



HAPPINESS BASED ON RELIGION AMONG PRE-RETIREMENT STAGE CAREERS OF BUDDHISTS IN THAILAND: INSIGHTS FROM A NATIONAL SURVEY

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Thailand was a predominantly Buddhist country where religious beliefs and practices were deeply embedded in the social and cultural fabric of the population. Religion plays a significant role in shaping individual values, coping mechanisms, and overall well-being. For individuals in the pre-retirement stage, particularly those aged 50-60, this period was marked by significant life transitions, including career wind-down and preparation for retirement. It was during this stage that the interplay between religiosity and happiness became particularly relevant, as spiritual practices and religious activities might have served as sources of emotional support and life satisfaction. The objective of this research was to examine the relationship between happiness and religion among pre-retirement stage careers of Buddhists (Aged 50-60) in Thailand, with a focus on understanding how religiosity and religious activities contributed to their overall happiness.

Methodology: This study analyzed secondary data from the 2018 Survey on Conditions of Society, Culture, and Mental Health, which was conducted by Thailand's National Statistical Office. The nationwide data collection used population size for proportional stratification, with households being surveyed through face-to-face interviews using a structured questionnaire. A subset of 6,060 individuals aged 50-60 years, who represented pre-retirement stage careers of Buddhists, was manually extracted for hypothesis testing that focused on this demographic.

Main Results: The findings confirmed that both religiosity and specific religious activities played a critical role in promoting psychological well-being among pre-retirement stage careers of Buddhists. Activities such as praying, observing the Five Precepts, meditation, participating in ordination ceremonies, becoming a nun, and engaging in New Year prayers significantly enhanced happiness in this demographic.



Additionally, religious activities like charity donations, using religious teachings to solve life problems, and practicing according to religious principles also showed strong positive associations with happiness. These activities provided meaningful ways to integrate spirituality into daily life, enhancing emotional resilience and a sense of direction during the transitional phase of retirement.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: This finding aligned with the framework of the Applied Buddhism Group, which involved the application of Buddhism alongside modern or recent knowledge and the use of research on religious principles from a new perspective, such as their impact on societal well-being. The finding suggested that integrating Buddhist knowledge could be applied to enhance the mental well-being of the Thai population. It fell under the category of Buddhism and the development of wisdom and morality, such as the application of Buddhist teachings in societal aspects or the use of Buddhist principles to promote mental happiness among Buddhists. Regarding the issue of alignment with Buddhism and the development of wisdom and morality as the foundation of happiness, this study validated the discovery and demonstrated how these teachings could be effectively applied to enhance happiness in the lives of Buddhists.

Conclusions: This study highlighted the significant role of both religiosity and specific religious activities in promoting psychological happiness among pre-retirement stage careers of Buddhists. Key practices, such as religiosity, were found to be strongly associated with increased happiness. Moreover, religious activities also had a positive impact on happiness. The study underscored the importance of religiosity and religious activities in fostering psychological well-being and happiness among pre-retirement Buddhists, making a compelling case for incorporating these practices into mental health and public health strategies.

Keywords: Happiness, Religion, Pre-retirement Stage Careers, Buddhists, Thailand

Introduction

In Thailand, Buddhism plays a central role in shaping the values, beliefs, and way of life of its people, serving as a cornerstone of both individual and collective identity. As the predominant religion, it profoundly influences personal convictions and societal norms, providing a moral and spiritual framework that guides decision-making and interpersonal relationships. For the Thai population, Buddhism is more than a religion; It is a way of life that equips individuals with principles to navigate life's challenges and complexities (Robinson, 2010). Deeply woven into the cultural fabric, Buddhist teachings act as a stabilizing force, fostering inner peace and resilience. (Cranney, 2013); (Fincham, 2022). They offer tools for self-reflection, problem-solving, and cultivating harmony, which are essential for personal well-being and societal cohesion (Grim, 2011); (Koenig et al., 2012). Buddhism helps individuals achieve a sense of balance and purpose in their lives by emphasizing values such as compassion, mindfulness, and moral integrity. In the broader societal context, Buddhism contributes to the collective ethos, promoting a spirit of unity and shared responsibility that resonates throughout Thai culture. Its teachings inspire practices that enhance both individual happiness and community welfare, solidifying its importance as a



guiding force in Thailand's cultural and spiritual landscape (Childs, 2010); (Can Oz et al., 2022). Through its enduring influence, Buddhism continues to shape the lives and aspirations of the Thai population, ensuring its relevance across generations.

