



CHANTING AND MEDITATION: THE JOURNEY OF THAI YOUTH TAEKWONDO ATHLETES AND THEIR PERCEIVED EFFECTS

Tuangthong Nukulki^{1*}, Nitikrit Kittisrivoranan², Prapawan Trakulkasemsuk¹

¹Department of Educational, Panyapiwat Institute of Management, Nonthaburi, Thailand

²Independent Researcher, Bangkok, Thailand

*Corresponding author E-mail: tuangthong.nukulki@gmail.com

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Youth Taekwondo athletes face both physical and emotional pressures from training, school, and competition. Traditional coaching often emphasizes technique over mental well-being, leaving many individuals without the necessary tools to manage stress or sustain motivation. Meditation and chanting have shown benefits for focus, emotional balance, and resilience, yet few studies explore how young athletes actually use these practices or how Buddhist chanting, combined with meditation, becomes part of their training routines. This study aimed to investigate how youth Taekwondo athletes, who faced not only physical demands but also academic and emotional pressures, experienced chanting and meditation practices rooted in Buddhism as part of their training. It focused on how they perceived these practices as supporting attention, emotional regulation, resilience, and athletic motivation, areas often overlooked in traditional coaching.

Methodology: A qualitative narrative inquiry framework was employed to explore personal experiences and meaning-making processes. Seven youth Taekwondo athletes aged 10 to 20 were recruited through purposive sampling. All participants practiced at a Taekwondo club in Bangkok and had engaged in chanting and meditation for at least one year as part of their training routine. Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and participant-generated timelines, then transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. The process aimed to capture the personal journeys of the athletes, from initial engagement through internalization, highlighting the evolving relationships they developed with these practices over time.

Main Results: Participants initially engaged in chanting and meditation due to external encouragement from coaches or parents. At first, they felt indifferent or uncertain about the purpose. Over time, consistent practice led to noticeable psychological and moral shifts. Many reported increased calmness, focus, and emotional control—chanting before competitions helped ease nervousness, while meditation improved concentration. Gradually, athletes began to view chanting not as mere ritual but as a personal strategy to "Clear the Mind" and "Reset the Day." As they internalized the practice, they associated it with greater self-discipline, patience, and self-awareness. Beyond mental benefits, many linked these practices to Buddhist principles of compassion, forgiveness, and letting go,



which became embodied ways of managing pressure, recovering from setbacks, and maintaining balance. For some, this transformation reflected moral and spiritual growth, as they learned to approach challenges with calmness, humility, and a stronger sense of ethical responsibility.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: This study explored how the application of Buddhadhamma practices, namely chanting and meditation, could enhance the performance of youth taekwondo athletes. Although derived from Buddhist teachings such as Anapanasati (Mindfulness of Breathing), athletes did not describe their experience as religious. Instead, they focused on the psychological and emotional benefits. Chanting verses about compassion, forgiveness, and letting go helped them manage stress, frustration, and competition pressure. These principles were experienced as promoting calmness, emotional resilience, and mental clarity. Some participants described chanting as a way to "Lighten the Mind" or "Release Negative Energy," allowing them to refocus before and after matches. The spiritual aspect appeared subtly, reflected in greater self-awareness, intentional action, and sensitivity to inner states. Overall, chanting and meditation became tools not only for mental preparation but also for cultivating composure, empathy, and focus-qualities that enhanced both athletic performance and personal growth.

Conclusions: Buddhist chanting and meditation were experienced by youth Taekwondo athletes as practical tools for achieving emotional balance, sustaining focus, and building resilience in the face of competitive and academic pressures. Beyond immediate benefits, these practices supported steady motivation, patience, and self-discipline, contributing to both athletic and personal growth. The findings suggest that when integrated consistently and meaningfully, chanting and meditation can promote holistic development in young athletes, providing accessible strategies for balance and resilience without requiring overtly religious framing.

