



APPLICATION OF BUDDHIST MINDFULNESS (SATIPATTHĀNA) TO CULTIVATE SELF-AWARENESS AND REDUCE WORKPLACE STRESS AMONG LEADERS IN THAILAND

Chanathip Thongpragob

Faculty of Business Administration, Ramkhamhaeng University, Bangkok, Thailand

Corresponding author E-mail: chanathip.t@ru.ac.th

Received 8 January 2026; Revised 23 February 2026; Accepted 10 March 2026

Abstract

Background and Objectives: Supervisory roles in Thailand's private organizations require rapid decisions, emotional resilience, and coordination across diverse teams. As workloads and interpersonal expectations intensify, supervisors experience rising stress, emotional fatigue, and diminished judgment clarity. These pressures undermine well-being and leadership effectiveness. Mindfulness, grounded in Buddhist contemplative traditions, has gained recognition as a practical method for cultivating present-moment awareness, stabilizing emotions, and supporting intentional action in demanding environments. However, prior mindfulness research in organizational and leadership contexts has predominantly emphasized secularized psychological models, often treating mindfulness as a generic attentional skill, while providing limited explanation of its Buddhist doctrinal mechanisms. Moreover, empirical studies integrating the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna) into leadership and supervisory research remain limited, particularly in Thai organizational contexts. This study examines how daily mindfulness-based self-reflection grounded in Satipaṭṭhāna provides a structured doctrinal framework for supervisors' stress management and relational responsibilities. The objectives of this research article were to examine two key aspects. First, the study aimed to examine the underlying mechanisms through which daily mindfulness-based self-reflection, interpreted through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna), cultivated supervisory employees' self-awareness and adaptive emotional regulation in high-pressure organizational environments. Second, the study aimed to examine how the Four Foundations of Mindfulness were practically applied in supervisory work to support stress coping and foster mindful and adaptive leadership behavior in everyday organizational contexts.

Methodology: This qualitative research employed semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 20 purposively selected supervisory employees who regularly engaged in mindfulness-based reflection. Data were analyzed using iterative coding and thematic interpretation, guided by the doctrinal framework of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and contemporary psychological models of mindfulness-based self-regulation.



Main Results: Two major findings emerged. 1) Development of Self-Awareness through Satipaṭṭhāna: Supervisors cultivated awareness across four domains: Embodied awareness of tension and posture (Kāyānupassanā), early recognition of emotional cues such as irritation or pressure (Vedanānupassanā), monitoring of fluctuating mental states (Cittānupassanā), and insight into intentions, impulses, and habitual reactions (Dhammānupassanā). Collectively, these foundations operated as an integrated mechanism of self-regulation, enhancing cognitive clarity, reducing impulsive responses, stabilizing emotions, and enabling deliberate, adaptive leadership, and 2) Guidelines for Applying Satipaṭṭhāna in Supervisory Practice: Findings indicated that brief reflective routines, such as mindful pauses, emotional check-ins, intention setting, and end-of-day reviews, can be integrated into daily work. These practices help supervisors regulate emotions, make clearer decisions, and engage with teams empathetically. These routines were viewed as feasible, culturally congruent, and suited to Thai organizational environments.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: The findings were categorized as Applied Buddhism, representing the integration of core Buddhist teachings with contemporary supervisory practice and organizational management. Satipaṭṭhāna offers a doctrinally coherent framework for strengthening personal well-being, improving interpersonal harmony, and fostering ethical leadership. Its four foundations support emotional balance, resilience, and wholesome conduct, fostering wisdom and morality in everyday work and contributing to sustainable organizational functioning aligned with Buddhist aims of clarity, compassion, and right intention.

Conclusions: Daily mindfulness-based self-reflection, rooted in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, offers an effective method for enhancing supervisors' self-awareness and fostering healthier workplace interactions, intentional leadership behavior, emotional regulation, and leadership capabilities. The study demonstrates practical improvements and psychological resilience. These improvements contribute to healthier workplace interactions, as supervisors become attuned to team needs, capable of managing emotional tension, and prepared to guide others with patience and clarity. Satipaṭṭhāna thus functions as a bridge between Buddhist contemplative wisdom and contemporary organizational development, supporting well-being and adaptive functioning in modern Thai workplaces.

