Research Article

A THEORY OF BUDDHISM INTEGRATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF WISDOM AND VIRTUE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: All things in the universe are mysteriously encrypted, subject to the rule of nature. Integrating knowledge is the only key to understanding them. In Buddhism, all objects contain microscopic elementary particles that cannot be seen with the naked eye. Theories of religious integration have been less visible despite the widespread integration of science and Buddhism. The Buddha sees all things with wise eyes. Likewise, a wise one should not solely look at the world and all things with just the physical eyes, but with wisdom. A person with a vision of wisdom can see nature as it really is. A holistic view is a key feature in deeply and wisely considering (Yoniso-manasikāra) the integration phenomena of different fields and disciplines. Integration reflects a study method that integrates Buddhism and modern science. This qualitative research work aimed to address that need. This paper aimed to achieve three objectives: To investigate the development of wisdom and virtue in the 21st century according to Buddhism and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to create a theory of Buddhism integration for the sustainable development of wisdom and virtue in the 21st century, and to validate a theory of Buddhism integration for the sustainable development of wisdom and virtue in the 21st century.

Methodology: A qualitative research design was employed. Data were collected from documentary and field studies with 25 experts and scholars, from 11 countries, who were monks and Buddhist scholars from the three Buddhist sects, selected using the purposive and snowball sampling method. In-depth interviews with 15 key informants were carried out to create the theory. The theory was validated through the Focus Group Discussions FGDs among 10 specialists. The interview forms were examined with the CVI by five experts. Data were analyzed using content, thematic, discourse, narrative, and grounded theory analysis.

Main Results: The findings suggested that the wisdom-virtue framework from the three Buddhist schools reflected a holistic learning approach aligned well with the SDGs. The Theory of Buddhism Integration (BI) sustainably developed the wisdom and virtue of humankind in the 21st Century. The Rule of Dual-Relational Integration (DRI) governed three principles, namely: First principle-integrating science into Buddhism, second principle-integrating Buddhism into science, and third principle-integrating Buddhism and science reciprocally. The Rule of Holistic-Relational Integration (HRI) governed four principles, namely: Fourth principle-three-Buddhist-school-based holistic integration, fifth principle-environment-mind-wisdom-based holistic integration, sixth principle-physical-environment-mind-wisdom-based holistic integration, and seventh principle-problem-solution-based holistic integration. The seven principles explained different phenomena of dual and multidimensional integration for Buddhism-multidisciplinary-based integrators around the globe. The goal of the BI Theory was the sustainable development of wisdom and virtue through an integral perspective.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: This breakthrough involves a scholarly engagement with the principles of wisdom and virtue through the reciprocal integration between Buddhadhamma and scientific inquiry. It harmonizes self-development, holistic insight, and environmental mindfulness, serving as a theoretical framework for sustainable human development aligned with the Buddha's epistemological and ethical vision of reality.

Conclusions: In the dynamic landscape of the twenty-first century, the cultivation of wisdom and morality within the three Buddhist sects reveals both shared and distinct characteristics unique to each tradition. These developments align harmoniously with the principles of the UN SDGs. The multidimensional integration of Buddhism, science, and other disciplines in this era is examined through the Seven Principles of DRI and the HRI rules within the framework of the BI Theory. By harmonizing theoretical contributions and practical implications for sustainable development, the theoretical novelty of the BI Theory advances beyond existing integrative or Wilberian models by minimizing conceptual overlap and clarifying theoretical boundaries.

Keywords: Buddhism Integration, Sustainable Development, 21st Century, Theory, Wisdom and Virtue

Introduction

Ethical oversight in research integrating Buddhism and science within the current global agenda poses a challenge to contemporary society. Significant and concrete research gaps highlight that the existing discussions of Buddhism–science integration remain theoretically undeveloped. The current scholarship gestures toward mystery and holistic vision but provides limited evidence of a specific scholarly problem. Religion and science have long been on the verge of controversy, in which science requires precise logical reasoning, theoretical construction, and experimental verification, while Buddhism cannot be investigated via scientific experimentation. Although a formal scientific theory of religion has never been established, the theory in Buddhism can recently be expressed in physics and mathematics, in particular, quantum mechanics and

quantum field theory (Wong, 2022). From the modern science perspective, Relativistic Quantum Field Theory (RQF) explains the basic degrees of freedom in Quantum Field Theory (QFT), which are operator-valued functions of space and time. Since space and time are continuous, we are dealing with an infinite number of degrees of freedom, so we will need to re-learn how to deal with systems with a large number of degrees of freedom (Many-Body Theory). Once we are done, we will be able to properly define QFTs that can be used in a variety of different contexts, for example, in high-energy theory, condensed matter, cosmology, quantum gravity, etc. (Strickland, 2019). This may lead to a preliminary conclusion that supports Einstein's quotation: "Science without Religion is Lame." In this regard, Ken Wilber argued that the integration of religion and science is the integration of a premodern worldview with a modern worldview. The essence of premodernity is the Great Chain of Being, and the essence of modernity is the differentiation of the value spheres of art, morals, and science. Thus, in order to integrate religion and science, we need to integrate the Great Chain with the differentiations of modernity (Wilber, 1998). That is to give learners the broadest sense of the Buddhist-science integral view.

Integration holds both a core component, which is the "Main Axis," and sub-components, which are the "Common Axis." Integration reflects a study method that integrates Buddhism and modern science as the adaptation of science to Buddhism, that is, to use Buddhism as a starting point and bring modern science to explain and enhance Buddhism. Thus, twenty-first-century people urgently need Buddhism-integration-based knowledge and practices to bring back sustainable wisdom and virtue. This is linked to achieving sustainable goals. The 17 goals of SDGs include 169 constituent targets, 230 indicators, and an evidence-based indicator (Pakkan et al., 2023). Sustainable development can be described as the principle of achieving human development while simultaneously sustaining natural systems to provide the inputs that society depends on (Cerin, 2006). The science of technology, including Information Technology (IT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), a subfield of computer science that studies machines capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence (Karba et al., 2023), and data science, is important in this era because it represents a significant leap forward for humankind in developing the world through technological tools. In addition, the science of human communication is important because humans must continually seek knowledge. Nakamori (2020) mentioned integrating knowledge models in his article "Knowledge Construction Methodology: Fusing Systems Thinking and Knowledge Management."

