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EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION (ADR) IN BUDDHISM: THE SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDITATION AND MEDIATION AS AN INSIGHT FOR CONTEMPORARY MEDIATORS

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Abstract

Background: The Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) process has become popular as a means of resolving disputes beyond the formal judicial system. Modes of dispute resolution grounded in dialogue have a long history in many legal systems and cultures. Among all these traditions, Buddhism provides a holistic model for comprehending and resolving conflict. Drawing from the tenets of compassion (Karuṇā), mindfulness (Sati), non-harming (Ahimsā), and non-attachment (Anupādāna), the Buddhist approach transcends procedural justice and responds to the emotional, moral, and psychological aspects of conflict empathetically. In an era marked by escalating geopolitical conflicts, including tensions in the South China Sea, border clashes in South Asia, inter-ethnic conflict zones like the Myanmar area, border issues between India and Pakistan, and transboundary issues linked to water sharing between India and China. The infusion of Buddhist principles into ADR is timely and critical to offer a transformational alternative to adversarial and interest-based models. To address this gap, the study aims to examine the synthesis of Buddhist doctrine and the contemporary ADR framework, focusing on the transformative aspects of meditation in the mediation process. Adopting a qualitative and doctrinal approach, the study analyses Buddhist philosophical texts alongside contemporary ADR literature to explore how meditative practices contribute to emotional regulation, focused attention, empathy, and constructive dialogue. Based on the teachings of right awareness, right speech, and cultivating inner peace, it further examines how mindfulness-informed mediation practices may enhance conflict de-escalation and promote durable, mutually acceptable outcomes in family, workplace, and community disputes.

Involvement to Buddhaddhamma: The study reflects a contemplative encounter with the Buddhaddhamma, which critically examines whether Buddhist philosophical fundamentals serve as a universal and ethically coherent basis for reconciliation and conflict transformation. At the heart of this study is the Buddhist view of conflict in relation to suffering (Dukkha), its cause in craving (Taṇhā), and its cessation through morality (Sīla), meditation (Samādhi), and wisdom (Paññā).



These teachings suggest that struggle originates from a deeper source than external circumstances; It stems from the heart or the mind. The study suggests that the Noble Path serves to address these sources of conflict, in the context of right intention (Sammā-saṅkappa), right speech (Sammāvācā), right action (Sammākammanta), and right mindfulness (Sammā-sati). These principles provide moral guidelines for personal conduct and a framework for resolving conflicts at social, and institutional levels. These components help individuals develop ethical behaviour and self-awareness, which are valuable tools for mediators who aspire to foster constructive communication and emotional transparency during disputes. The study highlights that the Buddhist approach of conflict transformation is more than a method for resolving interpersonal or societal conflicts. It recognises that peace, emotional well-being, and relationships are interconnected.

Conclusions: The study concluded that Buddhism offers a positive foundation for ADR by replacing adversarial competition with compassionate understanding and shared healing. Incorporating mindfulness and meditation into mediation creates an atmosphere in which parties can de-escalate from finger-pointing and hostility to peace-making and mutual resolution. Through the infusion of Buddhist principles, mediators can help disputants to become more settled and enable both parties to find inner peace amidst conflicts, as well as promote socially harmonious relationships within the community. This research supports mediators' use of Buddhist-inspired techniques to cultivate empathetic understanding, ethical discernment, and emotional resilience, which are necessary to achieve more sustainable and substantial conflict resolution.

Keywords: Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), Buddhism, Conflict Resolution, Mediation, Meditation

Introduction

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) has become popular for addressing disputes outside conventional judicial systems (Stipanowich, 2004). Among the many methods available in ADR, the incorporation of Buddhist ideas and practices offers a convincing path to understanding conflict resolution from a holistic and transformative standpoint. These principles have been used to tackle a wide range of conflicts, from family and workplace disputes to community and complex geopolitical conflicts (Phramaha Itsret Kittislo, et al., 2024). Buddhism provides a profound understanding of the nature of human conflict, the causes of suffering, and the paths to inner peace and reconciliation (Venerable Dr. Phramaha Hansa Dhammhaso, 2010). Investigating its intellectual and meditative legacy reveals the fundamental ideas and techniques that support successful conflict resolution and promotion of societal peace.

Amidst the increasing polarisation and nationalistic sensitivities across our globe, the need to include Buddhist principles in ADR has never been greater. The conventional legal or adversarial methods do not address the multi-layered dimensions of conflicts, such as emotional, psychological, and ethical, that sustain hostility (Blix & Wettergren, 2024). Even on current issues, including the border dispute between India and Pakistan, transboundary water-sharing conflicts involving India and China, or trade interference between India and the USA, demonstrate how underlying



distrusts and inflexible stances often hamper fruitful conversation. Notable contributions in this field include Prof. Hansa Dhammadasa's work on Buddhist Values towards Conflict and Peace and Peace Studies: The Buddhist Path to World Peace (Phramaha Hansa Dhammadasa, 2016), which illustrates how the principles can address contemporary geopolitical issues to attain global peace. In contemporary multiracial and multi-religious societies, social conflicts are informed and exacerbated by religious identities or cultural values. Buddhist ethics of right speech (Sammāvācā), non-violence (Ahiṃsā), and compassionate understanding (Karūṇā) offer a universal and non-sectarian framework for dialogue. These values transcend religious traditions, affirming peace-centric messages in Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Judaism, providing a common moral lexicon for mediators operating in various contexts (Igunbor, 2025). Buddhist-influenced techniques, such as mindfulness, empathetic listening, and ethical speech, help mediators overcome positional bargaining to a deeper recognition of the other party's needs and desires, and thus towards sustainable reconciliation (Bagshaw & Stud, 2017). This means that both mediators and disputants benefit from the mental clarity, emotion regulation, and awareness grounded in empathy, all of which are key aspects for reducing adversaries' hostility and encouraging open conversation. For example, mindfulness-based tools may help mediators stay present and refrain from escalating reactively, whereas ethical communication grounded in right speech opens trust and respect. These attributes provide psychological safety and moral anchoring to transmute geopolitical and socio-political conflicts into constructive, peace-oriented dialogues.

Buddhist teachings focus on the awareness of the transient and linked character of life and the basic causes of human suffering: Attachment (Taṇhā), aversion (Dosa), and ignorance (Avijjā), as expounded in the Tripitaka, particularly in the Samyutta Nikāya (SN 56.11, Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta) and the Dhammapada (Verses 212-216), which collectively frame the foundation of the Noble Truths (Girish, 2019). Buddhism presents a road map for negotiating challenges with knowledge, compassion, and practical skills through ethical behaviour and meditative awareness. This article focuses on integrating meditation, a basic Buddhist practice, into the mediation process. Mediators who cultivate deep listening and emotional resilience will be able to provide a conducive environment for participants to examine underlying interests, engage in honest communication, and seek mutually beneficial solutions (Karunamuni & Weerasekera, 2019).

The Art of Dispute Resolution in the Buddhism

Buddhist philosophy recognises that the realm of Buddhism is not free of conflict even beneath its serene façade (Tavachalee et al., 2021); Instead, it recognises the inescapable relationship between human life and the natural existence of conflict. Often manifesting as conflict, the great lessons of Buddhism follow the path of suffering from ignorance. Buddhism encourages a fundamental shift in perspective if we are to untangle and handle these conflicts. The primary issue takes the front stage instead of obsessing about the "Other" as the source of conflict. This is central to mediation as it promotes examination of the underlying circumstances and helps



one to reject assigning blame to others. The essence lies in the conditions that create difficulties rather than the intrinsic character of people. Inspired by Buddhist ideas, this subtle approach fits well with mediation techniques, steering the settlement process towards revealing the underlying cause of the problem instead of concentrating only on the parties engaged.

A comprehensive explanation of Buddhist conflict resolution involves the Sangha's practices as the first framework for settling conflicts within a monastic community. The Vinaya Pitaka outlines detailed procedures for handling disagreements, emphasising conciliation, confession, mutual understanding, and collective harmony instead of punishment. Key to these practices are principles such as sammukhā-vinaya (Face-To-Face Confrontation), sati-sāraṇa (Recollection of The Facts with Mindfulness), and ñatti-kamma (Formal Resolution Through Consensus), which provide for transparency in conflicts and compassionate responses. Such monastic systems are restorative, capable of maintaining good relationships, repairing trust and unity within the Sangha. Prioritising dialogue, ethical self-interrogation, and reconciliation, the Vinaya traditions demonstrate a non-adversarial approach to resolving conflict.

In Buddhism, mindful meditation is essential to reflect and acquire a deep understanding of the prevailing challenges (Tophoff, 2020). The practice enables mediators to cultivate inner awareness and emotional balance, allowing them to address the roots of conflict with clarity, compassion, and transformative insight (McConnell, 1995). Meditation is a discipline for identifying and separating the emotions embedded in a circumstance. People who can see, accept, and let go of these feelings develop an open-hearted, receptive attitude to the reality of the situation. This increased consciousness facilitates effective conversation and sympathetic listening. Ignoring the underlying causes of suffering impairs one's ability to interact successfully with people, make wise judgements, and clearly and effectively express ideas.

In the intersection of law and ADR, especially in terms of mediation, mindfulness meditation techniques have been appropriately integrated into the framework. Studies have explored the transforming aspects of the Buddhist perspective and its application in conflict resolution, therefore clarifying the advantages of using a transformative approach in mediation. These studies emphasise the need for mediators to embrace this technique to alternate perspective that negotiates the philosophical underpinnings of mediators and disputants (Kuttner, 2009) termed the "Relational Worldview." This paradigm acknowledges human nature's dual capability by combining a receptivity to others with the self-interestedness emphasised by individualist points of view. Resonating with the whole Buddhist perspective on conflict resolution, this transformative method converges in its focus on persons and their reciprocal obligations in conflicting situations. Mindfulness techniques become transformative instruments able to change attitudes, ideas, and behaviours within conflict, thus acting as accelerators for the peaceful resolution of disputes. Mindful meditation, essential for Buddhist conflict resolution and peacebuilding, held such importance for the Buddha that he directed daily practice among the monks (Kraft, 1992).



Sangha Serenity: Fostering Peace within the Buddhist Society

A Sangha is a diverse community comprising monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen who embark on a spiritual journey. At first, peace among the monks prevailed without a written rule of behaviour, while the Buddha was establishing the Sangha. Conflicts emerged as the society grew in complexity and scope. Understanding this, the Buddha developed the Vinaya, an ethical code ensuring monastic community order. Emphasising knowledge and ethical instruction in the spiritual path, Dhamma Vinaya is included in the cornerstone of the early Buddhist writings, the Pali canon (Thero, 2022). Guarded for more than 2,600 years, this monastic rule provides ideas on harmonious community life beyond moral principles (Smith, 2009). Since its founding, dispute resolution has become an integral part of the everyday activities of the Buddhist religion and the monastic community. At the same time, modern Buddhist Sangha keeps changing and using it, thereby highlighting the ongoing history of including dispute resolution into the fabric of Buddhist community life.

It is universally accepted that the Buddha established the Saṅgha for various purposes, including fostering its members' welfare, checking immoral action, abandoning unwholesome states of mind, for the protection of the Vinaya, and continuity of the Dhamma (Viengsavanh, 2024). Among these, one of the main goals was to create a harmonious religious society wherein nuns and monks coexisted (Kawanami, 2015). This community vision aimed to show a society where individuals sought peaceful coexistence, avoiding disputes and transcending assembly. Identifying himself as a reconciler and supporter of oneness, the Buddha exhorted the Sangha to promote calm personal relationships and quickly settle any developing conflicts (Mazza, 2021). Expanding the six principles of cordiality (Chahāṛā-sīla or Chahāṛā Sīla), a set of rules meant to avoid harm (Ahimsa), lessen suffering (Dukkha-pahāna), and maintain harmony (Sāmaggī) within the monastic community, he sought to mitigate the negative consequences of social strife (Dalai Lama, 2016). The teachings of the Buddha reflected a desire for peace and a practical guide for fostering harmonious group life.

Buddha gave meticulous direction to the monastic community, advocating a holistic framework for harmonious communal life. In public and private spheres, he taught a comprehensive code of conduct defining three fundamental aspects of moral behaviour: Physical, verbal, and mental acts infused with loving-kindness towards other monks (Venerable Sumanpriya Bhikkhu (Suman Barua), 2017). This edict sought to create an environment of kindness beyond outward actions, encompassing the fundamental fabric of mind and purpose. Buddha stressed the importance of material generosity as a cornerstone of communal peace. The encouragement of monks to share their material gains generously helped to foster a Sangha culture of mutual assistance and group well-being (Hattam, 2007). This injunction met the community's pragmatic necessities and underlined the importance of developing a giving attitude as a natural aspect of the monk's journey.

The Buddha's application of the code of discipline to the monks, i.e., the Sangha, is closely detailed and is a complete system of rules to ensure harmonious communal life (Goodman, 2014).



In the public as well as in the private domain, he taught an all-encompassing way of life, a set of moral guidelines that covered the basic standards of virtuous behaviour, physical, verbal, and mental conduct, imbued with loving-kindness towards his fellow monks. There was an inculcation of a sense of goodwill that manifested not only in outward actions but was rooted in the fabric of thought and intention.

Buddha reiterated the necessity of material generosity as one of the foundational pillars of a harmonious society. Monks were exhorted to relinquish their acquisitions, creating an atmosphere of mutual support and collective well-being in the Sangha (Hattam, 2007). This command supported the practical requirements of the Sangha and emphasised the importance of practising generously as part of what it means to be a monk. The monastic discipline, according to the teaching of the Buddha, was not only a question of personal conduct: It was also the organisational basis of the monastery. Compliance with the rules of discipline in the monastery was the fifth part of the Buddha's advice (Dhirasekera, 2007). This regulation was designed to bring discipline and order so that the Sangha was within a well-ordered, lawful framework. Moral codes, grounded in ethical principles, were guiding norms for the daily activities of the monks, providing a moral framework for the common life of the community (Hanh, 2020).

The Buddha urged the monks to help mitigate suffering in society. It was not about the communal obligation to rectify or to mitigate the cause of pain. The Buddha did not conceive the Sangha as a passive refuge for personal salvation, but as a community that generated a dynamic collective life in the interests of welfare. The six principles of cordiality set forth by the Buddha comprised a framework for maintaining the harmony and growth of monastic life (Tachibana, 2021). They are concerned not only with how to treat others but also with how to conduct oneself, representing a shared ethos of kindness, of generosity, of self-restraint, and of collectivism. This broad range of action was congruent with the Buddha's overall vision of the Sangha as a kind of microcosm of an ideal society, one in which people worked to physically develop qualities of mind and heart, to support one another regarding their physical needs and their quest for liberation, and to work together to end suffering. The lasting relevance of these principles is evident in the modern-day Buddhist monastic communities, where the teachings of the Buddha still set the course and the tone for the behaviour and culture of monks. The six principles are a beacon of testimony to the Buddha's intention, and they express the ideal manner of living in the world (Johnson, 2002).

In the monkhood, the cultivation of loving-kindness and compassion as a practice is not a belief but a lived experience. The Buddha's wisdom emerges as he commands monks to adopt tranquillity in meditation and then radiate it outward. By actively practising the six principles of cordiality, the monks create: "A Warmth of Feeling, A Climate of Affection and Respect" that promotes togetherness, concord and unity among members of the Sangha. It lies in the Buddha's affirmation that the long-term harmony of the monastic community is built on a foundation of peaceful and ethical social relationships. Even when disagreement arises, the Buddha recommends



addressing it with the soothing influence of loving kindness and compassion, showcasing their power in transforming our relationships with others in the community (Kung, 2010).

The Buddha anticipated that disputes within the Sangha would be inevitable and provided detailed instructions in the Vinaya for resolution. In Buddhist monastic life, disputes arose over interpretations of Buddhist law, allegations of unskilful behaviour, and transgressions of the precepts, duties, and responsibilities. The Buddhist Sangha developed a framework of seven conflict resolution techniques, effectively pacifying fights in their communities (Werner, 2005). The implementation of these mechanisms demonstrates the community's adherence to the values of harmony and the welfare of the community.

Sangha Symphony: A Pathway to Dispute Resolution through Seven Steps

Developed during the past 2500 years, the 'Seven Practices of Reconciliation in the Buddhist monastic community' are evidence of a long tradition of dispute resolution (Friedlander, 2012). Conceived with the express purpose of repairing monastic bonds and maintaining harmony among Sangha communities, these practices emerge with conscious subtlety. When there is a conflict among monks, the first step is a meeting of the assembly, which begins with the practice "Face-To-Face Sitting", in which stupa meditation is practised. It involves monks sitting together, breathing, and having a willingness to support rather than confront. The arguing monks, along with key members, meditate silently, creating peace in the Sangha.

After that peaceful pause, a vital confrontation occurs in which the conflicting monks express feelings and share their pain with the community gathered in silence. The practice of "Deep Listening" becomes prominent, serving as an essential aspect of an aware Sangha. The whole community, trained in the art of compassionate listening, listens to what each monk says without taking sides (Somaratne, 2012). While conventional mediation parties talk to the mediator separately, the monks speak freely in the Sangha, with the whole community acting collectively as a mediator. This shared participation transforms participants into mediators representing the community's interest in conflict resolution (Tavachalee et al., 2021)

The process is anchored by a deep-listening session, which serves to address group anxieties and misunderstandings. A shift in collective understanding occurs. However, the way the Sangha engages with the practice further amplifies the collective nature of a solution, potentially disrupting it if one member is not in harmony with the others. While the monks pursue this journey of change, the Sangha experiences the power of mindfulness and collaborative conflict resolution. It highlights a profound approach that has been embedded in the history of the Buddhist community life (Insakorn, 2021). The convergence of mindfulness, community support, and shared accountability in conflict resolution reveals a Buddhist monastic tradition (Tanabe, 2022).