Keywords: Taekwondo, Youth, Chanting, Meditation, Athletic Development

Introduction

Contemplative practices such as chanting and meditation, particularly Samatha within Buddhist traditions, are increasingly recognized for their psychological and cognitive benefits. Once confined largely to spiritual or ritual contexts, these practices have expanded into secular domains such as education, healthcare, and sports training. Recent studies have shown that even brief engagement can reduce stress, enhance attentional control, and foster resilience (Goyal et al., 2014); (Creswell, 2017); (Dahl et al., 2020).

Within athletic contexts, mindfulness-based practices such as breathing meditation, chanting, and visualization have been linked to improvements in emotional regulation, competitive readiness, and long-term motivation (Baltzell & Summers, 2018); (Noetel et al., 2019).

Despite these promising outcomes, existing research often relies on quantitative or outcome-driven methodologies. While such approaches are useful in demonstrating the effectiveness of chanting and meditation, they reveal little about how young practitioners understand, internalize, and sustain these practices over time (Felver et al., 2016); (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010).



Questions remain about how practitioners make meaning of chanting and meditation, how these routines shape their psychological development, and how they interact with broader social and cultural contexts such as Buddhist principles, educational policy on student well-being, and the growing emphasis on holistic development in youth sports.

Objectives

This study aimed to investigate how youth Taekwondo athletes, who faced not only physical demands but also academic and emotional pressures, experienced chanting and meditation practices, rooted in Buddhism, as part of their training. It focused on how they perceived these practices as supporting attention, emotional regulation, resilience, and athletic motivation, areas often overlooked in traditional coaching.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach grounded in narrative inquiry, focusing on seven youth Taekwondo athletes at the Bangkok Taekwondo Club in Thailand. The study emphasizes the participants' practice of chanting and meditation, as well as their effects on performance, learning, and psychosocial development.

Participants

The participants in this study include seven youth Taekwondo athletes and practitioners at the Bangkok Taekwondo Club in Thailand. They had competed in Taekwondo leagues domestically and internationally. Among several athletes and practitioners at the club, the participants were selected based on their voluntary participation and availability. Criterion-based purposive sampling was employed for participant recruitment. First, their ages ranged between 10 and 20 years. Second, they had been practicing chanting and meditating for at least one year. Table 1 below lists the information of the participants with their pseudonyms.

Table 1 Participants' Information

Pseudonym	Age (Year)	Sex	TKD Rank/Status	Years In TKD	Years In Chanting/Meditation
Olive	10	F	Not stated	4	2.5
Ken	12	M	Not stated (Active Fighter)	9	2.5
Penny	13	F	Brown belt, 2 stripes	7	1
Val	13	F	Brown belt, 2 stripes	5	1
Victor	15	M	Black belt 2 ^d dan & asst. coach	10	10
Nara	16	F	Black belt 1 st dan	7	6
Liza	17	F	Black belt	12	3

While this small sample of seven athletes provides rich narrative insights, it also presents limitations. The findings may not be generalizable due to the limited number of participants, their shared cultural context, and the specific environment of a single Taekwondo club. In addition, gender differences were not analyzed statistically, as the study employed a qualitative narrative



approach focused on lived experiences. This choice helps to center youth voices directly but may also raise concerns of recognizability within a close-knit sports community. To mitigate this, pseudonyms were used, and care was taken to ensure confidentiality and participants' well-being, in line with the approval of the ethical review board and research best practices.

The overall research process spanned approximately 5 months, including sequential phases of literature review, instrument development, research design, data collection, thematic analysis, and report writing. Data collection itself lasted 2 months, with regular observations and interviews conducted alongside athletes' training schedules. This timeline ensured sufficient immersion to capture both initial reactions and gradual internalization of chanting and meditation practices.

Data Collection

After explaining the purposes of the research in age-appropriate language and receiving permission from the club, coach, athletes, and their parents, interview sessions were arranged based on participants' availability. The researchers visited the gym many times to observe daily routines. In addition, the researchers consulted with the coach and an expert in chanting and meditation training to formulate practical interview questions and ensure the collection of insightful information from the participants. A pilot study was also conducted. Then, open-ended interview questions were carefully crafted to encourage athletes to describe their thoughts and feelings in their own words, without pressure to provide "Correct" answers. Questions were phrased in accessible language and focused on experiences, perceptions, and meanings rather than evaluation, allowing flexibility for participants to guide the conversation.