The foundational beliefs of Buddhism in Thailand play a crucial role in fostering harmony and tranquility, guiding behavior, and shaping the inner well-being of its adherents. These deeply ingrained beliefs and practices enable individuals to lead lives aligned with Buddhist principles, cultivating personal happiness while contributing to the collective harmony of the community. Buddhism, as a way of life, provides tools for self-reflection, mindfulness, and moral living, all of which are essential components of happiness for Thai Buddhists. This study explores the intricate relationship between Buddhist practices and happiness, emphasizing the profound influence of Buddhism on the daily lives and emotional well-being of its followers. By examining how Buddhist teachings and rituals contribute to subjective happiness, the study highlights the essential role of this belief system in enhancing the mental and emotional health of Thai Buddhists (Estrada et al., 2019). Understanding the relationship between Buddhism and happiness sheds light on its broader societal significance, offering practical insights for developing interventions, policies, and support systems tailored to this cultural context. By addressing the unique interplay between Buddhist values and personal well-being (Childs, 2010); (Zotti et al., 2016); (O'Sullivan, & Lindsay, 2023), this research underscores the importance of Buddhism as a vital force in promoting happiness and overall mental health among Thai Buddhists.

In Thailand's rapidly evolving societal landscape, late adults face significant challenges as traditional values and cultural norms are increasingly disrupted by technological advancements, the spread of Western cultural influences, and the country's transition into an aging society. This demographic, which constitutes a vital segment of the population, is particularly vulnerable to the societal shifts that have led to a decline in adherence to traditional Thai values (Ratanakul, 2012); (Jitapunkul et al., 1993) and growing disinterest in religion, raising concerns about the erosion of moral and ethical principles (Jones, 2008). Social media exacerbates these issues by rapidly disseminating negative information about Buddhist practices and institutions, distorting perceptions, and eroding faith in Buddhism, which has traditionally been a cornerstone of moral guidance for this group (Thanissaro, 2014); (Anders, 2022). As a result, adults face a crisis of faith and a weakening of their cultural and ethical foundations, contributing to a broader sense of social instability and diminished moral cohesion within society. Pre-retirement stage Buddhists, typically defined as individuals aged 50-60, often encounter profound changes in their physical, mental, and social well-being (Maddock, 2023); (Bilodeau et al., 2023). These include declining health, lifestyle adjustments related to retirement, and shifts in social roles, all of which may influence their happiness and religious engagement (Takase et al., 2022); (Sharifi et al., 2014). Additionally, this pre-retirement stage of life is characterized by heavy work responsibilities, being the final phase of their careers and the transition towards retirement (Colgan et al., 2019). The pressures of managing work commitments, planning for financial security, and preparing for the next stage of life can significantly affect their overall well-being and engagement with Buddhist practices.



Understanding these dynamics is essential for addressing the specific needs of pre-retirement stage adults in Thailand.

There was limited research exploring the relationship between Buddhist practices and the happiness of pre-retirement stage Buddhists. Current studies often focus on broader age groups or the elderly as a homogenous category, overlooking the nuanced experiences of pre-retirement stage Buddhists as they transition into older age (Abdel-Khalek & Lester, 2018); (Singh et al., 2020), pre-retirement stage Buddhists in Thailand are navigating a complex interplay of societal pressures, declining physical health, and changing social roles, all of which have implications for their happiness and well-being (Channuwong et al., 2018); (Lewis et al., 2000). Understanding the role of Buddhism in enhancing their happiness amidst these challenges is critical (Lewis et al., 2000); (Francis, 1998). This research aims to address the gap by exploring how Buddhist beliefs and practices contribute to the subjective happiness of pre-retirement stage Buddhists (Fincham, 2022); (Khaitan & Norton, 2019). Specifically, it seeks to analyze the levels of happiness related to religiosity and participation in religious activities. By exploring the influence of Buddhist beliefs and practices on the subjective well-being of pre-retirement stage Buddhists, this research intends to provide insights that can inform policymakers and guide the development of tailored strategies to promote holistic health and happiness within Buddhist communities in Thailand.

Objectives

The objective of this research was to examine the relationship between happiness and religion among pre-retirement stage Buddhists (Aged 50-60) in Thailand, focusing on how religiosity and religious activities contributed to their overall happiness and well-being.

Methodology

Participants and Procedure

This study utilized secondary data from the 2018 Survey on Conditions of Society, Culture, and Mental Health, which was conducted by Thailand's National Statistical Office, a government agency. The data was collected from provinces across Thailand and was stratified based on population size. Population size was determined through proportional allocation, with data gathered from households in each province. The survey was conducted through face-to-face interviews using a structured questionnaire. From the dataset, the researcher manually extracted a subset of 6,060 individuals who specifically represented the target demographic of pre-retirement stage Buddhists aged 50-60 years in order to conduct hypothesis testing for this particular group.

