

# Socio-psychological impact of Aikido on women's self-confidence and perception of their rights

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**Abstract.** A high level of self-confidence is directly related to an individual's perception of his rights. Education, sports and economic independence are important tools in increasing self-esteem and self-confidence. This applies equally to both men and women. Sport is one of the most effective tools for a personality's physical and mental health. This study included questions and received confirmation about the positive impact of Aikido on the physical and mental health of Aikido practitioners of the Aikido Federation of the Kyrgyz Republic during COVID-19.

Thus, sport is a multifunctional, effective tool that has a comprehensive positive impact on the individual. However, sports may become inaccessible to girls and women due to the strict restrictions that exist in patriarchal Islamic cultures. In the Central Asian region, the issue of attracting girls and women to sports must be placed on the agenda of all sports organizations and national states.

This article analyzes the influence of Aikido on physical and mental health, self-confidence, self-esteem and awareness of women's rights in the Aikido Federation of the Kyrgyz Republic using instructors' worldviews and experience.

**Keywords:** self-confidence, self-esteem, physical health, mental health, women's rights, women and sports, Aikido, Central Asia.

## Introduction

Problems with the participation of women in sports and their rights will always remain on the agenda. In Soviet times, the comprehensive emancipation of women, including women of the Muslim East, gave her equal rights with men in everything. Economic, political, social and cultural equality was achieved. For the first time in her life, a Muslim woman not only began to work for the benefit of society, participate in the largest socio-economic, educational and scientific projects of the USSR, but also actively engage in sports. However, the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of the Independent Central Asian States brought back patriarchal culture and Islamic identity. Wearing a hijab by girls and women automatically closed their way to gyms and stadiums. The hijab has forced women out of professional and popular sports.

Nowadays, sport is the prerogative of girls and women who continue to lead a secular lifestyle. However, the active spread of Islam closes the way to mass and elite sports for an increasing number of girls and women who adhere to Muslim principles. At the same time, sport is an important tool for creating all the conditions for a full and happy life of an individual. "It is important to keep women and girls participating in sports and exercise because

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sports have many benefits for men and women regardless of gender including decreased social loafing later in life with a history of participating in team, rather than individual sports; improved respiratory and cardiovascular health; enhanced muscle and bone strength and reduced hip fractures, vertebrae fractures, and cancer diagnoses; reduced risk of Type II diabetes; decreased risk of depression; improved grades; and in children who participate in team sports, increased self-concept and self-esteem” [20, 2].

This article, through the prism of gender issues, analyzes the influence of Aikido on physical and mental health, self-confidence, awareness of the rights of girls and women in the Aikido Federation of the Kyrgyz Republic. Aikido is a Japanese martial art meaning the path of harmony. It is unique in that women and men train together since there is no need to prepare men and women for competitions, due to the highly traumatic nature of Aikido techniques. The founder of Aikido, Morihei Ueshiba, bequeathed to bring harmony to this martial art in the world. The main purpose of Aikido is to teach self-defense, and the main goal is self-improvement through the unification of mind, body, and spirit. Men and women, training together, comprehend the principles of self-defense, learn proper interaction with the opposite sex, which should exclude harassment and any discrimination of individual rights. A girl and a woman are perceived by a man not as a sexual object, but as an equal partner who helps to achieve perfection in the use of complex Aikido techniques. Joint training increases a woman's self-confidence and self-esteem when having reached a certain level of skill, she becomes able to defend her honor and dignity in practice. For men, training gives them an understanding of the physical characteristics of women, who are quite fragile; if a woman does not engage in sports, any physical violence can cause injuries to an unprepared girl and woman, including injuries incompatible with life.

The Aikido Federation of the Kyrgyz Republic has a unique case, since it has been headed by a woman for many years. If in 1995-2010 the vast majority of instructors and trainees were men, today there are female instructors, girls and women training in Aikido. This has had a significant impact on gender stereotypes in martial arts. However, recently another stereotype has begun to emerge that Aikido is a martial art for women. Some parents began to prefer to send their sons to judo, wrestling and other, from their point of view, male sports. But the number of girls and women who seriously practice Aikido and achieve significant results has increased. During the certification process, sometimes we have to give a reprimand to those girls who break their assistants during the exam.

