



THE EFFECTS OF USING GUIDANCE ACTIVITIES PACKAGE COMBINED WITH
THE FOUR BRAHMAVIHARAS PRINCIPLES TO ENHANCE GOOD RELATIONSHIPS
WITH FRIENDS AMONG GRADE 6 ELEMENTARY STUDENTS
AT SAINT MARY SCHOOL, AYUTTHAYA

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: St. Mary's School in Bang Pa-in District, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province, under the Office of the Private Education Commission, offers education from pre-kindergarten to lower secondary level. As a researcher, teacher of ethics at the school, and assistant guidance counselor, I observed that sixth-grade students lack fundamental knowledge of how to build good relationships with their peers. Interviewing teachers and students revealed that most students have difficulties in building relationships by using impolite language, not apologizing for mistakes, not co-helping, and arguing with friends. Furthermore, they still lack polite speech, appropriate behavior, a cheerful demeanor, empathy, and compassion. Therefore, building relationships is crucial, and cultivating these qualities in various ways. The researcher, in the capacity of a Buddhist ethics teacher and assistant guidance counselor at the school, is interested in studying the effectiveness of using guidance activities applying the Four Sublime States of Mind: Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity to enhance positive relationships with peers. The objectives of this study were to compare peer relationships of Grade 6 students in the experimental group before and after using the guidance activity set combined with the Four Sublime States, to compare peer relationships between the experimental and control groups after the experiment, and to examine students' satisfaction with the guidance activity set combined with the Four Sublime States.

Methodology: This research used a quasi-experimental design with an experimental and a control group. Measurements were taken in pre-post experiments. The guidance activities focused on applying the Four Sublime States to improve relationships with peers. The following steps were included: 1) Studying relevant concepts, theories, documents, and research to serve as a conceptual framework for creating the guidance activities; 2) Defining operational definitions to guide the activity planning; 3) Developing the guidance activities, incorporating the Four Sublime States of Mind to enhance positive relationships with peers; 4) Checking the quality of the guidance activity set: This was done by having 3 experts with knowledge and understanding



of guidance activity set development evaluate its suitability; 5) Revising, revising, and developing the guidance activity set on good relationships with friends according to the experts' recommendations, and 6) Further improving the guidance activity sets on good relationships with friends to make it even more suitable. This will be used in experiments with sample groups and for further data collection.

Main Results: The results showed that: 1) The experimental group students who used the guidance activity set combined with the Four Sublime States had significantly better relationships with their friends after the experiment than before the experiment at the .01 statistical significance level; 2) After using the guidance activity set combined with the Four Sublime States, the good relationships with friends of the experimental group students had significantly different scores at the .01 statistical significance level, and 3) The experimental group students were highly satisfied the guidance activity set combined with the Four Sublime States and their good relationships with their friends.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: Applied Buddhism emphasizes the development of wisdom and morality through Buddhist practice. The learning activities were designed to integrate the Four Brahmavihāras, mettā (Loving-kindness), karuṇā (Compassion), muditā (Sympathetic Joy), and upekkhā (Equanimity), which cultivate noble qualities in students by fostering kindness, empathy, appreciation of others' success, and impartiality.

Conclusions: The study found that the guidance activity package integrated with the Four Brahmaviharas successfully enhanced positive peer relationships among Grade 6 students. In addition, it introduced an innovative model for guidance counseling that can be applied to similar contexts for fostering social harmony and cooperative learning.

Keywords: Guidance Activity-Package, Four Brahmaviharas, Positive Peer Relationships

Introduction

St. Mary's School in Bang Pa-in District, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province, under the Office of the Private Education Commission, offers education from pre-kindergarten through lower secondary. (Phramaha Waritthon Chan Chuen et al., 2022). As a researcher working as a Buddhist ethics teacher at the school and as an assistant guidance counselor, I observed that sixth-grade students lack fundamental knowledge in building good relationships with their peers (Capar & Tarim, 2015); (Jamila & Rahmawati, 2022). Interviews with teachers and fellow students revealed that most students have problems with interpersonal relationships, such as using impolite language, not apologizing for mistakes, not helping with assignments, and arguing with friends. Furthermore, I observed that most students lack skills in polite speech, appropriate behavior, a cheerful demeanor, and empathy (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). However, observations as a moral education teacher and assistant guidance counselor revealed that many Grade 6 students at Saint Mary School in Ayutthaya lack fundamental interpersonal skills for building positive peer relationships.



