



BOOSTING CREATIVE LEADERSHIP IN DIGITAL COMMUNITY GROWTH WITH FIVE BALA DHAMMA

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Buddhism was a social and cultural resource that influenced Thai society in many ways, from education and daily life to traditions and cultural practices that reflected the nation's identity. Buddhist teachings helped build cultural and spiritual resilience in responding to social changes such as demographic and economic shifts. The principle of the "Middle Path" enabled individuals to adapt and respond to changes in a constructive way, fostering peace in society. Buddhism also emphasized conflict management with patience, honesty, and fairness-qualities that were fundamental to good leadership. The development of leaders in this direction ensured that communities grew sustainably and strengthened in economic, social, and cultural aspects, thus establishing a solid foundation for the development of peaceful and sustainable communities and societies. The objective of this study was to examine the level of empowering creative leadership for community development in the digital era, to assess the level of applying the Five Bala Dhamma principles based on Buddhist teachings, to investigate the relationship between the empowering creative leadership and community development in the digital era through the application of the Five Bala Dhamma principles based on Buddhist teachings, and to develop recommendations for enhancing the empowering creative leadership for community development in the digital era by applying the Five Bala Dhamma principles based on Buddhist teachings.

Methodology: This research aimed to study the level of enhancing creative leadership potential for community development in the digital era, the level of applying the Buddhist principles of Five Bala Dhamma as a foundation, the relationship between enhancing creative leadership potential for community development in the digital era through the application of the Buddhist principles of Five Bala Dhamma, and to propose recommendations for enhancing creative leadership potential for community development in the digital era based on the application of the Buddhist principles of Five Bala Dhamma. This study employed a mixed-methods approach. The sample group consisted of 291 students and community leaders. The sample size was



determined using Krejcie and Morgan's table. The research tool was a questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale. The statistics used for the quantitative data analysis were the mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation coefficient. For the qualitative research, 15 key informants were selected purposefully. The data collection tool was a semi-structured questionnaire. The content analysis method was used for synthesizing the data, and the quality was checked using triangulation techniques.

Main Results: The results revealed that the level of enhancing creative leadership potential for community development in the digital era was high ($\bar{x} = 4.10$, S.D. = 0.32). The level of applying the Buddhist principles of Five Bala Dhamma as a foundation was also high ($\bar{x} = 4.07$, S.D. = 0.32). The relationship between enhancing creative leadership potential for community development in the digital era through the application of the Buddhist principles of Five Bala Dhamma was moderate and statistically significant at the .01 level. The recommendations for development were as follows: 1) Continuous enhancement of creative leadership potential; 2) Integration of Five Bala Dhamma principles in practice; 3) Application of technology for community development; and 4) Building partnerships and cooperation at all levels.

Involvement to Buddhaddhamma: This article explored Applied Buddhism and its role in cultivating wisdom and morality to enhance leadership development. Grounded in the principles of Five Bala Dhamma, it used relevance within the contemporary organizational context. Buddhist principles served as a fundamental foundation for empowering and strengthening leaders.

Conclusions: The study suggested that continuous enhancement of leadership potential, integration of Five Bala Dhamma principles into practice, the use of technology for community development, and fostering cooperation at all levels were key to achieving sustainable success in community development in the digital era.

Keywords: Creative Leadership, Five Bala Dhamma Principles, Community Development, Digital Era

Introduction

Education played a key role in developing knowledge, critical thinking, and morality, ensuring societal stability and sustainable national growth. According to the National Education Act of 1999, education aimed to develop Thai citizens into well-rounded individuals physically, mentally, and morally who could live harmoniously with others. In the context of creative leadership, education nurtured leaders who possessed vision, creativity, and ethics, enabling them to guide communities or nations toward sustainable development and effectively address emerging challenges (National Education Act B.E. 2542, 1999).

Community leaders were essential in shaping the direction of education and development within their communities. They fostered alignment between educational initiatives and community needs, enhancing the overall well-being of society (Sangsri, 2018). To lead effectively, these leaders had to embody virtues in management that helped guide their communities toward sustainable goals, which were in line with Thailand's vision of a stable and prosperous future. Key leadership qualities included foresight, transparency, fairness, and integrity. The absence of these virtues



could erode trust and undermine leadership effectiveness. Leadership development at that time could be grounded in Buddhist ethical principles, such as morality, concentration, and wisdom, which served as the foundation for virtuous, patient, and wise decision-making in management (Rungjaroen, 2010).