In conflict resolution, the art of active listening, which bears similarity to the Buddhist practice of deep listening, is a central factor of mediation. In Buddhist philosophy, listening (Savana or Suta) is more than the auditory act of hearing. It is a moral practice that involves receptivity, non-attachment, and empathy. "Deep Listening" is to listen with the intent of relieving



the suffering in the other without interruption or judging prematurely (Miller, 2015). Similarly, the *Samyutta Nikāya* states that wise listening (*Suta-Maya Paññā*) is an initial factor in the development of right understanding as it involves being receptive to others' viewpoints and feelings (SN 56.11). In mediation, this listening involves creating an environment where participants experience being listened to, acknowledged, and respected, which in turn diminishes hostility and opens the door to productive conversations. This communication tool is one that mediators exercise and provide for all participants, enabling productive discussion throughout the mediation process. Active listening goes beyond hearing; It is an empathetic interaction that conveys genuineness while paying complete attention to the process of communication. It is about "Reading Between the Lines" and letting all participants in the communication loop know that their views are being honestly recognised (Shaw, 2021).

Skilled in active listening, mediators communicate empathy and genuinely care about addressing the issues at hand. While mediators may interject in this process, as we have already done, re-articulating parts of the parties' stories to demonstrate understanding of the Buddhist practice of conflict mediation, the practice of deep listening in Buddhism takes a very different approach. In this case, the emphasis is on quiet listening with no immediate verbal response. Input into the Buddhist reconciliation process is postponed, reflecting the meditative nature of deep listening (Vijitha, 2019). Parallel to introductory mediation classes, where students are taught to actively listen and pay deep attention to the perspectives of others, the Buddhist model focuses on how responses can be both meaningful and generative, as well as mindful and reciprocal. Each approach acknowledges the power of authentic, deep listening from which understanding, empathy, and, eventually, peaceful conflict resolution can emerge. As the mediators and disputants engage in deep and active listening, they move closer to solving problems while building a thought-provoking and respectful communication culture (Kelly, 2023).

The second stage of the Buddhist reconciliation process is "Remembrance," in which the monks bring to memory the complex history and dynamics of the conflict and share them openly with the Sangha. This practice requires individuals to spend time in silence in contemplation before expressing their memories, allowing the origins of the conflict to be explored. The narratee, together with other members of the Sangha, promotes understanding through co-operation, while the narrator goes into minute details, contributing to a collective comprehension of the causes of the conflict. It is an important step because it helps both conflicting parties to gain deep insight into how their unskilful behaviour and thinking lead to the suffering in the conflict. Through this reflective aspect, greater self-awareness is achieved, and transformative pathways for future behaviour are identified to prevent recurrence. Such an approach is distinct from traditional mediation, which includes fact-finding interviews with each party separately, for the mediator's comprehensive assessment of the dispute. In contrast to the Buddhist approach, traditional mediation does not emphasise one's self-reflection on one's own behaviour during the conflict. It remains a process of information gathering rather than intentional and self-examination,



which is the fundamental approach of Buddhism, illustrating the subtlety and sophistication of the Buddhist method of conflict resolution (Kidron, 2021).

The third stage is the Sangha's assessment of the mental stability of both conflicting parties. Considering mental well-being as a factor influencing social cohesion, this assessment becomes essential. Once in the process, there is a revelation that one or both of the parties is mentally disturbed, potentially creating discord or unhappiness within the monastic community. The Sangha then expedites the decision-making process. In such cases, when the state of mind is too disturbed to remember the details of the conflict, the focus shifts to quickly re-establishing peace within the community. The pragmatic view is that the process must prioritise the welfare of the entire monastic body and promptly mitigate the disturbance caused by the quarrels involving individuals with compromised mental stability. The bottom line remains the peace and serenity of the group, along with sincere and purposeful conflict resolution (Makhumtup et al., 2024).

In the fourth stage, "Covering Mud with Straw" is performed, where both sides, whose mental conditions are sound, receive inspiration from the Buddhist Sangha. This procedure involves a mature monk appointed to speak on behalf of one party in front of the monastic community. In the Sangha, elder monks are revered teachers, and their words are taken seriously among the community. These senior monks also provide support and demonstrate kindness to the monks they represent while addressing the assembly, a strategic measure intended to diminish any remaining ill will and facilitate resolution. The practice is based on the metaphor of "Putting Straw on Mud", with the mud representing the quarrel or dispute and the straw symbolising the loving-kindness called *Maitrī* (Metta), which can settle such disputes. The elder monks subtly weave beneficial words and the essence of the Dharma to transform the battlefield into an encounter of understanding and compassion. Similar approaches appear in other religion conflict resolution methods. In Sulh, the *jaha* acts on behalf of the wrongdoer's family and issues an apology (Diab, 2016). As outlined in the biblical conflict resolution process, Christians bring community members to provide support (McElrea, 2001). This Jewish arbitration method (*Bitzua*) allows the parties to select their own judges (*Dayyanim*) who serve as their advocates (Zelcer, 2007). In mediation, lawyers may enter the proceedings to represent and argue on behalf of the parties. The commonality across this wide array of religious traditions is a recognition of the necessity for support during conflict resolution. By utilising elders, intermediaries, and spokespeople, all these religions have developed methods to offer guidance, understanding, and reassurance in the complex maze of resolution of conflicts (Sampson, 1997). This convergence of spiritual and civil perspectives reflects a common quest for understanding, peace, and justice in conflict resolution.

In the fifth stage of the reconciliation process, the Sangha holds a meeting where each monk openly engages in a "Confession of Self". This act reveals itself as a voluntary confession of one's faults and offences in the case. The stepping stone into the confessional dialogue is when a mendicant confesses publicly. The self-confession, then, is a kind of ritual resolution ceremony that is offered as an opening for the two parties to have a moment of self-reflection,



to say sorry, and to take responsibility for their actions. Everyone stands as one with the monks chanting, and they cheer and support the monks through the self-confession. Interestingly, senior monks have a major role in appeasing the disputing monks, stressing the communal norms of interpersonal tranquillity and amity (Arai, 2017). They point to a culture that emphasises the healing of hurts as a necessary part of communal health. The challenge to confess becomes an opening for deep self-knowledge and reconciliation. It allows monks to sincerely apologise and show they are serious about healing the damaged relationship. This self-examination is an exemplary model of accountability and represents the communal aspiration to make a place where conflicts are cared for attentively, encouraging a culture of openness, learning, and reconciliation among monastics.

In the sixth stage of the reconciliation process, a special committee consisting of impartial members examines all the nuances of a case. The special committee does not mention the number of neutral members. It can vary depending on the situation and participants. The members are designated following the tradition of democratic spirit and collective consideration that Buddhism has always cherished; Thus, minimising tendencies for prejudice while reflecting, by proportion in numbers, varying shades of opinion within the monastic or lay congregation. This investigative phase reflects the function of the mediator in mediation, where inquiry into the background is an essential prerequisite. Once the investigation is complete, the committee's findings are presented to the Sangha, or monastic assembly. After all, information on the report has been brought to the attention of the Sangha, the Sangha debates and puts the matter to a majority vote. The Decision is then announced to the whole community. Everyone in the assembly has officially accepted that the only option that remains open for the disputing monks is either to accept the assembly's verdict or leave the community. What is common, as a post-settlement practice, is to suppress further mention of the settled issue in monastic gatherings. This moderation is in keeping with the rigorous observance of the Buddhist monastic code, based mainly on the value of harmony and the common good. The ending of the conflict is a sealed matter, leading to a habitat where the old fight is not brought back up and forcing a focus on the future of harmony. This tactic respects resolution and reveres the value of communal harmony in functioning the complex weave of Buddhist life (Arai, 2017).

In the final stage on the path towards reconciliation, the most respected chief monks gather and announce a general pardon, a collective reunion sermon up to the wits of the monastic society. The quarrelling monks prostrate themselves towards their venerable seniors, using compassion and loving-kindness to bring reconciliation. This last act carries much weight as the reuniting force between the divided monks, bringing about a harmonious concord in the Sangha (Tanabe, 2011).



Insights of Buddhism on Dispute Resolution: What does Buddhism Offer the Field of Conflict Resolution?

Buddhism has been a doctrine of peace: Buddha was a mediator who sought to reconcile the divided, consolidate the fragmented, and bring peace (Singh, 2017). As religious founders such as Aaron, Christ, and Muhammad, the Buddha accepted that human conflicts, disputes, and misunderstandings are natural and inevitable consequences (Close, 2020). He did not preach grudges, but repeatedly cleared the slate. Instead of having a negative perspective towards conflicts, he considered them opportunities for spiritual reflection and meditation. The Buddha's Dharma contains the precepts of how to end suffering, lead a good life, and search for Enlightenment. The Vinaya contains ethical teachings and practices on issues related to the community and conflict, and consequently, its proper end. In Buddhist conflict resolution, the emphasis is on mindfully meditating on the roots of the conflict, one's part in it, and the suffering that follows. The aim is a fundamental transformation of mindset, heart, and thoughts.

There has been a tsunami of interest in law and dispute resolution regarding the use of mindfulness meditation, along with emerging paradigms inside the legal world. This confluence of principles culminates in the pragmatic environment of legal practice, and that is consistent with legal practitioners trained in negotiation and mediation. The centre of legal voice, mindfulness meditation, is increasingly playing a leading role as a means for lawyers in such practices. Their expressions highlight the tangible advantages of stress relief and the promotion of key professional qualities. These qualities (Attention, Creativity, Empathy, etc.) combined constitute a skill set beyond the traditional legal paradigm (Riskin, 2004).

This new method is to be found in the utilisation of a sophisticated "Understanding-Based Model" in mediation and conciliation within the legal framework. The model aims to foster deep understanding between opponents. A departure from coercive strategies, lawyers using this model serve as coaches, guiding a cooperative process to study creative outcomes (Riskin, 2013). Essential to the approach is the conscious move away from imposed compromises towards a conscious and respectful dialogue. Unlike top-down methods of resolution, this transformative paradigm is a model that promotes a journey in which participants in conflict draw from one another in order to construct their futures collectively. More than solving conflicts, this approach safeguards the respect of unique interpretations, leaving room for the promise of future relations. Within the broader scene of conflict resolution, the concept of awareness-based modelling is a testimony to the power of mindfulness and respect in dealing with the subtleties of human encounters (Riskin, 2009).

Buddhism, as a profound system of beliefs and practices, adds a different and inclusive dimension to the field of conflict resolution by proposing an alternative vision and a full range of ADR and peacebuilding. This unique method creates an atmosphere where all concerned are encouraged to listen and engage in respectful dialogue (Phan, 2016). It is this ethos that helps generate the conditions favourable to the investigation of solutions born of wisdom. Sharing the beliefs of the Dalai Lama, the exercise of inner peace is found in mindfulness exercises (Kabat-Zinn



& Davidson, 2012). If taken up by humanity, this interior change can yield peaceful families and human communities, which underpin world peace.

The theoretical framework of Meditation and Mediation

Mediation and meditation mutually engage in a rich theoretical sense. Meditation, a form of meditating, is the communication between consciousness and unconsciousness, frequently expressed and put into words via bodily awareness, often the breath (Nash et al., 2013). As described in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (Majjhima Nikāya 10), mindfulness practice transcends body awareness (Kāya) but also includes feelings (Vedanā), mind states (Citta), and mental objects (Dhamma). It enables an expression of a wisdom-filled guard that further informs and balances our involvement in conflict resolution. This increased attention to what is happening physically facilitates conflict resolution by allowing the body's responses to surface. Bringing rituals to mediation and meditation enhances the quest for peace. The two are working together in a way that leads to inner peace, which leads to outer peace. The orderly processes of meditation and mediation encourage a sense of balanced firmness of spirit, focusing on a world of prosperity and respect. Common ritual elements, including ritualised or consecrated spaces and facilitated discussions, reveal organisational symmetry in using these two educational strategies and how they guide students from solidarity toward reflection and change (Iacobucci et al., 2008). Evenness, neutrality, and indifference, cardinal principles in the meditative traditions, are acquired here to add to the responsiveness of mediators. A neutral state of mind is highly valued in many traditions because it makes the mediator effective. In particular, mindfulness meditation cultivates equanimity by decreasing subjective reactivity and promoting a more direct perception of reality (Grabovac et al., 2011).

Harmonising Mediation and Meditation: A Path to Effective Conflict Resolution

Synergy in Resolution: Integrating Meditation and Mediation

Meditation is an incredibly in-depth method of getting closer to reality, and makes meditation practices work much better. The fact that it can be integrated into everyday behaviour highlights its significance as a meta-technique in mediation, broadening their perspectives and refining their professional practices. In the Buddhist tradition, the idea of "Three Goods" in meditation indicates the progressive nature of meditation, from creating self-awareness in oneself to the creation of helpfulness for the individual, and leading with learning. With discernment, experienced mediators can employ meditation to navigate conflicts with clarity and compassion, which undoubtedly produces superior outcomes in dispute resolution (Roca et al., 2021).

Inception Insight: Igniting Motivation in Mediation

As we anticipate the mediation process, it is helpful to reflect on our desire to serve the parties involved and recognise that every individual has abilities and limitations (Including Ourselves). This kind of preliminary self-assessment is a helpful way to ground mediators before attempting to mediate.



Equilibrium Insight: Navigating Inner and Outer Realms in Mediation

By including meditation in mediation, the mediator can gain a clearer perspective of the overall situation. Meditation, as explained, allows a contemplative focus on one's train of thought without diminishing the mediator's involvement with the disputants (Matko & Sedlmeier, 2019). Meditation does not involve dissociation but rather a state of mindful awareness and relaxation, in which the mediator notices the various sensations, cognitions, and emotions accompanying a conflict, coming and going. This cultivated sense of presence, developed through consistent reflection, allows mediators to observe clearly and resiliently both external dynamics and internal responses. In this way, keeping the balance and the consciousness alert, the mediator can properly move from outside interactions to inner reflection without allowing either side to become biased or distracted. The purpose of such a mindfulness practice is to maintain a sense of equanimity in the face of conflict and to perceive the truth clearly and directly, without distortion or bias (Melchin & Picard, 2008).

Final Insight: Embracing Merit and Lessons in Mediation from Experience

After the parties have left the mediated process, mediators have resources available to them in post-mediation reflection, which forms a backdrop for mediators to think about what they bring to the mediation and dedicate the influencing results to social good. An unwavering commitment to change serves for mediators as a transformational vehicle that allows them to transcend the everyday dangers of guilt, regret, avoidance, and repression that may lurk in the "Inner Wilderness" of development. Where desired outcomes persist, the mediators may feel incompetent or worry about the continuation of the distress of the parties, or the preservation of their professional position may become a concern. Nonetheless, rather than avoiding it, meditation offers the potential for positive reflection and an opportunity for growth. In acknowledging constraints and accepting historical truths as they have been, mediators develop a sense of humility and resilience. Meditation teaches them to examine their behaviours without defence and to accept the feelings and realisations that arise. This reflective process, steeped in mindfulness, is a refocusing of their intention to strive forward with ever more loving kindness for the people in their care (Gale, 2017).

Limitations and SWOT Perspective

While introducing meditation into mediation offers the transformative possibility, it is also crucial to acknowledge the practical and systemic limitations apparent in legal systems today. For example, in Thailand, the Dispute Mediation Act BE 2562 (2019) defines the primary features of civil mediation. The Act does not cover all disputes, but is limited to certain types of disputes, with civil and commercial claims with a pecuniary limit up to THB 5 million, and excludes specific categories such as personal status, family rights, and immovable property disputes (Wongsawangsi, 2023). Under the law, mediators are required to have undergone authorised training and official certification in order to mediate at accredited or government-recognised mediation centres (Goh & Tangkiriphimarn, 2023). While this guarantees the quality and consistency of mediation as a practice, it may have the effect of excluding independent or community mediators who rely on more holistic or contemplative practices, such as Buddhist-influenced meditation.



This entails that even if the state-recognised mediation is standardised and professionalised, a community-based approach (Faith-Inspired or Led by Meditation) may not completely fit into the statutory legal framework. As a result, meditation practices influenced by Buddhist traditions may operate alongside, rather than from within, the formal justice system. Moreover, cultural pluralism and secular governance also influence the formal recognition of religious or contemplative cultural techniques in sanctioned ADR programs. Nonetheless, these community-based and faith-inspired models provide valuable psychological and ethical perspectives that might enrich formal ADR mechanisms. A fruitful possibility, however, is to include such meditative and ethical techniques in mediator training programmes.

SWOT Analysis of Integrating Meditation within Mediation Frameworks

Strengths

- **Holistic Conflict Resolution:** Integrates emotional regulation, mindfulness, and ethical awareness for greater understanding and long-lasting peace.
- **Emotional and psychological benefits:** Cultivating empathy, patience, and equanimity leads to mediators being more neutral and effective.
- **Harmonisation with Buddhist Ethics:** Principles of right intention, compassion (*Karuṇā*), and non-injury (*Ahiṃsā*) provide a strong ethical basis for dispute resolution.
- **Enhancement of Modern ADR:** It enriches traditional mediation, bringing about material, non-material, and psychological-relational interests.

Weaknesses

- **Limited Statutory Recognition:** Formal ADR legislation, such as Thailand's Dispute Mediation Act, B.E. 2562 (2019), does not specifically include faith-based or meditation-infused mechanisms.
- **Secular Objection:** In more pluralist societies, secular states may reject religious/spiritual perspectives.
- **Non-Standardised Training:** No structured educational process where meditation practices are required as part of the mediator qualification curriculum.
- **Risk of Misunderstanding:** While left without guidance, one might not recognise meditation for what it is, a cognitive, emotional, yet practical tool rather than a solely spiritual one.

Opportunities

- **Integration in Mediator Training:** Community-based, faith-inspired, and meditation-driven approaches should also be integrated into professional training to enable mediators to address present-day complex disputes on or around culture, identity, and emotion.
- **Cross-Cultural Innovation:** Provides culturally-appropriate approaches, particularly for cultures dominated by Buddhist or contemplative practices (e.g., South Asia and Southeast Asia).
- **Global Peacebuilding Frameworks:** Supports the UN SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) through restorative and non-violent modes of conflict resolution.
- **Collaboration Across Fields:** Helps us to rethink the relationship between law, psychology, and religious studies in developing ADR more broadly.