The interviews were carried out in Thai at the gym where the participants practiced. Each participant was interviewed individually, and audio recorded. The length of the interviews ranged from twenty to forty minutes. To safeguard youth participants, interviews were conducted in safe and familiar settings, with the coach or a parent nearby when appropriate. Informed consent and assent were obtained, and participants were reminded that they could skip questions or withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality was emphasized, with pseudonyms used in reporting. Throughout the sessions, participants shared their experiences with practice history, sensations, perceived outcomes, and changes that occurred after they began chanting and meditation.

Data Analysis

The audio recording of each interview was transcribed verbatim and stored separately. Each interview transcription was read carefully by the researchers to familiarize themselves with the content. For a qualitative study, it was important to acknowledge that each participant might differ, and thus each interview was treated as a separate case. However, analysis revealed strong convergence, as participants' accounts showed considerable similarity in their journeys.

To understand the participants' experiences of chanting and meditation and their perceived effects, thematic analysis was conducted following Braun & Clarke (2006). The initial coding of the themes was done inductively, with codes generated directly from participants' narratives rather than pre-determined categories. Then the content was organized into themes.



To ensure validity and reliability, researcher triangulation was employed. Two researchers independently coded a subset of transcripts, compared the coding results, and discussed discrepancies until consensus was reached. Thematic analysis was further reviewed through iterative discussion among the research team to check coherence and consistency across the data set. This process reduced individual researcher bias and ensured that the final themes represented participants' voices rather than researcher assumptions. After that, the themes were named to capture the essence of the participants' stories.

Results and Discussion

Results

This section presents the key findings from narrative interviews with youth Taekwondo athletes aged 10 to 17. The study explored how the integration of chanting and meditation influences the emotional, cognitive, and athletic development of these young individuals. The analysis revealed seven major themes that capture the complex and multifaceted nature of their experiences.

The setting: Daily Routine

The Taekwondo practice at the gym took place every evening, starting at 6:30 p.m. and lasting until 8:00 p.m. Before the practice, all the athletes and practitioners gathered for a coach-led collective chanting lasting 20 minutes. The chanting ritual was run in the same sequence every day. It began with a common Pāli Homage to the Buddha (Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammā-Sambuddhassa) recited three times, followed by the Request for the Five Precepts, and concluded with a Mantra for Teaching Vengeful Spirits. After the chanting, a five-minute sitting meditation was performed.

Practicing chanting and meditation may not be a common practice in Taekwondo gyms. However, this activity is a common practice at the Bangkok Taekwondo Club as they believe in its value. All the athletes and practitioners agreed to do it without any objections,

Even beyond Taekwondo practice, the coach and the owner stated that the ultimate goal of chanting practice is to help children develop a calm and composed mind before they face real-life challenges. It also aimed to instill a foundation of moral discipline that can protect them from the various temptations they may encounter in life. Through this practice, small acts of goodness are gradually cultivated, leading to a stable, lasting transformation into virtuous individuals in the future.

The following section presents the transformative Role of Chanting and Meditation in Youth Taekwondo Training.

1. Getting to know Chanting: From Resistance to Acceptance

All the participants reported that they did not know and did not chant before they joined the club, even if they were born a Buddhist. This phenomenon is common in Thailand. The main religion of the country is Buddhism, and most Thai children are given this religion at birth by their parents. This means not all Buddhist people in Thailand study or strictly practice Buddhism. In fact, their knowledge about Buddhist teaching might be rather superficial. Most of the participants even



mentioned that at first, they did not like chanting or did not understand why they had to do it. However, they followed the coach and the folk. Fortunately, after routine performance, they realized the positive changes and began to incorporate chanting into their lives.

For every participant, the initial exposure to chanting and meditation was not accidental. Rather, it occurred through a trusted adult figure, most often their Taekwondo coach. The consistency and sincerity of this figure played a central role in creating a psychologically safe environment for trying something new.

Seventeen-year-old Liza recalled, "I started chanting because the coach encouraged us before training. I didn't really understand it at first, but because I respected her, I followed along."