Buddhism significantly influenced Thai society, from education to daily life, helping build cultural and spiritual resilience in the face of demographic and economic shifts. The Buddhist principle of the "Middle Path" encouraged adaptive and constructive responses to societal changes, fostering peace and harmony (Somdet Phra Phutthakohsachao (P.A. Payutto), 2016). Buddhism advocated for equal development across all social classes, promoting the concept of "Leaving no One Behind" to ensure universal self-development. Teachings on mindfulness, self-restraint, and forgiveness also promoted peace both locally and globally (Phra Phrombuddhit (Prayoon Thammachitto), 2019).

Buddhist principles, such as mindfulness and careful decision-making, were essential for developing virtuous leaders with a broad vision who could guide their communities through change. Additionally, Buddhism taught leaders the importance of conflict management through patience, honesty, and fairness-fundamental qualities for effective leadership (Watthana et al., 2021). By incorporating these principles, leaders served as role models who fostered unity within their communities, ensuring sustainable growth in economic, social, and cultural spheres. This foundation supported the development of peaceful, sustainable communities and societies.

In response to these challenges, the research team conducted a study titled "Empowering Creative Leadership for Community Development in the Digital Era by Applying the Five Bala Dhamma Principles Based on Buddhist Teachings." This study aimed to explore how Buddhist teachings could guide community leadership development, focusing on self-development and capacity building to achieve leadership goals. By integrating Buddhist ethics into community management, the study provided valuable insights for developing effective leaders in the digital age. The findings offered practical guidelines for fostering leadership in sustainable digital-age communities.

Objectives

The objective of this study was to examine the level of empowering creative leadership for community development in the digital era, to assess the level of applying the Five Bala Dhamma principles based on Buddhist teachings, to investigate the relationship between empowering creative leadership and community development, and to develop recommendations for enhancing empowering creative leadership for community development in the digital era by applying the Five Bala Dhamma principles based on Buddhist teachings.

Methodology

This research had the following methodology:

This research was a mixed-methods study. The researcher defined the scope of the study and the research procedures as follows:

Quantitative Study: 1) The population for the research consisted of students and community leaders, totaling 1,210 individuals in Chom Bueng District, Ratchaburi. A sample group of 291 individuals was selected using the sample size table by Krejcie & Morgan, with simple random sampling; 2) A questionnaire was developed based on a review of related literature and was reviewed and evaluated by Five experts for content validity. The content validity index (IOC) ranged from 0.60 to 1.00. The questionnaire was then pilot tested with a group of 30 individuals like the sample. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach, 1990) for the entire questionnaire was 0.86, which met the acceptable threshold. The final questionnaire was a 5-point Likert scale (Likert, 1993); 3) Data were collected personally, with a 100% response rate (291 complete questionnaires); and 4) Descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviation, and hypothesis testing using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, were applied.

Qualitative Study: 1) The researcher studied related concepts and collected field data through focus group discussions. Participants were purposively selected based on predetermined criteria, with 15 individuals chosen according to the triangulation method; and 2) Content analysis, triangulation, and descriptive presentation were used for data analysis.

Results and Discussion

The level of empowering creative leadership capacity for community development in the digital era and the assessment of the level of applying the Five Bala Dhamma principles based on Buddhist teachings were presented in the results, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Mean and Standard Deviation of the Empowering Creative Leadership Capacity for Community Development in the Digital Era

Empowering Creative Leadership Capacity in the Digital Era		n = 291		Level	Rank
		\bar{x}	S.D.		
1.	Digital Vision	4.13	0.29	High	1
2.	Digital Literacy Skills	4.07	0.24	High	4
3.	Creative and Innovative Thinking	4.09	0.32	High	3
4.	Digital Communication and Collaboration	4.10	0.30	High	2
Overall		4.10	0.31	High	

From Table 1, it was observed that the level of empowering creative leadership capacity for community development in the digital era was at a high level overall (\bar{x} = 4.10, S.D. = 0.31). When considering each aspect, all aspects were found to be at a high level, ranked from highest to lowest as follows: Digital Vision (\bar{x} = 4.13, S.D. = 0.29), Digital Communication and Collaboration (\bar{x} = 4.10, S.D. = 0.30), Creative and Innovative Thinking (\bar{x} = 4.09, S.D. = 0.32), and Digital Literacy Skills (\bar{x} = 4.07, S.D. = 0.24), in that order.