Guidance activities are designed to promote self-understanding, awareness of one's environment, decision-making, and interpersonal development. These activities foster individual potential while accommodating differences among learners, thereby improving problem-solving, planning, and adaptability (Landreth, 2012); (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). The integration of the Four Brahmaviharas Principles: Loving-kindness (*Mettā*), Compassion (*Karuṇā*), Sympathetic Joy (*Muditā*), and Equanimity (*Upekkhā*), further enhances the moral and social dimensions of relationship building.

Therefore, promoting interpersonal relationships is critical for all age groups, especially adolescents. This study aimed to investigate the effects of a guidance activities package integrated with the Four Brahmaviharas (Banat et al., 2020); (Dewi et al., 2019) Principles on enhancing positive peer relationships among Grade 6 students at Saint Mary School, Ayutthaya.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were to compare peer relationships of Grade 6 students in the experimental group before and after using the guidance activity set combined with the Four Sublime States, to compare peer relationships between the experimental and control groups after the experiment, and to examine students' satisfaction with the guidance activity set combined with the Four Sublime States.

Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design with experimental and control groups. The population consisted of 110 Grade 6 students from three classrooms. Using cluster random sampling, 80 students were selected and equally assigned to the experimental and control groups (40 Students Each).

Development of Research Instruments:

Guidance Activities Combined with the Four Sublime States of Mind (Brahma Vihara 4) for Fostering Positive Relationships with Peers. The creation process is as follows: 1) Study relevant concepts, theories, documents, and research to use as a conceptual framework. 2) Define operational definitions to guide the planning of activities. 3) Develop a set of guidance activities combined with the Four Sublime States of Mind to enhance positive relationships with peers. There are a total of 9 activities, divided into: 1) Orientation: Connecting Hearts with Bodhi Trees; 2) Loving-Kindness: Great Compassion and Popularity; 3) Loving-Kindness: The Company of Compassionate People; 4) Compassion: Blessed Water of Happiness; 5) Compassion: A Message of Love from Friends; 6) Sympathetic Joy: The Room of Sharing Happiness; 7) Equanimity: Listening with an Open Ear; 8) Equanimity: The Center of the Heart; and 9) Concluding Orientation: A Bond of Love that Binds Hearts. 4) Checking the quality of the guidance activity set: This was done by having 3 experts with knowledge and understanding of guidance activity set development evaluate its suitability. 5) Revising, revising, and developing the guidance activity set on building good relationships with friends according to the experts' recommendations, and 6) Further improving the guidance activity set on building good relationships with friends to make it even more suitable.



This will be used in experiments with sample groups and for further data collection. Positive Peer Relationship Assessment: A 30-item questionnaire measuring relationships across the domains of body, speech, and mind, validated by experts (IOC = 0.8–1.0), with reliability confirmed (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.95). Student Satisfaction Questionnaire: Designed to measure student perceptions of the activities' relevance, engagement, and applicability. Data Collection: Permission was obtained from the school principal. Both groups completed a pre-test, followed by intervention sessions over five weeks, every Monday and Friday, starting Monday, May 5, 2025, to June 9, 2025.

Research Hypotheses: 1) The experimental group of students showed improved relationships with their peers after using a guidance activity package combined with the Four Sublime States of Mind and 2) The experimental group of students who used the guidance activity package combined with the Four Sublime States of Mind (Brahma Vihara 4) had significantly better relationships with their peers than the control group of students who used the standard guidance activity package after the experiment (Dong et al., 1979); (Çalışkan & Kılınç, 2012). The experimental group participated in the integrated package, while the control group received standard guidance activities. Post-tests were then administered, and data were analyzed using t-tests.

Results and Discussion

The study demonstrated that the guidance activities package integrated with the Four Brahmaviharas principles successfully enhanced positive peer relationships among Grade 6 students. Furthermore, it introduced an innovative model for guidance counseling that can be applied to similar contexts for fostering social harmony and cooperative learning.

1. Comparison of the mean scores of positive peer relationships before and after the experiment in the experimental group, according to objective 1.