Another very important result is the physical and mental health of Aikido trainees. The Federation has not conducted special studies on the health of coaches and students during COVID-19, however, many instructors and almost all parents noted that their children did not suffer from COVID-19, or suffered it very easily. Adults also noted that they suffered from COVID-19 easily, or did not get sick at all. This fully applies to the instructors themselves. The young instructors were not sick at all, or they also did not notice that they were sick. This study included these questions and obtained confirmation of the positive impact of Aikido on the physical and mental health of all aikido practitioners, which was confirmed during the pandemic.

Along with physical health, Aikido provides mental health due to the lack of aggression during training. In Aikido there is no competition so there is no need to break and defeat another, but there is a fundamental principle of love and harmony. Like other martial arts, Aikido has the potential to significantly boost self-confidence and self-esteem, especially for girls and women, since they have the practical opportunity to apply their skills to real boys and men. Thus, learning self-defense and physical skills can empower women, making them feel more secure and capable in their daily lives. Active interaction with the opposite sex on the

tatami, the use of techniques, increasing self-confidence and self-esteem give girls and women an advanced understanding and perception of Women's Rights.

### **The Goal:**

The goal of this research is to provide an understanding of the role of Aikido as a martial art in promoting women's rights and self-confidence. The article explores how Aikido can be used as a tool for personal development and empowerment for women, improving their mental health, well-being, and sense of agency, to offer insights that can lead to practical improvements in training, contribute to academic knowledge, and drive positive cultural change in society about women in martial arts and sports in general.

### **The Objectives:**

- to analyze existing literature on empowering and increasing women's self-confidence through sport;
- to identify and recruit a diverse group of Aikido trainers, considering factors such as experience and gender;
- to explore how Aikido improves women's mental health, well-being, and sense of agency;
- to explore how Aikido empowers women, their self-confidence, and self-esteem;
- to explore how Aikido changes women's and community's perceptions of their rights;
- to study how to foster a sense of community and belonging among female practitioners, helping them feel more connected and supported in their Aikido journey;
- to encourage continued exploration and deeper understanding of women's rights and self-confidence in martial arts;
- to contribute to academic knowledge;
- to drive positive cultural change about women within the martial arts community, sports, and society in general.

## **Methodology**

To understand the impact of sports on women the literature was analyzed. This study used a philosophical-phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of coaches in promoting women's rights and self-confidence. The importance of sports for women and girls, for unlocking their potential and growing self-confidence, reducing anxiety, is studied by some authors, among them: Lochbaum, M., Sherburn, M., Sisneros, C., Cooper, S., Lane, A. M., & Terry, P. C. [14], Mark Anthony B. Rosario [15], Kuloor, H., Kumar, A. [10]. Recently, more literature has begun to appear on the philosophy of sports and women, on the causes of gender inequality: Angela Schneider [1], Colleen English [4,5], Travis Scheadler, Audrey Wagstaff [20], Rachel Jewkes, Robert Morrell, Jeff Hearn, Emma Lundqvist, David Blackbeard, Graham Lindegger, Michael Quayle, Yandisa Sikweyiya, Lucas Gottzén [18].

In order to create a reliable platform for Gender Equality in Sport the European Commission has developed a special document "Gender Equality in Sport Proposal for Strategic Actions 2014 – 2020" [7]. This document describes in detail the goal, objectives and policy of how to make sport an area where Gender Equality would be consistently implemented. It provides detailed recommendations for the implementation of these tasks at the level of sports organizations and the state.

To write this article, an online survey was conducted on the topic: "The socio-psychological influence of Aikido on women's confidence and perception of their rights." The questionnaire contained 32 questions and 6 sections. Among them: Gender and Nationality of Aikido Instructor; Participant instructor's characteristics; Self-confidence and personal development;

Gender indicators; Health; Impact of COVID-19; Perceptions of girls' and women's empowerment. Additional questions were also included: “What role should the instructor and Aikido organization play in supporting women's rights and self-confidence?”; “Is there anything else that you would like to add about the socio-psychological and health effects of Aikido on women, on increasing their self-confidence, on their perception of their rights?”

All questions were compiled for the coaching staff. 25 instructors took part in the survey, of which 18 were men and 7 were women. Instructors of the city of Bishkek and surrounding areas, both young and experienced who have substantial experience in training Aikido were interviewed.