Threats

- **Institutional Intransigence:** As the legal system favours proceduralism, non-traditional practices might face resistance in being adopted.
- **Cultural Misalignment:** Meditation may not be desirable, dynamically relevant, or practical, in this non-Buddhist (or Secular) context.
- **Over-Spiritualisation:** Potential to water down the neutral or secular spirit of meditation if not offset by universal ethical principles.
- **Implementation Concerns:** In the absence of a universally accepted measure, evidence for the effectiveness of contemplative meditation may be anecdotal rather than empirically based.

Key Insights for Modern Mediators from the Buddhist Principles of Conflict Resolution

In exploring the overlay of mediation and meditation techniques as a dispute resolution mechanism in Buddhism, a number of notable lessons become evident, providing pertinent and valuable guidance for present-day mediators.

Modern mediation theory underlines the roles of psychological awareness, empathy, and ethical dialogue (Della Noce, 1999), all themes resonant with Buddhist teaching. Compassion (*Karuṇā*) corresponds to the mediator's role in cultivating empathy and understanding parties' deeper interests behind their positions. Mindfulness (*Sati*) promotes emotional regulation and presence, enabling greater impartiality and active listening, all essential skills in transformative and facilitative mediation models. Right speech (*Sammā Vācā*) parallels modern mediator ethics, including the commitment to honest, respectful, and goal-based communication. These principles are consistent with the transformative mediation framework that endorses moral engagement and relational empathy (Folger & Bush, 2014). The contemporary Mediation International instruments, such as the UNCITRAL Mediation Rules (2021) (Knieper & Haddad, 2023) and Singapore Convention on Mediation (2019) (Chua, 2019), remind us of the values of voluntariness, impartiality, and informed dialogue that are rooted in the Vinaya's pan-monastic mediation rules and traditions of consensus-based decision-making. In placing Buddhist knowledges into these contemporary frameworks, the literature underscores a shared concern for inner transformation, ethical communication, and sustainable peacebuilding between religious philosophy and legal practice.

Harnessing the Power of Mindfulness through Meditation:

One of the cornerstones of Buddhist meditation is the cultivation of mindfulness, the skill of being present moment by moment without judging one's thoughts, feelings, or sensations. This mindfulness is developed through techniques such as breath awareness and body scan. Modern mediators can employ these tools to enhance their mindfulness practice, ensuring they remain fully attentive and present during meditation sessions. Through cultivating presence, mediators help to provide a sanctuary for the disputant's expression and offer potential solutions from a wise and clear perspective (Bowling & Hoffman, 2000).



Cultivating Compassion and Empathy through Meditation:

Buddhist doctrines place value on developing compassion and empathy for oneself and others. Meditation practitioners can meditate to cultivate compassion and empathy. Modern mediators can employ meditation to enhance their compassion and empathy toward those involved in conflict. By demonstrating empathy and promoting a connection rooted in mutual respect, mediators can develop a rapport that builds trust and cooperation during mediation (Fulton, 2018).

Embracing Non-Attachment and Neutrality through Meditation:

In mediation, maintaining neutrality and detachment are key to evoking a sense of level-headed decision-making and trust between the parties (Cobb & Rifkin, 1991). Insight meditation, or Vipassana, emphasises that meditators observe thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations without reacting, realising they are transient. Building upon Buddhist themes of non-attachment, mediators can remain neutral and open-minded, free from prejudices or biases (King, 2023).

Nurturing Inner Calm and Equanimity through Breath Awareness and Mindful Meditation:

Buddhist meditation methods are effective methods for training the mind to be calm, collected, and equanimous, qualities that are indispensable for any successful conflict resolution (Sunandabodhi, 2024). With techniques like breath awareness and mindfulness meditation, meditators develop an ability to centre their attention on the present moment, fostering resilience in the face of adversity. Modern mediators who practise meditation can cultivate inner peace and calm, which can assist parties in generating resolutions that endure based on their needs and interests.

Integrating Eastern Wisdom with Western Practices:

As mediation evolves, more proponents argue that synthesising Eastern wisdom traditions and the Western conflict resolution practice is crucial. By integrating ancient and contemporary mediation methods, mediators can gain insights that enable them to resolve conflicts while addressing diverse party dynamics and cultural diversity (Chen et al., 2018). Mediators can develop an integrated and holistic approach to mediation that combines the best of both Eastern and Western traditions, supporting healing, reconciling, and sustaining peace.

Applying Buddhist Principles of Conflict Resolution to Contemporary Conflicts

The modern disputes across South and Southeast Asia are generally deeply layered, ranging from national security concerns to border disputes, trade disagreements, or ethnic insurgencies that are not adequately addressed by conventional adversary methods. By integrating Buddhist-minded meditation, a transformative and compassion-based framework exists that can introduce creative interest-based negotiation.

India-Pakistan Border Disputes

The border disputes between India and Pakistan stem from colonial legacies and political discourses that date back decades (Das, 2014). The Buddhist-informed mediation model can facilitate empathic listening and non-conflict conversation, favouring an understanding over accusation.



Practical applications on the ground where representative's express concerns, without attributing blame. This progressive trust-building approach refocuses from competitive distrust to collective security and the human good, consistent with a Buddhist model of peace that is grounded in compassion and wisdom.

Transboundary Water Conflicts - The Brahmaputra River

The rivalries over the Brahmaputra River between India and China highlight the contradictions between national interests and ecological interdependence (He, 2021). Through Buddhist ethical attention and compassionate consideration for affected communities, mediators can facilitate joint water management projects based on mutual benefits. Training mediators in meditation-based preparation decreases reactivity and helps them approach the table with calmness, allowing them to consider what will truly be sustainable, interest-based solutions that meet all parties' needs.

Trade Disputes - India and the United States

Trade diplomacy, especially between India and the U.S.A., often gets stuck on tariffs. Using mindful awareness can help "Keep Emotions in Check" when negotiating, thereby reducing the likelihood that the pressure of negotiation will hinder a clear and respectful interaction. This mindfulness-informed diplomacy fosters trust between the two countries, prevents escalation, and enables partnership-based agreements founded on understanding and long-term cooperation.

Ethnic Insurgencies in India's Northeast

Ethnic insurgencies in areas like Nagaland and Manipur can be addressed through Buddhist principles of dispute resolution. The Buddhist principles provide valuable practices for peacebuilding. Meditation-based dialogue and compassion training for mediators helps manage the volatility of emotions and lowers hostility. Mindfulness circles enable grievances to be expressed calmly, foster deep listening, and cultivate common human trust.

India - China Border Conflict

The simmering tensions between India and China in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh are representative of stubborn territorial pride, coupled with nationalist emotions (Verma, 2024). The shared Buddhist heritage can serve as a moral bridge, redefining disputes in terms of non-attachment and right intention. Practical steps, such as bilateral peace forums and meditation-based dialogues, can foster empathy and promote reflective encounters. In orienting the view toward not control but coexistence, these dialogues move us toward a Buddhist harmony of wisdom and compassion, opening paths to peace.

Thailand - Cambodia Temple Dispute

The Thai - Cambodian dispute over the Preah Vihear Temple is about control of a Buddhist holy site. Both countries can move beyond ownership and adopt co-management of the temple by practising non-attachment and shared stewardship. Conservation could be overseen by a joint management council based on mutual respect. Inter-monastic dialogues, under the guidance of senior monks, can reintroduce a common spiritual heritage to stakeholders, allowing the temple to be seen as a symbol of convergence rather than divergence. Thoughtful diplomacy, guided by



empathy and a proper understanding, can reimagine the site as a monument of reconciliation and peace.

Southern Thailand Insurgency

The ongoing insurgency in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, the three southernmost Muslim-majority provinces of Thailand, is largely due to a significant size ethnic Malay minority, which faces discrimination from the Buddhist Thai majority state. Using *karuṇā* (Compassion) and *upekkhā* (Equanimity, understood as non-reactive impartiality rather than indifference), mediators can contribute to dialogue across faiths and peacebuilding that restores. Teaching mediators' mindfulness-based conflict transformation contributes to emotional regulation and bias reduction. Integrating peace education into monastic and Islamic institutions with emphasis on interdependence, non-violence, and right speech fosters a new generation of leaders who respect diversity as in Figure 1.

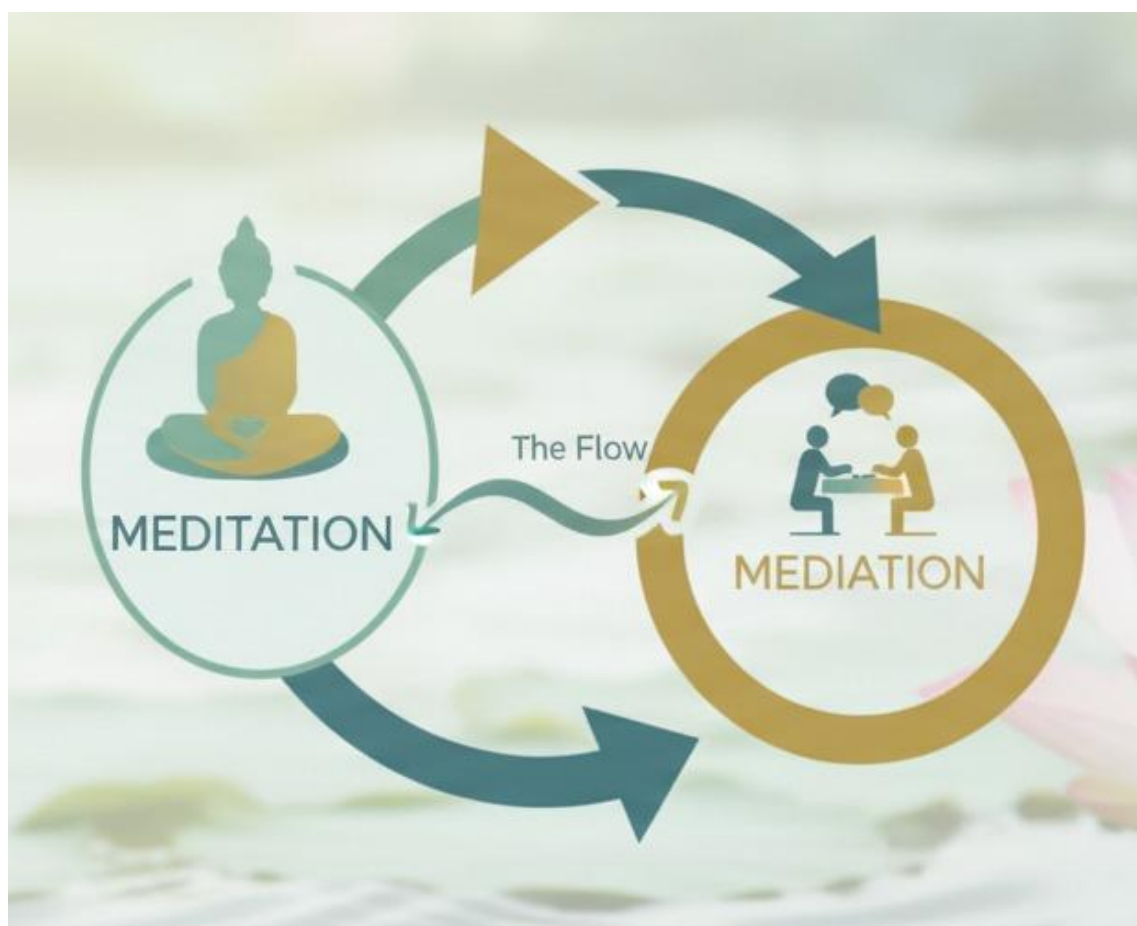


Figure 1 The Symbiotic Relationship between Meditation and Mediation

Conclusions

Buddhism outlines a unique mechanism for conflict resolution, which insists on restructuring the internal peace of an individual as the basis for a sustainable peace in society. It reframes conflict as a mode of development and supports mediators in attaining balance, perspective, and



compassion throughout the mediation process. It demonstrates that peace comes from awareness and balance within the individual. This study shows the utility of implementing Buddhist principles for modern ADR settings, from family and workplace conflicts to complex geopolitical conflicts, offering mediators hands-on skills to regulate heightened emotions, magnify empathy, and promote ethical conduct. These strategies may be applied as part of pre-mediation preparation or in-session as a means to keep attention and promote neutrality. An application of these strategies could be incorporated into mediator training programs so mediators can develop skills to address complex conflict issues in multicultural and multiple faith contexts. The study affirms that Buddhism-informed meditation is not a mere theoretical idea; It has real-world application for a lasting and psychologically informed approach to conflict resolution. This study suggests that parties' conscious and ethical presence within mediation maximises the chance of relational healing and sustainable agreements within relationships.

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

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Abstract

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Introduction

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



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

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

Objectives

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

Methodology

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

Development of Research Instruments:

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



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

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

Results and Discussion

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

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

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

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

Note: p < .01

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

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



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

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

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

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

Note: $p < .01$

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Originality and Body of Knowledge

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

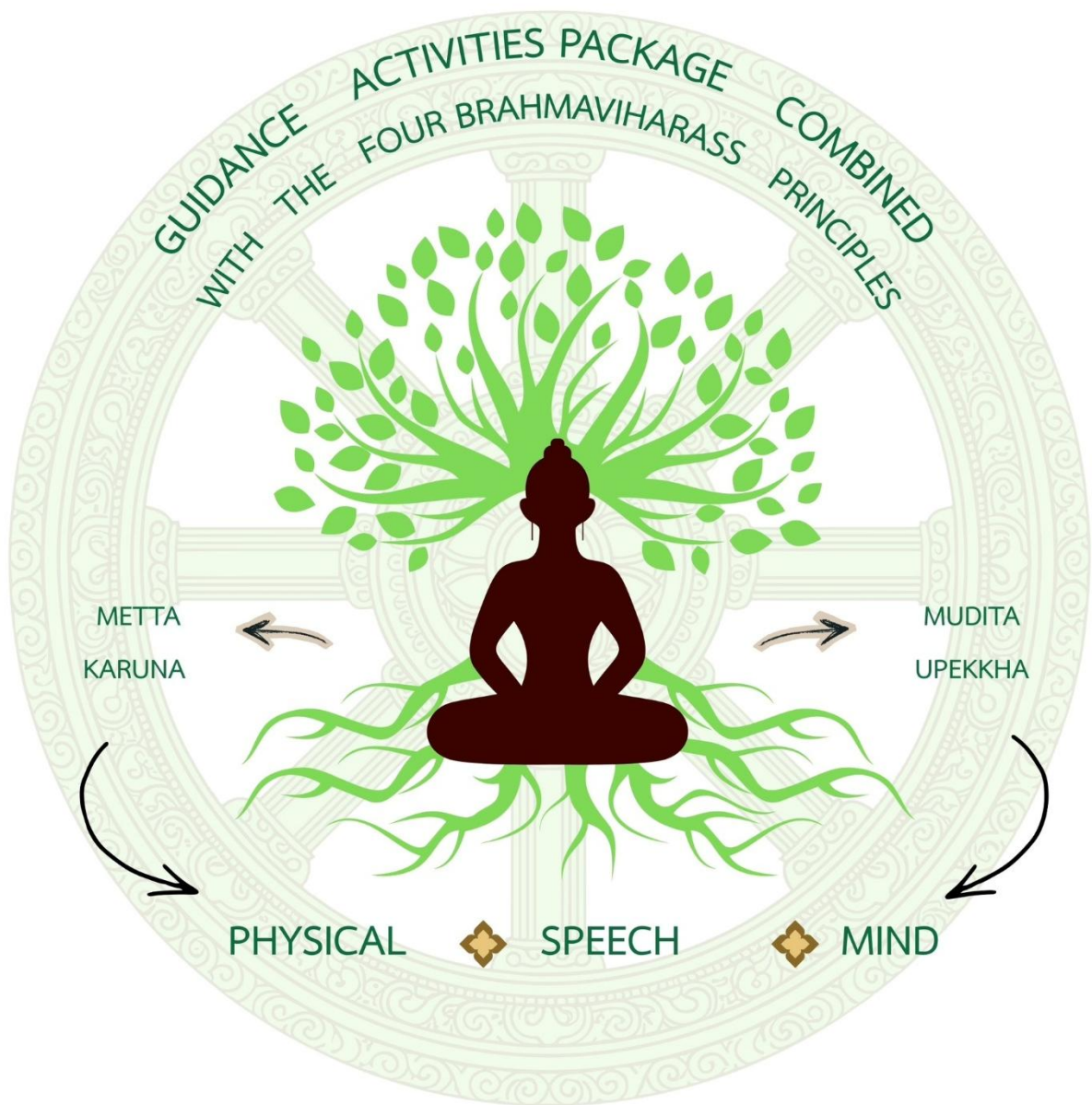


Figure 1 Model of Good Relationships with Friends According to The Principles of The Four Brahmaviharas



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Conclusions and Recommendations

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



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



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

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DHAMMA LANGUAGE-HUMAN LANGUAGE IN PHRA BODHIÑĀNATHERA (AJAHN CHAH SUBHADDO)'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Background and Objective: The transmission of something from the sender to the receiver, when aimed at creating understanding, uses language as a means of communication. However, worldly language that people commonly use often causes misunderstanding, just as the attempt to understand truth through language points to something deeper than what the senses can perceive. This research article aims to analyze how to understand the truth by Dhamma language and human language theory from the perspective of Phra Bodhiñānathera (Chah Subhaddo). This interpretation is from "48 *Thamthasēnā*" and "Human Language, Dhamma Language by Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu" that are shown about understanding the truth by distinction between human language and Dhamma language, which depend on conventional truth (*Sammutisacca*) and ultimate truth (*Paramatthasacca*).

Methodology: The study used a qualitative research methodology, employing documentary research. The data scope by analyzing and interpreting from two books was 1) "48 *Thamthasēnā*" of Phra Bodhiñānathera (Chah Subhaddo), a *Moṛadoktham* volume 37, published by the disciples of Wat Nong Pa Pong, Wat Pa Kanthi Dhammaram (Branch 147), and the Galayanadhamma Club that was published in 2016, which collects all his teachings and important ideas, and 2) *Human Language Dhamma Language by Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu*, published in 1971. The aim was to show how to understand the truth by analyzing and interpreting these books.