This initiation suggested that chanting practices became part of a relational practice, not merely a personal one. The coach served not only as an instructor but as a model of disciplined, intentional living.

The participants often described a period of skepticism or disinterest when first introduced to chanting and meditation. Several admitted they engaged in the practice out of obligation or peer pressure.

"At The Beginning, I Didn't Really Care About the Chanting," said Penny, 13. "I Just Wanted to Get to The Training Part. Sitting Quietly Made Me Think About Cartoons or Food."

Olive candidly confessed that her initial motivation came from monetary reward: "My Mom Gave Me 100 Baht Every Time I Chanted. So, I Did It for The Money."

Over time, however, repetition and communal participation began to shift these perceptions. The rituals, once foreign or tedious, became familiar and even comforting. This transformation underlines the importance of consistency and community in fostering inner engagement.

2. Realizing the Effects: Tangible Outcomes as Motivators for Sustained Practice

The turning point for many participants was the perceived effectiveness of chanting and meditation. This realization came in different forms: Winning a competition, scoring higher on a test at school, or simply feeling calmer.

Nara, 16, reflected: "There Was a Time I Was Stressed About Both School and Taekwondo Training. The Coach Told Me to Chant Regularly. I Tried It, And I Felt Calmer. That's When I Started to Believe."

Victor, who also served as a junior coach, shared: "I Chanted for My Grandfather's Health, And He Got Better. I Asked to Become a Registered Bangkok Athlete, And It Happened. That Made Me Believe It Works."

These accounts show that while initial compliance may have been externally driven, continued practice was deeply personal and grounded in felt experiences. However, the depth of adoption varied. For some, chanting and meditation were embraced mainly as practical strategies to manage stress or enhance performance, reflecting a more instrumental or superficial engagement. For others, especially those who connected the practices to Buddhist principles of compassion, gratitude, or moral responsibility, the routines appeared more deeply rooted in moral and spiritual growth. This distinction suggests that the sustainability of practice may depend not only on perceived short-term outcomes but also on whether athletes internalize the practices as part of a broader ethical or spiritual framework.



3. Cultivating Inner Stability: Emotional and Cognitive Self-Regulation

One of the most consistent benefits reported by the young athletes was emotional regulation. Chanting and meditation helped them become less reactive, more patient, and better able to handle pressure—a crucial skill in both school and combat sports.

"I Used to Cry When I Got Hit During Practice," said Penny. "But After Chanting Regularly, I Didn't Get Angry or Cry Anymore."

Nara shared, "Before, I Used to Get Easily Frustrated During Sparring. Now, If Someone Hits Me Hard, I Just Breathe and Refocus."

In parallel, several participants mentioned improved attention spans and mental clarity. Val commented, "After Meditating, I Could Remember Lessons Better and Focus During Class. I Didn't Zone Out Like Before."

These improvements in emotional and cognitive control appeared to translate directly into academic and athletic domains.

4. Integrated Achievement: The Link Between Spiritual Practice and Academic or Athletic Success

Participants described measurable improvements in school performance and Taekwondo outcomes, attributing these gains to increased mindfulness and confidence.

Olive, age 10, proudly said, "Now I Get 4.0 In Every Subject. I Chant Before Exams and Competitions, And I Do Better."

Ken noted, "I Used to Be Average. But After Chanting, My Grades Improved, And I'm More Confident on Stage. Even My Teachers Noticed."

These narratives reveal a strong sense of empowerment. The children felt they had a tool that could influence outcomes. Chanting became a personal ritual for psychological readiness, used strategically before high-stakes moments.

5. Belief in Energetic Exchange: Spirituality, Karma, and Positive Vibration

A subtle but powerful theme across the interviews was the belief in spiritual merit and the invisible energy of chanting. Even those less inclined to meditate frequently still expressed a sense that chanting "Did Something."

"It Felt Like Recharging," said Victor. "Like Positive Energy Came into My Body."

Ken, age 12, shared, "I Wanted a Guitar. I Prayed While Chanting. Later, My Grandfather Gave Me One. I Told My Mom She Should Try Chanting Too."