Participant observation was used for Aikido training sessions to see how instructors interact with female practitioners and address issues related to self-confidence and women's rights.

This study is pilot research. In subsequent studies, it is planned to use a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions focused on instructors' perspectives on women's rights and self-confidence. It allows for flexibility in exploring various aspects of the instructors' experiences. There will also be a survey of trainees and focus groups among instructors and students.

### **The influence of patriarchal culture and Islamic tradition on women in sports**

Along with the active spread of Islam in Kyrgyzstan, people began to treat Aikido with prejudice. Believers avoid joint training, since Islam prohibits touching a stranger of the opposite sex. Since Aikido is a Japanese martial art that has preserved its traditions associated with Buddhism and bowing towards the kamiza, where the portrait of O Sensei Morihei Ueshiba hangs, this also causes rejection among believers. In Islam, it is forbidden to bow to the image of a person. In Aikido bowing is just a ritual of greeting. However, believers do not want to accept Japanese-Buddhist traditions and consider them to be contrary to Islamic principles. All these restrictions hit the practice of Aikido very hard and deprived the men and women of Kyrgyzstan of an effective tool for increasing the self-esteem, self-esteem of women, and their rights on the part of men and society.

Because the majority of Kyrgyz identify themselves as Muslims, secular-minded students, representatives of Slavic nationalities, and Koreans come to Aikido. The same diversity exists among the coaching staff. See Table 1.

**Table 1.** Gender and Nationality of Aikido Instructor

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Kyrgyz</b>	<b>Russian</b>	<b>Korean</b>	<b>Ukrainian</b>
Male	18	10	7	1	0
Female	7	5	0	1	1

The number of female instructors reflects the general trend of strengthening patriarchal values in modern Kyrgyzstan. In Kyrgyzstan, Aikido is led by a woman despite the fact that it is a martial art. This is an excellent model and role model for many girls and women. Therefore, 7 female instructors are an excellent indicator of the existing gender balance in the Aikido Federation. Among the 7 female instructors, three have not yet reached the age of 25. Among male instructors, the majority are aged 35 years and above. The Aikido Federation of the Kyrgyz Republic is experiencing a crisis in the training of young male instructors at the moment. Many young guys choose wrestling and judo, where they train in homogeneous groups, without girls and women.

The increased popularity of sports and martial arts where men train separately from women further creates the risk of alienation between men and women. This may affect the

psychological behavior of both sexes. Moreover, this is fertile ground for strengthening the widespread stereotype characteristic of patriarchal-Islamic society that “a man is a breadwinner and a woman is a housewife.”

**Table 2.** Participant instructor’s characteristics

	Name	Sex	Age	Nationality	Qualification, Dan	Coaching experience
1.	Gulmiza	Female	46-64	Kyrgyz	6	More than 20 years
2.	Chyngyz	Male	65 and above	Kyrgyz	5	More than 20 years
3.	Beknazar	Male	35-45	Kyrgyz	4	More than 20 years
4.	Taalai	Male	46-64	Kyrgyz	4	More than 20 years
5.	Lidia	Female	65 and above	Korean	4	11-20 years
6.	Er	Male	46-64	Kyrgyz	4	11-20 years
7.	Ulsultan	Male	35-45	Kyrgyz	3	11-20 years
8.	Ulan	Male	46-64	Kyrgyz	4	6-10 years
9.	Alexander	Male	35-45	Russian	4	6-10 years
10.	Alexei	Male	46-64	Russian	4	6-10 years
11.	Azamat	Male	46-64	Kyrgyz	3	6-10 years
12.	Larisa	Female	65 and above	Ukrainian	3	6-10 years
13.	Gulzat	Female	46-64	Kyrgyz	3	6-10 years
14.	Volody	Male	46-64	Russian	3	1-5 years
15.	Dima	Male	46-64	Kyrgyz	3	1-5 years
16.	Oleg	Male	46-64	Russian	3	1-5 years
17.	Micle	Male	Before 25	Russian	3	1-5 years
18.	Volodtz	Male	46-64	Korean	3	1-5 years
19.	Alima	Female	Before 25	Kyrgyz	2	1-5 years
20.	Serje	Male	35-45	Russian	2	1-5 years
21.	Aizhan	Female	Before 25	Kyrgyz	2	1-5 years
22.	Marlen	Male	25-34	Kyrgyz	2	1-5 years
23.	Beksultan	Male	Before 25	Kyrgyz	1	1-5 years
24.	Artem	Male	46-64	Russian	1	1-5 years
25.	Amina	Female	Before 25	Kyrgyz	1	1-5 years

