindfulness and be fully aware in the present moment (Kavadlo, 2015). Shunryu Suzuki said, “*If your mind is empty, it is ready for anything, it is open to everything. In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert’s mind there are few.*” By focusing on their breath, body, and movements, they develop a heightened awareness of the present, which helps them let go of worries about the past or future.

This mindfulness practice enhances mental clarity, reduces anxiety, and promotes a sense of calm and centeredness.

P1 said that “*Aikido helps improve my show of respect to others. Bowing is practiced to show respect.*” P2 also said that “*Aikido helped me to be more patient.*” P3 mentioned that “*I remain calm, but I’m always ready to defend against an attack on me.*” P4 stated “*I have learned humility since my Aikido training.*”

The observations from P1, P2, P3, and P4 collectively highlight Aikido's contribution to the seminarians' mental well-being. One common theme that emerges is the development of respect. P1 mentions that Aikido has helped improve their show of respect towards others, citing the practice of bowing as a symbol of care in the martial art. This suggests that Aikido instills a sense of reverence and consideration for others.

Another aspect emphasized by P2 is the cultivation of patience. Aikido's disciplined nature and focus on precise movements and techniques require practitioners to develop patience and perseverance. This aligns with P2's observation that Aikido has helped them become more patient in their daily life.

Furthermore, P3 highlights the importance of maintaining calmness while being prepared to defend oneself. Aikido training instills a sense of composure, enabling practitioners to handle challenging situations with a level-headed approach. This ability to remain calm and composed in the face of adversity contributes to the mental well-being of the seminarians.

Lastly, P4 mentions the cultivation of humility through aikido practice. The experience of learning and training in Aikido has helped them develop a sense of humility, shedding any tendencies of arrogance or boastfulness.

Together, these observations demonstrate Aikido's multifaceted contributions to the seminarians' mental well-being. Developing respect, patience, calmness, and humility through Aikido training enriches their mental state and fosters positive growth in their personal and interpersonal lives.

The observations from P1, P2, P3, and P4 collectively highlight the contribution of Aikido to the mental well-being of the seminarians, which can be further understood through Burke's six characteristics of identity. Firstly, Aikido fosters respect, as mentioned by P1, who recognizes the importance of showing respect to others through the practice of bowing. This cultivates a sense of reverence and consideration for others, shaping the seminarians' identity with a strong foundation of respect.

Secondly, P2's observation emphasizes the development of patience through Aikido training. The disciplined nature of Aikido, with its focus on precise movements and techniques, requires practitioners to cultivate patience and perseverance. This characteristic contributes to the seminarians' identity by enabling them to approach challenges and adversities calmly and patiently.

Furthermore, P3 highlights the significance of composure in aikido practice. The ability to maintain calmness while being prepared to defend oneself is a valuable trait that Aikido instills in seminarians. This characteristic influences their identity by shaping them into individuals who can handle stressful situations with a level-headed and composed approach.

Lastly, P4 mentions the cultivation of humility through aikido training. Learning and practicing Aikido humbles the seminarians, helping them shed any tendencies of



arrogance or boastfulness. This characteristic mold their identity by fostering a sense of modesty and humility, leading to healthier relationships and a greater understanding of their limitations.

Together, these observations demonstrate how Aikido contributes to the mental well-being of the seminarians by shaping their identities through the development of respect, patience, composure, and humility. These characteristics influence their overall mindset, emotional stability, and interactions with others, ultimately promoting their personal growth and well-being. In the Personal View of Self-theory, Aikido training encourages seminarians to cultivate mindfulness and be fully present in the moment. They can apply this practice to their spiritual journey, enhancing their ability to connect with the divine and deepen their sense of spirituality.

Aikido practice has several practical implications for guidance and counseling, offering valuable insights and techniques to support individuals' mental well-being and personal growth. Firstly, counselors can incorporate the values promoted in Aikido, such as respect, patience, composure, and humility, into their counseling programs. By emphasizing these values, counselors can help students develop a solid moral compass and foster positive relationships with others.

Aikido also provides practical tools for stress management. The techniques and principles of Aikido can be adapted to help students manage stress and anxiety, teaching them how to remain calm and centered in challenging situations. By incorporating Aikido-inspired stress management techniques, counselors can equip students with practical strategies to cope with the pressures of daily life.

**Conflict resolution.** This refers to another area where Aikido has practical implications for counseling. Aikido emphasizes peaceful and respectful ways of resolving conflicts, focusing on redirecting and diffusing aggression rather than engaging in aggressive behavior. By teaching Aikido-inspired conflict resolution strategies, counselors can help students develop effective communication skills, empathy, and the ability to find mutually beneficial solutions.