Keywords: Buddhist Mindfulness, Satipaṭṭhāna (Four Foundations of Mindfulness), Self-Awareness, Workplace Stress Reduction, Leadership in Thailand

Introduction

Modern organizational environments are experiencing rapid transformation due to technological acceleration, intensified competition, and increasingly complex systems of communication and coordination. These changes have reshaped work behaviors and heightened the emotional and cognitive demands placed on employees. Over the past decade, international labor and health organizations have consistently identified workplace stress as a growing global challenge, particularly among employees in supervisory and managerial roles, with rising implications for burnout, decision quality, and organizational sustainability (International Labour Organization, 2021); (Ganster & Rosen, 2013); (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Beyond contextual concern, workplace stress



among supervisors has emerged as a critical academic and practical issue because supervisors occupy a pivotal position in translating organizational pressures into day-to-day leadership decisions that directly affect employee well-being, performance, and organizational climate (Reb et al., 2015); (Bartlett et al., 2019). Within Buddhist contemplative traditions, mindfulness offers a systematic framework for cultivating embodied awareness, affective balance, and discernment in action. In this study, Satipaṭṭhāna is positioned not merely as a philosophical backdrop but as an analytic lens for examining how self-awareness and self-regulation unfold in supervisory practice (Analayo, 2003); (Bodhi, 2011); (Gethin, 2015). This study focuses on examining how these principles, when applied through daily self-reflection, enhance self-awareness and emotional regulation among supervisors in high-pressure work settings.

Supervisory employees in contemporary workplaces face substantial strain as they manage simultaneous expectations from senior leaders, staff, and clients. Research has shown that these pressures often lead to cognitive overload, emotional exhaustion, and impaired judgment (Ganster & Rosen, 2013); (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). In parallel, scholarly interest in mindfulness has expanded rapidly across organizational psychology, emphasizing its effects on attention, emotional regulation, and interpersonal functioning (Good et al., 2015); (Hülshager et al., 2013). Empirical evidence indicates that even brief, daily mindfulness practices can strengthen self-regulatory capacities and improve adaptive functioning in demanding environments (Slutsky et al., 2019). In the Thai context, where Buddhist values continue to shape interpersonal norms and leadership expectations, integrating mindfulness into daily work routines is particularly relevant.

Despite growing interest, existing research has focused primarily on structured mindfulness interventions, leaving a limited understanding of how short, self-directed practices are used by supervisors in real settings. Many supervisors report high workload pressure, emotional reactivity, and challenges in managing interpersonal relationships, yet lack the feasible tools they can apply independently during the workday. There is insufficient empirical knowledge regarding how daily mindfulness-based self-reflection, such as brief pauses, emotional check-ins, and intentional awareness of mental states, supports supervisors, particularly at the level of underlying mechanisms linking moment-to-moment awareness with leadership judgment and emotional regulation. This gap is particularly salient in hierarchical and collectivist work environments such as Thailand, where supervisors are expected to embody calmness, fairness, and relational sensitivity while managing structural and emotional demands (Hofstede, 2001); (Rungreangkulkij et al., 2011).

Given these challenges, a systematic investigation into how supervisors apply the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in their daily routines is essential for understanding the mechanisms through which self-awareness and emotional regulation are developed. By integrating Buddhist doctrinal insights with contemporary organizational psychology, this study positions Satipaṭṭhāna as a complementary and generative framework for understanding supervisory self-awareness and adaptive functioning, thereby directly informing the study objectives and extending existing mindfulness-leadership research (Van Gordon et al., 2015); (Shonin et al., 2016). The anticipated contributions include deepening theoretical understanding of mindfulness in leadership, informing



practical strategies for workplace well-being initiatives, and offering evidence-based guidance for developing mindful, emotionally resilient leaders in modern Thai organizations.

Objectives

The objectives of this research article were to examine two key aspects. First, the study aimed to examine the underlying mechanisms through which daily mindfulness-based self-reflection, interpreted through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna), cultivated supervisory employees' self-awareness and adaptive emotional regulation in high-pressure organizational environments. Second, the study aimed to examine how the Four Foundations of Mindfulness were practically applied in supervisory work to support stress coping and foster mindful and adaptive leadership behavior in everyday organizational contexts.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative interpretive research design. Data were collected primarily through semi-structured, in-depth interviews designed to capture the lived experiences of key informants who regularly engaged in mindfulness-based self-reflection. The broader population for this study comprised supervisory-level employees working in private-sector organizations in Thailand, particularly those operating in dynamic, high-demand work environments. This methodological choice aligned with qualitative inquiry traditions aimed at eliciting rich, nuanced accounts of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes situated within real organizational contexts (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014); (Yin, 2014), in which meaning was co-constructed through participants' reflections and the researcher's interpretive engagement. A total of 20 key informants were purposively selected. Participants were contacted through professional networks and organizational referrals. Such purposive sampling ensured the inclusion of information-rich participants capable of providing detailed insight into how mindfulness-based self-reflection influenced their self-awareness, emotional regulation, and leadership practices (Patton, 2014). The focus on supervisors, rather than general employees, was intentional, as their roles require complex decision-making, emotional stability, and interpersonal judgment, making them particularly suited for investigating the mechanisms of mindfulness in high-pressure environments.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide developed based on relevant literature on mindfulness, leadership, and self-regulation, as well as the conceptual framework of Satipaṭṭhāna, to ensure conceptual alignment. Core areas of inquiry included: 1) The process and perceived impact of daily self-reflection; 2) Emotional regulation and coping under workload stress; 3) Changes in leadership style and team interaction; and 4) Perceived influence on performance, well-being, and relational dynamics.