**Sport and self-confidence**

Self-confidence plays a key role in the social value of an individual. Only a person with a high level of self-confidence is able to make a great contribution to the development of the entire society. “People with high self-confidence tend to be more optimistic, resilient, and successful than those with low self-confidence [17]. Self-confidence also gives a person a high degree of

autonomy, which means the ability to face life's challenges alone. In Aikido this is called fighting spirit. This also means that: "By recognizing our worth and embracing self-confidence, we can overcome self-doubt, break free from societal expectations, and pursue our dreams and goals with resilience and determination" [12, 439].

Kate Hays and other authors believe that "Self-confidence has consistently been identified as an important influence on athletic performance" and offer the following sources of self-confidence: preparation, performance accomplishments, coaching, innate factors, social support, experience, competitive advantage, self-awareness, and trust [12, 439, 450]. They also classify six types of self-confidence: skill execution, achievement, physical factors, psychological factors, superiority to opposition, and tactical awareness. Of these, four types are characteristic of both male and female athletes: 'Skill execution; achievement; physical factors; and psychological factors [12, 446]. The two types are different: 'Superiority to opposition and tactical awareness emerged as types of confidence identified by the male athletes only' [12, 446].

Analyzing sports confidence, the authors believe that it has a specific and multidimensional nature. They also note that an athlete who shows high confidence in sports does not always show it in other areas of his life. However, the research conducted by the author of this article and long-term observations of Aikido instructors and students suggests that sports confidence is universal. Self-confidence cultivated on the tatami necessarily manifests itself in other areas of aikidoka's life. Students begin to study better because they can concentrate their attention on achieving results. Many acquire leadership qualities. Those who were previously bullied became leaders in the class and school.

### **Sports and women's rights**

The development of any society is impossible without the development of the woman herself, and therefore respect for her rights. "These include the right to live free from violence and discrimination; to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; to be educated; to own property; to vote; and to earn an equal wage. But across the globe many women and girls still face discrimination on the basis of sex and gender" [2].

A woman is endowed with natural rights from birth, which means she has the right to life, the right to safety and health. Martial arts initially carry within themselves the philosophy of self-defense, the right to protect one's life and safety, to be healthy physically and mentally.

The natural result of constant training, acquisition of skills, and mastery of effective self-defense techniques is an increase in the self-esteem and self-confidence of the individual. This, in turn, reduces social and psychological anxiety, increases social expectations, and improves the living conditions of such an individual. The principle of being strong and confident helps individuals achieve results in everyday life, in their workplace, career, and business. Moreover, "True sport gender equality gives equal opportunities for men and women to compete at the highest level of their sport. As well as to assume leadership roles within the industry. This is better for everyone in the long term" [19].

Thus, "Winning rights for women is about more than giving opportunities to any individual woman or girl; it is also about changing how countries and communities work. It involves changing laws and policies, winning hearts and minds, and investing in strong women's organizations and movements" [8].

### **Aikido, physical and mental health**

One of the great benefits of Aikido is its healing nature. There are no competitions in Aikido due to the highly traumatic nature of all its techniques, in case of their aggressive practical

application. The lack of competition minimizes physical and psychological trauma. The very nature of the need to harmonize the body, spirit and consciousness creates a positive effect, reduces anxiety, and eliminates many psychosomatic diseases. Regular training and work on consciousness create an excellent foundation for leading a healthy lifestyle and constantly strengthening the instructor and Aikido practitioners of their health.

Thus, Table 4 presents the results of the positive impact of Aikido on health. 14 Aikido instructors indicated that their health had improved, and 11 indicated that it had improved significantly. 11 instructors indicated an improvement in their mental health, 8 became more stress-resistant, and 5 became more self-confident.

17 instructors noted that Aikido helps improve the physical and mental health of their students. 8 instructors noted that Aikido significantly improves the physical and mental health of students.