Furthermore, aikido training promotes self-empowerment. Through consistent practice and disciplined training, individuals can cultivate self-confidence, self-discipline, and a sense of personal agency. Counselors can integrate elements of Aikido training to empower students, encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions, set goals, and persevere through challenges.

Lastly, Aikido emphasizes the mind-body connection. By introducing mindfulness practices inspired by Aikido, counselors can help students cultivate self-awareness, emotional regulation, and a greater sense of inner balance. Mindfulness techniques derived from Aikido can support students in developing a greater understanding of their thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations, fostering overall well-being. Aikido emphasizes non-violent conflict resolution and the redirection of energy. Seminarians who practice Aikido

can apply these principles in their interactions with others within their seminary community and in their future pastoral work. By learning effective techniques to resolve conflicts peacefully and harmoniously, seminarians can contribute to a healthier and more peaceful environment within the Seminary and in their relationships with others.

By applying these practical implications of Aikido, counselors can enhance their guidance and counseling services, providing students with valuable tools and strategies for personal development, emotional well-being, and positive interpersonal relationships.

***Emotional Regulation and Self-Control.*** This refers to Aikido training which fosters emotional regulation and self-control among seminarians. Through the practice of techniques and partner exercises, they learn to manage and channel their emotions effectively. By staying composed and grounded, they develop the ability to respond to challenging situations with a level-headed approach, reducing the likelihood of impulsive or reactive behavior. This cultivates emotional resilience and equips them with valuable skills for handling stress and conflicts in their daily lives.

In summary, Aikido positively impacts the mental well-being of seminarians by promoting mindfulness and presence and enhancing emotional regulation and self-control. These subcategories highlight how aikido training supports their psychological health, enabling them to navigate life's challenges with greater resilience and inner strength.

P2 shared that *"I am working hard to achieve self-control."* P1 said, *"I learned self-control and developed a good attitude from my Aikido practice."* He added that, *"I have self-control in dealing with others every day."* P3 also said that, *"I learned humility, focus, and patience in Aikido practice at the Seminary."* P3 mentioned, *"The Aikido practice trained me to become humble, focused, and patient."* P4 mentioned that, *"I learned self-control, love, and humility with the Aikido practice."* P4 said, *"I express my positive behavior by harmonizing with everyone in the community."* He added, *"Aikido has trained me to be humble and in harmony with different personalities."*

Triangulating the observations from P1, P2, P3, and P4, it is evident that aikido training positively impacts self-control, humility, and harmonious relationships, contributing to the mental well-being of the seminarians. P2 and P1 both express their efforts to achieve self-control, attributing their progress to their practice of Aikido. P1 further emphasizes the development of self-control in daily interactions with others. P3 mentions learning humility, focus, and patience through Aikido practice, which aligns with P4's observation of developing self-control, love, and humility through Aikido.

Additionally, P4 highlights the expression of positive behavior and the ability to harmonize with others in the community, which is nurtured through Aikido training. P3 also recognizes the training in humility, relaxation, and harmony with others and nature. These observations collectively suggest that Aikido contributes to the seminarians' mental well-being by cultivating self-control, humility, and the ability to maintain harmonious relationships with others.

The triangulation of these observations highlights the consistent themes of self-control, humility, and harmonious relationships fostered by Aikido training. These qualities are crucial for the seminarians' personal growth, spiritual development, and overall mental well-being, providing them with valuable skills and attitudes to navigate their daily lives and interactions with others.

The observations from P1, P2, P3, and P4 reveal that aikido training contributes to the mental well-being of seminarians in several ways. It promotes self-control, helping individuals regulate their emotions and reactions. It cultivates humility, fostering modesty and respect. It also encourages harmonious relationships, enabling individuals to connect with others and their community. Overall, aikido training enhances the mental well-being of the seminarians by developing self-control, humility, and harmonious interactions with others.

The observations from P1, P2, P3, and P4 regarding the contribution of Aikido to the seminarians' mental well-being can be understood through the application of Burke's six characteristics of identity. These observations demonstrate how Aikido influences various aspects of their identity.

Firstly, the seminarians' symbolic actions exemplify the practice of bowing in Aikido, which symbolizes respect and fosters a sense of reverence towards others. Secondly, their language reflects the development of self-control, humility, and harmonious interactions. They use words that express these characteristics, showcasing their understanding and expression of these values. Thirdly, the seminarians identify themselves as individuals who have gained self-control, humility, and harmonious qualities through their practice of Aikido. This identification aligns with their experiences and the transformative impact of Aikido on their mental well-being. Fourthly, there is a noticeable positive shift in attitudes among the seminarians. They mention developing good attitudes, becoming more patient, and expressing positive behavior, indicating a change in their mindset and approach toward themselves and others. Fifthly, the seminarians have embraced the principles and values of Aikido, accepting the importance of self-control, humility, and harmonious relationships as essential elements in their personal growth and well-being. Lastly, the observations reveal the seminarians' hierarchy of motives. They are motivated to improve their mental well-being through Aikido, striving for self-control, expressing love, and cultivating harmonious interactions.