Main Results: This analysis showed that the distinction between Dhamma language and human language from the perspective of Phra Bodhiñānathera (Ajahn Chah Subhaddo), a prominent figure in modern Theravada Buddhism. Ajahn Chah's teachings highlight the limitations of human language, which is tied to sensory experiences and social norms, and its potential to obscure deeper spiritual truths. In contrast, Dhamma language seeks to convey the ultimate truth (*Paramatthasacca*) beyond conventional language's capacity. The study explores key concepts from Ajahn Chah's *48 Thamthasēnā* and *Human Language Dhamma Language by Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu*, emphasizing the importance of experiential understanding in Buddhist practice. This paper provided insights into how language shapes our understanding of spiritual truths and promotes a practice-oriented



approach to Buddhist teachings, enhancing our comprehension of Ajahn Chah's linguistic and philosophical contributions.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: This article is situated within the Application of Buddhism and the development of wisdom and morality, focusing on understanding the truth in everything by analyzing and interpreting it through the conventional truth (Sammutisacca) and ultimate truth (Paramatthasacca) theories, which are based on the Buddha's thought. A key part of Buddhist discussion is the difference between conventional truth (Sammutisacca) and ultimate truth (Paramatthasacca). The two types of truth in Buddhism are very important for understanding how language and reality relate to each other.

Conclusions: The study of this article contributes to analyze and interpret the truth from the literary works "*48 Thamthasenā*" of Phra Bodhiñānathera through the theories of the Dhamma language and human language by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu which found that humans could perceive truth through language, and language could be assisted to understand the truth. Understanding the truth was divided into two types: Conventional truth (Sammutisacca), the truth according to the state of things, and ultimate truth (Paramatthasacca), the fundamental and absolute truth. These truths were related to important theories that were to interpret and find the truth. Human language is the language commonly used to denote things perceived through the senses, and Dhamma language is used by ordinary language to explain the truth, but the speaker must have thorough training in Dhamma. Both theories were explained and presented through the perspective of Phra Bodhiñānathera.

Keywords: Dhamma language, Human language, Sammutisacca, Paramatthasacca, Phra Bodhiñānathera

Introduction

Language played a central role in shaping meaning and mutual understanding within society. As Adivatthanasit (2008) noted, language functions as a medium of communication, but in complex societies, it develops equally complex structures that can obscure deeper truths. Phra Bodhiñānathera (Ajahn Chah) addressed this language's challenge by distinguishing between the theory of human language and Dhamma language. This distinction is crucial for grasping Buddhist teachings, particularly the difference between conventional truth (Sammutisacca) and ultimate truth (Paramatthasacca). While human language is tied to sensory experiences and social contexts, often hiding spiritual insights, Dhamma language provides a way to transcend words and connect with the essence of reality. His works, especially *48 Thamthasenā*, reveal the philosophical foundations of this approach and highlight how his thought about interpreting by using language shapes our perception of spiritual truth.

Studying language is, therefore, essential for uncovering reality. Phra Bodhiñānathera emphasized that everyday language can conceal deeper meanings, leading to misunderstandings when separated from the practice of Dhamma, as Phra Bodhiñānathera (2005) stated that just knowing the words is not enough to understand the deeper truths. For instance, the word



"Death" may evoke ordinary associations that distract from its profound spiritual significance. To address this, he advocated for careful translation and interpretation that bridges human and Dhamma language. Fieldwork and textual study are necessary to connect linguistic expression with lived practice, ensuring that both conventional and ultimate truths are understood in ways that enhance one's connection to reality.

Yet language itself presents challenges in expressing truth. Subtleties and limitations often hinder the communication of complex Buddhist ideas, making it difficult to convey experiential knowledge central to Dhamma teachings. Phra Bodhiñānathera's distinction between conventional and ultimate truth illustrates how regular definitions restrict comprehension of deeper spiritual insights. Overcoming these barriers requires translation methods that respect the complexity of Dhamma language while making it accessible to practitioners. True understanding, he argued, goes beyond words and demands engagement with experience, which calls for interpretation that encourages real practice rather than mere intellectual grasp.

Phra Bodhiñānathera remains a key figure in modern Theravada Buddhism, shaping how Buddhist philosophy is taught and practiced worldwide. His ability to balance the complexity of Dhamma language with the simplicity of daily speech allowed him to communicate profound truths to both novices and experienced monks. With teachings spread across more than 300 branch monasteries, he demonstrated that words alone are insufficient without lived experience. By distinguishing between human and Dhamma language, he showed that spiritual truth must be realized through both practice and study. His writings, including *48 Thamthasenā*, continue to guide practitioners toward a deeper bond with the Dhamma, revealing how language, when properly understood, can be a powerful tool for transformation.

Objective

This research article aims to analyze how to understand the truth by Dhamma language and human language theory from the perspective of Phra Bodhiñānathera (Chah Subhaddo).

Methodology

The research in this study was qualitative research, utilizing documentary research methodology. The data scope was from two books: 1) "*48 Thamthasenā*" of Phra Bodhiñānathera (Chah Subhaddo), a *Mōṛadoktham* volume 37, published by the disciples of Wat Nong Pa Pong, Wat Pa Kanthi Dhammaram (Branch 147), and the Galayanadhamma Club, published in 2016. The reason for using this work in the analysis was that this book compiled Ajahn Chah's teaching on various occasions and transcribed his spoken words into written form. The book contained 721 pages and could be regarded as a systematic collection of his teachings and 2) *Human Language* Dhamma Language by Ajahn Buddhādāsa, published in 1971. This work served as the original reference for the theory of human language and Dhamma language, providing a guideline for interpretation.

The data analysis process was important for turning insights from Phra Bodhiñānathera's writings into clear meanings, especially in grasping the nuances of Dhamma and human languages. By using qualitative analysis methods, the researcher analyzed the way of using language to



make the real meaning of "48 *Thamthasenā*" to explore themes that showed similarities and differences between conventional truth (*Sammutisacca*) and ultimate truth (*Paramatthasacca*). This examination not only looked for repeating language patterns but also needed careful attention to details that showed how Ajahn Chah's teachings promote learning through experience, moving beyond simple word meanings. Additionally, combining ideas from Buddhist studies with linguistic theory would deepen the analysis, making sure data interpretations were rooted in both historical context and modern significance. Ultimately, this careful data analysis approach encouraged a deeper connection with Buddhist teachings, opening up opportunities for more academic research and translation work.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the key findings from analyzing 2 works, "48 *Thamthasenā*" of Phra Bodhiñānathera (Chah Subhaddo) and *Human Language Dhamma Language* by Ajahn Buddhādāsa. The study explored how to understand the truth.

The truth (Buddhism)

"Buddhism is What the Statement" "Knowing What is What" refers to, according to the entirety of the Pali Canon. This is because the fundamental teachings of the Buddha in the Pali Canon all serve to indicate "What is What" (Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, 2004). Learning according to the teachings of Buddhism means knowing what is what. Once we truly understand what something is, we can then practice correctly. Therefore, understanding "What is What" is known as the truth.

The truth in Buddhism is divided into two levels. As explained by Ngamchitcharoen (2018), to understand the concept of reality from the perspective of Theravada Buddhism, we must begin with the theory of two truths: Conventional truth (*Sammutisacca*) and ultimate truth (*Paramatthasacca*). Reality has multiple meanings or levels. At one level, we may say that something is real, but at another level, we may not be able to say it is real. This is similar to what we encounter in dreams. We cannot entirely say "It is Not Real" in all contexts because we can say "It is Real" in the sense of "Real Within the Dream" or "Real in the External World." Understanding these two truths will allow for accurate and clear comprehension of the concept of reality in Theravada Buddhism without confusion.

The term *Sacca* generally means truth, which is the belief that corresponds with facts or aligns with reality. The truth of all things exists at multiple levels or types, which can be divided into two main types:

1. *Sammuttisacca* (Conventional Truth) is a truth based on another truth that is more fundamental or has a greater degree of reality. In other words, it is a truth that can be reduced to another truth. This can be further divided into two types:

- 1.1 This truth comes from human roles, relationships, or the combination of other elements. For example, a "Teacher" arises from the role of teaching others. "Husband" and "Wife" come from the relationship between a man and a woman who are married. What we call "Human"



comes from the combination of elements known as the "Five Aggregates" or "Form and Name." These can be considered as having a degree of reality, but they can still be reduced to more fundamental truths. In this context, "Teacher," "Husband," and "Wife" can be reduced to human, while human can be reduced to the "Five Aggregates" or "Form and Name."

1.2 Humans create truth that is based on something, such as the truth of "Honor" or "Dignity." These are concepts that humans define as characteristics of statuses or conditions. For instance, we consider the status of being a minister as honorable. In reality, "Honor" has no independent existence; it is merely derived from the values of society, which attach to that status. Thus, the truth of "Honor" is something constructed by humans and is based on the political role of a minister.

Therefore, Conventional truth refers to a level of truth commonly understood and defined by the values of society that correspond to existing things but may not go beyond superficial understanding or mere terminology. It is not the ultimate truth. As Tankaew (2002) stated, lower-level truth or the truth as perceived by the world, also called "Worldly Truth or Lokiyasacca," is the term used to refer to things by people in the world so they can communicate and understand each other in daily life. For example, humans, animals, trees, and other things are named for mutual understanding but do not represent an absolute truth. They are only conventions created by people in the world to call things by certain names.

2. Paramatthasacca (Ultimate Truth) is the fundamental truth. It cannot be further reduced because things that possess this level of truth are not made from other components. For example, the term "Khandha" (The Five Aggregates) cannot be reduced to anything else. Rūpa (Form) is composed of the four great elements (Earth, Water, Fire, and Air), which are the basic components of matter or physical objects. Vedanā (Feeling), saññā (Perception), saṅkhāra (Mental Formations), and viññāṇa (Consciousness) are abstract phenomena that are not created from other components. The reason we summarize Vedanā, saññā, and saṅkhāra together with viññāṇa under "Rūpa and Nāma" is because the three mental aggregates are behaviors or functions of consciousness, not separate things. Therefore, the five aggregates or "Rūpa-Nāma" are the level of ultimate truth because they cannot be reduced to other things. Besides, Nibbāna (Nirvana) is a term used to describe the state of liberation or the extinguishing of defilements and the aggregates. It has no self or components to be further reduced. Nibbāna, as the ultimate truth, does not imply a thing that exists apart from the five aggregates, and Nibbāna is eternal.

Based on the concept of Paramatthasacca, when we talk about things such as humans, these things are real in one meaning, but they do not exist independently from the five aggregates or as eternal and unchanging entities.

This theory refers to the truth of existent things, which may appear in terms of human thoughts and understanding through language or the entities themselves. Ultimately, the deepest truth is Paramatthasacca, which relates to the five aggregates and Nibbāna as previously mentioned.

The Paramatthasacca can be compared to what is referred to as "The Ultimate Truth" or "Lokuttara," as it is a truth that ordinary humans have not yet attained or fully comprehended.



This level of truth cannot be known by perception but requires thorough and wise consideration (Yonisomanasikāra) until knowledge arises within the mind. (Tankaew, 2002) The understanding at this level leads to non-attachment, unlike Sammuttisacca, which involves knowing that something exists, or has been created, but ultimately not clinging to it. As Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu (2004) stated, the highest principle of Buddhism rejects attachment to all things, both those that are lovable and despicable, which ordinary people are infatuated with. It even rejects attachment to good and evil. One is not deluded by either goodness or badness, thus freeing the mind from all things and purifying it from all coverings.

The purpose of studying the truth of Buddhism is to understand and practice it correctly. In this way, the truth at the level of Paramatthasacca allows us to understand reality profoundly, changing our perspective on the world and leading to non-attachment. This is a deeper understanding of the truth of the world.

Human Language

"Human Language is The Worldly Language, But It is the Language of a Person Who Does Not Know Dhamma." "Human Language Follows Material Ways, As Felt by Ordinary People, and Relies on Material Things as Its Basis, Not on Dhamma. Thus, It Speaks Only of Material Things, Speaks Only of The World, and Speaks of Things Seen with The Eyes of Ordinary People" (Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, 1971). In the book *Dhamma Language-Human Language*, the definition of human language is explained in several places. From the two quotes before is one of many places where he said. Basically, the two terms, human language and Dhamma language, are different, but I will first discuss human language.

In modern terms, one might say it is the language of physics, which relies on material things, a physical way of speaking, following the methods of physics. The language of physics is the worldly language, the human language that is commonly spoken based on material things. (Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, 1971).

As referenced above, Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu categorizes language into two levels. The first level, which will be discussed initially, is "Human Language." This language level refers to the language that describes the state of the world in material terms, or what can be perceived by the senses. According to Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu, this language focuses on physics, emphasizing material objects in nature. It parallels the science of physics, which studies natural phenomena that humans can perceive, using sensory perception as a means of investigation.

From above, it is found that language plays an important role in revealing reality, or that "Truth Resides in Language." Language serves as a tool for achieving a shared understanding of truth and for relating it to external phenomena, as confirmed through sensory perception. In this respect, such truth can be accepted as real or as something that truly exists, in accordance with the concept of human language, as Jackson (2013) stated, "If Readers Knew from Their Experiences with Physical Objects Through Their Five Senses, They Would Interpret the Sutta in Terms of Human Language."



Besides, Phra Bodhiñānathera (Chah Subhaddo) (2016) explained the nature of impermanence by using human language, which he stated, "Sometimes A Fruit Tree, Such as A Mango Tree, Has Already Produced Blossoms, But When the Wind Blows, The Blossoms Fall While They are Still Flowers. In Some Clusters, Small Fruits have Already Formed, Yet the Wind Blows Them Off, and They Fall Away as Well. Human Beings are the Same. Some Die While Still in The Womb; Some are Born and Live for Only Two Days Before Dying; Some Die When They Have Just Reached Youth. When One Reflects on People and on Fruit, One Sees Impermanence."

From Ajahn Chah's style of language use, it is evident that he employs worldly language, or human language, to explain truth through things that actually exist, and the truths he describes appear in accordance with conditions as perceived by the senses.

Another of his descriptions, "The Buddha Declared That He Would Not Be Born Again in Any Realm of Existence." He taught us not to be born again, because birth is suffering. Suffering arises because one is born, and contemplating and clearly seeing the nature of birth is therefore essential, for it is birth that gives rise to all forms of suffering. However, this does not mean that birth refers to the physical body being born, when one is delivered in a hospital, "That is What is Conventionally Called Birth" (Phra Bodhiñānathera (Chah Subhaddo), 2016).

When considered from the perspective of human language, birth in Ajahn Chah's view refers to physical birth: Going to a hospital and being delivered is regarded as birth. In this sense, birth as understood in human language can be comprehended in this way. In reality, however, birth is not limited to a hospital; Being born at home, in a pavilion, or even in a taxi is also considered birth. As defined in legal terms, once a child is delivered and has breathed, it is counted as a birth as well.

Truth resides in language and serves as a tool for achieving mutual understanding of reality. The articulation of truth according to phenomena as they arise within familiar environments functions to preserve factual accuracy. In one sense, this implies that if worldly language were not real, comprehension would be impossible. Ajahn Chah acknowledges the necessity of such language, for in disseminating the Dhamma, although he realizes the profound truth that resists articulation, he must nevertheless endeavor to convey the ultimate reality to those he encounters through the language of the world. This affirms worldly matters in a straightforward manner. Hence, human language operates as a medium that enables comprehension of truth at the level of sensory perception and everyday life.

Dhamma Language

In addition to human language or the language spoken by ordinary people, there is another type of language known as the Dhamma language. Dhamma language is also spoken by humans, but it is derived from seeing and understanding the true nature of Dhamma. It is different from human language. "This is Called Dhamma language" (Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, 1971).

The language used in the Dhamma is similar to ordinary language. However, if there is no clear distinction between the two concepts, ordinary people might not see the difference and might not pay attention to Dhamma language at all, as human language can convey meaning just the same.



This might lead to the misunderstanding that the Dhamma language is not meant for people and is only for monks. However, Dhamma language can be understood by all people; It is important to emphasize once again that the speaker must truly understand or be clear about the Dhamma. In other words, they must have realized or seen the true Dhamma to communicate the truth accurately.

Dhamma language is about the abstract and the unseen that is not related to material objects. One must have the wisdom to perceive these abstract concepts in order to speak and give their meanings properly. Therefore, it is spoken only among those who have understood the Dhamma. This is the Dhamma language, an abstract language that transcends material objects (Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, 1971).

Further explanation of Dhamma language from the perspective of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu (1971) states that, "The Language That the Opposite to Physics is Metaphysics," which goes beyond the scope of Physics. It has its own way of speaking, known as the Metaphysical way of speaking. Therefore, "It Can Be Briefly Said That There Are the Language of Physics and The Language That Transcends to Physics." This point can be understood through a branch of philosophy known as Metaphysics.

To understand metaphysical language, it is necessary to rely on the use of words whose meanings may not be entirely clear but are sufficient for comparison and comprehension. The reason for using the term "Comparison" is that such words are abstract nouns, for which providing explanations through direct or completely precise language is difficult to achieve.

Some matters are difficult to understand if the person explaining has not personally experienced them. An example of this is the story that Ajahn Chah cited from Zen Buddhism in his teaching on the "Two Aspects of Truth," which concerns contemplation of the mind or the cultivation of concentration in order to perceive reality as it truly is. He explained it as follows:

One day, Zen monks were sitting together in a meeting. A flag planted outside was fluttering back and forth. Two monks began to question why the flag was moving. One said it was because of the wind; The other said it was because of the flag itself. Each argued while clinging to his own view. The teacher then concluded that both were mistaken, because in reality there is neither a flag nor wind (Phra Bodhiñānathera (Chah Subhaddo), 2016).

This teaching approach differs from that of the Buddhist traditions commonly practiced in our country. Therefore, the example given by Ajahn Chah helps to illustrate how difficult concepts can be explained more clearly. In this regard, distinguishing what is what, what is real and what is not, requires examining the root cause. From the example, it is found that the teacher ultimately replied that there is nothing at all, because this ultimate truth is what resolves the problem. If one assumes the existence of a flag, there must be wind; If one assumes the existence of wind, there must be a flag. In this way, the issue can never be brought to an end. This arises from the conceptual construction of "Wind" or "Flag," which therefore must be cut off or let go, resulting in the realization that there is nothing at all.