**Table 3. Health**

Who	Question	Answer	Quantity
about the instructor	How would you rate your overall health before starting Aikido?	Poor	3
		Good	17
		Excellent	5
about the instructor	How has Aikido training affected your physical health?	Without changes	0
		Improved	14
		Significantly improved	11
about the instructor	How has Aikido training affected your mental health?	Without changes	1
		Improved	11
		Became more stress-resistant	8
		Became more confident in myself	5
about the student	According to your observations, does Aikido help your students become physically and mentally stronger and healthier?	Yes	17
		Yes, significantly	8
		No	0
		I find it difficult to answer	0
In general	Would you recommend those closest to you to train in Aikido?	Yes	25
		No	0
		I find it difficult to answer	0

**Aikido and COVID-19**

The questionnaire included questions related to COVID-19. The pandemic has become a practical indicator of the impact of Aikido on the health of instructors and their students. All instructors continued to train during the pandemic. This means that regular training and a healthy lifestyle have become an integral part of their lifestyle. This has helped most cope with the challenges to their physical and mental health during COVID-19. Only one instructor suffered from severe COVID-19. This was a special case. This instructor lost his father to COVID-19. It had an overwhelming effect on him. Most likely, this is why he had a hard time suffering from the disease. At the same time, 13 instructors suffered from mild COVID-19. 9 instructors were not sick at all. 2 do not know whether they were sick or not. At the same time,

there are 4 instructors in the Federation over the age of 65. The majority of instructors are over 35 and under 65 years old.

The same positive results are observed among students. 6 instructors noted that their students suffered a mild form of the disease. 14 instructors noted that most of their students were not sick at all. 5 instructors did not know whether their students were sick or not.

The positive effect of Aikido training gave the following results to the question: “Do you believe that practicing Aikido has strengthened your immune system and overall health resilience during the pandemic?” 21 instructors responded positively.

To the question: “Has practicing Aikido during the pandemic helped you cope with the stress and anxiety associated with COVID-19?” 17 instructors answered “yes” - it helped, 4 - it helped significantly. It didn’t help, or I don’t know, 2 instructors each answered.

To the question: “Do you believe that Aikido training has strengthened your students' immune systems and overall health resilience during the pandemic?” 17 instructors answered “yes”, and 3 - it helped significantly. Nobody answered, “not helped”.

My personal experience also confirms the positive impact of Aikido on physical health, stress resistance, the ability to withstand difficulties, and anxiety control. This also applies to COVID-19. The habit of leading an active lifestyle and the understanding that only a strong body can resist infections and diseases helped me survive the pandemic. I and several of my instructors and students did not stop training despite the official ban. And only a complete lockdown forced us to stay at home for 3 months. But physical activity did not stop. As a result, I suffered from COVID-19 easily. For three days I put myself on bed rest. When my saturation dropped, I actively worked with a boken (wooden sword). This instantly raised the saturation. Three days of flu-like treatment allowed me to rise again.

**Table 4.** Impact of COVID-19

Who	Question	Answer	Quantity
about the instructor	Have you continued to practice aikido during the COVID-19 pandemic?	Yes	15
		No	0
		Partially	10
about the instructor	Have you had COVID-19?	Yes, in severe form	1
		Yes, in a mild form	13
		No	9
		Don't know	2
about the instructor	Do you believe that practicing Aikido has strengthened your immune system and overall health resilience during the pandemic?	Yes	21
		No	1
		I find it difficult to answer	3
about the instructor	Has practicing Aikido during the pandemic helped you cope with the stress and anxiety associated with COVID-19?	Yes	17
		No	2
		Helped a lot	4
		I find it difficult to answer	2
about the student	How did your students cope with COVID-19?	Yes, in severe form	0
		Yes, in a mild form	6
		Most didn't get sick	14
		Don't know	5

about the student	Do you believe that Aikido training has strengthened your students' immune systems and overall health resilience during the pandemic?	Yes	17
		Yes, significantly	3
		No	0
		I find it difficult to answer	5

**Aikido and gender issues**

Aikido and the development of sports is very important in terms of gender issues. The survey showed the practical result of the influence of Aikido on the physical and mental health of everyone who practices this martial art. It significantly improves the health of both the instructors themselves and their students. Increases stress resistance, self-esteem and reduces anxiety. Therefore, it is very important to more actively involve girls and women in sports.