Data collection was conducted over a four-month period (July–October 2025), allowing participants to reflect on their ongoing supervisory experiences within a consistent organizational context. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or via online platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams, based on participant preference and availability. Each session lasted approximately 45-60 minutes. All interviews were conducted in Thai, audio-recorded with participants' consent,



and transcribed verbatim to preserve linguistic nuances and experiential depth. The flexible structure of the interviews allowed for conversational flow, follow-up questions, and emergent probing, consistent with qualitative best practices emphasizing reflexive listening and co-constructed meaning (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). Interview transcripts were analyzed using iterative thematic analysis, involving familiarization, initial coding, theme development, and interpretive integration. Analysis was guided by the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and contemporary models of mindfulness-based self-regulation.

Results and Discussion

Results

This section presented the findings of the thematic analysis by explicating how supervisors' experiences of daily mindfulness-based self-reflection were organized and interpreted through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna). The results focused on identifying the core mechanisms through which bodily awareness, affective appraisal, mental states, and reflective insight contributed to the development of supervisory self-awareness and adaptive functioning. The data were analyzed using a thematic and interpretive approach that combined repeated reading of the interview transcripts with an iterative coding process. As I engaged with the data, I focused on identifying recurring patterns related to experiences of bodily awareness, emotional cues, mental states, and reflective insights. These recurring patterns naturally aligned with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna), which were used as an organizing and interpretive framework to structure the thematic analysis and to guide the interpretation of participants' accounts (Analayo, 2003); (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Initial codes emerged from participants' descriptions of how they noticed tension in the body, recognized early stress signals, observed shifts in their emotional tone, or reflected on their thoughts and intentions. These codes were gradually refined and grouped into broader thematic categories that operationalized the abstract research objectives into empirically observable patterns of experience. Rather than following a rigid coding sequence, I adjusted the codes throughout the process to ensure they accurately captured the lived experience of mindfulness-based self-reflection in supervisory work (Silverman, 2006).

The emerging themes reflected the core mechanisms of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and demonstrated how each foundation corresponded to a distinct dimension of supervisory self-awareness as manifested in lived experience. Experiences related to direct bodily awareness, such as noticing posture, muscular tension, breathing patterns, and physical stillness during supervisory interactions, corresponded with Kāyānupassanā, whereas descriptions of irritation, pressure, or calmness reflected affective appraisal and were therefore aligned with vedanānupassanā. Bodily-oriented themes were particularly evident in interviews where supervisors described moment-to-moment noticing of physical sensations, for example, tightening of the shoulders during conflict discussions or conscious grounding of posture before responding to subordinates. In several accounts, participants described how initial awareness of their own bodily reactions



later shaped how they perceived others, for instance, moving from seeing employees merely as task performers to recognizing them as whole persons with emotions, limitations, and intentions. These interpretations were further supported by recent psychological research highlighting the role of embodied awareness in self-regulation and social attunement (Brown & Ryan, 2003); (Glomb et al., 2011) observations about mental states, such as impatience, clarity, or agitation were associated with *cittānupassanā*, and insights into intentions, reactions, and habitual patterns contributed to the category of *dhammānupassanā*, which together addressed the study's first objective on mechanisms of self-awareness development. Together, these themes elucidated the cognitive and meta-cognitive mechanisms through which supervisory self-awareness is strengthened. These thematic groupings allowed the findings to be interpreted coherently through both Buddhist doctrinal principles and contemporary psychological models (Brown & Ryan, 2003); (Glomb et al., 2011).

Discussion

Objective 1: Buddhist Foundations for Understanding Self-Awareness Through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*)

Overall, the findings support Glomb et al.'s (2011) dynamic model of mindfulness while positioning *Satipaṭṭhāna* as a generative framework that explicates the experiential mechanisms underlying supervisory self-awareness and adaptive functioning (Van Gordon et al., 2015); (Shonin et al., 2016). The findings of this study can be interpreted through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*), which provide a systematic doctrinal account of how awareness, affective discernment, and self-regulation unfold through lived experience (Analayo, 2003); (Kabat-Zinn, 1990); (Bodhi, 2011). While prior mindfulness-leadership studies often employ mindfulness as a broad attentional construct, the present findings extend this literature by theorizing *Satipaṭṭhāna* as a differentiated process system, thereby clarifying how distinct experiential mechanisms unfold sequentially and interactively in supervisory contexts.