As he concluded, "In Emptiness, The Reaper Cannot Keep Up; Birth, Aging, Illness, and Death Cannot Keep Up. Thus, The Matter Comes to An End" (Phra Bodhiñānathera (Chah Subhaddo), 2016).



Dhamma language may seem difficult to understand because it consists of abstract terms used for explanation, or even explanations of abstract nouns through various words or meanings. Nevertheless, it is not something that is too difficult to comprehend.

The language that further facilitates the realization of truth is the Dhamma language. Yet, in this sense, Dhamma language is not something extraordinary or beyond the limits of human perception. It remains a language spoken by human beings, similar to ordinary language, but it possesses a distinctive quality insofar as the speaker must have undergone a process of understanding and realization of the Dhamma. Ajahn Chah therefore emphasizes the use of worldly language and draws upon elements from the environment to explain, thereby fostering comprehension of Dhamma language. This is achieved through the use of metaphor and analogy, enabling those unfamiliar with the Dhamma to grasp its meaning. Nevertheless, access to this language necessarily requires both an understanding of language itself and a profound engagement with the Dhamma.

Discussion

This study suggests that language plays a crucial role in the process of understanding truth. However, comprehending truth through language is complex, as it develops in relation to social contexts, and the structures of language in use appear insufficient for attaining deeper levels of understanding. Nevertheless, linguistic knowledge and competence remain essential for adaptation and self-development in the pursuit of truth. Across all times and eras, what human beings ultimately seek to know in its fullest sense is truth (Adivatthanasit, 2008); (Lynch, 2005).

Interpretation of Ajahn Chah's works can be regarded as a valuable aid in understanding truth through language. Although Ajahn Chah repeatedly emphasizes that deeper realization of truth cannot be achieved solely by means of linguistic expression (Phra Bodhiñānathera, 2005), analytical engagement with his writings, which compile teachings from diverse contexts, serves to enrich and deepen comprehension of truth. However, the interpretation of Ajahn Chah's works does not constitute the creation of new definitions but remains grounded in Buddhist teachings. It aligns with Buddhist philosophical interpretations that regard truth as a dynamic process of dependent arising rather than as a fixed abstraction (Kenaphoom et al., 2024). This interpretive approach facilitates understanding of the practical transition from *Sammuttisacca* to *Paramatthasacca*, as articulated within Theravāda epistemology (Tankaew, 2002); (Ngamchitcharoen, 2018).

Therefore, the approach to understanding truth is grounded in interpretation and analysis based on this foundation, through two key theoretical frameworks: Dhamma language and human language. Considering truth through these two perspectives enables a distinction between understanding mediated by language and understanding that transcends linguistic limits. In summary, human language facilitates comprehension at the level of sensory perception, whereas Dhamma language enables comprehension at a level beyond the senses. Following this interpretive orientation cultivates the capacity to apprehend truth in a systematic manner.

This study provides a framework for approaching the understanding of truth; However, it is limited to a textual interpretation. From the theory of Dhamma language, genuine



comprehension of truth through this method requires deep training or meditative practice, without which truth cannot be fully apprehended. Such experiential engagement would enrich the study with insights derived from practice. Nevertheless, this work serves as an initial stage of inquiry, offering a cautious interpretive approach toward understanding truth.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

This finding contributes a new way to analyze the truth. Basically, the understanding of truth in the perspective of Buddhism is divided into two types: *Sammuttisacca* (Conventional Truth), which refers to the roles we assume, and *Paramatthasacca* (Ultimate or Fundamental Truth), which is regarded as superior because it cannot be reduced further. Buddhism perceives and affirms truth in the world at two levels of cognition and comprehension: The conventional truth, which is constructed to serve the role of mutual communication, and the ultimate truth, which is considered more genuine, more fundamental, and which enables liberation from the conventions that are otherwise held.

However, this article presents another way to make it clear to understand the truth, which, based on the works of Phra Bodhiñānathera, is an interpretive approach through the theory of human language and Dhamma language that are connected to the principles of seeking truth as previously discussed. This serves as a guideline for everyone to consider and trace the truth. In terms of human language, it relates to the level of sensory perception, or worldly truth that we commonly experience, resulting in a superficial understanding of truth. Yet, to comprehend truth at a higher level, one must engage in practice and cultivate deeper experiences beyond ordinary sensory perception, which enables a more profound understanding of ultimate truth (Dhamma language) as shown in Figure 1.

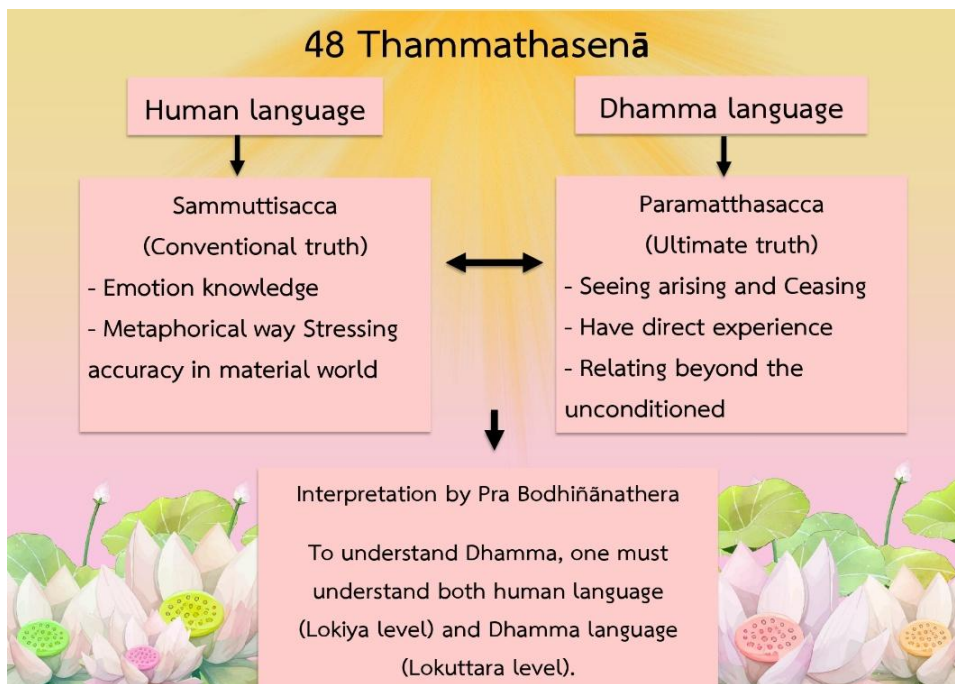


Figure 1 A Conceptual Foundation of the Truth by the Two Languages



Conclusions and Recommendations

This study advances an interpretive approach to the works of Ajahn Chah as a means of accessing truth, demonstrating that his writings consistently seek to cultivate an understanding of truth grounded in the Buddhist framework of *Sammuttisacca* (Conventional Truth) and *Paramatthasacca* (Ultimate Truth). The process of attaining truth is situated within a fundamental path that requires not only intellectual comprehension of doctrinal principles but also sustained practice informed by a pragmatic orientation. The principal scholarly contribution of this research lies in its classification and analysis of truth through two interpretive frameworks "Dhamma Language and Human Language" which serve to guide reflection and facilitate deeper engagement with truth. Nevertheless, the study is limited by its reliance on documentary analysis and the absence of fieldwork; Incorporating empirical methods, such as in-depth interviews with prominent monks on linguistic interpretations of truth, or collecting perspectives from practitioners of Ajahn Chah's teachings, would enrich the interpretive dimension. Furthermore, systematic categorization of vocabulary according to the theories of human and Dhamma language would enhance the clarity and concreteness of the findings.

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

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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.

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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 Thittila (Setthila) Aggamahāpandita, 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 (Kuṇḍa-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 (Ñānamoli & 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 Āgamanīyapaṭipadamṃ 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.

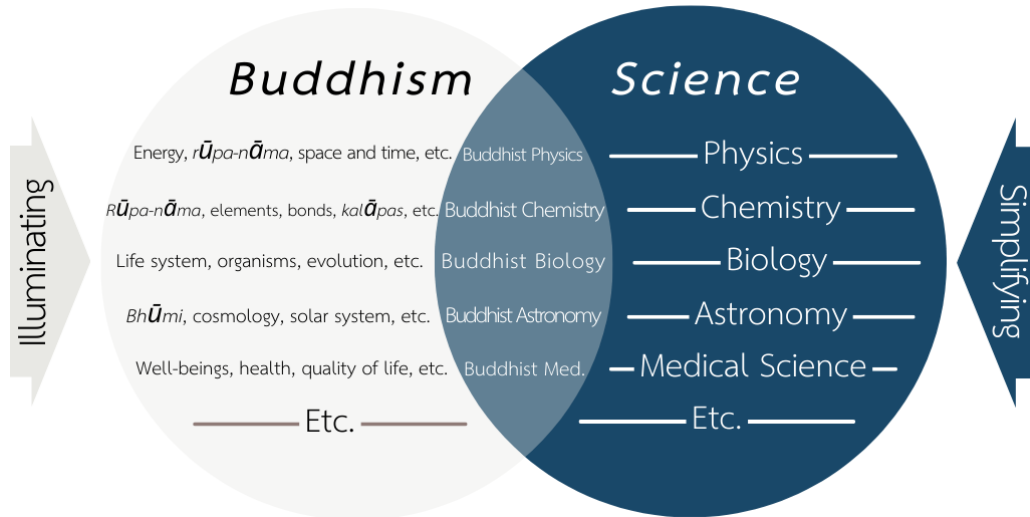


Figure 1 Third Principle: Integrating Buddhism and Science Reciprocally

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-khandā) 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 Karma), 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.

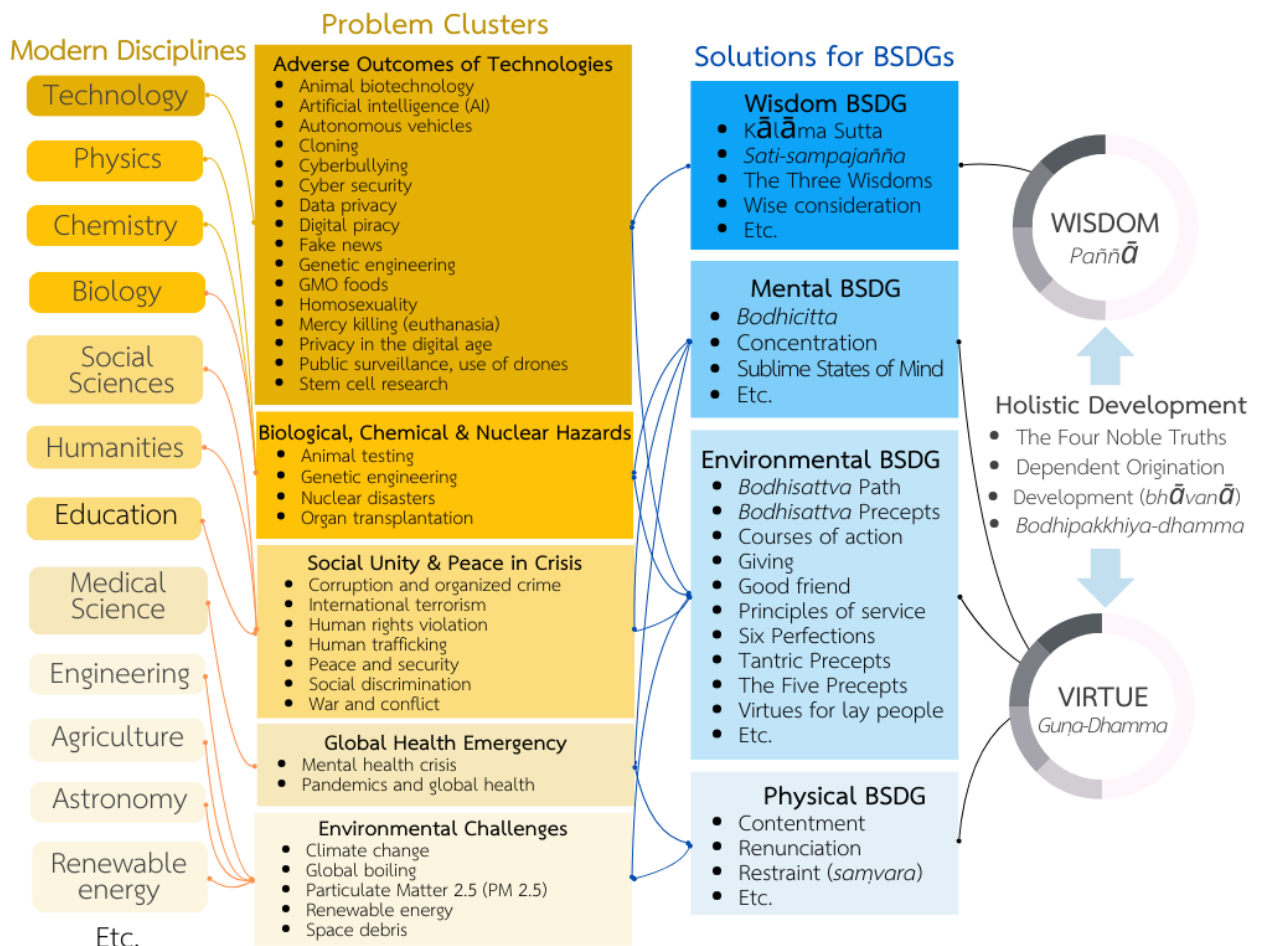


Figure 3 Seventh Principle: Problem-Solution-based Holistic Integration

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. "Yāvakiṅvañca Me Bhikkhave Imesu Catūsu Ariyasaccesu Evantiparivaṭṭaṃ Dvādasākāraṃ Yathābhūtaṃ Ñāṇadassanaṃ Na Suvisuddhaṃ Ahoṣi..." (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 twelfold 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 (Samvara), 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 Kāḷāma 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 (*Pūraṇākāra*) refers to (a) the act, work, or process of unification (*Ekodibhāva*), 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.

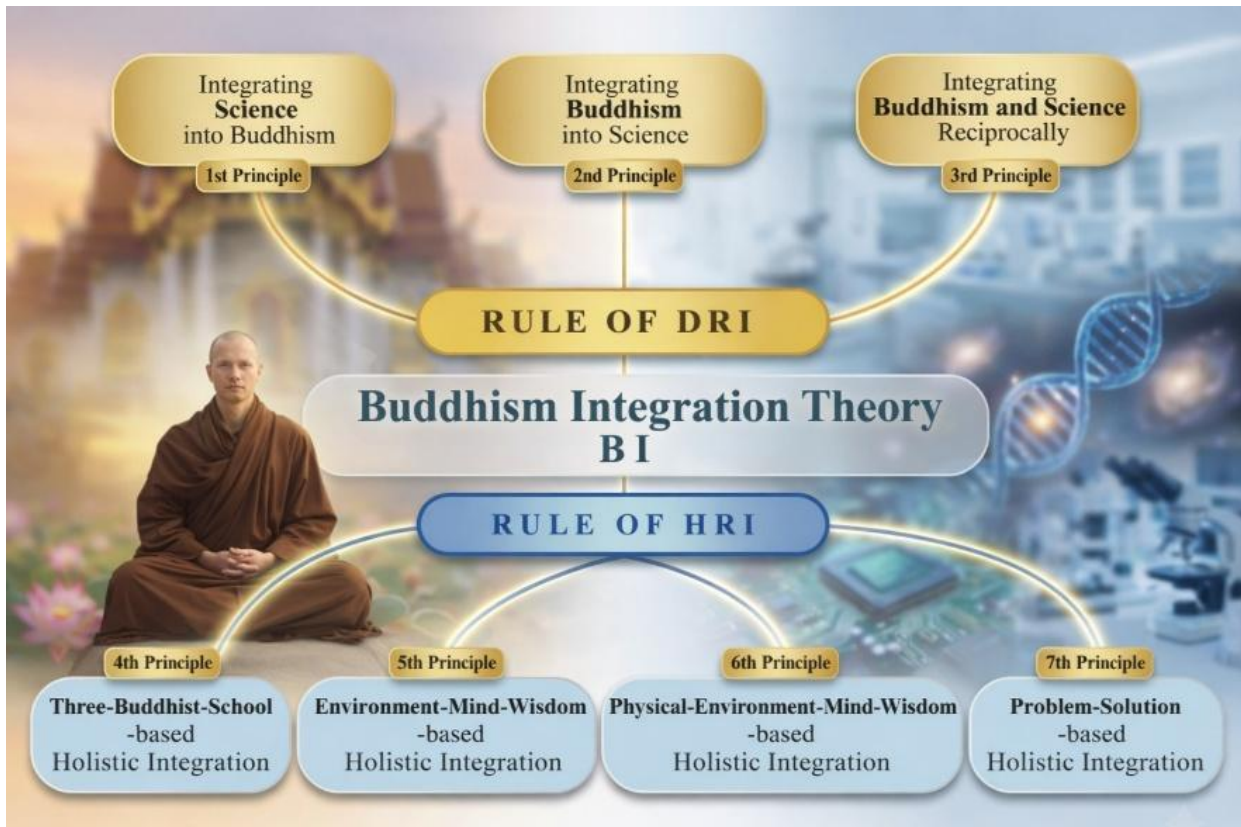


Figure 4 The BI Theory and its Rules and Principles

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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EXPLORING HOW BUDDHIST NETWORKS ENCOURAGE MENTAL HEALTH CARE: PATHWAYS TO BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES IN URBAN THAILAND

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Abstract

Background and Objective: The challenges of mental health problems in Thailand require collaboration from various social institutions. However, studies examining the role of Buddhist institutions in addressing mental health problems through participatory approaches remain limited. Moreover, previous studies linking social networks with mental health issues have suggested potential pathways for ensuring comprehensive healthcare at multiple levels. This article aimed to examine the relationship between social networks and mental health care, focusing on the role of Buddhist institutions as initiators of community-based support networks.