Things in the universe are mysteriously encrypted, subject to the rule of nature. Integrating knowledge is the only key to understanding them. In Buddhism, all objects are composed of microscopic elementary particles that cannot be seen with the naked eye. Buddhist metaphysical explanations describe the nature of the four great elements (Mahābhūta-rūpa), and the five aggregates (Pañca khandhā) (Vbh.1) (Davids, 1978); (S.III.47) (Feer, 1975); (Paṭhamakyaw Ashin Thiṭṭila (Seṭṭhila) Aggamahāpaṇḍita, 1995) and the exposition of nature as integrated natural entities, as described by dependent origination (Paṭiccasamuppāda), the logical and systemic foundation for the derived concept of systemic wisdom. The Buddha, the supreme wise one, sees things with such eyes. Likewise, a wise one should not solely look at the world and all things with

just the physical eyes, but with the wisdom eye, etc. A person with a wisdom vision can see nature as it really is. A holistic view is a key feature in deeply and wisely considering (Yoniso-manasikāra) the integration of phenomena across different fields of disciplines.

It is undeniable that religion plays a more or less important role in integration. Zainuri et al. (2022) emphasized the integration of pedagogical science with the Islamic religion. It can be said that the integration of science values can be done by (Prospective) teachers since they formulate learning plans, implement learning, and assess learning outcomes. With good pedagogical skills and scientific literacy, the elements of science will easily be found in the study of the Islamic religion. Völker (2022) argued that the integral study of science-religion is required. He claimed that the holistic approach requires, as its constitutive basis, an integrative methodology, one that is in principle able to combine all fruitful lines of inquiry in a methodically differentiated and reflexively judicious manner and, thus, allows each of the complementary ways of looking to have its legitimacy respected as they unfold their specific questions. Currently, there is a growing amount of research on Buddhist integration with various disciplines, such as Buddhism-Emotional Intelligence Integration (Long et al., 2022); Buddhism-communication integration (Ven. Nguyen Anh Tuan et al., 2021); Buddhist ethics and biotechnology (Thanaboripat, 2020), and so on. Theories that involve integrating multiple disciplines are not seen very often. One such theory is the Integral Theory. Wilber (2006), the founder of this theory, proposed Integral Methodological Pluralism (IMP). He elaborated on the eight primordial perspectives as the inside and the outside view of a holon in any of the 4 quadrants. These 8 primordial perspectives are called integral perspectivism. We inhabit these 8 spaces, these zones, these life-worlds, as practical realities. Wilber (1998) also elaborated on the integration of modern sciences with religions such as biology, psychology, theology, mysticism, etc. The great chain of being is perhaps a bit of a misnomer, because the actual view is more like the great nest of being, with each senior dimension enveloping or enfolding its junior dimension(s), a situation often described as "Transcend and Include."

Objectives

This paper aimed to achieve three objectives: To investigate the development of wisdom and virtue in the 21st century according to Buddhism and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to create a theory of Buddhism integration for the sustainable development of wisdom and virtue in the 21st century, and to validate a theory of Buddhism integration for the sustainable development of wisdom and virtue in the 21st century.

Methodology

In designing the research methodology, qualitative approaches helped to construct a theory of Buddhism integration because they can capture the interpretive, experiential, and philosophical dimensions of Buddhist thought that were not easily reducible to quantitative measures. Purposeful and theoretical sampling strategies allowed this study to engage deeply with key texts, practitioners, and contexts that were most relevant to theory creation rather than

aiming for statistical generalization. Analytical frameworks, such as content, thematic, and grounded theory analysis, supported the systematic creation of the BI theory, enabling a coherent theory to emerge from complex, context-dependent data. Methodological transparency regarding sampling rationale, interview procedures, and validation strategies was carefully conducted to reduce the impression of over-generalization from expert opinion.

Key Informants and Focus Group Discussion Specialists: Based on the first and second objectives, some data and information gathering from textual collection and in-depth interviews were carried out. In particular, the third objective required a validation against the proposed theory, thus the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) from various scholars in each Buddhist sect of Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna were invited to complete such mission and "To Share Their Views, Experiences, Stories, and The Insights with Rich Data Produced" (Morgan, 2019); (Rosen, 2019); (Aguinis, 2024). The key informants for in-depth interviews, the specialists for FGDs, and the areas for field research studies were carefully selected using purposive and snowball sampling methods based on the significance of the studies.

There were a total of 25 experts and scholars who are monks and Buddhist scholars from the three Buddhist sects from local and international prominent universities, institutions, and organizations. Their expertise met the requirements for using integration theory to either integrate Buddhism with the sciences or integrate the sciences with Buddhism to expose the phenomena of life and the world, so they can be more easily understood through the process and viewpoint of multidisciplinary studies. The in-depth interview forms consisted of five questions, which were mainly based on the first and second objectives of the research. Its content validity (Hazari, 2023); (Mertens, 2024); (Aguinis, 2024)was examined with the Content Validity Index (CVI) by the five experts. The inter-coder agreement was used to assess the consistency and reliability of qualitative coding by comparing how multiple coders evaluated the relevance and clarity of categories or indicators. Audit trails were maintained to systematically document analytical decisions, coding revisions, and theory development steps. The question forms for FGDs consisted of two key questions, which were specifically based on the third objective of the research.

Collection of Data: First, data collection for the first and second objectives: 1) Documentary Data: By reading, analyzing, and summarizing the main points of the studies, and 2) Field Data: Through in-depth interviews, both face-to-face and via emails, using a communication-based approach as a primary pattern of communication in interviewing opinions. Then, data collection for the 3rd objective: A total of three FGDs were held, each lasting approximately four hours, both onsite and via zoom online meetings, using a communication-based approach as a main pattern of communication.

Data Analysis: First, the research team primarily used content analysis to help categorize large amounts of textual data from Buddhism, science, and integrative sciences, as well as to organize matrix data, visual data, and others. in a well-structured manner; Second, thematic analysis was mainly used for organizing and comprehending the substantive key concepts of the data, particularly 1) The key principles of Buddhism, such as wisdom (Paññā) and virtue (Kuṅa-dhamma),

the ultimate truths (Paramattha-dhamma), the threefold training (Tisikkha), the four developments (Bhāvanā), the Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca), dependent origination (Paṭiccasamuppāda), the thirty-seven enlightenment states (Bodhipakkhiya-dhamma), etc.; and 2) The key scientific theories, such as physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, medical science, engineering, agriculture, technology, renewable energy, etc.; Third, discourse analysis was used to analyze the data regarding knowledge and practices that appeared in Pali and English; Fourth, narrative analysis was used to provide wisdom knowledge, particularly from Buddhist stories from various Suttas, Dhammapada, and other Buddhism-science textual-based resources; Fifth, grounded theory analysis was top beneficial to the theory generation at its inception by formulating a theory around a single data case. It aimed to create a theoretical draft of the BI Theory for further validation by FGD experts.