In Kyrgyzstan, the presence of a positive model of women in martial arts, the emergence of an increasing number of female instructors, attracts more and more girls and women to Aikido. Thus, almost all instructors of the Aikido Federation of the Kyrgyz Republic have mixed groups, with the exception of two instructors who train only men. The number of girls and women in groups is 10 percent and above. In some groups the number of girls and women is more than 50 percent. From the point of view of promoting the rights of girls and women in Kyrgyzstan, this is a positive indicator. On the other hand, for many parents with boys, Aikido is now associated with women's sports. Such parents are looking for purely male, more aggressive sports for their boys. In recent years, the most popular sports in Kyrgyzstan are wrestling and fighting without rules. Since the media constantly broadcast wrestling without rules, this ensures a constant influx of young people into this sport, despite its very high traumatic rate.

The role of the media plays a huge role in the persistence of gender imbalance in sports. Rachel Jewkes (2015) and English (2020) demonstrate the most common athletic narratives. Current narratives in sports serve to discriminate against female athletes. Therefore, feminist narratives in sports are necessary for women and girls to become an integral part of the sporting world. The active participation of girls and women will create massive cultural shifts that promote equality [4].

**Table 5.** Gender indicators

Who	Question	Answer	Quantity
about the instructor	Who does a better job as an Aikido instructor?	Male	2
		Female	
		Depends on the instructor himself	23
about the student	Are there girls and women in your group?	Yes	20
		No	5
about the student	What percentage are girls and women in your group?	0	3
		10%	10
		20%	4
		50%	4
		Более 50%	4
about the student	Which students achieve better results in Aikido?	Male	3
		Female	1

		Depends on the student himself	21
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To develop the topic of gender, questions related to women's rights in sports were included in the questionnaire.

**Table 6.** Perceptions of girls' and women's empowerment

Question	Answer	Quantity
Does Aikido help us better understand women's rights?	Yes	19
	No	0
	Other	6
Are the rights of girls and women respected in your group?	Yes	21
	No	0
	Other	4
Is there a pattern of harassment of girls and women in your group?	Yes	10
	No	1
	This is out of the question	14
Do your students feel protected in their rights while training in your group?	Yes	7
	No	1
	Did not think about it	17
Can Aikido training help women protect and defend their rights?	Yes	16
	No	0
	Undoubtedly	5
	I find it difficult to answer	4

The survey showed that Aikido helps to understand women's rights better. 19 Aikido instructors responded positively; there were no negative responses. But there was the answer "Other". The answer to this question can be obtained during focus groups or interviews in the following studies.

To the question: "Are the rights of girls and women respected in your group?" 21 instructors answered "Yes." There were no negative answers.

To the question: "Is there a pattern of harassment of girls and women in your group?" 14 responded that harassment is excluded in their groups. 10 instructors answered that it was not there. But one answer was "Yes". This means that it is necessary to work with instructors and students.

The survey also showed that not all instructors thought about the rights of girls and women before. And these are the majority of 17 instructors out of 25. However, on the question: "Can Aikido training help women protect and defend their rights?" 6 instructors answered "Yes" and 5 answered definitely. 4 instructors never thought about it. This suggests that the issue of women's rights should always be discussed so that everyone understands it and contributes to greater protection of the rights of girls and women, including in gyms and dojos where girls and women train.

To identify measures that would help advance gender issues and the rights of girls and women, several options were prepared to answer the question: "What role should the instructor and Aikido organization play in supporting women's rights and self-confidence?"

Respondent could choose only one, the most preferred option. However, in future studies it will be proposed to select several answers at once. 5 instructors responded that Aikido

instructors and organizations have an important role to play in supporting women's rights and confidence. The largest number of instructors (8) chose the answer: "Demonstrate appropriate behavior towards girls and women". 5 instructors selected the answer: "Demonstrate respect and integrity of the rights of women and men". Most instructors understand that it is up to them to ensure that women's rights are respected, as well as raising the level of self-confidence of girls and women. Instructors also understand the need for balance and respect for the rights of both women and men. 4 instructors noted that it is necessary to have conversations with their students about women's rights.

**Table 7.** What role should the instructor and Aikido organization play in supporting women's rights and self-confidence?