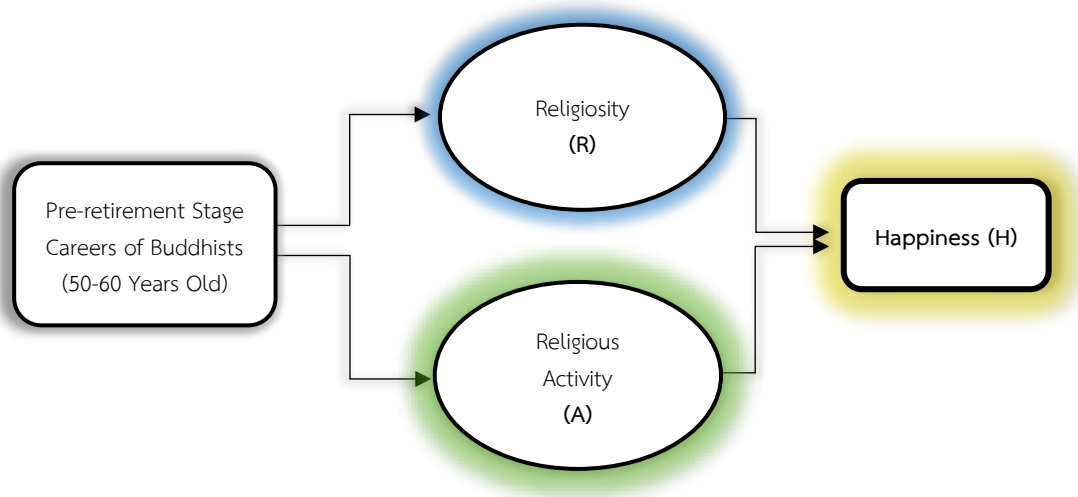


Figure 1 Conceptual framework of the study

The conceptual framework of this study (Figure 1) explored the relationship between two variables: Independent variables, including religiosity (R) and religious activities (A), and the dependent variable, happiness (H), among pre-retirement stage Buddhists (Aged 50-60) in Thailand. Religiosity (R) encompassed personal religious practices such as praying, listening to sermons, observing precepts, meditating, and participating in cultural celebrations like New Year's festivals. Religious activities (A) focused on the application of Buddhist teachings in daily life, problem-solving through religious principles, and adherence to moral precepts. The study hypothesized that both religiosity and religious activities significantly contributed to enhancing happiness (H) among pre-retirement stage Buddhists in Thailand.

Variables and Measurements

All of the variables were socio-demographic characteristics, including 1) Sex, 2) Age, 3) Education, 4) Marital status, 5) Occupation, and 6) Nationality, and independent variables, including: 1) Religiosity factors (R), which included R1: Praying, R2: Offering food to the monks, R3: Listening to sermons, R4: Five Precepts, R5: Meditation, R6: Ordination, R7: Female worshippers, R8: Usefulness of praying, R9: Praying for New Year's Eve celebration, and R10: Place for New Year praying; and 2) Religious activity factors (A), which included A1: Paying in religion, A2: Charity donations, A3: Importance of teaching for a living, A4: Teaching for life problem-solving, A5: Belief in religious teachings, and A6: Practice on religious teachings. The dependent variable was the happiness level (H) in Table 1.

Table 1 Measurement of the valuables

Variables	Definition	Measurements	Options
Socio-demographic characteristics	Participant's characteristics	1. Sex	1. Male
		2. Age	2. Female Age 50-60 years old



Table 1 Measurement of the valuables (Continued)

Variables	Definition	Measurements	Options
Socio-demographic characteristics	Participant's characteristics	3. Education	1) Non-educated; 2) Pre-primary; 3) Primary; 4) Pre-secondary; 5) Secondary (General); 6) Secondary (Vocational); 7) Diploma; 8) Bachelor degree; and 9) Master and Ph.D.
		4. Marital status	1) Single; 2) Married; 3) Widow; 4) Divorced; and 5) Separated
		5. Occupation	1) Officers; 2) Professional; 3) Technical; 4) Clerk; 5) Sales; 6) Agriculture; 7) Secretary; 8) Factory; and 9) Basic general
		6. Nationality	Thai
Pre-retirement stage Buddhists	Religiosity (R)	R1: Praying	
		R2: Offering food to the monks	
		R3: Listening to sermons	
		R4: Five precepts	
		R5: Meditation	
		R6: Ordination	
		R7: Female worshipper	
		R8: Usefulness of praying	
		R9: Praying for New Year's Eve celebration	0 = Never 1 = Rare
		R10: Place for new year praying	2 = Sometimes 3 = Frequently
	Religious activity (A)	A1: Paying in religion	
		A2: Charity donations	
		A3: Importance of teaching for a living	
		A4: Teaching for life problem-solving	
A5: Belief in religious teachings			
A6: Practice on religious teachings			
Happiness (H)		0 = Less, 1 = More	

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS software, and the research hypotheses were tested using an independent samples t-test. The analysis aimed to determine whether religiosity (R) and religious activity (A) significantly influenced happiness among pre-retirement stage Buddhists (Aged 50-60) in Thailand. The grouping variables in the analysis were the levels of religiosity (R) and religious activity (A), while the dependent variable was the happiness level (H).