Results and Discussion

Finding related to Objective 1

Virtue played a key role in ethical development. It played a vital role as an introspective knowledge that leads to prosperity: Seeing things as they are, overcoming wrong views, and developing wisdom and virtue. The function of wisdom and virtue was to develop wisdom and virtue, as in the Kālāma Sutta, the Buddha explains to the Kālāmas (A.I.189) (Morris, 1961); (Bodhi, 2012). Ten investigations of information by wisdom, which was the wisdom that goes through a process of analyzing and investigating carefully before accepting each set of information, led to virtuous practices. The process of wisdom development involved three levels of the database that served as the foundation for intellectual development, namely perception (Saññā), view (Diṭṭhi), and knowledge (Ñāṇa) (D.III.220) (Carpenter, 1976); (Walshe, 1987). The fundamental ways depend on the perception-view-knowledge threefold process of wisdom to develop knowledge based on three kinds of wisdom. The most important way of the gradual purification and development of wisdom was the seven gradual purifications in the Relay Chariots Sutta (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 2001); Rathavinīta Sutta (M.I.149) (Trenckner, 1979). The ways to develop virtue in the 21st century in Theravāda were suggested in three steps based on the Ten Wholesome Courses of Action. The wisdom-virtue framework aligned well with the SDGs, especially with Goals 3, 4, 12, and 16.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, holistic ways of learning for development, wisdom, and virtue were not separate but were integral to each other. The most important thing for intellectual development was education in terms of precept, concentration, and wisdom. The way to develop virtue according to Mahāyāna was based on the Perfections and the Four Immeasurable Minds. They can significantly contribute to achieving the SDGs, especially Goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 11, 13, 15, and 16. In Vajrayāna Buddhism, there were four steps to develop wisdom and virtue. They can be arranged starting from virtue to wisdom, respectively. When it came to the development of virtue and wisdom in the 21st century, Vajrayāna teachings provided a vast number of resources that did not require much time and are friendly to the busiest lifestyle. The finding clearly showed

that the spiritual development of wisdom and virtue among the three Buddhist sects differed in detail according to their own traditions, unlike the worldly SDGs.

Finding related to Objective 2

The BI Theory was created for the sustainable development of wisdom and virtue in the 21st century. It consisted of two rules, the Rule of Dual-Relational Integration (DRI) and the Rule of Holistic-Relational Integration (HRI). The findings advanced knowledge beyond prior Buddhist–science integration by moving from largely descriptive or comparative accounts to a systematic, theory-driven framework. Rather than relying on broad holistic syntheses, the theory clearly differentiates conceptual domains, specifies mechanisms of integration, and grounds interpretation. This approach clarified how Buddhist principles can be integrated without conceptual conflation, thereby offering a more precise, analytically robust foundation for contemporary Buddhist–science scholarship and future empirical inquiry.

The Rule of DRI referred to the effort to bridge and harmonize the content, information, and knowledge between these two distinct domains. Buddhism, as a religion, was seen as distinct from science (Soucy, 2020). We needed to study how to connect theory with practice (Zhang, 2022) to bridge and harmonize them. The Rule of DRI encouraged open and respectful exchange of ideas and beliefs between Buddhist and scientific views, acknowledging the different ways in which they approach questions about existence, the world, the environment, the universe, and so on.

First Principle: Integrating Science into Buddhism: The First Principle explained integrating science into Buddhism by placing Buddhist content at the center and integrating science or modern sciences into it. With a scientific methodology, when science was integrated into Buddhism, it automatically helped promote Buddhism in many ways. The Vajrayāna view confirmed this: Science was so influential in modern times that most people believed in science. Whatever was scientifically proven or related to science was universally accepted as standard, although many findings were disproved or found to be incorrect after a certain time. So, in this way, when Buddhism went forward hand in hand with science, it can promote Buddhism automatically (Ven. Geshe Sonam Wangden, 2023).

Moreover, science helped prove various Buddhist principles. "Science Supported Buddhism by Using Various Scientific Tools to Prove Various Buddhist Principles" (Cherdsak, 2023). The Manorathapūraṇī described the Brahmin who asked about the Dhammaguna, "Ehipassikoti' Ehi Passā' Ti Evaṃ Dassetuṃ Sakkāti Āgamanīyapaṭipadaṃ Pucchati" (AA.II.256) (Walleser & Kopp, 1967). The Brahmin asked about the āgamanīyapaṭipadā "The Dhamma That a Practitioner Can Encourage in This Way: Come and See (Ehipassiko)." Thus, the Dhamma in Buddhism was resistant to perpetual investigations. The most important role that science played in Buddhism, especially in the 21st-century-world context, was science helped protect Buddhism from superstitious and false doctrines (Saddhammapaṭirūpaka). Bhikkhu Brahmali pointed out: Science can protect Buddhism by showing us where Buddhists might be superstitious or where we might have misunderstood the Dhamma, for instance, by relying too much on later tradition rather than the word of the Buddha (Brahmali, 2023).

Through this type of integration in the First Principle, science helped promote Buddhism. Integrating science into Buddhism gave science a triple role in 1) Promoting and modernizing Buddhism by confirming ancient Buddhist insights, 2) Proving various Buddhist doctrines and principles, and 3) Protecting Buddhism from superstitious and false doctrines. See the following diagram, "Second Principle: Integrating Science into Buddhism."

Second Principle: Integrating Buddhism into Science: The Second Principle explained the integration of Buddhism into science by placing science or modern science content at the center and integrating Buddhism into it. Integrating Buddhism into science based on the Second Principle resulted in Buddhism having three roles: 1) Imparting wisdom and virtue to science by advocating for all scientific discoveries, especially whenever science lacks proper understanding, 2) Influencing science in vast scientific areas of consciousness, matters, and ethics, and 3) Motivating science with philosophical viewpoints in Tipiṭaka.