The study on applying the Five Bala Dhamma principles based on Buddhist teachings using mean (\bar{x}) and standard deviation (S.D.) statistics, both overall and by dimension, was presented in Table 2.



Table 2 Mean and Standard Deviation of Applying the Five Bala Dhamma Principles Based on Buddhist Teachings, Overall and by Dimension

Applying the Five Bala Dhamma Principles Based on Buddhist Teachings	n = 291		Level	Rank
	\bar{x}	S.D.		
1. Faith Power (Saddhā)	4.10	0.27	High	1
2. Effort Power (Viriya)	4.06	0.31	High	3
3. Mindfulness Power (Sati)	4.05	0.35	High	4
4. Concentration Power (Samādhi)	4.07	0.32	High	2
5. Wisdom Power (Paññā)	4.01	0.33	High	5
Overall	4.06	0.32	High	

From Table 2, it was shown that the overall application of the Five Bala Dhamma principles based on Buddhist teachings was at a high level ($\bar{x} = 4.06$, S.D. = 0.32). When considering each dimension, all dimensions were at the highest level, ranked from highest to lowest as follows: Faith Power (Saddhā) ($\bar{x} = 4.10$, S.D. = 0.27), Concentration Power (Samādhi) ($\bar{x} = 4.07$, S.D. = 0.32), Effort Power (Viriya) ($\bar{x} = 4.06$, S.D. = 0.31), Mindfulness Power (Sati) ($\bar{x} = 4.05$, S.D. = 0.35), and Wisdom Power (Paññā) ($\bar{x} = 4.01$, S.D. = 0.33), in that order.

Table 3 The Pearson Correlation Coefficient Between the Empowering Creative Leadership for Community Development in The Digital Era with The Application of The Five Bala Dhamma Principles Based on Buddhist Teachings

Variable	X	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄	Y
X	1.000					
X ₁	0.82**	1.000				
X ₂	0.80**	0.59**	1.000			
X ₃	0.78**	0.49**	0.49**	1.000		
X ₄	0.73**	0.42**	0.43**	0.53**	1.000	
Y	0.59**	0.46**	0.44**	0.48**	0.47**	1.000

** Statistically significant at the .01 level.

Table 3 indicated a moderate positive correlation between empowering creative leadership for community development in the digital era and the application of the Five Bala Dhamma principles based on Buddhist teachings ($r_{xy} = 0.59$), with statistical significance at the level of .01.

The study explored how empowering creative leadership for community development in the digital era through the application of the Five Bala Dhamma principles based on Buddhist teachings was a process that required the integration of various knowledge areas, including management, self-development, and the strategic use of technology. This integration was particularly crucial in the digital era, where rapid changes influenced all sectors of society. The key findings from the study were summarized as follows, clearly aligning each goal with the corresponding results:



1. Continuous Enhancement of Creative Leadership: The development of leadership capacity continuously evolved in response to the fast-paced changes of the digital era, ensuring that leaders possessed the necessary knowledge, skills, and vision. Leadership development has been an ongoing process, not a one-time achievement. Leaders had to continually build their capacity to adapt to digital changes and guide community development effectively. This was consistent with Chantra et al. (2023), who found a strong positive correlation between visionary leadership and ethical transparency in school administration, statistically significant at the .01 level. These findings suggested that visionary leadership, combined with ethical behavior, was essential for effective community development in the digital age. Leaders must commit to lifelong learning and continuous improvement to remain relevant in an ever-changing digital world. This ensured that they could guide their communities in forward-thinking and adaptable ways.