Results and Discussion

The research findings were presented in four sections as follows,

1. Summary of demographic characteristics

The demographic and socioeconomic analysis of the respondents (N = 6,060) revealed that the majority were female (61.6%), with males comprising 38.4%. All respondents were pre-retirement stage Buddhists aged 50-60 years, representing 100% of the sample. Marital status showed that most were married (74.7%), followed by widowed (11.3%), single (6.4%), separated (4%), and divorced (3.7%). Education levels indicated that the majority (57.1%) had completed primary education, with smaller proportions attaining pre-primary (10.7%), pre-secondary (7.3%), secondary (General) (6.2%), vocational (3.2%), diploma (2.8%), bachelor's degree (8.1%), and master's or Ph.D. degrees (1.6%). A small percentage (3%) were uneducated. The occupation distribution within the group was as follows: 2% officers, 5% professionals, 3% technical workers, 3% clerks, 5% sales personnel, 60% in agriculture, 4% secretaries, 7% factory/mechanics, and 10% in basic general occupations. All respondents were Thai nationals (100%) showe in Table 2.

Discussion

The findings highlighted that the sample predominantly consisted of pre-retirement stage Buddhists aged 50-60 years, with a female majority and a significant portion being married. Most were engaged in agricultural work and had primary education as the highest educational attainment. This demographic profile reflected the socioeconomic characteristics of late adults in Thailand, emphasizing a strong agricultural base and limited access to higher education. It provided a clear depiction of the socioeconomic profile of earlier generations, highlighting their reliance on agriculture and limited access to advanced education (Hanklang et al., 2018); (Jansuwan & Zander, 2021). Future research should aim to include a more diverse representation of education levels and occupational fields to better understand the interplay between religiosity, religious activities, and happiness among pre-retirement stage Buddhists in Thailand (Senasu & Singhapakdi, 2017); (Sumngern et al., 2010).

Table 2 Demographic characteristics

Demographic characteristics		(N = 6,060)	Percentage (%)
Sex	1. Male	2,326	38.4%
	2. Female	3,734	61.1%
Age	Age 50-60 years old	6,060	100%
	1. Non-Educated	184	3%
Education	2. Pre-primary	650	10.7%
	3. Primary	3,460	57.1%
	4. Pre-secondary	443	7.3%
	5. Secondary (General)	373	6.2%
	6. Secondary (Vocational)	193	3.2%
	7. Diploma	168	2.8%
	8. Bachelor degree	96	8.1%



Table 2 Demographic characteristics (Continued)

	Demographic characteristics	(N = 6,060)	Percentage (%)
Education	9. Master and Ph.D.	451	1.6%
	1. Single	387	6.4%
Marital status	2. Married	4,526	74.7%
	3. Widow	682	11.3%
	4. Divorced	225	3.7%
	5. Separated	240	4%
	1. Officers	121	2%
Occupation	2. Professional	303	5%
	3. Technical	181	3%
	4. Clerk	181	3%
	5. Sales	303	5%
	6. Agriculture	3,636	60%
	7. Secretary	121	2%
	8. Factory	606	10%
	9. Basic general	606	10%
Nationality	Thai	6,060	100%

2. The role of religiosity (R) in enhancing happiness among pre-retirement stage career of Buddhists

The role of religiosity (R) in enhancing happiness among pre-retirement stage Buddhists was significant. The analysis revealed that individuals with higher religiosity reported greater happiness levels compared to those with lower religiosity. This difference was statistically significant, indicating that variations in religiosity levels were strongly associated with happiness among pre-retirement stage Buddhists.