Third Principle: Integrating Buddhism and Science Reciprocally: The Third Principle explained integrating Buddhism and Science reciprocally, starting with paying attention to both Buddhist principles and modern sciences simultaneously. First, integrating Buddhism and Pure Sciences: Intriguing parallels between Buddhism and physics were the Buddhist concept of the Three Characteristics (Tilakkhaṇa) (S.IV.1) (Feer, 1990) and dependent origination (Paṭiccasamuppāda) that reflected a view of interconnectedness similar to the way physics described interrelated systems in nature. Quantum mechanics and Buddhist teachings both discovered the role of the observer, though in different ways. Buddhism also aligned with the dynamic nature of chemical reactions, which were subject to change and cannot always be controlled. One way to discover the secrets of life and nature was through integrated Buddhist biology. Looking at life through these perspectives opened up a world of life from the cellular level to the environmental level. The integration between Buddhism and astronomy can enhance the mutual study of the cosmos and astronomical discoveries. It encouraged a holistic view that appreciates both the scientific and existential dimensions of our understanding of the universe.

Integrating Buddhism and Applied Sciences: In applied psychology, Buddhist principles were widely used to explain mental phenomena. Hugh Nicholson mentioned the Buddhist No-self doctrine roughly coheres with current thinking in the cognitive sciences. Given the centrality of No-self in Buddhist thought as a whole (Nicholson, 2023). As for another category of applied science, "Renewable Energy," the crisis facing our current fossil fuel-based energy system is alarming, and we urgently need to transition to renewables in all economic and societal activities (Mastny & Trumbull, 2022), as shown in Figure 1.

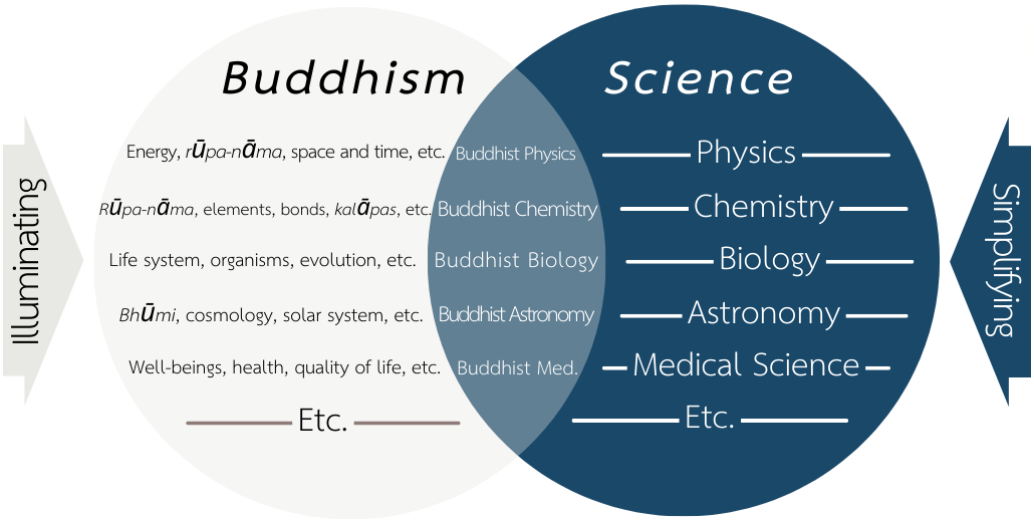

Figure 1 Third Principle: Integrating Buddhism and Science Reciprocally

Buddhism and science shared a common goal of exploring the essence of nature to the best of one's capability. At the same time, physics explored energy, matter, space, time, etc. Buddhism offered the metaphysics of aggregates (Khandha), sense bases (Āyatana), elements (Dhātu), energy (Indriya or Bala), form and norm (Rūpa-nāma), space and time (Kāla-ākāsa), etc. Such integration resulted in a completely integrated knowledge set, also known as a Buddhist integrated breakthrough in Buddhist Physics. Dee Denver supported Buddhism-biology integration where the genetic conversation continued and connected back to the Buddhist paradigm of the five skandhas and their relationship to suññatā, emptiness (Denver, 2022). Other Buddhist integrated breakthroughs, such as Buddhist chemistry, Buddhist astronomy, Buddhist medical science, and so on, follow a similar pattern above. A mystery religion can be simplified by rational science; Science was illuminated by wisdom and virtue. Buddhism and science thus resonated reciprocally.

Next, the Rule of HRI referred to the effort to bridge and harmonize the process of holistically integrating databases, information, knowledge, perspectives, ideas, and methodologies from multiple different sources, among multiple relational domains. Buddhist and non-Buddhist scholars, including scientists, may engage in interdisciplinary research that incorporates both Buddhism and multi-disciplinary perspectives, aiming to find answers with a more comprehensive understanding of complex questions. The interdisciplinary scope clearly distinguished philosophical inspiration from empirically grounded integration. Examples of knowledge outcomes from integrating some disciplines may shed some light on this issue. As in the case of integration psychology, according to Sandage & Brown (2018), the relational view of integration was built on the prior work of integrative theorists in both psychology (Sorenson, 1996); (Collins, 2000); (Jones, 2010) and theology (Green, 2005); (Reynhout, 2007); (Wolters, 2007). However, they shifted emphasis to a consistently "Relational" approach to integration, arguing that "Differentiated Relationality is Formative for Shaping Collaborative Integration" (Sandage & Brown,

2018). Such a message showed the connection between POP (Point of Parity) and POD (Point of Difference) in the integrated domain.

Fourth Principle: Three-Buddhist-School-based Holistic Integration: The Fourth Principle elaborated on the holistic integration among the three sects of Buddhism. The three schools of the Buddhist religion played a vital role in enabling the coexistence of similar and different doctrines (Dhamma) and discipline (Vinaya) in harmony. The Dhamma and the Vinaya were the only teachers of the Buddhist religion, as the Buddha instructed Venerable Ānanda. The doctrine and discipline that appeared in the Tipiṭaka were thus considered the Teacher of Buddhism. In this context, the most important aspect of Buddhism Integration Theory was "Accurate and Plausible Primary Data," which meant the "Tipiṭakas" of the TMV Buddhist sects. The holistic integration among the three siblings of Buddhism was as important as the largest footprint of an elephant among all animal footprints. They were the integration of key principles, traditions, or knowledge existing among the three sects of Buddhism (Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna: TMV) that can be carried out under this Rule.