Such stories reflect a childlike, but sincere, trust in the universe. For many, chanting was not only a discipline but a form of communication with something larger—a karmic system of intention and return.

6. A Realistic Outlook: Valuing Practice While Acknowledging Its Limits

Although participants acknowledged many benefits, a few also voiced realistic caveats. They recognized that chanting and meditation alone were insufficient without regular physical training.

Val remarked, "Chanting Helps, Especially with Focus. But If I Don't Practice, I Won't Get Better. You Can't Just Wish to Win."



Ken echoed a similar balance: "I Give Chanting 6 Out Of 10 For How Much It Helps with Training. It's Not Magic. You Still Have to Work Hard."

Such reflections suggest an evolving maturity. The young athletes are developing critical thinking about the tools they use, while still valuing them for what they offer.

The findings from the in-depth interviews with the youth Taekwondo athletes reveal how chanting and meditation can serve as more than pre-training rituals. They are tools for self-awareness, emotional regulation, focus, and hope. Initiated through trusted relationships, sustained by tangible benefits, and validated by belief, these practices helped young athletes become not only stronger competitors but more centered individuals.

As one participant reflected, "When We Focus on Good Intentions, We Receive Good Things in Return."

In a world often driven by external achievement, these stories affirm the value of inner development, not in opposition to performance, but as its foundation.

The thematic analysis revealed shared patterns of change, but each athlete's journey unfolded in unique ways. Summarizing their individual stories highlights how chanting and meditation were adopted, from superficial engagement to deeper internalization, and shows the varied paths through which common outcomes were achieved.

Table 2 A Summary of Individual Journeys

Pseudonym	Initial Attitude	Turning Point	Outcomes Reported	Depth of Adoption
Olive (10F)	Started chanting mainly for rewards from mother; initially unmotivated.	Improved grades, sports wins, and belief in prayers being answered.	Better concentration, calmness, improved school grades, athletic success, emotional maturity.	Sustained practice with strong parental reinforcement; moderate internalization.
Ken (12M)	Followed teacher and peers; curious but not deeply convinced.	Felt calmer and saw prayers answered (e.g., Gifts, Confidence Boost).	Increased focus in TKD and school, greater confidence, less fear.	Engaged consistently, views chanting as practical support; partially internalized.
Penny (13F)	Found chanting long and boring at first; preferred training.	Realized benefits in competitions and school exams.	Improved self-control, calmness, academic focus, confidence in sports.	Internalized over time, now values it as part of personal growth.
Val (13F)	Initially disliked chanting, found it boring and tiring.	Peer influence and teacher encouragement; realized calmer mood after chanting.	Better emotional control, calmness before matches, slight improvement in focus.	Limited adoption; still somewhat superficial but acknowledges benefits.



Table 2 A Summary of Individual Journeys (Continued)

Pseudonym	Initial Attitude	Turning Point	Outcomes Reported	Depth of Adoption
Victor (15M)	Skeptical at first but tried due to teacher's encouragement.	Observed results for family's well-being and personal athletic success.	Stronger confidence, emotional regulation, improved academics and coaching ability.	Deep adoption; sees chanting as spiritual and moral practice tied to values.
Nara (16F)	Initially bored and skeptical; saw it as reducing training time.	Found calmness and reduced anxiety in competitions.	Better emotional regulation, discipline, memory, resilience.	Deeply internalized; practices independently and links to self-development.
Liza (17F)	Initially bored, wanted to skip chanting.	Felt calmer during stress, better focus before exams and competitions.	Improved memory, confidence, academic performance, focus in TKD.	Strong adoption; integrates into daily life, both practical and personal.

Table 2 demonstrates the seven youth athletes' journeys, revealing a shared trajectory: From external motivation (Parental Rewards, Teacher Direction, or Peer Influence) toward gradual internalization of chanting and meditation. Initial resistance or boredom was common, but most participants reported tangible outcomes such as improved calmness, concentration, confidence, and academic or athletic performance.