This canonical framework explains the processes through which practitioners cultivate present-moment observation, non-reactivity, and clarity of mind, mechanisms that closely correspond with contemporary psychological models of mindfulness and self-awareness (Brown & Ryan, 2003); (Glomb et al., 2011). The four foundations collectively provide a comprehensive structure for understanding how daily mindfulness-based self-reflection supports supervisors in navigating high-pressure organizational environments.

1.1 *Kāyānupassanā*: Mindfulness of the Body as the Entry Point to Awareness

Kāyānupassanā emphasizes direct awareness of bodily sensations, breath, posture, and physical tension as they arise in everyday work activities. Several participants explicitly described first noticing bodily cues, such as tightened shoulders, shallow breathing, or physical heaviness, before recognizing emotional reactions. These bodily observations occurred prior to affective labeling and served as an early entry point for self-regulation. This experiential pattern directly reflects *Kāyānupassanā* as described in Buddhist doctrine, where mindfulness of



the body functions as the primary foundation upon which subsequent awareness of feelings and mental states can arise (Analayo, 2003).

As one participant shared:

"WHEN I PAUSE AND REFLECT BEFORE REACTING, I CAN SEE WHAT I AM FEELING AND WHY. I DO NOT GET CARRIED AWAY BY FRUSTRATION ANYMORE. I RESPOND MORE CALMLY AND MAKE CLEARER DECISIONS."

The participants' descriptions of calming bodily responses and slowing down before reacting are consistent with evidence that bodily awareness serves as a gateway to emotional regulation and cognitive clarity (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). This mechanism also reflects Brown and Ryan's (2003) model, in which physical awareness increases sensitivity to internal cues that support self-awareness. These findings are consistent with prior mindfulness research emphasizing the role of embodied awareness in emotional regulation (Kabat-Zinn, 1990); (Brown & Ryan, 2003). However, this study extends previous work by demonstrating how such bodily awareness is enacted through brief, informal reflective pauses embedded in supervisory routines, rather than formal meditation practice.

1.2 Vedanānupassanā: Awareness of Feelings and the Interruption of Automatic Reactivity

Vedanānupassanā refers to recognizing feelings, pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral-as they arise. Participants consistently reported becoming more aware of "EARLY SIGNS of STRESS," such as irritation, pressure, or overwhelm, particularly when managing multiple tasks. This mirrors the purpose of Vedanānupassanā, which trains practitioners to identify emotional valence at its earliest point before it conditions reactive behavior (Analayo, 2003).

"I Used to Feel Overwhelmed When Multiple Tasks Came at Once. Now I Pause, Breathe, and Notice My Reactions. It Does Not Feel as Heavy-I can Handle It Better."

In the interviews, supervisors described pausing to breathe and observing emotions without immediately acting on them. This non-reactive stance reflects Kabat-Zinn's (1990) description of mindfulness as allowing feelings to be observed without judgment and supports Creswell's (2017) concept of the "Stress-buffering" effect of mindfulness. While consistent with mindfulness-based emotion regulation research (Hülshager et al., 2013); (Creswell, 2017), the present findings further indicate that affective awareness plays a buffering role within hierarchical supervisory relationships, where unmanaged emotions may disproportionately shape authority use and communication. Notably, the present study highlights how affective awareness operates within hierarchical supervisory contexts, where unmanaged emotions may otherwise spill over into leadership communication.

By cultivating awareness of feelings, participants demonstrated improved ability to prevent emotional spillover into leadership interactions-a phenomenon consistent with psychological models of emotion regulation in mindfulness research (Hülshager et al., 2013).



1.3 Cittānupassanā: Awareness of Mind States and the Development of Meta-Cognitive Self-Awareness

Cittānupassanā concerns observing the mind as it is, whether agitated, calm, distracted, or focused. This foundation maps directly onto participants' experiences of recognizing their own mental patterns, including frustration, impatience, or cognitive overload.

"Since Practicing Mindfulness, I See People More Clearly-Not Just as Employees but As Individuals. I Can Match Tasks Better, and The Team Performs More Smoothly."

Participants reported that regular self-reflection enabled them to "See What I Am Feeling and Why," indicating heightened meta-awareness. This heightened meta-awareness corresponds with Cittānupassanā and aligns with psychological models of metacognitive monitoring, illustrating how supervisors become aware of mental states without over-identification (Analayo, 2003); (Hölzel et al., 2011).