Fifth Principle: Environment-Mind-Wisdom-based Holistic Integration: This principle outlined a holistic integrative process aimed at bridging the gap between spiritual Buddhist doctrines and contemporary scientific perspectives and understanding. This endeavor sought to find common ground and insights among these multiple seemingly distinct domains, to enhance our understanding of the nature of reality, consciousness, matter, and the human experience. The Fifth Principle allowed learners to access a three-dimensional overview of nature based on the doctrine of sikkhā that played a key role as an integral education in Buddhism, with the Threefold Training as the foundation for Buddhists to cultivate in order to attain enlightenment and liberation from suffering. It was recognized as the total educational and learning system throughout human life, also known as Lifelong Learning (LLL), in both worldly methodologies and Buddhist methodological systems. These three domains were the framework for integrating Buddhism and science under the universal laws of nature, as shown in Figure 2.

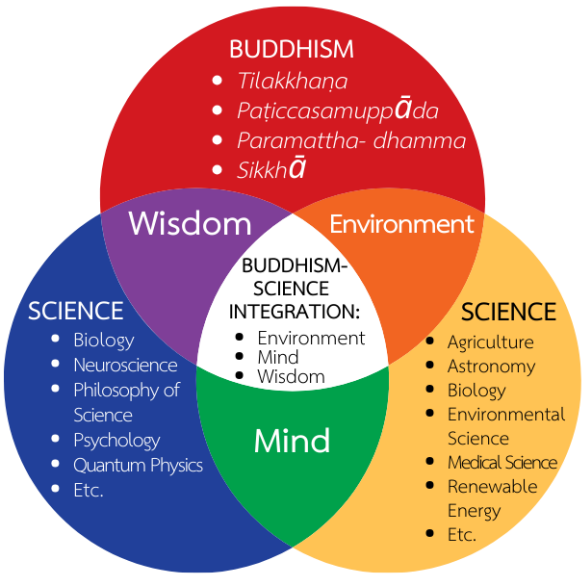

Figure 2 Fifth Principle: Environment-Mind-Wisdom-based Holistic Integration

The Threefold Training in Buddhism (Sikkhā) was the broadest picture of sustainable human development. It served as the primary practical instrument for cultivating Wisdom and Virtue. It was a foundational principle that can be integrated with all the sciences existing in the world. First, environment or morality (Sīla) referred to the sciences that focus primarily on the study of the relationships among humans, society, and the environment, such as agriculture, astronomy, biology, environmental science, medical science, and renewable energy. Among them, environmental science stood out as an interdisciplinary field that integrated pure sciences, applied sciences, and other sciences. This was the Buddhist environmental science suggested. Second, the integration of mind (Samādhi) and science aimed to purify one's mind, a key to promoting the sustainable balance of mind according to Buddhist Psychology. Last, wisdom (Paññā) stood out, offering insight to science when humans understand and successfully discover the secret code of all things. They were tilakkhaṇa, paṭiccasamuppāda, paramattha-dhamma, and sikkhā.

Sixth Principle: Physical-Environment-Mind-Wisdom-based Holistic Integration: The Sixth Principle elaborated on the type of integration that allowed learners to access a four-dimensional overview of nature. Buddhism suggested a wider fourfold holistic view. In the Anguttara-Nikāya, it was said "Bhavissanti Bhikkhave Bhikkhū Anāgatamaddhānaṃ Abhāvitakāyā Abhāvitasīlā Abhāvitacittā Abhāvitapaññā..." (A.III.106) (Hardy, 1976). translated as "Monks, There Will Be, In the Long Road of The Future, Monks Who have Not Made Body Become, Not Made Virtue Become, Not Made Mind Become, Not Made Insight Become..." (Hare, 1973). From the passage, the four bhāvanā were expounded in different forms as the person's four qualifications in terms of human self-development in four areas. Physical Science referred to an exploration of the physical body or kāya, encouraging humans to enhance the ability to interact well with the external physical environment with wise manipulation of the material aggregate (Rūpa-khanda) and the six sense-bases (Saḷāyatana). Environmental Science refers to an exploration of morality or sīla covering individual personal behavior toward the environment. The Science of Mind referred to an exploration of phenomena that occurred in one's mind or citta, covering individual positive mental qualities. The Science of Wisdom was important for augmenting wisdom for oneself. At this highest intelligence level, Buddhism played a crucial role in explaining various phenomena in its broadest perspective of metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical questions for the optimal level of wisdom and virtue.

Seventh Principle: Problem-Solution-based Holistic Integration: The Seventh Principle, also known as "Ariyasacca-Based Learning" (ABL), was a systematic problem-solving process in the twenty-first century, starting by addressing the problem as the starting point, and then finding a way to solve such a problem. Some examples of recent studies regarding ABL were presented by Panvong et al. (2022) and Sutcha & Tungkasamit (2024). It shared some similarities with a learning method called "Problem-Based Learning" (PBL) in modern education, requiring formulating sound or practical solutions to some real-world issues through doing self-directed research for information (Savery, 2006). ABL implied a much more complex meaning than PBL because the

term "Noble Truth" or ariya-sacca particularly referred to the spiritual emancipation of all humanity from the entire mass of suffering as the root cause of the problem. The Seventh Principle employed integral measurements combining Buddhist and scientific measurements, named "Buddhist Sustainable Development Goals' Key Performance Indicators" or BSDG-KPIs, through an integration process. Bhikkhu Bodhi supported this idea by linking Buddhist goals with ethical principles:

Buddhism is certainly a religion. It is directed toward a goal that transcends the empirical world (Namely, Nibbāna), it upholds the belief in human survival of death (In the Form of Rebirth), it recognizes an objective moral law that cannot be empirically observed (The Law of Kamma), and it affirms the existence of realms of being invisible to our eyes and scientific instruments (The Heavens and Hells, etc.) (Bodhi, 2023).

The law of action, the law of existence, and a goal that transcended the empirical world were something that scientific goals cannot achieve without Buddhist integration, as shown in Figure 3.