Table 3 Results for religiosity (R) in enhancing happiness among pre-retirement stage careers of Buddhists

	More (Happiness)		Less (Happiness)		t	Sig.
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
R1: Praying	4.98	3.09	5.41	3.01	4.791***	0.000
R2: Offering food to the monks	5.95	2.95	5.82	2.83	-1.565	0.111
R3: Listening to sermons	6.50	3.02	6.74	2.82	2.817	0.005
R4: Five precepts	3.78	3.14	4.69	3.23	0.000***	0.000
R5: Meditation	3.65	3.21	4.50	3.27	8.992***	0.000
R6: Ordination	1.11	.86	1.24	1.26	0.386***	0.000
R7: Female worshipper	1.53	1.85	1.83	2.29	4.650***	0.000
R8: Usefulness of praying	3.02	1.63	2.94	1.69	-1.662	0.097
R9: Praying for New Year's Eve celebration	1.78	.415	1.71	.45	0.000***	0.000
R10: Place for new year praying	1.07	.25	1.08	.28	2.186	0.029
Overall	3.33	0.99	3.59	1.02	8.863***	0.000

Note: In this research, only the most significant results (***) $p < 0.001$ are highlighted



Table 3 presented a summary of the results highlighting the role of religious activities (R) in enhancing happiness among pre-retirement stage Buddhists. Practices like praying (R1), observing the Five Precepts (R4), meditation (R5), ordination (R6), female worshippers (R7), and participating in New Year's Eve prayer celebrations (R9) were strongly associated with greater happiness. In contrast, activities such as offering food to the monks (R2) and the perceived usefulness of praying (R8) showed no significant impact on happiness among pre-retirement stage Buddhists.

Significant results

The analysis revealed several significant findings regarding the role of specific religiosity factors in enhancing happiness among pre-retirement stage careers of Buddhists. Praying (R1) showed a significant difference, with individuals experiencing lower happiness reporting a higher mean score (5.41, S.D. = 3.01) compared to those with higher happiness (4.98, S.D. = 3.09), with a t-value of 4.791*** ($p < 0.001$). Observing the Five Precepts (R4) demonstrated a strong positive association with happiness, where individuals with higher happiness had a mean score of 3.78 (S.D. = 3.14) compared to 4.69 (S.D. = 3.23) for those with lower happiness ($t = 0.000$ ***, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, meditation (R5) highlighted a significant relationship, with individuals experiencing less happiness showing a higher mean score of 4.50 (S.D. = 3.27) compared to 3.65 (S.D. = 3.21) for those with higher happiness ($t = 8.992$ ***, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, Female worshippers (R7) and Praying for New Year's Eve celebration (R9) exhibited significant differences, with t-values of 4.650*** ($p < 0.001$) and 0.000*** ($p < 0.001$), respectively. The ordination (R6), associated with ordination, also demonstrated significance, where individuals with higher happiness had a mean score of 1.11 (S.D. = 0.86) compared to 1.24 (S.D. = 1.26) for those with lower happiness ($t = 0.386$ ***, $p < 0.001$).

Non-significant results

Conversely, some religious activities did not demonstrate a statistically significant association with happiness among pre-retirement stage Buddhists. Offering food to monks (R2) yielded mean scores of 5.95 (S.D. = 2.95) for individuals with higher happiness and 5.82 (S.D. = 2.83) for those with lower happiness, with a t-value of -1.565 ($p = 0.111$), indicating no significant difference. This suggests that almsgiving, while culturally significant, may not strongly influence personal happiness, as it is often perceived as a routine, customary act. Similarly, the perceived benefits of praying (R8) did not show a significant association, with mean scores of 3.02 (S.D. = 1.63) for higher happiness and 2.94 (S.D. = 1.69) for lower happiness ($t = -1.662$, $p = 0.097$). This lack of significance might be attributed to limited personal experience with prayer or its perceived routine nature, which may diminish its impact on happiness levels.

Discussion

The findings confirmed that religiosity played a significant role in enhancing happiness among Buddhists in the pre-retirement stage of their careers. Individuals who engaged in specific religious practices reported higher levels of happiness, highlighting the critical role of religiosity in fostering well-being within this demographic. Notable activities that had strong associations with happiness included praying (R1), observing the Five Precepts (R4), meditation (R5), Female



worshippers (R7), and praying for the New Year's Eve celebration (R9). Meditation emerged as particularly impactful, likely due to its ability to promote mindfulness, emotional stability, and inner peace. Observing the Five Precepts and praying during the New Year's Eve celebration also stood out as significant contributors, offering structured guidance for ethical living and opportunities for collective spiritual reflection. The strong association between becoming a nun and happiness underscored the profound personal transformation and spiritual growth achieved through a deeper commitment to religious life. Conversely, certain activities, such as offering food to monks (R2) and the perceived benefits of praying (R8), did not demonstrate significant associations with happiness. This could have been attributed to their routine or cultural nature, which might not have engaged individuals on a deeply personal spiritual level. For example, almsgiving, while culturally significant, was often viewed as a customary act rather than a transformative spiritual practice (Maheshwari & Singh, 2009); (Lewis, & Cruise, 2006).