The findings align with Brown and Ryan's (2003) and Hölzel et al.'s (2011) models of meta-awareness, while extending them by showing how such awareness supports real-time leadership judgment and task coordination in supervisory work.

Participants' descriptions of gaining clarity, responding more calmly, and managing time more effectively reflect Glomb et al.'s (2011) dynamic model of mindfulness as an interplay of awareness, attention, and intentional action.

1.4 Dhammānupassanā: Understanding Mental Processes and Improving Leadership Judgment

Dhammānupassanā involves observing mental phenomena-thoughts, intentions, impulses, and patterns conditioned processes rather than fixed attributes. Participants described clearer insight into interpersonal dynamics, improved delegation decisions, and greater empathy toward subordinates. These experiences reflect the capacity cultivated in Dhammānupassanā to perceive mental phenomena as conditioned and transient, enabling supervisors to decouple emotional impulses from professional intentions (Analayo, 2003); (Gethin, 2015).

This foundation explains why supervisors were able to separate emotional impulses from professional intentions and engage in more deliberate leadership behaviors. These findings align with Reb et al. (2015), who propose that mindfulness enhances relational transparency and stable self-regulation, critical dimensions of effective leadership.

Participants' ability to "See People More Clearly-Not Just as Employees" demonstrates increased relational attunement, consistent with Good et al.'s (2015) review highlighting how mindfulness improves empathy, perspective-taking, and interpersonal functioning. Importantly, this study adds a doctrinally grounded explanation of why such relational changes occur, rooted in Buddhist insight into conditioned mental processes.



Objective 2: Guidelines for Applying the Four Foundations of Mindfulness to Strengthen Self-Awareness and Adaptive Functioning in Supervisory Work

For Objective 2, the findings indicate that supervisors translated mindfulness-based self-reflection into practical strategies that supported emotional stability, adaptive stress coping, and more deliberate leadership behavior in daily work.

The application of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*), mindfulness of the body, feelings, mind, and mental phenomena, provides a structured and practice-oriented pathway that explicates how moment-to-moment awareness is translated into adaptive supervisory functioning, rather than functioning solely as a contemplative ideal (Analayo, 2003); (Kabat-Zinn, 1990); (Gethin, 2015). Rather than treating each foundation as an isolated practice, the findings suggest that supervisors experienced the Four Foundations as an integrated self-regulatory process through which bodily awareness, affective discernment, and meta-cognitive insight collectively supported adaptive supervisory functioning. The following subsections outline how each foundation can be integrated into daily supervisory work to cultivate self-awareness and adaptive functioning.

2.1 Enhancing Emotional Stability through Mindfulness of the Body (*Kāyānupassanā*)

Modern organizational pressures often manifest first as bodily tension-tight shoulders, shallow breathing, or accelerated heart rate. Applying *Kāyānupassanā* enables supervisors to detect physiological stress signals early, supporting bottom-up regulation of attention and affect (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012); (Slutsky et al., 2019). Short practices such as mindful breathing, posture awareness, or slow body scanning during breaks help regulate the autonomic nervous system and restore cognitive clarity.

Participants in this study frequently described using brief pauses to "Recenter the Body," which helped reduce impulsive reactions and enhance decision quality. Importantly, bodily awareness functioned not merely as a physiological technique but as the initial regulatory anchor through which subsequent emotional and cognitive awareness became accessible, positioning *Kāyānupassanā* as the entry point of an integrated mindfulness sequence rather than a standalone intervention. This reflects the principle that bodily awareness is the entry point to emotional and mental regulation (Analayo, 2003); (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Incorporating simple bodily-awareness routines throughout the workday can therefore strengthen moment-to-moment stability and support sustained performance under pressure.

2.2 Strengthening Stress Coping through Awareness of Feelings (*Vedanānupassanā*)

Vedanānupassanā trains supervisors to recognize the emotional tone of their experiences—whether irritation, frustration, pressure, or calmness—before these feelings shape behavior. Participants' reflections indicate that acknowledging feelings early helped them interrupt habitual stress reactions and adopt adaptive coping strategies such as reframing, pausing, and deep breathing.

This aligns with psychological research showing that affective awareness reduces emotional exhaustion and supports adaptive stress appraisal (Creswell, 2017); (Hülshager et al., 2013). Encouraging supervisors to regularly observe whether work situations trigger pleasant, unpleasant,



or neutral feelings provides a foundation for healthier emotional processing. Such awareness allows them to manage workload stress more effectively and prevents negative emotional spillover into team interactions, a critical issue in supervisory roles where emotions cascade across hierarchical relationships (Bartlett et al., 2019); (Reb et al., 2015).

Practical applications include short feeling-check routines before key meetings, during transitions between tasks, or at the end of the day. These micro-reflective moments help stabilize emotions and promote resilience in fast-paced environments.