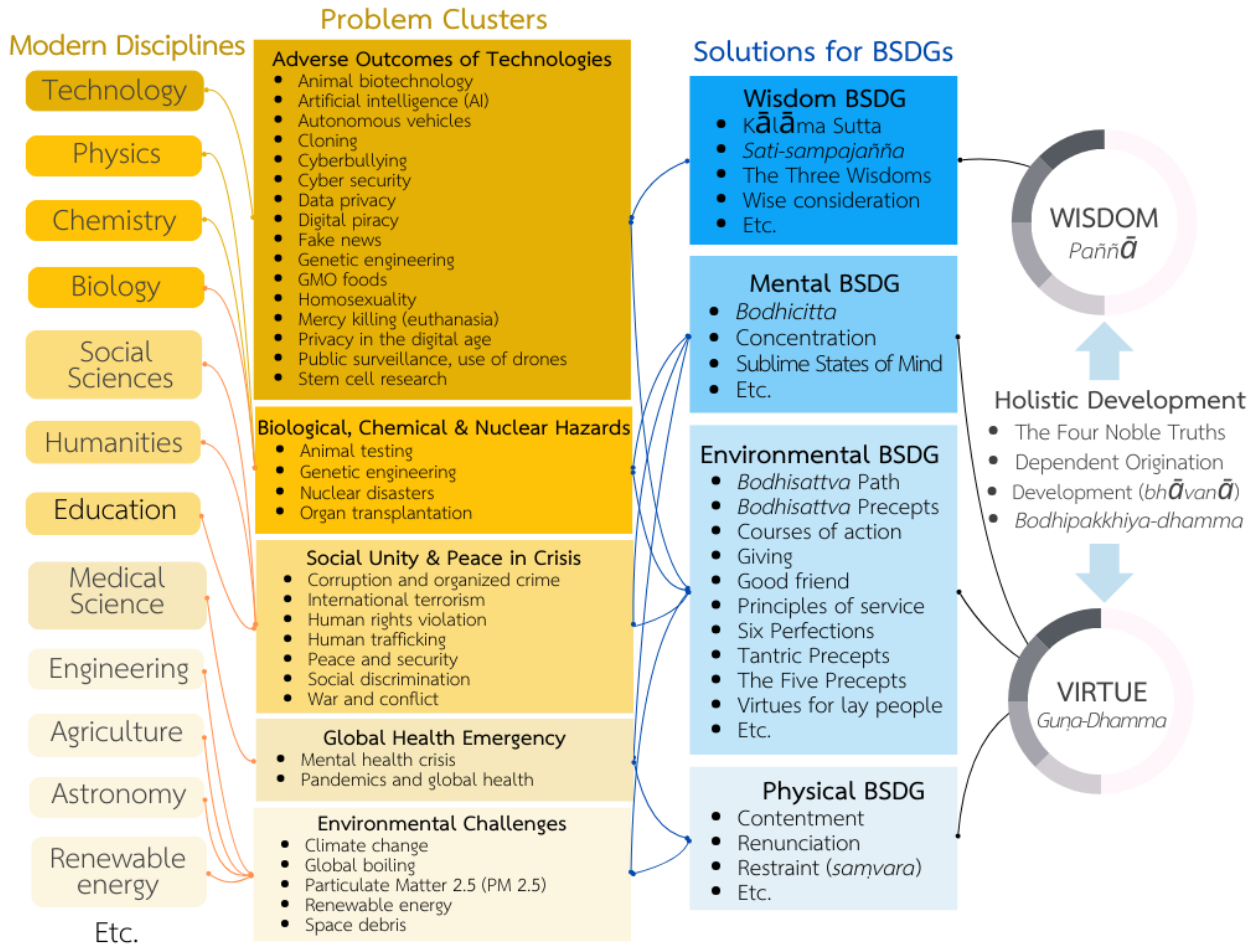

Figure 3 Seventh Principle: Problem-Solution-based Holistic Integration

The interwoven problematic issues faced in the Twenty-first-century world were completely different from those in the past. One problem can be linked to another and further interrelated to all.

The above five problem clusters were: 1) Environmental Challenges, which included issues related to and directly affecting the environment, such as climate change, global boiling, particulate matter 2.5 (PM 2.5), renewable energy, and space debris, etc.; 2) Global Health Emergency, which included global health-related issues giving impacts on health, such as mental health crisis, and pandemics and global health, etc.; 3) Social unity & Peace in Crisis, which included corruption and organized crime, international terrorism, human rights violation, human trafficking, peace and security, social discrimination, and war and conflict, etc.; 4) Biological, Chemical & Nuclear Hazards, which included animal testing, genetic engineering, nuclear disasters, organ transplantation, etc.; and (5) Adverse Outcomes of Technologies, the largest group, which included technology-related issues, such as animal biotechnology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), autonomous vehicles, cloning, cyberbullying, cyber security, data privacy, digital piracy, fake news, genetic engineering, Genetically Modified Organism Foods (GMO), homosexuality, mercy killing (Euthanasia), privacy in the digital age, public surveillance, use of drones, stem cell research, etc. Every problem starts from its roots, which can be traced to science and various disciplines in modern science available in the contemporary world. Some problems can be rooted in several disciplines with common objectives in their fields of study. Among countless modern disciplines available today, some disciplinary explanations may be essential to each problem cluster in one way or another. For instance, the first problem cluster under "Environmental Challenges" required explanations from engineering, agriculture, astronomy, and renewable energy. Often, problems manifest themselves in multiple dimensions. The challenge lay in the self-ability to view problems as they are and the skill to integrate Buddha-dhamma to solve them with wisdom-eyes.

In the process of solving the Four Noble Truths, understanding the true condition of the problem was the key. In Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the Buddha called "knowledge and Vision as They Really Are" (Yathābhūta-Ñāṇa-Tassana), i.e. "Yāvakīvañca Me Bhikkhave Imesu Catūsu Ariyasaccesu Evantiparivaṭṭaṃ Dvādasākāraṃ Yathābhūtaṃ Ñāṇadassanaṃ Na Suvisuddhaṃ Ahosi..." (Sacca Saṃyuttam, Dhammacakkappavattana Vaggo Dutiyo) (Feer, 1976) and "So Long, Bhikkhus, As My Knowledge and Vision of These Four Noble Truths as They Really are In Their Three Phases and Twelve Aspects was Not Thoroughly Purified in This Way..." (Bodhi, 2000) were the twelvefold knowledge and vision. This system of thinking, based on the Four Noble Truths, helped integrate the whole picture for sustainable problem-solving. In addition, we must also be aware of the process of arising (Samudayavāra) and the process of ceasing (Nirodhavāra) of problems according to the dependent origination (Paṭiccasamuppāda) principle, saying that things proceed subject to the conditions and factors that depend on each other. Another thing was that setting the goal of problem-solving by setting clear outcomes according to the Four Developments (Bhāvanās) or BSDGs made the problem-solving process more effective. Lastly, the seven categories of the thirty-seven enlightenment states (Bodhipakkhiya-dhamma) acted as detailed KPIs for this problem-solving process.