These findings aligned with prior research that emphasized the positive effects of religious practices like prayer and meditation on mental health and happiness (Lim, 2015); (Holt & Dellmann-Jenkins, 1992). They also resonated with broader studies across diverse religious contexts, underscoring the universal potential of religiosity to foster well-being. The study highlighted the multidimensional nature of religious practices: While some activities fostered deep spiritual connections, others served primarily as cultural or social rituals. This distinction suggested opportunities for targeted interventions and community programs that promoted meaningful engagement in impactful religious activities. For the pre-retirement stage of Buddhist careers, such programs could have included meditation workshops, collective prayer events, and discussions on applying the Five Precepts in daily life. Ultimately, the study underscored religiosity as a cornerstone of happiness, bridging cultural traditions with universal principles of spiritual fulfillment (Leelavanichkul et al., 2018); (Yiengprugsawan et al., 2012). Incorporating these findings into public health strategies could have significantly enhanced both individual and collective well-being among pre-retirement stage careers of Buddhists).

3. The role of religious activities (A) in enhancing happiness among pre-retirement stage careers of Buddhists

The analysis demonstrated that religious activities (A) contributed to happiness among Buddhists in the pre-retirement stage of their careers in Thailand. However, the overall difference in happiness levels between those with more engagement and those with less engagement was not statistically significant. Despite this, specific aspects of religious activities, such as charity donations (A2), using religious teaching for life problem-solving (A4), and practicing according to religious principles (A6), exhibited significant positive associations with happiness among pre-retirement stage Buddhists.

Table 4 Result of religious activities (A) in enhancing happiness among pre-retirement stage careers of Buddhists

	More (Happiness)		Less (Happiness)		t	Sig.
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
A1: Paying in religion	1.96	.962	1.89	.951	-2.66	0.008
A2: Charity donations	1.60	.857	1.80	.913	-7.76***	0.000
A3: Importance of teaching for a living	1.03	.202	1.02	.154	-1.63	0.102
A4: Teaching for life problem-solving	2.54	1.086	2.22	.904	-11.70***	0.000
A5: Belief in religious teachings	8.51	1.394	8.39	1.308	-3.16	0.002
A6: Practice on religious teachings	7.51	1.461	7.79	1.313	6.94***	0.000
Overall	3.85	0.49	3.84	0.47	-0.63	0.52

Note: In this research, only the most significant results (*** p < 0.001) are highlighted

Table 4 presented a summary of the results highlighting the role of religious activities (A) in enhancing happiness among pre-retirement stage careers of Buddhists. Overall, there was no statistically significant difference in happiness between groups. However, when examining individual aspects, three activities demonstrated highly significant differences. Specifically, charity donations (A2), using religious teaching for life problem-solving (A4), and practicing according to religious principles (A6) showed substantial statistical significance, underscoring their critical role in promoting happiness among pre-retirement stage careers of Buddhists.

Significant results

The analysis highlighted the most significant findings regarding the influence of religious activities on happiness among pre-retirement stage careers of Buddhists. Charity donations (A2) showed a strong association with happiness, with individuals experiencing more happiness having a mean score of 1.60 (S.D. = 0.857) compared to 1.80 (S.D. = 0.913) for those with less happiness (t = -7.76***, p < 0.001). Similarly, the application of teaching for life problem-solving (A4) demonstrated a robust relationship with happiness, with mean scores of 2.54 (S.D. = 1.086) for more happiness and 2.22 (S.D. = 0.904) for less happiness (t = -11.70***, p < 0.001). However, the practice of religious teachings (A6) was inversely related, with individuals reporting less happiness scoring higher (Mean = 7.79, S.D. = 1.313) compared to those with more happiness (Mean = 7.51, S.D. = 1.461, t = 6.94***, p < 0.001).

Not significant results

The overall analysis of religious activities (A) did not reveal a statistically significant difference in happiness among pre-retirement stage Buddhists. Similarly, the importance of teaching for a living (A3) did not show a significant difference, with mean scores of 1.03 (S.D. = 0.202) for more happiness and 1.02 (S.D. = 0.154) for less happiness (t = -1.63, p = 0.102).

Discussion

The analysis highlighted the nuanced role of religious activities (A) in promoting happiness among pre-retirement stage careers of Buddhists in Thailand. While the overall comparison of happiness levels between those with higher and lower engagement in religious activities was not statistically significant, specific aspects of these activities demonstrated strong positive associations



with happiness. Charity donations (A2) emerged as a particularly significant factor, underscoring the emotional benefits derived from acts of generosity and social contribution. Similarly, applying teachings for life problem-solving (A4) showed a strong association with happiness, reflecting the value of practical spirituality in fostering emotional resilience and a sense of control over life's challenges. Adherence to the practice of religious teachings (A6) also contributed positively, suggesting that ethical living, guided by religious frameworks, supported a stable and fulfilling emotional state. Interestingly, the findings challenged the assumption that all religious activities contributed equally to happiness. Activities such as the importance of teaching for a living (A3) or belief in religious teachings (A5) did not show statistically significant associations, indicating that these aspects might not have resonated as deeply or directly influenced happiness in this demographic.