2.3 Improving Leadership Judgment through Awareness of Mind and Mental Processes (Cittānupassanā & Dhammānupassanā)

Cittānupassanā and Dhammānupassanā collectively support deeper self-observation by enabling supervisors to monitor the quality of their thoughts, mental states, intentions, and habitual reactions. In the interviews, participants described gaining clearer insight into mental patterns through meta-cognitive monitoring and decentering processes (Brown & Ryan, 2003); (Hölzel et al., 2011); (Vago & Silbersweig, 2012).

Applying these foundations can strengthen leadership effectiveness in three ways:

1. Improved Meta-Cognition: Supervisors become aware of the mind's state, agitated, focused, or reactive—allowing them to adjust before making decisions (Brown & Ryan, 2003); (Hölzel et al., 2011).

2. Enhanced Relational Judgment: Observing mental phenomena helps supervisors interpret interpersonal cues more accurately, contributing to empathy and fair delegation (Reb et al., 2015); (Good et al., 2015).

3. Greater Ethical and Intentional Action: Awareness of intentions reduces automatic emotional responses and supports behavior aligned with leadership values by rendering intentions explicit and observable, consistent with Buddhist perspectives on intentional action (Cetana) (Analayo, 2003); (Bodhi, 2011).

Practical strategies include reflective journaling, mindful pauses, and structured reviews, which function as low-intensity, self-directed practices that align with calls for scalable mindfulness applications in organizations (Van Gordon et al., 2015); (Shonin et al., 2016). These practices help supervisors refine their decision-making, improve team relationships, and cultivate steady, resonant leadership.

Integrating the Four Foundations of Mindfulness into daily supervisory routines provides a coherent, culturally grounded, and evidence-based framework that integrates Buddhist mindfulness principles with contemporary organizational demands, offering a sustainable pathway for adaptive supervisory leadership (Gu et al., 2015); (Reb et al., 2015). By grounding awareness in the body, feelings, mind, and mental processes, supervisors cultivate a stable inner foundation that supports clarity, resilience, and constructive interpersonal engagement. This alignment between Buddhist mindfulness principles and contemporary organizational needs offers a sustainable pathway for promoting psychological well-being and adaptive leadership in high-pressure work environments.



Originality and Body of Knowledge

Thai organizational contexts place supervisors and leaders in roles that require continual coordination, emotional composure, and sound judgment. Applying Buddhist mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna) provides a practical and doctrinally grounded method for strengthening leaders' self-awareness and reducing workplace stress. This study explicitly contributes four empirically grounded domains of new knowledge that advance mindfulness and leadership theory by reconceptualizing Satipaṭṭhāna not merely as a contemplative doctrine or applied intervention, but as an analytical process framework that explains how self-awareness is generated, stabilized, and translated into leadership behavior under stress. These insights align with classical Buddhist explanations of awareness and contemporary psychological models of self-regulation and mindful behavior.

1. Embodied Mindfulness as the Foundation for Regulating Stress Responses (Kāyānupassanā)

Embodied mindfulness (Kāyānupassanā) emerged as a foundational leadership capacity, enabling supervisors to regulate physiological stress reactions before they escalate into emotional or behavioral responses, thereby supporting calm decision-making under pressure. The study shows that bodily awareness, such as noticing changes in posture, muscular tension, and breathing rhythm, acts as the primary gateway to emotional steadiness among leaders. When leaders pause briefly to "Recenter the Body," they interrupt the automatic escalation of stress and regain clarity before reacting. This demonstrates that the body serves as a stabilizing anchor that supports leaders in maintaining calmness and preventing stress-driven responses during demanding tasks. Awareness of the body thus becomes a foundational mechanism for cultivating self-regulation, as further illustrated in the process model presented in Figure 1.

2. Affective Awareness for Early Identification of Stress Triggers (Vedanānupassanā)

Affective awareness (Vedanānupassanā) functioned as an early-warning mechanism that helped leaders identify stress triggers before they influenced communication, authority use, or relational judgment, thereby reducing cumulative occupational stress. Observing the valence of feelings, pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, enables leaders to detect the earliest signs of emotional strain. Recognizing irritation, pressure, or overwhelm prevents reactive behavior and allows leaders to shift toward more constructive coping strategies. This domain highlights that affective awareness helps leaders prevent emotional spillover into managerial communication and team interactions. It functions as an emotional "Buffering System," reducing the cumulative impact of stress in high-pressure environments.