The most important point was the right solution to the problem. Each set of Dhamma principles under the four frameworks of BSDGs was an option that can be used to address specific

problems correctly. The Four KPIs under the BSDGs framework, from bottom to top, are as follows: The first KPI for "Physical BSDG" measured the success of physical problem solving for the problem clusters "Environmental Challenges" and "Global Health Emergency." The main Dhamma principles used to solve problems in such problem clusters were contentment (Santosa), renunciation, restraint (Saṃvara), etc. The second KPI for "Environmental BSDG" measured the success of societal and environmental problem-solving for up to four problem clusters: "Environmental Challenges," "Social Unity and Peace in Crisis," "Biological, Chemical and Nuclear Hazards," and "Adverse Outcomes of Technologies." The main Dhamma principles used to solve problems in such problem clusters comprised the Bodhisattva path, Bodhisattva precepts, courses of action, giving, good friend, principles of service, Six Perfections, Tantric precepts, the Five precepts, and virtues for lay people, etc. The third KPI for "Mental BSDG" measured the success of mental problem solving for three problem clusters: "Global Health Emergency," "Social Unity, Peace in Crisis," and "Biological, Chemical, Nuclear Hazards." The main Dhamma principles used to solve problems in such problem clusters were Bodhicitta, concentration, and the sublime states of mind, among others. The last KPI for "Wisdom BSDG" measured the success of wisdom problem-solving only for the problem cluster "Adverse Outcomes of Technologies." The main Dhamma principles used to solve problems in such problem clusters were the Kālāma Sutta, sati-sampajañña, the Three Wisdoms, and wise consideration, among others. Although not every member of society can achieve all four BSDG-KPIs, an individual can become a noble individual. Buddhist doctrinal foundations such as paññā, guṇa-dhamma, and paṭiccasamuppāda systematically informed and linked to the BI theory.

Finding related to Objective 3

Every Theravāda scholar agreed that the Theory offered a new interpretation with a high possibility of wide use due to its all-new research findings. It was a new theory that no one had developed before. In this work, there were still key academic gaps for other researchers to continue exploring. The outstanding feature of the BI Theory was that it held conceptual coherence resulting from precise definitions established in a pre-integration stage. The integrated process dealt with pretty exact definitions or at least characterizations of each term, and then the right process was possible. An integrator must try as hard as possible to make the concepts fit together and be consistent with clear definitions in every pre-integration stage. The goal of the BI Theory among sciences, modern disciplines, and Buddhism was to help or benefit the general public in developing their wisdom and virtue. The discovery of the Theory was beneficial not only for high-level or elite-level people or practitioners but also for general people. The goal of the BI Theory was truly for the sustainable development of wisdom and virtue for the benefit of human beings, animals, plants, society, the world, and the environment through a holistic perspective.

Discussion

Findings on wisdom and virtue development are scattered, as is the issue of SDGs presented in a secular context, as an evidence-based indicator (Pakkan et al., 2023). The BI Theory plays a crucial part in closing that gap by reconciling scientific theories with the wisdom-virtue

principles of Buddhism. Its true originality and creativity offer an intellectual breakthrough in the world of Buddhism integration. The Integrated Knowledge Model, research of Nakamori (2020), explores the integration model of thought and knowledge dealing with 3 different integrating models characterizing 1) Debate-EDIS, 2) Experiment-EEIS, and 3) Hermeneutic-EAIR. As to the BI Theory, the work of Nakamori is just one part of the wide range of possibilities of integration under the Seven Principles of the DRI and HRI Rules. The research work on Religion-Science Integration of Zainuri et al. (2022) is another example that affirms the paramount importance of religion-science integration. He integrated pedagogical science with the Islamic religion for optimal learning outcomes. Integration according to such methodology can be found in the Seventh Principle of the HRI Rule: Problem-Solution-based Holistic Integration, which outlines the broadest picture of the various disciplines to be integrated with Buddhism within their respective clusters. Völker (2022) affirms that the holistic approach requires an integrative methodology as its constitutive basis. The BI Theory has laid out an integrative methodology as the foundation of its seven principles to support the great chain of integral learning. The Integral Theory of Wilber (2006) elaborates on integral approaches (Meta-paradigms) and integrating science and religion. His four-quadrant integral perspective attempts to integrate various disciplines and is successful in fulfilling the overall satisfaction. The BI Theory recognizes the limitations of access to precise and accurate knowledge of each discipline. The BI Theory strongly suggests that the integrators must pay serious attention and be very careful with the integration process and many other factors, as improper integration may undermine the relationship between the two domains. They must try as hard as possible to make the concepts fit together and be consistent with clear definitions in every pre-integration stage. These theoretical implications demonstrate the scholarly significance of the validated BI theory by showing how it advances contemporary Buddhist inquiry beyond descriptive or comparative studies toward a more systematic and integrative theoretical framework. The theoretical novelty of the BI Theory advances beyond existing integrative or Wilberian models by minimizing conceptual overlap and clarifying theoretical boundaries.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

The Theory of Buddhism Integration (BI) aims to sustainably develop wisdom and virtue for the universal, all citizens, all professions, all genders, all ages, and all religions, who are living in the 21st Century. The key informants provided comments supporting the strengths of the BI Theory, particularly the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Principles, which broaden the scope for cooperation and foster the idea of the oneness of humanity. It profoundly impacts harmonious living and helps preserve the environment for future generations, who play a key role in the future development of our world. The term integration (P**ū**ra**ṇ**ā**k**ā**ra) refers to (a) the act, work, or process of unification (Ekodibh**ā**va), uniting, coordinating, incorporating, blending, combining, or linking two or more different things or parts to create, form, or produce a complete whole under a common core. (b) A doer of integration is called the integrator, repairer, or restorer who completes an imperfect thing by doing, making, or adding something into a part of another

functioning larger thing or unit, thus causing oneness and fullness with a new unique identity (Ekatta). In other words, integration connotes and (c) the replenishment of deficiency where integral parts are woven into one (Ekodi). There are two rules under the BI Theory: 1) The Rule of DRI, and 2) The Rule of HRI. Each rule is made up of three or four principles, respectively, from the first to the seventh principle. These seven principles explain seven different phenomena of multidimensional integration. The diagram of the Theory of Buddhism Integration (BI) and its Rules and Principles pointed out the BI theory, rules, and principles, as shown in Figure 4.