Methodology: Drawing on action research, this study examined the relationship between social networks and mental health care across four provinces: Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, and Phuket. Data were collected through focus groups, workshops, and lessons-learned reviews that reflected the stages of action research. Content analysis was subsequently employed to analyze the data and synthesize the findings. Action research was adopted because it facilitates purposeful social change and aligns with the objectives of this study.

Main Results: Action research conducted across the four sites led to the development of supportive social networks for mental and cognitive well-being grounded in Buddhist principles, with each initiative shaped by its local context. In Bangkok, a model was developed that integrated Buddhist teachings with artistic processes and counseling activities led by monks and youth volunteers from Satri Si Suriyothai School. The initiative enhanced youth attitudes toward Buddhism, strengthened civic-mindedness, and resulted in the establishment of a collaborative network recognized by city policymakers. In Chiang Mai, social innovation emerged through the "Jarigano" coffee brand, a collaborative initiative between Dhamma-jārika monks and local youth. The project generated employment and income for community members while contributing to psychological stability. Profits were reinvested to support Buddhist outreach and community-based activities. In Khon Kaen, a Buddhist university collaborated with public health agencies and Village Health Volunteers (VHVs) to support older adults. The initiative reduced stress and anxiety among



elderly participants, strengthened social cohesion, and contributed to the establishment of a community health learning center. In Phuket, cross-sector collaboration among the sangha, public health authorities, and the police created a protective mental health framework for youth. Young participants developed greater awareness of drug-related and legal risks while also practicing mindfulness to enhance self-regulation and emotional resilience.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: This article is situated within the field of Applied Buddhism, examining how Buddhist principles are translated into social action through the framework of the Four Sangahavathu. It also highlights the role of Buddhism in fostering the development of wisdom and morality, which underpin the ethical orientation of these practices. *Dāna* is reflected in the creation of networks that enable community participation and the sharing of emotional support. *Piyavācā* is expressed through persuasive and unifying communication that encourages community engagement. *Atthacariyā* is embodied in concrete activities carried out for the collective good, helping alleviate psychological distress and strengthen communal well-being. Finally, *Samānattatā* is demonstrated through sustained collaboration among multiple sectors in supporting the mental health of community members.

Conclusions: The study demonstrates that religious leadership and the monastic community play a significant role in strengthening social capital and fostering meaningful collaboration among diverse network partners. The application of Buddhist principles through practical activities not only supports emotional and cognitive healing but also contributes to structural transformations, including influencing public policy and developing socially oriented business models. These findings suggest that religious networks can serve as effective and sustainable actors in addressing community mental health challenges.

Keywords: Social Capital, Buddhist Institutions, Mental Health, Urban Areas, Thailand

Introduction

The notion of supportive social networks is considered in relation to mental health and the urban environment. Cockerham (2024) shows that the urban environment can affect an individual's mental disorders, for example, anxiety, depression, and personality disorders, which are related to less supportive social networks and less social interaction in neighborhood living. Regarding urban populations, overcrowded housing as a socioeconomic factor reflects urban population density and contributes to an individual's alienation and increased risk of mental disorders resulting from urban life. This article particularly examines the role of Buddhist institutional networks in supporting mental health care in urban settings. It argues that these networks foster individual mental resilience through the long-term accumulation of religious capital (Sasiwongsaroj et al., 2014); (Wiist et al., 2012); (Zhang et al., 2022). In Thailand, the social networks of Buddhist institutions have become an important mechanism for spatial access to health care practices (Jearajit et al., 2022); (Pornsiripongse et al., 2014).



Thailand places great importance on promoting the good health of Thai people in various dimensions, particularly through government policies. However, Thai society still faces many challenges regarding health disparities, especially in urban areas (urban health). Urban health reflects the relationship between urbanization processes and the health of urban populations. Diverse groups of people, social backgrounds, and cultures present challenges to comprehensive care. Furthermore, there remain gaps in healthcare access for people with NCDs, mental illnesses, well-being, consumption, access to public services, and the living conditions of urban society (Iamtrakul & Chayphong, 2023); (L-Y. Lim et al., 2009); (Panyachit, 2025). In this context, this study pays particular attention to mental illness as an important issue that should be examined through the perspective of social networks.

Consequently, considering mental illness as a condition related to mental well-being, which is closely connected to family and social relationships in everyday life, it is also necessary to recognize the influence of digital technology on mental well-being. Mental health issues are increasingly associated with generational aspects, such as Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), stress from living in the toxic online world of social media, and the effects on individuals after being exposed to violent media. Therefore, any consideration of mental well-being, which is related to mental illness, should also incorporate the dimension of digital well-being (Suavansri et al., 2022); (Thianthai & Tamdee, 2024).

Evidence from a mental health survey conducted by the National Statistical Office shows that the average mental health of Thais falls within the established standards for mental well-being. However, the social determinants of health indicate that urban residents tend to exhibit lower mental health compared to those in other areas. In terms of age demographics, older adults report better mental health than children and working-age adults. Additionally, factors such as educational level and gender have been found to correlate with mental health outcomes. Notably, within the specific research areas, only Chiang Mai province reported an average mental health score higher than the national average (National Statistical Office, 2021). Moreover, the mental health of the Thai population was significantly at risk during the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in relation to psychological stress, mental disorders, burnout, and increased rates of suicide stemming from the loss of social and economic status (Baker & Phongpaichit, 2021); (Ruengorn et al., 2021); (Wun'Gaeo & Wun'Gaeo, 2021). Several reviews further revealed that urban residents faced considerable social distress due to disruptions in the economic activities of the urban working class. These phenomena collectively contributed to a sense of psychological insecurity among city dwellers, leading to heightened instances of mental illness and suicidal behavior (Pongsawat, 2024); (Tangopasvilaisakul, 2022).

In response to these challenges, academics have proposed various solutions to enhance mental health resilience, particularly through the utilization of social networks as mechanisms that facilitate the care and promotion of mental well-being. These networks represent the relationships between individuals and their social connections, which significantly influence individual health outcomes (Eliksson, 2011); (Ferlander, 2007); (Snel et al., 2022). Within this



perspective, social networks associated with Buddhist institutions are particularly significant, as they play a crucial role in promoting health through their capacity to mobilize various resources for mental health activities. These institutions also utilize essential Buddhist principles that resonate with the community, thereby fostering acceptance and support from local residents (Jearajit et al., 2022). At the same time, several studies have demonstrated a relationship between Buddhism and mental health. Buddhist concepts and teachings serve as driving forces that encourage practices in daily life for maintaining good mental health, often emphasizing mindfulness in living and careful judgment in decision-making. In addition, Buddhist activities themselves help reduce stress and anxiety, such as meditation, listening to Dhamma teachings, and walking meditation (Cheng & Tse, 2015); (Pholphirul & Srijamdee, 2025); (Shonin et al., 2016).

Hence, this paper addresses the role of social networks, with Buddhist institutions serving as pioneers in organizing activities that alleviate mental health risks in Thai society. It draws upon Bourdieu's concepts of social networks and social capital, highlighting how social capital is cultivated through the mobilization of Buddhist institutions to foster collaborative groups that enhance mental security amid urban stress and technological dynamics. Moreover, the researchers expect that this study will contribute to policy implementation related to the development of mental well-being through the integration of collaboration among Buddhist institutions, communities, and relevant social networks. Such collaboration may help improve mental health-related quality of life in an appropriate manner. At the same time, the findings of this study can be further applied and adapted to community contexts that face challenges or that are important for strengthening mental well-being.

Objective

This article aimed to examine the relationship between social networks and mental health care, focusing on the role of Buddhist institutions as initiators of community-based support networks.

Methodology

This study employed action research to demonstrate the relationship between the social capital of Buddhist institutions and mental health care. The data for this research article, covering the period from November 2022 to October 2023, were collected as part of a study funded by the Office of Organizational Health Promotion through the Health Promotion Fund (Thai Health) and the Development of Area Management Systems and Networks of Health Organizations Based on Buddhist Principles Project. Before the research procedures were initiated in accordance with the action research framework, approval was obtained from Srinakharinwirot University's Ethics Committee for Human Research (SWUEC/E-296/2565).

Action research was a research approach that aimed to promote social change and achieve problem-solving goals while emphasizing stakeholder involvement. As a result, action research provided opportunities for individual experiences to contribute to societal change and problem-solving (Daniel, 2010); (Rajaram, 2007).



Focus groups were the primary data collection method, covering the whole research process. A total of 30 stakeholders per research site, including monks, representatives from relevant agencies, and community members directly affected by the project, were selected through purposive sampling. The selection criteria included individuals who had participated in social activities with Buddhist institutions for at least one year, were in good physical health, and had given informed consent to participate in the study. After gathering data from stakeholders within the Buddhist organization network during the planning stage, the information was examined to identify issues related to mental health development. The identified difficulties were addressed by organizing a workshop to facilitate activities in the acting stage. The final step was to conduct a lessons-learned review as the reflection stage (As Show in Table 1). Since this research covered four specific areas-Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, and Phuket- the research methods in each area were implemented at different times. This staggered approach allowed the lessons learned from the pilot area to be applied to refine subsequent activities. The research sequence began with Bangkok, followed by Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, and finally, Phuket. Once activities had been completed in all four provinces, a joint session was held to collectively review and reflect on the outcomes.

Table 1 Stages of action research

Research sites	Stages of action research			
	Plan	Act	Observe	Reflect
Bangkok	Explored mental health issues among youth, with key stakeholders including monks, young people, and educational institutions.	A two-month pilot implementation in Bangkok focused on organizing participatory activities with youth, using art as a tool for mental healing.	Observation and narrative listening following participants' engagement in the activities.	The lessons learned from the implementation in Bangkok were used as a prototype for other project areas. Activities were then further developed to be more suitable and responsive to the target groups in each respective location. In addition, other areas produced their own lesson-learned manuals, which were
Chiang Mai	Explored the integration of mental health and intellectual development.	A two-month implementation aimed to strengthen mental resilience through developing critical thinking skills and teamwork in creating local products.		



Table 1 Stages of action research (Continued)

Research sites	Stages of action research			
	Plan	Act	Observe	Reflect
Khon Kaen	Explored mental health issues with a focus on participation from older adults, monks, and local administrative organizations.	A two-month implementation involved training programs for older adults on managing stress and anxiety based on Buddhist principles.		disseminated to promote shared learning in the future.
Phuket	Explored mental health issues among youth, emphasizing participation from monks, young people, and other collaborative networks.	A two-month implementation emphasized cultivating mental resilience and preventing drug use among youth.		

Research sites and units of analysis

The research areas in each province were chosen based on ongoing programs that were consistent with monastic community rules and the goals of the Thai Health Promotion Foundation. Descriptions of the selected areas are as follows: 1) Wat Yannawa and Wat Don School (Borom Satharn) in Bangkok provided a network dedicated to the development of psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom. 2) Wat Si Soda, a royal monastery in Chiang Mai, hosted a network dedicated to psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom. 3) Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University's Khon Kaen Campus hosts a network for fostering psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom, and 4) The community training unit in Kathu Subdistrict, Phuket Province, housed a network dedicated to fostering psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using inductive and deductive content analysis based on information acquired from focus group discussions and practical activities conducted by the networks that aimed to develop psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles to support community health. The collected data were examined and interpreted by all researchers, who read and reviewed the collected data thoroughly, followed by two rounds of reliability checks. After repeated readings of the data by the researchers, a comparative analysis was conducted to identify similarities and differences across the four case studies. The data used to present the research findings were selected based on consensus among all researchers involved in the study. The findings



were then presented through a case-based discussion approach, focusing on the analyzed content rather than using direct participant quotations. This approach was intended to emphasize the actions and operations of social networks in supporting mental health and to allow the practices of each network to be clearly demonstrated. The presentation of the study's findings focused on the results obtained from these practical procedures.

Results and Discussion

The Creation of Supportive Social Networks

The action research approach used in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Khon Kaen, and Phuket resulted in the establishment of social capital within networks for psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles, which were strengthened through supporting social networks. These networks were primarily initiated by monks alone, with the exception of Bangkok, where the impetus came from the Sangha. Nonetheless, the monks utilized their potential through existing social networks to gather and implement activities, as detailed below.

Wat Yannawa and Wat Don School (Borom Satharn) in Bangkok provide a network dedicated to the development of psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles.

Bangkok's Buddhist-based network for improving psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom was composed of monks who were trained in counseling and youth work and were well informed about psychological and intellectual well-being. These monks were recognized for their experience working with youth and had taken part in a training course titled "Developing Counseling Potential to Enhance the Quality of Life for Buddhists," which was organized by the Development of Area Management Systems and Networks of Health Organizations Based on Buddhist Principles Project. The Buddhist youth volunteer group from Satri Si Suriyothai School was a public organization committed to social service. The group actively participated in activities, demonstrated critical thinking, expressed opinions confidently, and exhibited creativity. Both monks and youth groups came together under the name "Volunteer Buddhist Monks and Youth Groups for Educational Institution and Well-being Area Development." Their aim was to promote initiatives focused on elementary-level students that enhanced the mental and intellectual well-being of youth, particularly primary-level school students. The success of these activities would not have been possible without the support of key executives, specifically the Sathon District Office, Wat Yannawa School, and Wat Don School. These three institutions played an essential role in promoting and supporting the activities conducted by the group of Buddhist monks and youth volunteers, thereby fostering a healthy and supportive educational environment.

Wat Si Soda, a royal monastery in Chiang Mai Province, hosts a network dedicated to psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles.

The network for the Buddhist development of psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom in Chiang Mai Province was established by local youth groups and the monastic community, particularly monks serving as Phra Dhammacarika. Under the Phra Dhammacarika Project, the



monastic community supported and fostered this cooperative network, which included administrative agencies such as the Public Relations Department and the Royal Scholarship Project, both operating under the supervision of the Privy Council Office. This collaboration contributed to concrete outcomes in the development of coffee products under the Jari Gano brand. In addition to the previously mentioned collaborative network, several private sector organizations and external civil society groups contributed to advancing psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom in Chiang Mai Province. Coffee entrepreneurs in the Doi Chang area participated by sharing knowledge on various aspects of coffee cultivation, including varieties, care, storage, processing, and basic marketing. They also opened their coffee plantations to the Phra Dhammacarika monks for experiential learning. Sanyo Trading Co., Ltd. supported the network by contributing to research, product development, and business partnerships, including assistance in securing markets for product distribution.

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University's Khon Kaen Campus hosts a network for fostering psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles.

The network for the development of psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom in Khon Kaen Province was primarily managed by Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University's Khon Kaen Campus. As an educational institution, it played an important role in research and the provision of academic services to society, drawing on its strengths in knowledge generation and the practical application of academic principles. Furthermore, with the vice-rector serving as a Sangha administrative official, this integration facilitated the incorporation of academic knowledge into the work of the monastic community. It enabled the Buddhist faith, as a central source of community trust, to drive effective health and well-being activities for the elderly. It also demonstrated how Buddhism could meaningfully and appropriately contribute to enhancing well-being. In addition to the primary organization, other collaborative networks played significant roles. These included public health entities such as the Provincial Public Health Office and local health promotion hospitals, which contributed expertise, organized on-site activities, and linked national policies with initiatives aimed at improving elderly well-being. The involvement of Village Health Volunteers (VHVs) served as a strong community force, working closely with local residents to implement activities within their communities. This formal network of cooperation was essential for establishing sustainable efforts to promote elderly well-being. Furthermore, the working group was striving to establish a wellness development learning center at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University in the future.

Kathu Subdistrict, Phuket Province, houses a network dedicated to fostering psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles.

In Phuket Province, the network for the development of psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom was led by the monastic community in each district. The network was headed by Phra Maha Thawisak Nandhammo, the Kathu District Head Monk, who participated by delivering Buddhist teachings to groups of students. Other monks served as speakers and facilitators in the activities, sharing Buddhist principles and guiding students in meditation practices. In addition to the monastic community, public health authorities such as the Kathu Subdistrict Health Promoting Hospital and the Provincial Public Health Office served as important collaborative partners.



They provided support through knowledge-sharing, sending speakers to educate students on health care, the dangers of drug abuse, and methods of mental management through various activities. As a result, students who participated in the activities gained knowledge of both Buddhist principles and scientific health-related concepts, fostering awareness, understanding, and the ability to manage their basic health needs. In addition to the Buddhist and public health networks, the Kathu Police Station played an important role in providing legal education. This helped students understand that certain drugs were illegal and guided them on how to live as responsible citizens under the rule of law. Throughout the five days of activities, multiple groups within Phuket Province's network collaborated to support and advance the initiatives. They worked together to define shared wellness development goals based on Buddhist principles, with the aim of ensuring sustainability and long-term positive influence on community members.

Action to Connect Supportive Social Networks to Mental Health Care

The network for the development of psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles launched the project to integrate social capital with mental health care by establishing psychological well-being development activities through collaborative efforts. Table 2 presents the analyzed data.

Table 2 Collaborative planning for defining mental health development activities

Supportive Social Networks	Description	Target Groups
Wat Yannawa and Wat Don School (Borom Satharn) in Bangkok provide a network dedicated to the development of psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles.	An action-based activity using Buddhist practices, integrated with artistic methods, to enhance mental and intellectual well-being.	Monks and the Buddhist Youth Volunteer Group
Wat Si Soda, a royal monastery in Chiang Mai Province, hosts a network dedicated to psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles.	An action-based activity aimed at improving quality of life, creating employment opportunities for community members to strengthen mental resilience, through the "Charigano" coffee product.	The general public
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University's Khon Kaen Campus hosts a network for fostering psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles.	An action-based activity to promote mental stability for the elderly and to address stress and anxiety.	The elderly
Kathu Subdistrict, Phuket Province, houses a network dedicated to fostering psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles.	An action-based activity to reduce risk and build mental resilience as a protective measure against health risks from drugs and tobacco among youth.	Youth



The practical activities of the network for the development of psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles were guided by the core research framework of utilizing social capital to support local mental health. Network participation aimed to identify suitable activity models and to create a space for stakeholders to actively engage in addressing issues and enacting change within the community. However, the ability of the religious network to connect with mental health care in the community was partly due to the symbolic capital of its leaders, who were respected by local residents and network members. This respect helped balance social capital, thereby allowing the network to operate effectively. Consequently, activities conducted by the network were consistently met with willing and active cooperation from all involved.