2. Integration of Practical Buddhist Teachings: The integration of Buddhist ethical principles, such as patience, honesty, and fairness, into leadership practices promoted sound decision-making and built trust. The application of Buddhist teachings strengthened leadership by fostering patience, honesty, and fairness-virtues that helped build trust and credibility within communities. The study's findings aligned with Nilkote et al. (2024), who showed that applying Sappurisa Dharma principles enhanced collaboration and facilitated learning among community members. By incorporating these ethical principles into daily leadership practices, leaders made decisions that served the collective good, improving community cohesion and cooperation. Leaders who embodied these values also gained the respect and trust necessary to lead effectively.

3. Application of Technology for Community Development: Technology has been used as a tool for managing resources, improving communication, and fostering sustainable development in the community. It has been a vital tool for leaders to access timely and accurate information, enabling better decision-making and efficient community development. This aligned with Sukpom et al. (2024), which emphasized how Buddhist principles supported individual potential and organizational learning, encouraging the use of technology for community advancement.

Real-Life Implications: Leaders embraced digital tools to streamline community operations. This helped them improve communication, track development progress, and manage resources efficiently, ultimately driving sustainable community growth.

4. Building Partnerships and Cooperation at All Levels: Cooperation among local communities, government bodies, private sectors, and other stakeholders were built and sustained to achieve comprehensive community development. Effective community development depends on collaboration at all levels. Leaders needed the skills to build networks and foster partnerships with various sectors, ensuring that development efforts were unified and efficient. This was supported by Saisena et al. (2024), who identified the importance of fostering local networks and promoting lifelong learning. Similarly, Singsorn et al. (2023) highlighted that lifelong learning helped communities adapt to changes and apply Buddhist principles to daily life. Leaders prioritized building strong relationships across sectors, ensuring that all parties were engaged and motivated to contribute to community



development. This collaboration ensured that resources and efforts were maximized, leading to more effective problem-solving and innovation.

In conclusion, the study suggested that empowering leadership for community development in the digital era required integrating technology, ethical principles, and management strategies. Leaders who combined these elements and the wisdom of Buddhist teachings were better equipped to navigate the challenges of the digital age and lead their communities toward sustainable growth.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

The research demonstrated that empowering creative leadership for community development in the digital era, combined with the application of the Five Bala Dhamma principles from Buddhist teachings, significantly enhanced effective and sustainable community development. The key insights from the study were summarized into three main points: 1) Creative Leadership in the Digital Era: Leadership played a crucial role in driving community development, especially in the digital age. Effective leaders need to be creative, adaptable, and capable of solving problems quickly. Digital tools, such as real-time data collection and online communication platforms, supported creative leadership. These tools enabled leaders to connect with the community, coordinate initiatives, and promote transparency. Leaders who embraced creativity and adaptability while leveraging technology were vital in helping communities navigate rapid changes; 2) Integration of Buddhist Principles (Five Bala Dhamma): The Five Bala Dhamma principles—faith power (Saddhā), effort power (Viriya), mindfulness power (Sati), concentration power (Samādhi), and wisdom power (Pannā)—provided a solid foundation for ethical leadership and sustainable development. By incorporating these principles, leaders cultivated integrity, made responsible decisions, and guided their communities through challenges. When combined with technology, these principles ensured that digital transformation was carried out in an ethical and beneficial manner, fostering equitable access and protecting vulnerable members of the community; and 3) The Role of Technology and Collaboration: Technology and collaboration were key to adapting to the digital era. Online platforms allow leaders to foster cooperation across government, businesses, and citizens. Tools like social media, crowdsourcing, and online forums enabled communities to engage, share resources, and solve problems collectively. These collaborative efforts, supported by technology, ensured more inclusive and sustainable solutions to community issues. Real-World Applications: Real-world examples highlighted the effectiveness of this approach. For instance, during natural disasters, digital tools enabled leaders to organize swift relief efforts through social media and other online platforms. Similarly, in Bhutan, the government successfully integrated Buddhist principles with digital tools to promote sustainable development. In conclusion, the study underscored the importance of developing virtuous, creative leaders who integrated Buddhist teachings and leveraged technology to drive community development. This approach ensured that communities were equipped to adapt to the challenges of the digital age, promoting sustainable and ethical growth for the future, as summarized in Figure 1.