Answer	Quantity
Important	5
Conduct conversations with all students	4
Conduct special events to explain women's rights	0
Conduct special events to explain the rights of women and men	2
Demonstrate appropriate behavior towards girls and women	8
Demonstrate respect and integrity of the rights of women and men	5
I find it difficult to answer	1

An additional question was asked to which instructors could provide an extended answer: "Is there anything else that you would like to add about the socio-psychological and health effects of Aikido on women, on increasing their self-confidence, on their perception of their rights?"

One of the recommendations was that women need to train more often with men. Some noted that more research needs to be done on this issue, as "There is a lot to be said about this. This is a very important issue that needs to be discussed more widely".

The survey showed that discussion of the rights of girls and women among trainers is an urgent need. "Gender friendly guidance and coaching may decrease the high drop-out rate of girls and women, avoid sexist gender stereotypes in sport and create a positive and social educational climate for all" [7, 8].

### Findings and recommendations

The survey results showed that the development of Aikido in Kyrgyzstan is a very important social and health task for both men and women. Participation in Aikido can have positive effects on mental health, including reduced anxiety and improved overall well-being. It has a significant impact on the growth of confidence and self-esteem, including for girls and women. Understanding how trainers can enhance these benefits for women is important for holistic health promotion.

Aikido also helps maintain a certain gender balance and promotes women's rights. Experienced coaching staff, especially those who advocate for gender equality, can serve as powerful role models, encouraging more women to participate and excel in Aikido. And finally, examining women's rights within Aikido can highlight progress and ongoing challenges in achieving gender equality in martial arts.

The survey showed a very high assessment of the influence of aikido on the well-being of the individual. All coaches answered the question: "Would you recommend those closest to you to train in Aikido?" – "Yes".

The study of the socio-psychological influence of Aikido on women's confidence and the perception by her and society of her rights is of high relevance. Both men and women win in Aikido, as they gain tremendous experience in close communication with the opposite sex, which presupposes the exclusion of any harassment or disregard for rights.

However, it is in the field of sports in Kyrgyzstan that inequality between men and women not only does not decrease but there is an active gap. "The lack of gender equality in sports could also be seen as a missed opportunity for the sports sector. Research and developments in sport have shown that better skilled and educated women and men could lead to interesting benefits on personal, organisational and societal levels" [7, 7].

This study can contribute to the Academic Literature on the socio-psychological impact of Aikido and sports on women's self-confidence and perception of their rights. There is limited academic research specifically focused on the intersection of women's rights, self-confidence, and the role of trainers in Aikido. The research also can contribute to various fields such as sports studies, gender studies, psychology, and sports, offering interdisciplinary insights and fostering collaboration among scholars.

## **Conclusion**

The EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism, Youth and Sport emphasizes "The importance of sport in our daily life cannot be overstated. It contributes significantly to fitness, health, the economy and self-development, teaching us values and skills like discipline, teamwork, respect and perseverance. It is all the more regrettable, therefore, that the sport world should still be plagued by inequalities between women and men" [7, 3].

For the author of this article, as an active trainer and manager of Aikido, social impact and cultural change are very important. By highlighting women's experiences of aikido and its positive role, the study may contribute to broader cultural changes. This can change the attitude of women themselves in martial arts and become more active in leading a healthy lifestyle. It could also change the society views women in martial arts and sports in general. "Participating in sports can help break-down gender stereotypes, improve girls' and women's self-esteem and contribute to the development of leadership and strategic thinking skills" [13].

The Research of Travis Scheadler and Audrey Wagstaff shows, that "sports fans are not interested in women's sports because they are covered significantly less than men's sports, indicating that they are less important and less interesting than men's sports and other topics that are covered more frequently in the media, some researchers hypothesized" [20, 7]. Therefore, it is necessary to change the policy of media broadcasts in sports, in the work of sports organizations and the policy of the state itself.

To attract more girls and women to sports, as well as to overcome stereotypes against women in patriarchal cultures such as Kyrgyz, it is very important to disseminate more information through the media about outstanding female athletes, trainers, and managers. The main responsibility of sports organizations and state policy in the field of preserving the physical and mental health of women, empowering them, and protecting their rights is to create "A gender-friendly climate" [7, 3]. Girls and women should also receive all benefits from sports.

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