The implementation of building social networks for mental health care applied Buddhist principles as a mechanism for network development. These social networks were driven by the principle of Sangahavatthu, a set of teachings that fostered social cohesion and social trust among members within the Buddhist networks across the four research sites. The network was initially established to promote equal access to emotional support and mental healing (Giving). In order to fulfill the goal of sharing, communication within the network relied heavily on leaders who possessed charisma, particularly the ability to speak persuasively and to foster unity among members (Kindly Speech). Once the social network became strong, it led to acts of public benefit, especially in providing emotional healing for individuals with mental health challenges (Useful Conduct). This required consistent actions, equal treatment of all members, and shared awareness of problems that might arise during the network's operations (Even and Equal Treatment).

Practices and Outcomes of Supportive Social Networks

The practical research conducted was based on a systematic research process with clearly defined steps. After establishing the collaborative network and planning joint activities, the process of change in mental health resulting from the power of social capital was summarized as follows:

Wat Yannawa and Wat Don School (Borom Satharn) in Bangkok provide a network dedicated to the development of psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles.

The operations of the network for the development of psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles in Bangkok led to outcomes that fostered health improvements for both groups of youth. The first group comprised primary school students from Wat Yannawa School and Wat Don School. As these youth participated in the activities, changes in well-being were influenced by the activity models implemented by the network in Bangkok. The network aimed to improve psychological and intellectual well-being through Buddhist approaches, which were conveyed through the presentation of basic teachings and practices based on Buddhist principles together with integrated artistic techniques.

As a result, these activities successfully engaged youth in their learning processes and promoted a positive attitude toward Buddhism among this group. The second group, the Buddhist youth volunteer group from Satri Si Suriyothai School, participated in activities that promoted Buddhist lifestyle health development in urban areas. The health improvements experienced



by this group resulted from a learning process expressed through activity design and practical implementation. A tangible outcome was that this Buddhist youth volunteer group represented a community committed to public service; Members demonstrated enjoyment in helping society, engaging in activities, and expressing their ideas boldly and creatively. Additionally, the members embodied the ethics and virtues expected of them, largely due to their close relationship with the monks.

Through participation in various activities organized by temples or monks, the outcomes for both groups of youth extended beyond health improvements. The initiative led to significant results in other areas, including the development of a formal and robust cooperative network with promising prospects for sustainability. Initially, the monks and the group of Buddhist youth volunteers collaborated on long-term activities to ensure the transfer of knowledge and practices across generations, thereby promoting sustainability. In terms of policy outcomes, both the Bangkok clergy and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, as policymakers, demonstrated awareness of and recognized the importance of health development in accordance with Buddhist principles for youth. There were indications that plans would be developed to expand the implementation of such activities to other districts in Bangkok.

Wat Si Soda, a royal monastery in Chiang Mai Province, hosts a network that is dedicated to psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles.

The activities of the network for the development of psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles in Chiang Mai Province, under the program "Training to Enhance the Potential of Monks and Youth in Highland Areas for Creative Design," yielded satisfactory tangible results. The outcomes of these activities indicated that they played a significant role in advancing the monk development project, enabling the creation of products that enhanced the quality of life for people in the community. Additionally, the profits generated from the sale of these products were used to support the work of the Phra Dhammacarika in the area.

The product in question was roasted coffee beans branded as "Jarigano." This initiative successfully advanced the development of the product into a formal policy under the monk development project. The monastic community, in collaboration with the Royal Scholarship Project under the Office of the Privy Council, promoted and supported the distribution and expansion of coffee seedlings to various monasteries where monks resided, thereby enabling coffee cultivation that created jobs and livelihoods for community members.

In addition to product development and expansion, the activity also strengthened human capacity among monks and youth. It equipped them with knowledge related to community development project planning, provided tools to highlight community strengths, and fostered creative ideas for enhancing the quality of life within the community.

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University's Khon Kaen Campus hosts a network for fostering psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles.

The activities of the network for the development of psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles in Khon Kaen Province, under the initiative



"Enhancing Well-Being for the Elderly in the Koksri, Buayai, and Baan Kham Subdistricts," resulted in satisfactory outcomes. The findings indicated that, in terms of improving elderly health, the working group successfully enhanced the physical well-being of seniors through training sessions that provided knowledge, promoted physical activities, and enabled participating elderly individuals to transfer these benefits to other seniors in their communities.

In terms of mental well-being, the activities helped the elderly find happiness through social interaction and participation in various collective activities. They also received teachings based on Buddhist principles, which contributed to their joy and emotional fulfillment and fostered a way of life grounded in wisdom. This transformation occurred not only among the elderly but also within the collaborative network that participated in these activities. The network recognized and understood existing problems in the area and sought systematic approaches to address them.

Regarding social well-being, this dimension reflected an outcome achieved through the activities, as demonstrated by the emergence of a collaborative network focused on developing well-being according to Buddhist principles in the three operational areas. Finally, the network for developing mental and spiritual well-being in Khon Kaen Province created a body of knowledge that was ready for further development and expansion.

Kathu Subdistrict, Phuket Province, houses a network dedicated to fostering psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles.

The operations of the network for developing psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles in Phuket Province resulted in positive health changes among students. Over the course of the five-day program, participating students had the opportunity to listen to lectures on key Buddhist principles and to connect these teachings to practical ways of living. Additionally, efforts were made to illustrate how Buddhism aligned with contemporary situations by using these principles to explain current events.

Students also participated in mindfulness activities, such as meditation, prayer, chanting, and walking meditation, conducted by experienced monks knowledgeable in Buddhist teachings who guided them through these practices. The findings indicated that the activities considerably improved students' well-being, particularly their psychological and intellectual well-being. The activities also facilitated physical well-being by encouraging students to reduce, refrain from, and eliminate various risk factors during the training.

In addition to the well-being benefits gained through Buddhist activities, students participating in the program received support and wellness development from various activities organized by collaborative network partners. These collaborators included the Kathu Subdistrict Health Promoting Hospital, the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organization, the local police station, and a group of psychologists affiliated with the Provincial Public Health Office. These networks played an essential role in promoting and supporting the successful implementation of activities under the network for developing psychological well-being and Buddhist wisdom based on Buddhist principles in Phuket Province.



The students who participated in the activities were not only guided through Buddhist practices but also received care and support from relevant organizations. They gained knowledge about health, developed an understanding of drug-related risks, and learned how to live thoughtfully and with awareness, consistent with the goals of self-development according to Buddhist principles.

Discussions

The findings of this study demonstrated that the social capital of Buddhist institutions was clearly reflected in their ability to leverage networks of leaders, particularly monks. The capacity of monks enhanced and expanded these networks, fostering strong social ties that spanned the monastic community, academia, the private sector, civil society, and government. The active cooperation of local communities, alongside the faith in and recognition granted to the monks, contributed to the successful implementation of activities. These collaborative efforts were shaped by the specific social and cultural contexts in which the networks operated.

The findings from the action research emphasized that social capital created beneficial outcomes for individuals and social groups by forming networks and effectively mobilizing their potential, including mutual trust. In this study, social capital within health contexts was closely tied to symbolic capital. Without the symbolic capital of monks, the formation and sustainability of social networks for mental health care would likely have been constrained. This interpretation aligns with Bourdieu's (1986), Lin's (2001), and Putnam's (2000) conceptualizations of capital as embedded in social relations and institutional trust. Furthermore, the findings reinforced the idea that social capital and Thai Buddhist institutions are closely interconnected when examined within specific sociocultural contexts (Son & Sung, 2024).

The monks who served as leaders of the social networks drew upon a combination of spiritual authority and community-based social trust to develop localized mental health support systems. These findings suggest that the emergence of the four networks required an intersection of multiple forms of capital: Social capital, symbolic capital, and religious capital. Among these, social capital played a central role in mobilizing and integrating other forms of capital within the community context.

These social networks, formed under the guidance of Buddhist institutions, demonstrate that such institutions can adapt to contemporary social conditions and actively engage in addressing public issues rather than remaining separate from society (King, 2009). The benefits of social capital generated through these networks contribute to the strengthening of health capital, which is reflected in improved health conditions, bodily resilience, and other measurable indicators of well-being. Thus, health capital is interconnected with other forms of capital (Blaxter, 2003); (Jearajit et al., 2022). Scholarly discussions have also noted that Buddhist institutional networks possess influential authority, enabling monks to garner support from formal governmental organizations to advance public-oriented activities within Thai society (Borchert, 2024).



Originality and Body of Knowledge

The originality of this article lies in its demonstration of how the social capital of Buddhist institutions can be mobilized to address mental health and cognitive challenges in diverse contexts through concrete and practical approaches. Rather than relying solely on traditional forms of Dhamma instruction, Figure 1 highlights how Buddhist institutions generate forms of social innovation across four dimensions: The ability to leverage religious networks-grounded in the leadership of Buddhist monks-to support community mental health through trust-based relationships; The recognition that mental health interventions cannot follow a one-size-fits-all model and must instead be adapted to the specific contexts of each community; The effective engagement of key stakeholders, particularly monks who serve as network leaders and community youth who become volunteers contributing to social well-being and the creation of sustainable collaborative networks by connecting research findings to relevant agencies and institutional partners. Together, these findings illustrate how Buddhist principles can be transformed into meaningful social action that strengthens mental health care within urban communities.

In addition, Figure 1 illustrates the mechanism of the Four Sangahavattu: *Dāna* (Generosity or Giving), *Piyavācā* (Kind and Compassionate Speech), *Atthacariyā* (Conduct That Benefits Others), and *Samānattatā* (Equality and Impartial Participation) working together to produce social change outcomes through mental health care by utilizing social networks in which Buddhist institutions are involved. It can be seen that operating on the basis of the Four Sangahavattu has generated psychological and intellectual well-being, which are conditions for good mental health. This process requires the social capital of Buddhist institutions and Buddhist leadership to help drive efforts to ensure that mental health care is comprehensive and inclusive.



Figure 1 Buddhist-Based Supportive Social Network for Mental Health Care



Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings from the action research, two policy recommendations are proposed to enhance the use of social capital for mental health care and promotion. First, social networks that focus on mental health should be utilized as a bridge between government health policies, the health system, and individual health practices in daily life should be used. The social networks led by monks can closely monitor the mental health of community members, ensuring the seamless implementation of government mental health policies and achieving more precise health outcomes. Second, mental health promotion and care should be supported through action research, as it moves beyond a one-size-fits-all approach towards a deeper understanding of the diverse health conditions that are influenced by social and cultural contexts. In this study, action research was employed as the primary research approach. However, one limitation was the geographic scope, as the research could not be conducted across multiple regions. Additionally, the study lacked a systematic assessment of the mental health conditions of the target population in each area, which would have served as an empirical basis for localized decision-making. This was due to time constraints during the research process. These limitations suggest important directions for future research. It is recommended that future studies conduct empirical social research through comprehensive surveys of mental health conditions across Thailand, with particular attention to the country's diverse social and cultural contexts, especially in terms of religious differences, as Thailand is a multicultural society. Moreover, future action research should aim to expand to other localities while incorporating long-term impact evaluation. This would provide clearer insight into the transformative outcomes of social network-based interventions in mental health support.

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THE INFLUENCE OF BUDDHIST LEADERSHIP DIMENSIONS ON EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORKPLACE MINDFULNESS

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: In organizational environments characterized by rapid change, intensifying competition, and psychological demands, employee well-being has become a critical determinant of sustainable organizational performance. Conventional leadership approaches often emphasize efficiency and control while neglecting employees' emotional, ethical, and cognitive development. In response to these limitations, Buddhist leadership offers a holistic paradigm grounded in mindfulness, compassion, moral integrity, and wisdom. Rooted in the Four Brahmavihāras; Loving-kindness (Mettā), compassion (Karuṇā), sympathetic joy (Muditā), and equanimity (Upekkhā) and the Four Iddhipāda; Zeal (Chanda), effort (Viriya), concentration (Citta), and wisdom or investigation (Vīmaṃsā). Buddhist leadership conceptualizes leadership as a process of cultivation and ethical responsibility. However, existing studies have largely treated Buddhist or mindful leadership as a unidimensional construct, limiting theoretical precision and empirical depth. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the influence of eight doctrinally grounded Buddhist leadership dimensions on employee well-being within Thai organizational contexts, with workplace mindfulness functioning as a mediating mechanism.

Methodology: A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was employed to examine the relationships among Buddhist leadership dimensions, workplace mindfulness, and employee well-being. Data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed both online and in paper format to 400 employees across educational institutions, public organizations, healthcare facilities, and private enterprises in Thailand. Participants were selected using purposive and stratified sampling techniques to ensure representation across organizational levels. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis to assess direct and mediating relationships among the variables.

Main Results: The findings indicate that Buddhist leadership functions as a multidimensional construct with differentiated effects on workplace outcomes. Wisdom (Vīmaṃsā), Equanimity (Upekkhā), Effort (Viriya), and Concentration (Citta) significantly enhanced workplace mindfulness, suggesting that leaders who demonstrate cognitive discernment, emotional balance, perseverance, and focused attention foster a mindful organizational climate. In terms of direct effects on employee well-being, Loving-kindness (Mettā), Compassion (Karuṇā), and Equanimity (Upekkhā) emerged as significant



predictors, highlighting the importance of moral-emotional leadership behaviors in promoting psychological satisfaction and emotional stability. Furthermore, workplace mindfulness was identified as a strong predictor of employee well-being and was found to partially mediate the effects of Wisdom and Equanimity, underscoring its pivotal role as a psychological mechanism linking leadership practices to employee outcomes.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: This study operationalizes the Four Brahmavihāras and the Four Iddhipāda into empirically measurable leadership dimensions and aligns them with the Threefold Training (Tisikkhā) framework of morality (Sīla), concentration (Samādhi), and wisdom (Paññā). In accordance with the journal's classification, this research is situated within Applied Buddhism, as it applies fundamental Buddhist doctrinal principles to contemporary organizational leadership and employee well-being. By integrating Buddhist ethical teachings with modern organizational behavior and mindfulness theory, the study demonstrates how Buddhadhamma can be systematically translated into practical leadership practices in modern management contexts. The findings reaffirm that leadership grounded in compassion, equanimity, mindful awareness, and wisdom reflects core Buddhist teachings aimed at reducing suffering (Dukkha) and promoting collective well-being (Sukha) within organizational life.

Conclusions: The findings provide empirical support for Buddhist leadership as a multidimensional model associated with employee well-being. The final regression model explained 68% of the variance in employee well-being ($R^2 = .68$), with Workplace Mindfulness demonstrating a substantial effect ($\beta = .41$, $p < .001$). Wisdom ($\beta = .22$, $p < .001$) and Equanimity ($\beta = .19$, $p < .01$) showed meaningful associations with workplace mindfulness, which partially mediated several leadership-well-being relationships. These results highlight the practical relevance of integrating wisdom, equanimity, and compassion into leadership development and human resource practices. Overall, the study suggests that Buddhist leadership dimensions are statistically and practically associated with improved psychological outcomes and sustainable organizational functioning in Thai work contexts.

Keywords: Buddhist Leadership, Workplace Mindfulness, Employee Well-Being, Four Brahmavihāras, Four Iddhipāda

Introduction

In contemporary organizational contexts, where rapid change and psychological strain increasingly challenge employees' well-being, leadership that fosters mindfulness, compassion, and ethical integrity has become an essential foundation for sustainable performance. Traditional management models often emphasize productivity and control, whereas Buddhist-oriented leadership offers a holistic paradigm centered on awareness (Sati), compassion (Karuṇā), and wisdom (Paññā). This orientation not only supports organizational success but also nurtures human flourishing, a growing priority in both organizational behavior and positive psychology research.

An expanding body of evidence confirms that mindfulness enhances psychological resilience and employee well-being. Sentin et al. (2025) demonstrated that mindfulness reduces perceived



stress and improves well-being, while Kumprang & Suriyankietkaew (2024) found that organizational mindfulness strengthens psychological capital and engagement at multiple levels. Likewise, Choi et al. (2022) and Kuo et al. (2025) provide evidence that mindfulness promotes intrinsic motivation, attention regulation, and collective well-being. Together, these findings emphasize mindfulness as both a personal and organizational capability essential to employee welfare. Leadership mindfulness has also been recognized as a crucial determinant of employee outcomes. Mohammed et al. (2023) showed that leadership mindfulness positively affects employee well-being through ethical leadership, while Cawthorn (2025) highlighted mindful leadership as a competitive advantage that fosters emotional intelligence and engagement. Pinck & Sonnentag (2018) further suggest that mindfulness-oriented leadership behaviors cultivate psychological resources that buffer against stress and burnout. These studies collectively point to mindfulness-based leadership as a potent force in creating emotionally healthy and productive workplaces.

In the Thai context, where Buddhist philosophy is deeply embedded in cultural, educational, and organizational life, leadership practices are often implicitly shaped by Buddhist values. However, despite this cultural foundation, contemporary Thai organizations are increasingly confronted with challenges such as rising work-related stress, employee burnout, role ambiguity, and psychological strain driven by rapid digital transformation and competitive pressures. Reports from Thai labor and public health agencies indicate growing concerns regarding employee mental well-being, particularly in public institutions, healthcare settings, and service-oriented sectors. Although Buddhist principles are widely recognized at a cultural level, their systematic integration into formal leadership frameworks remains limited and largely conceptual rather than empirically examined. This gap highlights a critical need to investigate whether and how doctrinally grounded Buddhist leadership dimensions can meaningfully contribute to psychological resilience and well-being in modern Thai workplaces. By situating the present study within Thai organizational contexts, this research responds to both theoretical and practical imperatives: It addresses the underdevelopment of empirically validated Buddhist leadership models. It responds to pressing well-being challenges faced by employees in a Buddhist-majority society undergoing socio-economic transition.