Table 1 Comparison of the Mean Scores of Positive Peer Relationships before and After Participation in the Guidance Activities Package Integrated with the Four Brahmaviharas Principles

(n = 40)				
Group	\bar{x}	S.D.	t	Sig
Pre-test	76.18	5.830	26.593**	.000
Post-test	132.18	10.674		

Note: $p < .01$

From Table 1, it was found that the experimental group had a pre-test mean score of ($\bar{x} = 76.18$, S.D. = 5.830) for positive peer relationships, which increased to ($\bar{x} = 132.18$, S.D. = 10.674) after the intervention. This demonstrates a statistically significant improvement at the .01 level, supporting Hypothesis 1.

The experimental results of both the experimental group and the control group showed similar mean scores in terms of positive peer relationships. This finding was consistent with (Shigetomi, 2007), who stated that learning was a process of behavioral change; however, it was



not limited to changes in overt behavior alone. The learning process began internally and did not necessarily require immediate external expression. It was also proposed that most human learning depends on observational learning, whereby individuals can acquire both cognitive patterns and behavioral expressions simultaneously. (Blackwell et al., 2007). Such role models can be regarded as a process of behavioral development in accordance with the Four Brahmaviharas Principles, Loving-kindness (Mettā), Compassion (Karuṇā), Sympathetic Joy (Muditā), and Equanimity (Upekkhā), which further enhance the moral and social dimensions of relationship building. These principles are consistent as discussed above.

2. Comparison of the mean scores of positive peer relationships between the experimental and control groups after the experiment, according to objective 2.

Table 2 Comparison of the Mean Scores of Positive Peer Relationships between the Experimental and Control Groups after the Experiment

Group	n	\bar{x}	S.D.	t	Sig
Experimental	40	132.18	10.674	28.850**	.000
Control	40	76.85	5.758		

Note: $p < .01$

From Table 2, the post-test mean score of the experimental group ($\bar{x} = 132.18$, S.D. = 10.674) was significantly higher than that of the control group ($\bar{x} = 76.85$, S.D. = 5.758). The difference was statistically significant at the .01 level, confirming Hypothesis 2.

Therefore, the post-experimental positive peer relationships had a higher mean score than the control group. This indicated that post-experiment, students in the experimental group showed significantly higher levels of positive peer relationships than those in the control group at the .01 level of statistical significance. This finding was consistent with the study conducted by (Mardani & Jahanbazian, 2015), which showed that students who participated in guidance activities using group relations had significantly better peer adjustment than the control group at the .01 level of statistical significance. Moreover, these students showed higher levels of respectful behavior toward others than students who did not receive training through the guidance activity package.

3. Student satisfaction with the guidance activities package integrated with the four Brahmaviharas according to objective 3.

Table 3 Student Satisfaction with the Guidance Activities Package Integrated with the Four Brahmaviharas Principles for Enhancing Positive Peer Relationships

Item	Statement		
	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
1. The content of each activity is consistent with the objectives of enhancing peer relationships.	3.97	1.049	High
2. The content is appropriate for developing positive peer relationships	4.42	.984	High



Table 3 Student Satisfaction with the Guidance Activities Package Integrated with the Four Brahmaviharas Principles for Enhancing Positive Peer Relationships (Continued)

Item	Statement		
	\bar{x}	S.D.	Level
3. The time allocated for each activity is appropriate.	4.22	.767	High
4. The activities allow students to participate, express themselves, and share opinions confidently.	4.30	.757	High
5. The activities encourage students to overcome obstacles in life and develop problem-solving skills.	4.32	.764	High
6. The media and materials used are varied and engaging.	4.30	.939	High
7. The worksheets are not overly difficult.	4.15	.863	High
8. The procedures and methods of conducting the activities are appropriate.	4.50	.599	High
9. The evaluation methods of the activities are appropriate.	4.17	.984	High
10. Students can apply what they learned from the activities to real life.	4.30	.966	High
11. Students believe that this guidance package is beneficial.	4.30	.822	High

From Table 3, it was found that student satisfaction with the integrated guidance package was at a high level overall. The highest mean scores were observed in:

Item 8: The procedures and methods of conducting the activities were appropriate (\bar{x} = 4.50, S.D. = .599).

Item 2: The content was appropriate for developing positive peer relationships (\bar{x} = 4.42, S.D. = .984).

Item 5: The activities encouraged students to overcome obstacles and develop problem-solving skills (\bar{x} = 4.32, S.D. = .764).