3. Meta-Cognitive Clarity for Improving Judgment and Intentional Action (Cittānupassanā & Dhammānupassanā)

Awareness of mental states (Cittā) and mental processes (Dhammā) strengthens leaders' ability to observe thoughts, intentions, and habitual reactions without being driven by them. As represented in Figure 1, these two foundations operate together to generate meta-cognitive clarity. Leaders in the study reported clearer insight into what conditions their emotional impulses



and decision tendencies. Such awareness enhances meta-cognitive judgment, enabling leaders to adjust their approach before making decisions, interpret interpersonal cues more accurately, and act consistently with leadership values. This domain represents a bridge between Buddhist cognitive insight and organizational leadership practice.

4. Development of Compassionate, Stable, and Prosocial Leadership Behavior

The integration of all four foundations culminated in observable prosocial leadership behaviors, including empathy, patience, and relational stability, which directly supported healthier team climates and reduced interpersonal tension. This transformation supported constructive communication, improved team morale, and healthier leader-subordinate relationships. Mindfulness practice thus enhanced prosocial leadership qualities, supporting the creation of emotionally safe and collaborative work environments through the cumulative interaction of embodied regulation, affective monitoring, and meta-cognitive clarity. Unlike many mindfulness or leadership frameworks that emphasize individual techniques or traits, this Satipaṭṭhāna-based model offers a process-oriented, culturally embedded framework that integrates embodied awareness, affective monitoring, cognitive insight, and ethical relational conduct. This domain highlights the role of Satipaṭṭhāna in fostering leadership styles that reduce conflict, strengthen team cohesion, and promote long-term well-being in organizations, thereby advancing Satipaṭṭhāna from a doctrinal framework to an empirically grounded analytical lens for leadership and stress research.



Figure 1 Application of Buddhist mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna) to cultivate self-awareness and reduce workplace stress



Conclusions and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that daily mindfulness-based self-reflection, interpreted through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna), functions as a practical and effective mechanism for enhancing supervisors' self-awareness, emotional regulation, and leadership behavior in high-pressure organizational contexts. The findings illustrate that brief, routine reflective practices enable supervisors to recognize bodily tension, identify emotional cues, monitor mental states, and discern conditioned thought patterns, capacities that collectively strengthen their ability to manage stress, make deliberate decisions, and cultivate stable interpersonal relationships. First, the study shows that the cultivation of embodied awareness, affective discernment, and metacognitive monitoring contributes directly to the development of psychological resilience. Supervisors who engaged in daily self-reflection demonstrated greater emotional stability, reduced reactivity, and improved coping with workload stress, suggesting that short, structured reflective practices can be integrated into daily leadership routines without disrupting operational demands. While consistent with prior mindfulness and leadership models, this study advances existing work by integrating doctrinally informed mindfulness processes with supervisors' lived experiences, revealing how Satipaṭṭhāna operates as a dynamic, process-oriented system of self-regulation rather than a static set of mindfulness skills. Second, the findings indicate that mindfulness supports more effective leadership and team interaction, particularly through improved communication clarity, empathetic engagement, and relational attunement within teams. Enhanced clarity, empathy, and relational attunement enabled supervisors to communicate more constructively, delegate tasks more appropriately, and foster team cohesion. Such improvements reflect the broader organizational value of mindfulness as a leadership competency that enhances psychological safety, team cohesion, and collective performance. Together, these insights underscore that a brief, structured, and culturally adaptable mindfulness practice can generate meaningful changes in self-regulation and interpersonal behavior, even within fast-paced private-sector environments. For supervisory practice, the findings suggest that organizations may encourage leaders to adopt brief daily mindfulness-based self-reflection, such as short pauses for bodily awareness and emotional checking, as part of leadership development and stress management initiatives. The study contributes to both Buddhist mindfulness scholarship and organizational behavior literature by demonstrating how traditional contemplative frameworks can be operationalized to support modern managerial roles. For future research, greater emphasis should be placed on examining how mindfulness-based self-reflection grounded in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna) supports leadership development over time. Longitudinal research designs would allow for a deeper understanding of how self-awareness, emotional regulation, and leadership judgment evolve through sustained reflective practice, rather than being captured only at a single point in time. In addition, comparative studies across organizational sectors, leadership levels, or cultural settings would help clarify the contextual conditions under which Satipaṭṭhāna-informed practices are most effective. At the same time, the present study is subject to certain limitations.



Its qualitative design and purposive sampling within Thai organizational settings may limit the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, the analysis relies on participants' self-reported experiences and interprets these experiences through a Buddhist doctrinal lens, which may not fully capture alternative cultural or organizational understandings of mindfulness. Future research employing mixed methods, broader samples, or alternative theoretical perspectives would therefore be valuable in extending and validating the findings.