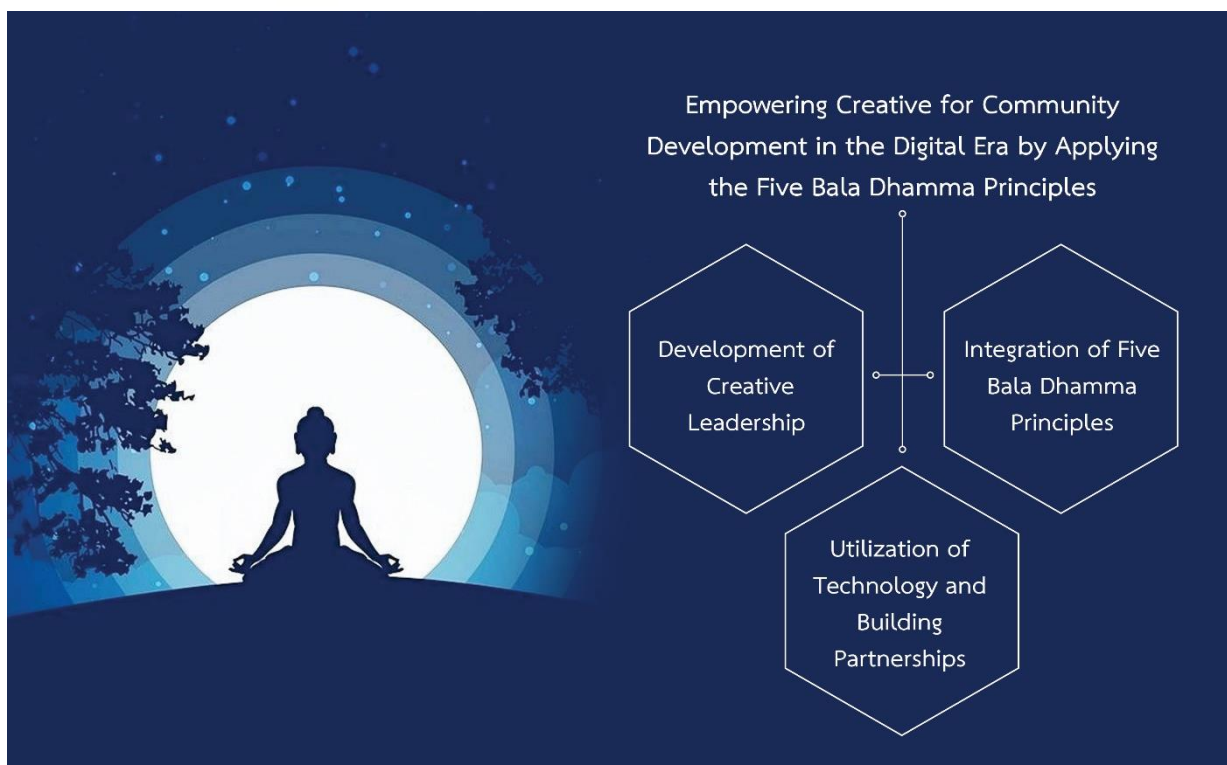


Figure 1 Guidelines for Empowering Creativity for Community Development in the Digital Era by Applying the Five Bala Dhamma Principles

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study found that both the potential for creative leadership in community development in the digital era and the application of Buddhist principles, especially "The Five Bala Dhamma Principles," were at a high level. There was a moderate, statistically significant correlation between enhancing creative leadership and applying these Buddhist principles. This highlighted the importance of creative leadership in adapting to technological changes and using Buddhist ethics to guide leaders during social transformation. Recommendations: 1) Creative leadership needed continuous enhancement to address the evolving challenges of the digital era; 2) Integrating Buddhist principles, such as faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom, helped guide leaders with integrity and clarity; 3) Using technology to improve access to essential services, such as education and healthcare, was crucial for community development; 4) Promoting cross-sector collaboration was vital for sharing resources and knowledge, contributing to sustainable development; and 5) This study emphasized that combining creative leadership with Buddhist principles effectively guided communities through technological, social, and cultural changes. Leaders embracing these principles fostered individual and collective growth, helping communities navigate challenges more successfully. Suggestions for Future Research: Future studies could explore the long-term impact of creative leadership combined with Buddhist principles on community development. Additionally, comparing these findings with older research could provide insights into emerging trends and leadership and community development shifts.



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