These results aligned with existing research that emphasized the positive influence of religiosity on mental well-being, particularly through practices that involved practical application and personal engagement (Fave et al., 2013); (Abdel-Khalek, 2007). For pre-retirement Buddhists, the role of religious teachings in addressing life's problems was especially salient, providing a framework for emotional stability and resilience during a transitional life stage (Witter et al., 1985); (Greenfield et al., 2009). This demographic seemed to have benefited less from the social aspects of religiosity and more from its intrinsic and practical dimensions (Xu et al., 2020); (Leelavanichkul et al., 2018). Future research should have delved deeper into the psychological mechanisms driving these associations, exploring why certain aspects of religiosity impacted happiness more significantly than others. Additionally, the development of tailored interventions and community programs was essential. Initiatives that promoted meaningful engagement in charity, practical application of religious teachings, and ethical living could have provided targeted support for this group, enhancing their emotional well-being and resilience during pre-retirement. Policies should have emphasized the value of these specific activities, integrating them into mental health and social support frameworks. Encouraging acts of charity and practical spirituality while fostering environments that allowed pre-retirement Buddhists to explore and apply religious principles meaningfully could have significantly improved their overall happiness and quality of life.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

The new body of knowledge can be summarized from two perspectives as follows:

1. The results confirmed that religiosity (R) played a significant role in promoting happiness among pre-retirement stage Buddhists. Specific practices, such as praying, observing the Five Precepts, meditation, participating in ordination ceremonies, becoming a nun, and engaging in New Year prayers, were strongly associated with greater happiness. These findings highlighted the importance of engaging in spiritual practices that promoted mindfulness, emotional stability, and a deeper sense of purpose during the transitional pre-retirement stage of Buddhists. For implementation, policies were recommended to promote workers' happiness through summer ordination activities or spiritual retreats during vacation leave, as well as policies encouraging New Year prayers and routine prayer and meditation practices.

2. The results confirmed that religious activities (A) played a significant role in promoting happiness among pre-retirement stage Buddhists. Specifically, charity donation (A2), using religious teachings to solve life problems (A4), and practicing according to religious principles (A6) were strongly associated with greater happiness. These findings emphasized the importance of engaging in meaningful spiritual practices that fostered mindfulness, emotional resilience, and a deeper sense of purpose during the pre-retirement stage of a Buddhist's career. For implementation, policies were recommended to promote workers' happiness through donations and charity activities, as well as through initiatives focused on religious teachings and practices for addressing life and work challenges.