In summary, the observations align with Burke's six identity characteristics, illustrating how Aikido influences the seminarians' symbolic actions, language, identification, attitudes, frames of acceptance, and hierarchy of motives, ultimately contributing to their mental well-being. Aikido's impact on the mental well-being of the seminarians has practical implications for guidance and counseling. It highlights the importance of promoting respect, self-control, patience, positive attitudes, humility, and harmonious interactions. Counselors can incorporate these principles into their sessions,

encouraging clients to show respect, develop self-control, cultivate patience, maintain positive attitudes, practice humility, and foster harmonious relationships.

### ***The Contribution of Aikido to the Spiritual Well-Being of the Seminarians***

Aikido's significant contribution to the spiritual well-being of seminarians is evident through the subcategories of mind-body connection and transcendence, and self-transformation, as the practice cultivates awareness, attunement, and resilience through precise movements, breath control, and mindfulness, fostering a deeper integration of mind and body.

***Mind-body connection.*** Aikido training facilitates the development of an embodied spirituality among seminarians by integrating thoughts and intentions with physical movements, incorporating breath control and energy awareness techniques to deepen spiritual awareness and presence, fostering a heightened mind-body connection that enhances overall well-being and resilience in seminary life.

P2 said that, "*Aikido helped me to focus mentally because, during our practice, we meditate while in the seiza or sitting position.*" He also added that, "*Aikido has helped protect my daily activities.*" Furthermore he said that, "*Aikido has helped me to go with the flow.*" He added that, "*Aikido has helped me to go with what God has planned for my journey to priesthood.*" He also said that, "*Aikido trained me to focus my mind and develop my mental well-being.*" P3 also said that, "*Aikido has trained me to persevere and to become confident in facing life's challenges.*" P4 said, "*Aikido's meditation training gives me insight into practicing Aikido.*" P4 mentioned, "*My spiritual well-being improved during prayer time through Aikido practice. I can meditate properly during prayer.*"

We possess distinct intellectual capabilities that are innate to us as individuals. These capabilities can be understood in terms of our neurobiology. As members of a culture, we are exposed to a wide range of domains encompassing different disciplines and skills. These domains can be considered impersonal entities that can be captured and transmitted through various mediums like books or computer programs (Gardner, 2011).

The observations from P2, P3, and P4 collectively demonstrate that Aikido enhances seminarians' spiritual well-being by improving mental focus, resilience, and connection to their faith, offering valuable stress management tools, fostering perseverance, and deepening their spiritual connection through meditation and prayer.

***Transcendence and self-transformation.*** Aikido provides opportunities for seminarians to engage in self-reflection and personal growth by overcoming challenges, improving techniques, and learning the importance of surrendering and letting go, fostering spiritual transcendence and self-transformation. Seminarians employ a range of strategies to cope with temptation. They cultivate self-discipline to resist temptations that may hinder their spiritual growth, while prayer and reflection provide them with guidance and strength.

Remaining faithful to the mandates of their priestly vocation helps them navigate challenges, and actively participating in the seminary formation process equips them with the necessary tools and knowledge. Additionally, they adjust to community life, embracing the support and accountability it offers. Through these strategies, seminarians strive to overcome temptations and foster their spiritual journey and commitment to their calling (Naparan et al., 2022).

P1 mentioned that, *“My journey from a white to a purple belt was difficult, but I enjoyed the training and process.”* P3 stated also that, *“When I was promoted to green belt, I became interested in practicing Aikido. I was not contented as a green belter and wanted to be enabled to be a purple belter. I want to continue to be promoted to the next level, but we need more time to review and practice for the promotional examination in the Seminary.”* He also mentioned, *“My interest in Aikido began when I got promoted to a green belter. This continued until I got my purple belt.”* P3 further stated that, *“My promotion to a green belt made me more interested in continuing my Aikido practice.”* P4 mention also that, *“I diligently practice after my green belt.”*

The observations from P1, P3, and P4 demonstrate the personal significance of belt promotions in Aikido and their impact on motivation and commitment, aligning with Mezirow's transformative learning theories and highlighting the transformative potential of Aikido in personal growth and development (Mezirow, 2018).