However, the depth of adoption varied. For some (e.g., Val, Olive, Ken), chanting remained more instrumental-valued as a tool for immediate benefits. For others (e.g., Victor, Nara, Liza), the practice evolved into a deeper commitment, tied to spiritual or moral values, self-discipline, and independent continuation. These differences suggest that sustainability depends not only on visible performance outcomes but also on whether the practices are integrated into broader frameworks of personal growth and ethical development.

Discussion

The narratives collected in this study trace a common arc: Young Taekwondo athletes who began chanting only to please a coach or parent quickly discovered the practice helped steady their breathing, ease frustration after intense sparring, and improve classroom concentration. Several recalled moving from "Thinking About Cartoons or Food" during early sessions to noticing they "Felt Calmer" and could "Just Breathe and Refocus" when hit or when exams loomed. Such first-person descriptions provide real-world context to laboratory evidence that chanting and mindfulness reduce autonomic arousal and strengthen attentional networks (Acharya et al., 2025). The athletes' accounts illustrate how those physiological shifts are experienced in the moment and deliberately harnessed before high-stakes events, echoing sport-science findings that Anapanasati breathing and visualization improve composure in combat sports and archery (Stephen et al.,



2022); (Kongurai et al., 2023). Recent EEG and EPR studies also indicate that chanting and meditative breathing enhance frontal midline theta and alpha rhythms associated with attentional control and emotional regulation (Lomas et al., 2015); (Duda et al., 2024), supporting athletes' reports of calmness and sharper focus.

Beyond immediate performance, the stories point to broader developmental mechanisms. Participants reported a growing certainty that "I Can Influence Outcomes," a sentiment consistent with Bandura (1997) mastery-experience pathway to self-efficacy and with self-determination theory's claim that competence fuels intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2020). Because the ritual was introduced and modeled in a supportive coaching climate, the findings also support the relational-developmental systems perspective, which holds that thriving emerges from mutually reinforcing person-context relations. The results also resonate strongly with Buddhist concepts: The calm awareness athletes described reflects *sati* (Mindfulness); references to "Lightness Inside" and "Letting Go" align with karma as a moral framework for action and consequence; and the athletes' reports of increased patience, forgiveness, and care for others suggest the cultivation of *metta* (Loving-kindness). These internal shifts show how chanting and meditation may foster not only psychological readiness but also spiritual virtues that support sustained motivation and resilience. Such hybrid devotional-attentional routines underscore calls for an integrative taxonomy of contemplative practices that mirrors real-world blending of breath, vocalization, and meaning (Kozhevnikov et al., 2022).

These qualitative insights agree with quantitative syntheses showing moderate-to-large effects of mindfulness on test anxiety, attentional focus, and athletic resilience (Si et al., 2024). By documenting how children strategically deploy chanting as a "Mental Warm-Up," the present study helps explain why effect sizes are strongest in contexts, such as sport and academics, where brief, portable state induction is valuable. At the same time, references to "Energy Recharge" and karmic merit remind practitioners designing secular school programs that contemplative techniques in Buddhist cultures carry devotional meanings that can enhance, rather than diminish, engagement. This bridges the thematic findings (Calmness, Attention, Discipline) with theoretical frameworks by showing how lived experiences of youth athletes map onto both psychological constructs and culturally embedded spiritual values.

Practical implications follow naturally. Coaches can embed brief chanting sessions without reducing physical training time, cultivating psychological safety, emotion regulation, and a shared sense of purpose. Because athletes reported transferring the routine to schoolwork, schools and clubs can coordinate a unified, culturally consonant routine for stress management, including a short chant and quiet breath focus, before classes, exams, or other anxiety-provoking activities. Participation should remain optional, with secular alternatives (e.g., Neutral Phrases, Mindful Breathing, or Simple Group Humming) to respect diversity. In line with evidence that team rituals can be accessible gateways to youth mental-health promotion (Sibinga et al., 2016), students may initially feel unfamiliar with the practice but, over time, often report greater calm and focus and may integrate brief meditation into daily life.