References

- Analayo. (2003). *Satipatthāna: The Direct Path to Realization*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Windhorse Publications.
- Bartlett, L., Martin, A., Neil, A. L., Memish, K., Otahal, P., Kilpatrick, M. & Sanderson, K. (2019). A systematic review and meta-analysis of workplace mindfulness training. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 24(1), 108-126. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000146>.
- Bodhi, B. (2011). What does mindfulness really mean? A canonical perspective. *Contemporary Buddhism*, 12(1), 19-39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2011.564813>.
- Brown, K. W. & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), 822-848.
- Creswell, J. D. (2017). Mindfulness interventions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 68(1), 491-516. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-042716-051139>.
- Ganster, D. C. & Rosen, C. C. (2013). Work stress and employee health: A multidisciplinary review. *Journal of Management*, 39(5), 1085-1122.
- Gethin, R. (2015). Buddhist conceptualizations of mindfulness. In K. W. Brown, J. D. Creswell, & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of mindfulness: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 9-41). New York, United States of America: The Guilford Press.
- Glomb, T. M., Duffy, M. K., Bono, J. E. & Yang, T. (2011). Mindfulness at work. In A. Joshi, H. Liao & J. J. Martocchio (Eds.), *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management* (Vol. 30, pp. 115-157). Bingley, United Kingdom: Emerald. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S0742-7301\(2011\)0000030005](https://doi.org/10.1108/S0742-7301(2011)0000030005).
- Good, D. J., Lyddy, C. J., Glomb, T. M., Bono, J. E., Brown, K. W., Duffy, M. K., Baer, R. A., Brewer, J. A. & Lazar, S. W. (2015). Contemplating Mindfulness at Work: An Integrative Review. *Journal of Management*, 42(1), 114-142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206315617003>.
- Gu, J., Strauss, C., Bond, R. & Cavanagh, K. (2015). How do mindfulness-based cognitive therapy and mindfulness-based stress reduction improve mental health and wellbeing? A systematic review and meta-analysis of mediation studies. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 37, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2015.01.006>.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, United States of America: Sage.
- Hölzel, B. K., Lazar, S. W., Gard, T., Schuman-Olivier, Z., Vago, D. R. & Ott, U. (2011). How Does Mindfulness Meditation Work? Proposing Mechanisms of Action From a Conceptual and



- Neural Perspective. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 6(6), 537-559. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691611419671>.
- Hülshager, U. R., Alberts, H. J. E. M., Feinholdt, A. & Lang, J. W. B. (2013). Benefits of mindfulness at work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 98(2), 310-325. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031313>.
- International Labour Organization. (2021). *World employment and social outlook: Trends 2021*. Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Office.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. New York, United States of America: Delacorte.
- Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2014). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, United States of America: Sage.
- Maslach, C. & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Burnout. In G. Fink (Ed.), *Stress: Concepts, cognition, emotion, and behavior* (pp. 351-357). Amsterdam, Netherlands: Elsevier Academic Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods Integrating Theory and Practice* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, United States of America: Sage.
- Reb, J., Narayanan, J. & Ho, Z. W. (2015). Mindfulness at Work: Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Awareness and Absent-mindedness. *Mindfulness*, 6, 111-122. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-013-0236-4>.
- Reb, J., Sim, S., Chintakananda, K. & Bhave, D. P. (2015). Leading with mindfulness: Exploring the relation of mindfulness with leadership behaviors, styles, and development. In J. Reb & P. W. B. Atkins (Eds.), *Mindfulness in Organizations: Foundations, Research, and Applications* (pp. 256-284). chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rungreangkulkij, S., Wongtakee, W. & Thongyot, S. (2011). Buddhist Group Therapy for Diabetes Patients With Depressive Symptoms. *Archives of psychiatric nursing*, 25(3), 195-205. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnu.2010.08.007>.
- Shonin, E., Van Gordon, W. & Griffiths, M. D. (Eds.). (2016). *Mindfulness and Buddhist-Derived Approaches in Mental Health and Addiction*. Springer International Publishing/Springer Nature. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-22255-4>.
- Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting qualitative data* (3rd ed.). London, United Kingdom: Sage.
- Slutsky, J., Chin, B., Raye, J. & Creswell, J. D. (2019). Mindfulness training improves employee well-being: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, 24(1), 139-149. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000132>.
- Vago, D. R. & Silbersweig, D. A. (2012). Self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-transcendence (S-ART): A framework for understanding the neurobiological mechanisms of mindfulness. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 6, 296. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2012.00296>.
- Van Gordon, W., Shonin, E., Griffiths, M. D. & Singh, N. N. (2015). There is Only One Mindfulness: Why Science and Buddhism Need to Work Together. *Mindfulness*, 6, 49-56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-014-0379-y>.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case Study Research Design and Methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, United States of America: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjpe.30.1.108>.