### ***The Contribution of Aikido to the Emotional Well-Being of the Seminarians***

The contribution of Aikido to the emotional well-being of seminarians can be further explored through the subcategories of *emotional regulation and stress management*, which highlight the positive impact of Aikido on managing emotions and coping with stress.

***Emotional Regulation.*** Aikido provides a platform for seminarians to develop skills for emotional regulation, allowing them to control their emotions, respond to challenges with composure, and cultivate a balanced emotional state.

P3 said that, *“Aikido has helped me to go with what God has planned for my journey to priesthood.”* P1 also added that, *“I experienced a paradigm shift when I practiced Aikido.”* He also said that, *“I was able to see new options.”* He mentioned, *“Aikido taught me to focus, clarity, exercise, and improve my physical health.”*

Aikido contributes to the emotional well-being of seminarians by fostering personal growth, adaptability, resilience, alignment with higher purposes, humility, confidence, and perseverance, providing a holistic approach to emotional well-being through its principles and practice.

P2 agreed, *“Aikido has helped protect my daily activities.”* He also shared that, *“Aikido has helped me to go with the flow.”* He mentioned also that *“Aikido has helped*

*me to go with what God has planned for my journey to priesthood.” P3 shared also that, “Aikido practice has humbled me” He added that “I was able to build my confidence and perseverance.” He also said that, “Aikido has trained me to persevere and to become confident in facing life’s challenges.”*

**Stress Management.** Aikido training provides a release for stress and tension, promotes relaxation and well-being through dynamic movements, breathing exercises, and mindfulness practices, fosters a sense of community and connection, and equips seminarians with effective strategies to cope with stressors and enhance their emotional well-being. For certain seminarians, the structured and disciplined nature of seminary life can present significant challenges as they strive to adapt and fully embrace this environment (Naparan et al., 2022).

Through Aikido training, seminarians mentioned that it taught them focus, clarity, exercise, and improved physical health, helped protect their daily activities, allowed them to go with the flow, facilitated mental focus and development, trained them to persevere and become confident in facing life's challenges, and enhanced their spiritual well-being during prayer and meditation.

The observations from P1, P2, P3, and P4 collectively highlight the positive effects of Aikido on the well-being of seminarians, encompassing physical health, mental focus, stress management, spiritual connection, perseverance, and confidence, indicating that Aikido contributes to their overall well-being.

### ***The contribution of Aikido to the moral development of the Seminarians***

Based on the participant's responses, it can be observed that Aikido contributes to the moral development of seminarians through the subcategories of moral reasoning and moral behavior.

**Moral Reasoning.** This is a subcategory of moral development, involves the cognitive processes individuals undergo to make ethical judgments and decisions, encompassing the development of moral principles, values, and beliefs that guide their actions, and evolving towards more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of concepts such as fairness, justice, and empathy as individuals mature.

P3 mentioned that , *“The Aikido practice trained me to become humble, focused, and patient.”* P4 mentioned that, *“I learned self-control, love, and humility with the Aikido practice.”* P4 said that, *“I express my positive behavior by harmonizing with everyone in the community. He added that, “Aikido has trained me to be humble and in harmony with different personalities.”*

In summary, the statements from P3 and P4 highlight the transformative effects of Aikido practice on their character and behavior. They have developed qualities such as humility, focus, patience, self-control, love, and harmony through Aikido training. These

qualities have become integral parts of their identities, shaping how they relate to others and fostering positive relationships within their community. The practical implication in guidance and counseling is that Aikido can be utilized as a tool for personal growth, emotional well-being, and relationship building, empowering individuals to cultivate essential qualities and foster a deeper sense of connection and fulfillment in their lives.

**Moral Behavior.** It involves putting moral principles into practice, acting in alignment with ethical beliefs, and engaging in acts of honesty, kindness, compassion, integrity, and respect for others, while guidance and counseling can support individuals' moral development by facilitating ethical reflection and providing opportunities for practicing moral behavior. According to Mezirow, transformative learning involves a shift in one's perspectives, beliefs, and attitudes, resulting in personal growth and development (Mezirow, 2018).

### Conclusion

Aikido contributes to the physical development of seminarians by improving fitness, body awareness, control, balance, coordination, and overall physical well-being. It enhances the mental well-being of seminarians by promoting mindfulness, conflict resolution skills, emotional regulation, and self-control. Aikido fosters the spiritual well-being of seminarians by strengthening the mind-body connection, facilitating transcendence, and supporting self-transformation. It contributes to the emotional well-being of seminarians by providing tools for emotional regulation and stress management. Lastly, Aikido promotes moral development among seminarians by instilling values such as respect, integrity, and humility, influencing their moral reasoning and behavior.

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