Several limitations temper these insights. The sample comprised seven athletes from a single Bangkok club, and their enthusiasm may reflect social desirability or the charismatic coach. Self-report data cannot confirm whether chanting drives performance gains or whether already successful athletes persist in chanting. Moreover, cultural specificity limits generalizability: The meaning of chanting as rooted in Buddhist tradition may not directly translate into non-Buddhist contexts, where devotional framing could be absent or less resonant. These boundaries must be acknowledged so that findings are not overextended. Longitudinal mixed-methods designs-pairing narrative interviews with physiological indices such as EEG or heart-rate variability-are needed to chart causal pathways and verify how subjective "Calm" maps onto neurophysiological change. Comparative studies contrasting clubs that chant with those that employ secular breathing drills would help isolate the role of spiritual framing.

Chanting and meditation emerged as multifaceted resources that youth athletes use to regulate emotions, sharpen focus, and construct hopeful self-narratives (Lomas et al., 2015); (Gardner & Moore, 2020); (Noetel et al., 2019). Far from peripheral superstition, the practice weaves through relational, cognitive, and spiritual strands of their lives, supporting positive youth development. Recognizing and nurturing such culturally rooted contemplative habits may enrich sport pedagogy and, more importantly, the broader well-being of young people beyond the gym (Sibinga et al., 2016).

Looking ahead, future research should aim to expand on these findings through longitudinal designs that can assess the long-term effects of chanting and meditation on psychosocial and athletic outcomes. In addition, comparative studies across diverse cultural and sporting contexts are essential to evaluate the generalizability of these practices and to understand how spiritual framing may influence engagement and effectiveness. These lines of inquiry will help refine intervention strategies and support the integration of contemplative practices in youth development across varied settings.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

Although contemplative practices such as mindfulness have gained traction in sport psychology, Buddhist chanting, an embodied, vocal form of meditation, remains virtually unexamined within youth athletics and entirely absent from combat-sport research. By foregrounding the lived narratives of Thai Taekwondo athletes, this study goes beyond descriptive accounts to show how chanting, meditation is introduced, interpreted, and internalized in everyday training, thereby extending three scholarly domains (Buddhist Anthropology, Sport Psychology, and Contemplative Studies).

1. Empirical novelty (Sport Psychology): We provide qualitative evidence of a structured chanting-meditation routine in a competitive martial-arts context, tracing adoption → Adaptation → Sustainment rather than reporting outcomes alone.

2. Conceptual advance (Buddhist Anthropology & Contemplative Studies): We articulate a "Devotional Psychophysiology" lens that links the progressive internalization of *sīla* (Ethical Discipline) and *khanti* (Patient Endurance) with observable shifts in attention, emotion regulation, and resilience.



This framework explicitly connects to established sport-psychology models: 1) Self-determination theory-chanting functions as a consistent routine that supports competence and relatedness, strengthening intrinsic regulation; 2) Self-efficacy-mastery experiences during practice/competition build "I Can Do This" beliefs; and 3) Mindfulness-Acceptance-Commitment model-brief chant + breath promotes present-moment focus and values-consistent action. In practical terms, the model explains why a short, repeatable ritual helps athletes settle, focus, and achieve their goals.

3. Practical significance (Integrative Practice): By mapping transitions from external compliance to internalized discipline, the study distils simple guidelines for coaches and psychologists seeking culturally grounded, developmentally sensitive methods for stress management, motivation, and character formation in high-pressure settings (e.g., 3-5-Minute Pre-Practice Chant/Breath with Optional Secular Wording).

Together, these contributions extend Buddhist anthropology, sport psychology, and contemplative studies beyond surface description by explaining not only that chanting is used, but how and why it becomes a durable mind-body practice, and how these maps onto mainstream sport-psych mechanisms while remaining accessible to coaches and practitioners. Figure 2 provides a summary of the Thai youth taekwondo athletes' journey through chanting and meditation, as well as the outcomes.