The findings revealed that the use of the guidance activity package integrated with the principles of the Four Brahmavihāras was consistent with Hypothesis 3. This result enhanced students' positive peer relationships in terms of not only physical behavior and verbal communication, but also mental aspects. The students had learnt a variety of guidance services and opportunities to express their feelings and thoughts, as well as to release emotional tensions through the guidance activity process. These findings were consistent with the study by (Lee et al., 2023), which suggested that guidance services for adolescents should be organized in group settings, allowing individuals to express their feelings, exchange thoughts and emotions with group members, learn communication skills, and experiment with behaviors that they may not previously have dared to express. Such interactions contribute to the development of interpersonal relationships and enable students to gain a deeper understanding of themselves and others.



Originality and Body of Knowledge

By using guidance activities combined with the Four Sublime States of Mind Loving-kindness (Mettā), Compassion (Karuṇā), Sympathetic Joy (Muditā), and Equanimity (Upekkhā), positive behaviors of sixth-grade students in all three aspects: Physical, verbal, and mental are fostered, strengthening good relationships with their peers. This is achieved through getting to know each other, establishing connections, and building familiarity and closeness. Students learn to use methods to build positive relationships with their friends. This includes exhibiting polite behavior towards others, speaking respectfully, helping others, listening to others' opinions, cooperating with others, appreciating others' successes, and appropriately expressing gratitude or apologies according to the situation, thereby building positive relationships as shown in Figure 1