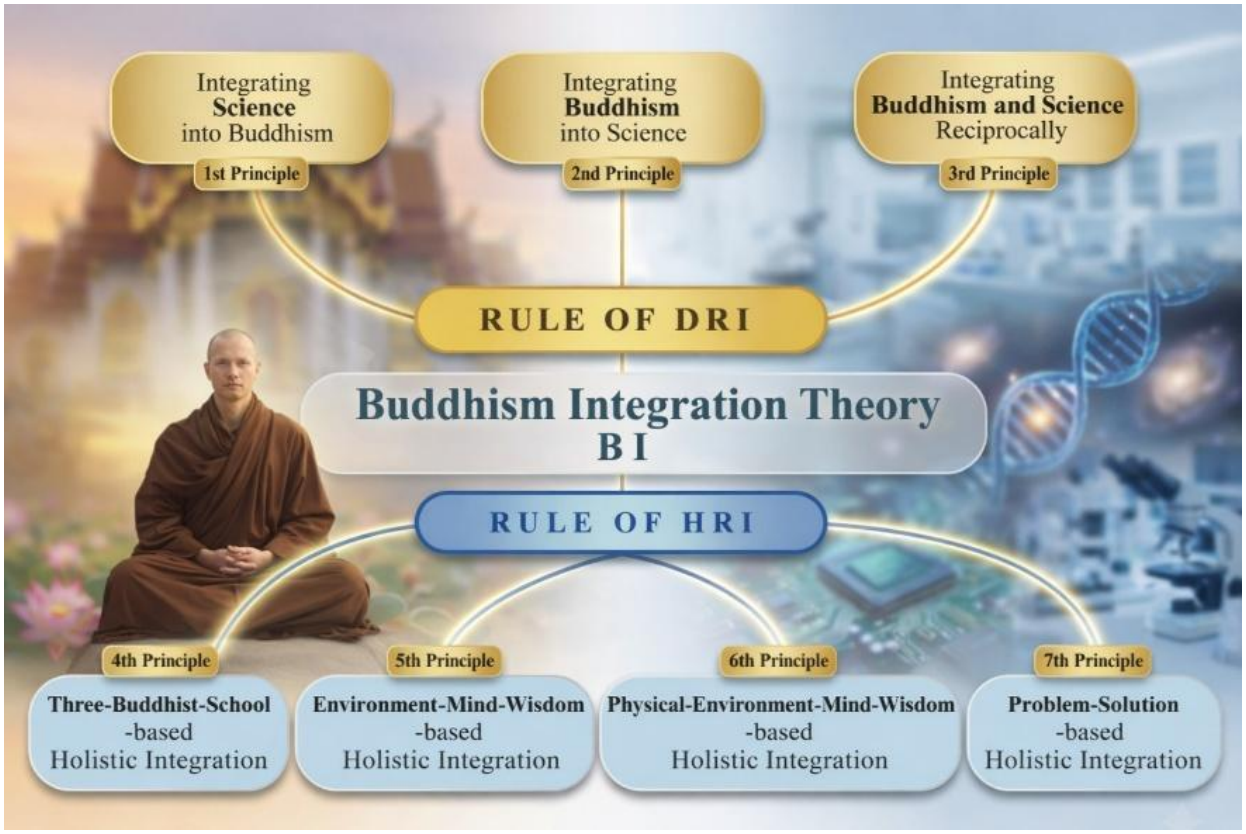

Figure 4 The BI Theory and its Rules and Principles

The seven principles are logically linked under the two rules in the sense that DRI inevitably leads to HRI because the number of domain elements is always greater than one, giving rise to the "Rule of Duality" and the "Rule of Holism." The originality and body of knowledge distinguish itself from existing integral or interdisciplinary models by specifying how integration occurs at defined analytical levels and under explicit theoretical conditions. This precision enables more reliable interpretation, comparison, and application across Buddhist and scientific domains, marking a substantive advance over prior integrative approaches. The BI Theory generates original knowledge by specifying rules that govern how concepts are related, translated, and delimited across domains. It enables novel analytical insights, supports consistent application, and establishes new theoretical ground for systematic inquiry rather than ad hoc or purely philosophical integration. It represents Buddhist Integrated Breakthrough Par Excellence, differing from conventional cross-disciplinary studies.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In the fast-paced world of the twenty-first century, the development of wisdom and morality of the three sects of Buddhism has both commonalities and differences according to their sects. It is consistent with and does not conflict with the principles of the UN SDGs. The phenomena of multidimensional integration between Buddhism, science, and various fields of study available in the 21st century was explored by the Seven Principles of DRI and HRI Rules under the BI Theory. The validated Theory serves as a tool to illuminate the intentions and efforts to integrate knowledge and practices according to the original purpose of each discipline in the search for the nature of nature. The BI theory presents a rigorously structured, rules-based model that transcends previous integration frameworks by eliminating conceptual redundancy, clarifying boundaries, and enabling a systematic and repeatable analysis of the integration of Buddhism and sciences. However, the BI theory offers practical solutions for policymakers and researchers, providing a clear framework for applying Buddhist principles in diverse contemporary contexts such as education, humanities, social sciences, economics, mental health, technology, and ethics. The theory's operating principles ensure that interventions are evidence-based, foster interdisciplinary collaboration, and support consistent outcome evaluation. Researchers can use the theory to design studies, systematically interpret findings, and develop methodologically rigorous integration approaches. The theoretical significance of the BI theory, like the seventh principle, promotes various integrated breakthroughs in Buddhism, such as Buddhist physics. Various national and international agencies should support funding and recognition for the BI Theory as a practical ethical framework for regulating science and technology in the 21st century. Future research may test BI theory in diverse cultural contexts, employ a mixed-methods approach, and refine operational components for more concrete practical applications.

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