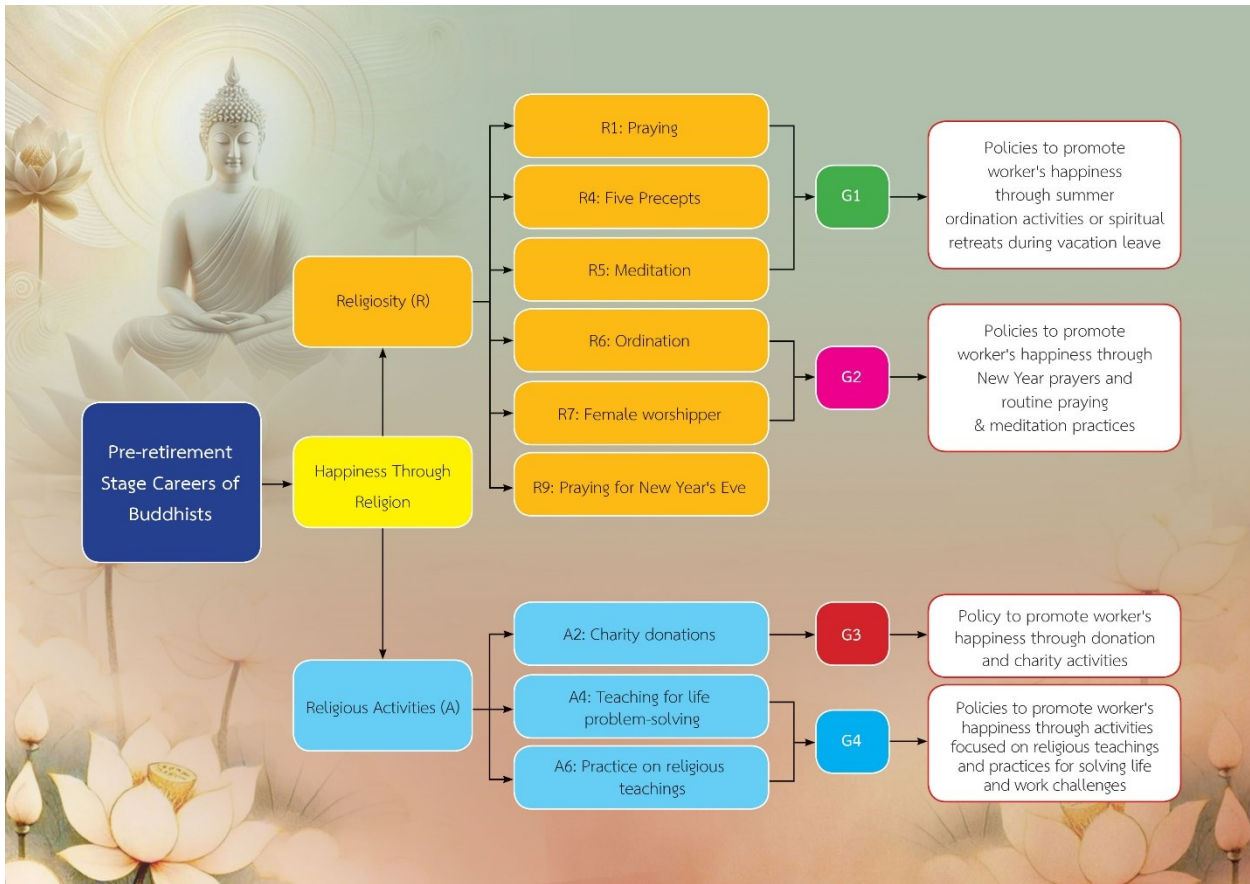


Figure 2 Model of Happiness based on religion for pre-retirement stage careers of Buddhists

The figure illustrated the religious dimensions of promoting happiness among pre-retirement stage Buddhists in Thailand by highlighting the roles of religiosity (R) and religious activities (A). Religiosity included practices such as praying, listening to sermons, observing the Five Precepts, meditation, becoming a nun, and participating in New Year prayers. Religious activities (A) encompassed the use of religious teachings to solve life problems, belief in religious faith, the necessity of religious teachings for daily living, and practicing according to religious principles. This figure demonstrated how both religiosity and religious activities worked together to promote happiness among pre-retirement stage Buddhists, helping them navigate the transitional phase of



their careers and lives. By applying the findings to policy formulation for promoting happiness, it was recommended that policies be developed to enhance workers' happiness through summer ordination activities or spiritual retreats during vacation leave, as well as policies encouraging New Year prayers and regular prayer and meditation practices. Additionally, policies were suggested to support workers' happiness through donation and charity activities, along with initiatives focused on using religious teachings and practices to address life and work challenges.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study explored the influence of religiosity (R) and religious activities (A) on the happiness of pre-retirement stage Buddhists in Thailand, revealing significant insights into the relationship between spiritual practices and happiness. The findings confirmed that religiosity, including activities such as praying, observing the Five Precepts, meditation, participating in ordination ceremonies, becoming a nun, and engaging in New Year prayers, significantly enhanced happiness in this demographic. These practices promoted mindfulness, emotional stability, and a deeper sense of purpose, which were crucial for fostering happiness during the pre-retirement stage career. Additionally, religious activities like charity donations, using religious teachings to solve life problems, and practicing according to religious principles also showed strong positive associations with happiness. These activities provided meaningful ways to integrate spirituality into daily life, enhancing emotional resilience and a sense of direction during the transitional phase of retirement. In conclusion, both religiosity and specific religious activities played a critical role in promoting psychological well-being among pre-retirement stage Buddhists. Based on these findings, it was recommended that policies be formulated to promote workers' happiness through summer ordination activities, spiritual retreats, and initiatives encouraging regular New Year prayers, prayer, and meditation practices. Furthermore, policies that supported charity donations, the use of religious teachings to address life and work challenges, and the application of religious principles could further enhance workers' emotional resilience and purpose. Integrating these activities into public health and mental health strategies could provide valuable support for promoting well-being during this stage of career and life. Future research could explore the long-term impact of Buddhist practices on workplace well-being, conduct cross-cultural comparisons, and test interventions integrating mindfulness and ethical teachings. Digital tools, such as meditation apps, could be studied for their effectiveness in promoting well-being. Workplace policies supporting religiosity should be assessed for their impact on job satisfaction. Additionally, public health campaigns could incorporate Buddhist principles to enhance mental resilience among workers.

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