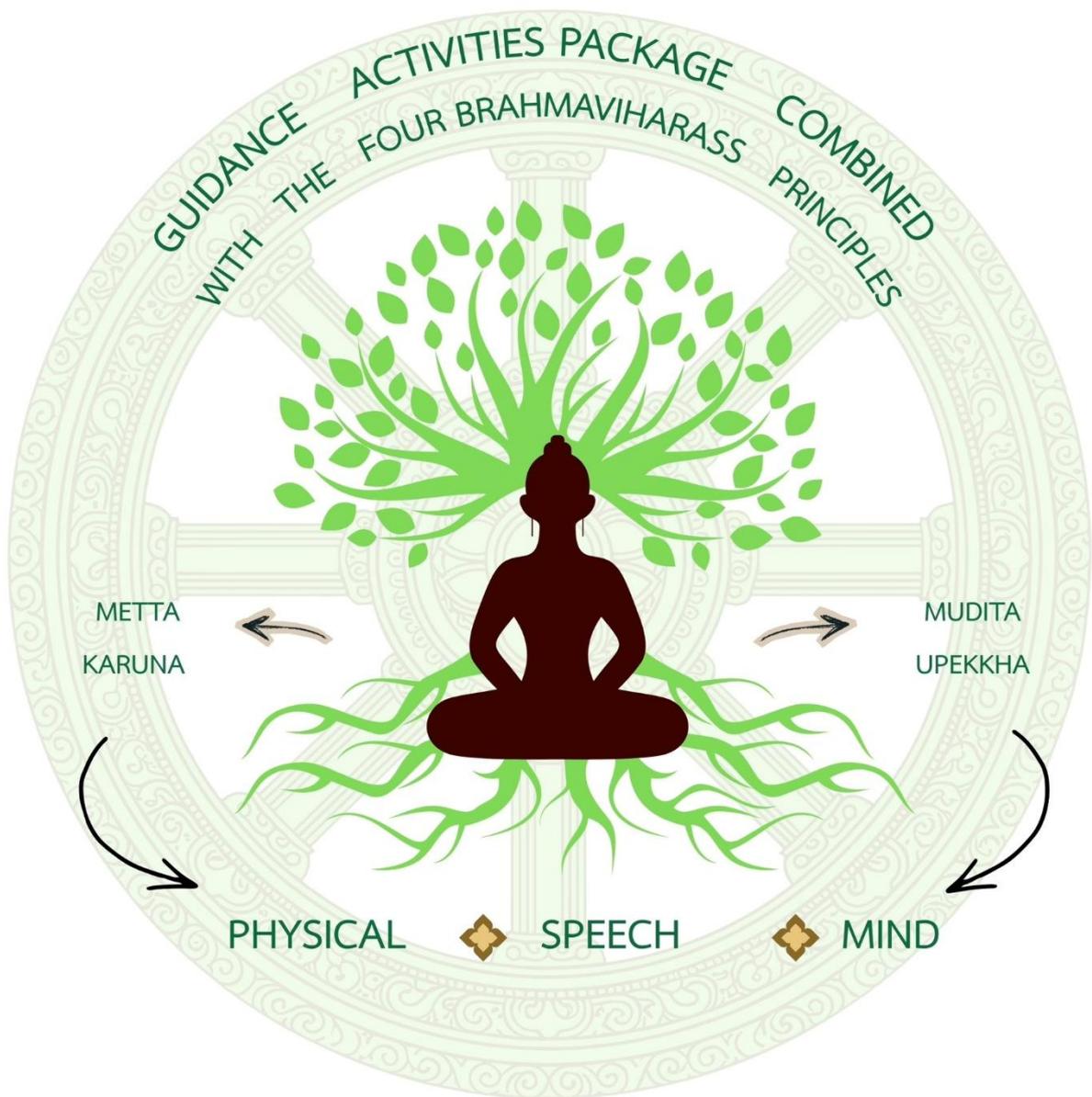


Figure 1 Model of Good Relationships with Friends According to The Principles of The Four Brahmaviharas



The researcher observed that students demonstrated significant positive changes in peer relationships across three domains:

1. Physical Domain (Body): Students displayed polite manners and humility, willingly helped peers in need, and showed responsibility in group assignments. They avoided exploiting classmates, demonstrated fairness, expressed sympathy when peers experienced difficulties, and carried out assigned tasks diligently. Many volunteered to assist others, maintained friendliness and cheerfulness, and enjoyed collaborating with peers in classroom activities.

2. Verbal Domain (Speech): Students communicated politely and kindly, avoided using hurtful words, and were quick to apologize when at fault. They encouraged peers, congratulated others on their successes, and refrained from expressing envy. They expressed gratitude, offered forgiveness when necessary, and spoke neutrally without taking sides.

3. Emotional Domain (Mind/Heart): Students experienced happiness when being with peers, learned to regulate negative emotions such as greed, anger, and delusion, and rejoiced in the happiness of others. They demonstrated empathy, self-awareness, and sincerity, and provided encouragement to others in their studies. They developed emotional stability, maintained a sense of humor, and carried out responsibilities with accountability.

The researcher observed that students' peer relationships had improved positively in all three aspects: Physical aspect: Students became more polite, humble, and helpful when friends faced difficulties. They demonstrated responsibility in group work, avoided taking advantage of others, and acted fairly. They showed empathy when classmates were distressed, carried out assigned tasks to the best of their ability, frequently volunteered to assist peers, maintained friendliness and cheerfulness, and enjoyed collaborating on class projects. Verbal aspect: Students spoke politely and pleasantly, refrained from using words that could cause hurt, apologized first, encouraged their peers, communicated respectfully, expressed joy at others' success, avoided envious speech, expressed gratitude, forgave mistakes, and maintained impartiality in conversation. Emotional aspect: Students felt happy when being with friends, managed their emotions well, rejoiced in others' happiness, showed empathy, understood their own needs, were sincere with peers, encouraged classmates in learning, displayed emotional stability, maintained a sense of humor, and were responsible in fulfilling tasks assigned by peers.

The Four Brahmaviharas Principles: Loving-kindness (*Mettā*), Compassion (*Karuṇā*), Sympathetic Joy (*Muditā*), and Equanimity (*Upekkhā*), serve as guiding virtues for individuals with noble and expansive minds, akin to the Brahma. These principles foster positive peer relationships: (*Mettā*) represents goodwill and a desire to bring happiness and benefit to others. (*Karuṇā*) reflects compassion, the wish to help others be free from suffering. (*Muditā*) signifies joy in others' well-being and success, free from envy. (*Upekkhā*) embodies impartiality, viewing reality with balance, fairness, and equanimity, much like a scale that weighs without bias. Thus, the application of the Four Brahmaviharas Principles significantly contributed to the development of positive peer relationships in the dimensions of body, speech, and mind.



Based on the satisfaction results of the experimental group of students regarding the use of the guidance activity package integrated with the Four Brahmaviharas Principles, the average level of satisfaction was found to be high. Most students expressed satisfaction with the activity package because the steps and methods used in conducting the activities were appropriate, and the knowledge gained from participating in the guidance activities could be applied in practice. This result indicates that the experimental group was satisfied with the guidance activity package integrated with the Four Brahmaviharas Principles, which in turn enhanced their positive peer relationships in three aspects:

1. Physical aspect: Students demonstrated more polite manners, such as bowing their heads when passing monks. They became humbler, offered help to friends in need, showed responsibility in group activities, refrained from taking advantage of others, and acted fairly. They expressed sympathy when friends were distressed, performed assigned tasks to the best of their ability, often volunteered to help peers, were friendly and cheerful, and enjoyed collaborating with classmates to produce shared work.