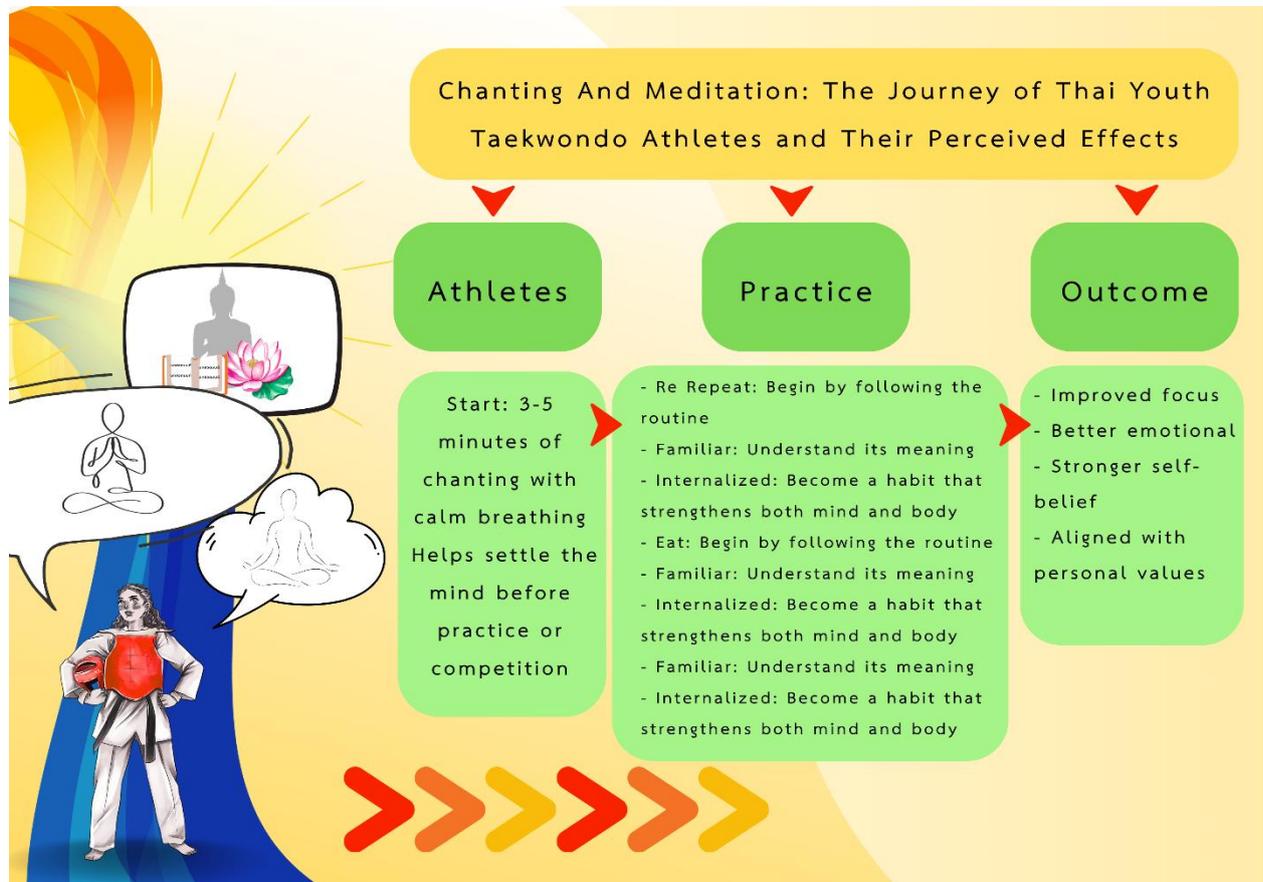


Figure 1 Framework of Knowledge Contribution from Youth Taekwondo Chanting and Meditation Study



Conclusions and Recommendations

This study shows that Buddhist chanting and brief meditation evolved from a simple pre-fight ritual into a deeply internalized mental tool for youth Taekwondo athletes, enhancing focus, emotional resilience, and discipline. Athletes used chanting to regulate their breathing, manage anxiety, and reinforce virtues such as patience and ethical conduct. Recommendations include integrating short chanting and meditation routines with reflective discussions in training, supported by sport psychologists and inclusive coach education. Broader applications in schools and sports can promote calm and focus through secular adaptations. While findings are limited to a small sample, future longitudinal and cross-cultural studies should examine how internalization and moral-spiritual development persist across contexts.

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