2. Verbal aspect: Students spoke politely and pleasantly, avoided using words that could hurt others' feelings, and were always the first to apologize to their friends. They made efforts to encourage peers, communicated politely in class, expressed joy when others succeeded, refrained from envious speech, expressed gratitude to friends, forgave peers when they made mistakes, and spoke impartially without taking sides.

3. Emotional aspect: Students felt happy when being with friends, demonstrated good emotional control, and rejoiced in their friends' happiness. They showed empathy, understood their own needs, were sincere with their peers, offered encouragement to others in learning, displayed emotional stability, maintained a sense of humor, and showed responsibility in tasks assigned by their peers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

A research study on the effects of using a guidance activity package integrated with the Four Sublime States of Mind Loving-kindness (*Mettā*), Compassion (*Karuṇā*), Sympathetic Joy (*Muditā*), and Equanimity (*Upekkhā*) to promote positive peer relationships among sixth-grade students at St. Mary's School, Ayutthaya Province, confirmed the following research hypotheses: After participating in the integrated guidance activities, the experimental group's peer relationship scores were significantly higher than their pre-test scores at the .01 significance level. The experimental group's post-test scores were significantly higher than the control group's at the .01 significance level. The experimental group showed a high level of satisfaction with the integrated guidance activity package. The integrated guidance activity package can be effectively implemented with students. Those conducting the activities should be familiar with the manual and have a sufficient understanding of the Four Sublime States of Mind. Since most activities are group-based, it is recommended to use a variety of grouping methods to promote active participation and knowledge sharing among peers. Clear rules and guidelines should be



established before each activity to ensure effective time management. In summary, activity facilitators should encourage students to apply what they have learned to their daily lives for maximum benefit. Future studies should examine the effects of the guidance activities package integrated with the Four Brahmaviharas Principles across all Grade 6 students. Researchers should also identify causal factors influencing the development of positive peer relationships, and the findings should inform the design of improved guidance activities tailored to strengthen peer relationships among elementary students. The present research, entitled "The Effects of Using a Guidance Activity Package Integrated with the Four Brahmaviharas Principles to Enhance Positive Peer Relationships among Grade 6 Students at Saint Mary School, Ayutthaya," provides the following recommendations: 1) Recommendations for application of the findings. The guidance activity package integrated with the Four Brahmaviharas Principles can be applied to Grade 6 students at Saint Mary School, Ayutthaya, as well as to other Grade 6 students with characteristics similar to those of the sample group in this study. Guidance teachers or other interested parties may implement this activity package to foster positive peer relationships during school counseling sessions with students of the same age as those in the experimental group in this study. The activity package is particularly appropriate for this age group, as the techniques used—such as group discussions—it is divided into small groups to exchange ideas in a short period of time or to exchange ideas in general, focusing on working together to solve problems and learning from various perspectives, role-playing allows learners to practice essential skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and decision-making. Common role-playing activities include simulating problem situations, such as job interviews, or simulating career roles to help learners visualize and better understand their interests, case studies emphasize problem solving and individual development of service recipients according to 7 main steps: Defining the problem and forming a hypothesis, collecting and analyzing data, diagnosing the cause of the problem, providing assistance, predicting the results, following up on the results, and summarizing the results with recommendations. The main principle is to respond to the needs of service recipients according to their age and curriculum, including promoting the participation of service recipients in decision-making, and simulated situations simulating real situations for students to practice problem-solving and decision-making. The main technique is presenting a situation (e.g., Telling a Story, Pictures, Videos), having students work together to find solutions and express their opinions in small groups, and then discussing the results to apply to real life. Tests are well-suited to their developmental level. These techniques also promote enjoyment in learning and encourage students to develop positive peer relationships while participating in the activities and 2) Recommendation for further research should investigate the effects of using the guidance activity package integrated with the Four Brahmaviharas Principles among all Grade 6 students in order to enhance positive peer relationships more broadly. Further research should also examine causal factors that may influence the development of positive peer relationships among Grade 6 students. The findings



could then be used to develop additional guidance activity packages designed to strengthen peer relationships for this group of students.

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