Despite the growing scholarly interest in Buddhist-informed leadership, the theoretical foundation underpinning the selection of specific doctrinal constructs remains underexplored. A critical issue concerns the justification for adopting the Four Brahmavihāras (Four Divine Abodes or Sublime Attitudes) and the Four Iddhipāda (Bases of Success or Foundations of Mental Power) as the conceptual basis of Buddhist leadership, rather than other central Buddhist frameworks such as the Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca 4), the Noble Eightfold Path, or the Pāramī (Perfections). To enhance conceptual rigor, it is therefore necessary to clarify the theoretical criteria guiding this selection. The present study prioritizes the Four Brahmavihāras and the Four Iddhipāda based on three interrelated theoretical considerations: Relational applicability, behavioral operationalizability, and psychological-process relevance. First, leadership is inherently relational and interpersonal in nature, loving-kindness (Mettā), compassion (Karunā), sympathetic joy (Muditā), and equanimity (Upekkhā). The Four Brahmavihāras constitute an explicitly relational



ethical framework that governs how individuals orient themselves toward others. These virtues prescribe prosocial emotional dispositions directly aligned with leadership functions such as care, fairness, empathy, and impartiality. Unlike the Four Noble Truths, which primarily address existential suffering and its cessation at a philosophical level, the Brahmavihāras articulate observable moral-emotional orientations that can manifest concretely in leader-follower interactions. Second, the Four Iddhipāda: Zeal (Chanda), effort (Viriya), concentration (Citta), and wisdom or investigation (Vīmaṃsā), provide a motivational-cognitive architecture that explains how intentional action is sustained and directed. Whereas the Noble Eightfold Path presents a comprehensive spiritual training system encompassing morality, concentration, and wisdom, it is structured as a holistic path of liberation rather than a differentiated behavioral framework tailored to organizational roles. Similarly, the Pāramī (Spiritual Perfections) emphasize long-term spiritual perfections cultivated across lifetimes and are less readily translatable into measurable leadership behaviors within contemporary organizational contexts. In contrast, the Iddhipāda delineate actionable psychological drivers: Motivation, persistence, attentional focus, and reflective discernment, that can be operationalized as leadership capacities influencing workplace climate and employee outcomes. Third, the integration of the Brahmavihāras and the Iddhipāda yields a balanced multidimensional construct encompassing moral-emotional, motivational, and cognitive domains. This integration aligns conceptually with contemporary leadership and organizational behavior theories that emphasize ethical influence, self-regulation, and resource activation. By combining relational ethics (Brahmavihāras) with volitional and attentional mechanisms (Iddhipāda), the framework captures both the affective orientation of leaders toward followers and the inner psychological processes that sustain mindful and purposeful action. Such a structure is theoretically compatible with the Job Demands-Resources model, in which leadership behaviors function as social and psychological resources that foster employee resilience and well-being. Importantly, the selected constructs meet the criterion of empirical operationalizability. Each of the eight dimensions can be translated into observable behaviors and measurable psychological tendencies, thereby allowing quantitative validation through established statistical techniques. This characteristic distinguishes them from broader soteriological doctrines whose abstraction may hinder empirical assessment in organizational research. By explicitly grounding the construct selection in relational relevance, psychological mechanism, and empirical measurability, this study strengthens the conceptual foundation of Buddhist leadership theory. Rather than treating Buddhist leadership as a diffuse spiritual metaphor, the present framework offers a theoretically justified and empirically testable multidimensional model suitable for examining how specific Buddhist virtues influence workplace mindfulness and employee well-being.

Objectives

This study aimed to examine the influence of eight doctrinally grounded Buddhist leadership dimensions on employee well-being within Thai organizational contexts, with workplace mindfulness functioning as a mediating mechanism.



Methodology

This study aimed to examine the relationship between Buddhist leadership dimensions and employee well-being, with workplace mindfulness functioning as a mediating variable. A quantitative research approach was employed using a cross-sectional survey design. This design was appropriate for assessing relationships among variables occurring in natural organizational settings without experimental manipulation. Multiple regression analysis was utilized as the primary analytical technique, enabling the examination of both direct and indirect effects among the variables in alignment with the proposed hypotheses.

Sample

The target population comprised employees working in Buddhist-oriented organizations located in Thailand, specifically in Ubon Ratchathani Province in the northeastern region. The participating organizations included public universities, government agencies, regional hospitals, and ethically oriented private enterprises that explicitly incorporated Buddhist values and mindfulness-based management practices into their leadership frameworks. A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify organizations that demonstrated explicit alignment with Buddhist leadership principles, as reflected in their organizational mission statements, leadership development programs, or institutional culture. Within these selected organizations, stratified sampling was applied to ensure proportional representation across hierarchical levels, including operational staff, middle management, and senior management positions. The final sample consisted of 400 respondents, which met the recommended sample size for multiple regression analysis to achieve adequate statistical power (Hair et al., 2019). Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity in accordance with research ethics guidelines.

Measurement Instruments

Data were collected through a self-administered structured questionnaire consisting of four main sections. All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 7 ("Strongly Agree"). A seven-point Likert scale was employed to enhance measurement sensitivity and capture greater response variability. Prior methodological research has suggested that seven-point scales provide higher reliability, improved discriminatory power, and better approximation to interval-level measurement compared with shorter formats (e.g., Five-point Scales), thereby supporting parametric statistical analyses such as multiple regression (Hair et al., 2019); (Lozano et al., 2008). The questionnaire consisted of the following sections: Demographic Information: This section included respondents' gender, age, education, position level, and years of work experience.

Buddhist Leadership Dimensions: The construct was developed based on Buddhist doctrinal principles, namely the Four Brahmavihāras: loving-kindness (Mettā), compassion (Karūṇā), sympathetic joy (Muditā), and equanimity (Upekkhā), and the Four Iddhipāda: Zeal (Chanda), effort (Viriya), concentration (Citta), and wisdom or investigation (Vīmaṃsā). Sample items included statements such as: "My Leader Demonstrates Compassion and Understanding Toward Employees" and "My Leader Performs Duties with Wise Effort and Determination."



Workplace Mindfulness: This construct was measured using the scale developed by Reb et al. (2014), which assessed awareness and attention in workplace activities. Sample items included: "I am Aware of My Thoughts and Emotions While Working" and "I Stay Focused on My Tasks Without Unnecessary Distraction."

Employee Well-being: Employee well-being was measured using the scale developed by Zheng et al. (2015), which evaluated both psychological and subjective well-being in the workplace. Sample items included: "I Feel Happy and Satisfied with My Working Life" and "I Maintain a Healthy Balance Between Work and Personal Life."

The questionnaire was translated into Thai using a translation and back-translation process (Brislin, 1980) to ensure semantic equivalence and cultural appropriateness. Expert reviewers in organizational behavior and Buddhist studies evaluated the items to confirm their contextual relevance.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted over a two-month period through both paper-based and online surveys. Permission was obtained from each participating organization prior to distribution. Respondents were informed of the research objectives and were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. Participation was entirely voluntary. Each respondent completed the questionnaire within approximately 10-15 minutes. All completed questionnaires were screened for completeness and accuracy before statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis was performed in several stages.

Descriptive Statistics: These statistics were used to describe respondents' demographic characteristics, including mean, standard deviation, and percentage. **Reliability Analysis:** Internal consistency of each measurement scale was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, with a minimum acceptable value of 0.70. **Correlation Analysis:** Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed to assess the strength and direction of relationships among the study variables. **Multiple Regression Analysis:** Multiple regression was employed to test the study's hypotheses and determine both the direct and indirect effects among the variables. The hypotheses were as follows: H1: Buddhist leadership positively influences workplace mindfulness; H2: Buddhist leadership positively influences employee well-being, and H3: Workplace mindfulness mediates the relationships between individual Buddhist leadership dimensions and employee well-being.

The results were presented in tables reporting regression coefficients, t-values, and significance levels (p-values). The selected research methodology allowed for the systematic examination of relationships among the variables within a real organizational context. The use of multiple regression analysis provided a robust approach for testing the mediating role of workplace mindfulness and understanding how Buddhist leadership behaviors were associated with employees' psychological and emotional well-being. This methodological design also ensured alignment with the theoretical foundations of Applied Buddhism and organizational behavior, offering insights into how Buddhist virtues, such as compassion, effort, and mindfulness, may be integrated into



contemporary leadership practices to enhance well-being and sustainability in organizational life.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is grounded in the integration of Buddhist leadership theory, mindfulness research, and organizational well-being literature. It proposes that Buddhist leadership, anchored in core Buddhist doctrines such as the Four Brahmavihāras: Loving-kindness (Mettā), compassion (Karuṇā), sympathetic joy (Muditā), and equanimity (Upekkhā), and the Four Iddhipāda: Zeal (Chanda), effort (Viriya), concentration (Citta), and wisdom or investigation (Vīmaṃsā) positively influences employees' psychological and emotional states, thereby enhancing their overall well-being.

Buddhist leadership emphasizes moral conduct (Sīla), mental cultivation (Samādhi), and wisdom (Paññā), three dimensions that align with the Threefold Training (Tisikkhā) in Buddhist teachings. These principles translate into leadership behaviors characterized by compassion, ethical mindfulness, empathy, and purposeful effort. Such leadership is not only directed toward achieving organizational goals but also toward reducing suffering (Dukkha) and promoting collective happiness (Sukha) within the workplace. This conceptualization aligns with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001), which posits that leadership behaviors act as resources that reduce job demands and enhance motivational states. Within this model, workplace mindfulness functions as a psychological resource that helps employees regulate attention and emotions, mitigating stress and fostering resilience. Empirical studies have shown that mindfulness facilitates well-being by reducing perceived stress (Sentin et al., 2025), increasing psychological capital and emotional intelligence (Kumprang & Suriyankietkaew, 2024), and promoting engagement and motivation (Choi et al., 2022).

The model proposes three main relationships:

Direct Effect of Buddhist Leadership on Workplace Mindfulness (H1): Leaders who embody Buddhist virtues, such as compassion (Karuṇā), equanimity (Upekkhā), and wise effort (Vīriya), create organizational climates that nurture awareness and reflective thinking. By modeling mindfulness and empathy, such leaders encourage followers to remain calm, attentive, and emotionally balanced in their work. Prior studies on mindful and ethical leadership (Mohammed et al., 2023); (Cawthorn, 2025) support the idea that leadership mindfulness cascades to followers, enhancing their own mindfulness at work.

Direct Effect of Buddhist Leadership on Employee Well-Being (H2): Buddhist leaders promote fairness, compassion, and moral clarity, which foster psychological safety and meaningful work. Such behaviors enhance employee satisfaction, reduce burnout, and strengthen well-being. This relationship is supported by evidence that ethical and mindful leadership styles positively influence well-being and engagement (Cawthorn, 2025); (Mohammed et al., 2023).

Mediating Role of Workplace Mindfulness (H3): Workplace mindfulness is theorized to mediate the relationship between Buddhist leadership and employee well-being. When employees experience mindful awareness, they develop self-regulation and emotional balance, allowing them to transform leadership influence into positive psychological outcomes. This mechanism



aligns with the findings of Sentin et al. (2025) and Kumprang & Suriyankietkaew (2024), who demonstrated that mindfulness serves as an internal pathway linking external leadership practices with well-being.

Through this mediational process, Buddhist leadership is expected to foster both inner transformation (Mindfulness, Clarity, and Compassion) and outer flourishing (Well-being, Engagement, and Moral Purpose).

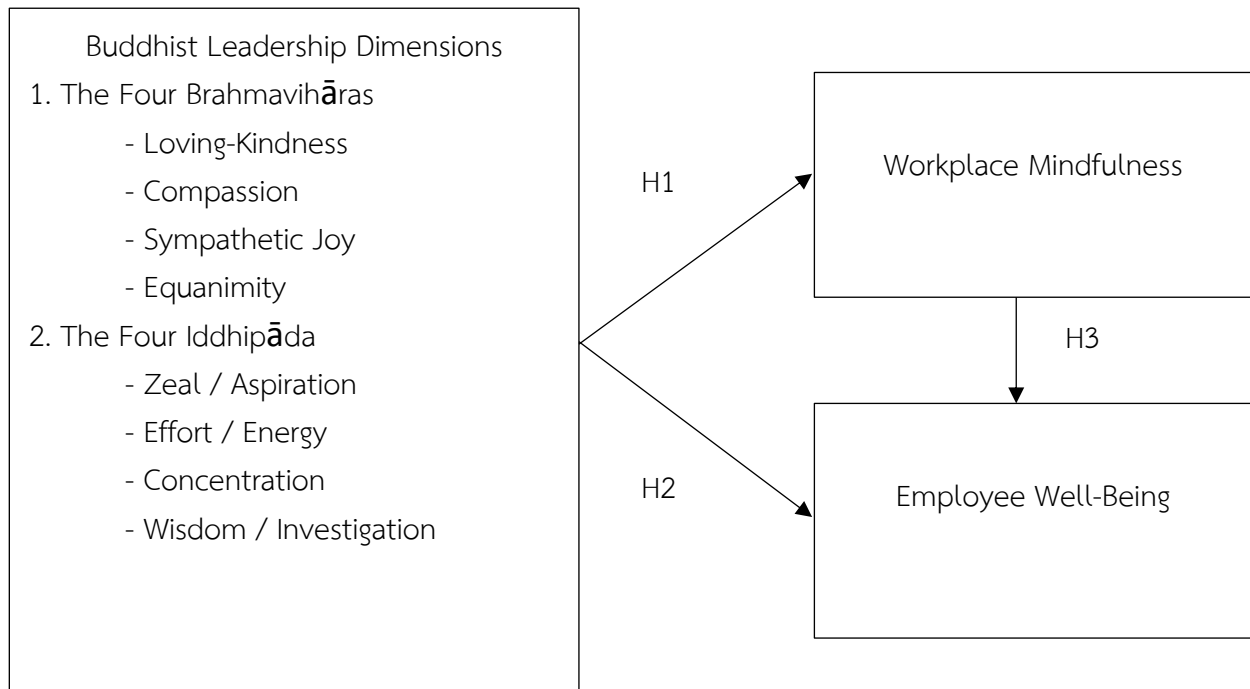


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the present study, which integrates Buddhist leadership theory, mindfulness research, and organizational well-being models. The framework posits that Buddhist leadership dimensions rooted in both the Four Brahmavihāras (Brahmavihāra 4) and the Four Iddhipāda (Iddhipāda 4) serve as the independent variables influencing two key employee outcomes: Workplace Mindfulness and Employee Well-Being.

The left side of the framework details the eight core dimensions of Buddhist Leadership that form the theoretical foundation of this study. The Four Brahmavihāras represent the moral and emotional virtues of Buddhist leadership: Loving-Kindness (Mettā): The leader's intention to promote the happiness and welfare of others; Compassion (Karuṇā): Empathy and concern for followers' suffering; Sympathetic Joy (Muditā): Appreciation and joy in the success of others, and Equanimity (Upekkhā): Calm impartiality and fairness in decision-making.

The Four Iddhipāda represent the cognitive, motivational, and wisdom-based dimensions of Buddhist leadership: Zeal / Aspiration (Chanda): Genuine intention to achieve goals beneficial to the collective; Effort / Energy (Viriya): Perseverance and consistent moral action despite



obstacles; Concentration (Citta): Focused attention and presence in action, and Wisdom or Investigation (Vīmaṃsā): Critical reflection, discernment, and insight in leadership judgment.

Collectively, these eight dimensions encapsulate the holistic nature of Buddhist leadership, combining moral virtue, emotional intelligence, mindful awareness, and wisdom. According to the proposed model, these leadership dimensions are hypothesized to exert two main effects. First, H1 suggests that Buddhist Leadership Dimensions positively influence Workplace Mindfulness, meaning that leaders who embody Buddhist virtues can cultivate a mindful organizational climate by modeling awareness, balance, and compassion. Second, H2 posits a direct positive effect of Buddhist Leadership Dimensions on Employee Well-Being, indicating that moral and compassionate leadership directly enhances followers' happiness, satisfaction, and psychological health. Furthermore, H3 specifies that Workplace Mindfulness acts as a mediating variable between Buddhist Leadership Dimensions and Employee Well-Being. This mediating pathway suggests that the beneficial effects of Buddhist leadership on employee well-being occur not only directly but also indirectly, through the cultivation of mindfulness among employees. When leaders demonstrate awareness, focus, and equanimity, they encourage employees to engage mindfully in their work, leading to improved emotional regulation, resilience, and holistic well-being.

In summary, Figure 1 presents a multidimensional and integrative model that explains how Buddhist leadership, through eight doctrinal dimensions, translates into employee well-being both directly and via workplace mindfulness. This framework extends prior leadership and mindfulness research by decomposing Buddhist leadership into its doctrinal components and empirically testing their unique influences in an organizational setting, particularly within the Thai cultural context, where Buddhist principles are deeply embedded.

Results and Discussion

The research findings were presented in two major sections as follows:

1. Descriptive results summarizing the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the reliability of measurement instruments, and
2. Inferential statistical analyses testing the hypothesized relationships among the study variables, specifically, the direct and mediating effects of Buddhist leadership dimensions on employee well-being through workplace mindfulness.

1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (n = 400)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	192	48.0
	Female	208	52.0
Age	20-30 years	96	24.0
	31-45 years	188	47.0



Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (n = 400) (Continued)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Education	46-60 years	116	29.0
	Bachelor's degree	256	64.0
	Master's degree or higher	144	28.0
Position	Operational	92	23.0
	Middle management	232	58.0
	Senior management	76	19.0
Tenure	Mean = 8.6 years	SD = 4.2	—

Table 1 presented the demographic profile of the 400 employees who participated in the study. The purpose of this table was to provide contextual information about the respondents' gender, age, education, job position, and tenure, variables that established the representativeness and diversity of the sample. The data indicated a balanced gender distribution (52% Female, 48% Male), ensuring gender inclusivity in perceptions of leadership and well-being. Most participants were between 31-45 years old (47%), representing a mature working demographic likely to have significant exposure to organizational leadership practices. Regarding education, 64% of respondents held a bachelor's degree, and 28% had postgraduate qualifications, suggesting a well-educated workforce. The distribution across job levels, 23% operational, 58% middle management, and 19% senior management, reflected adequate stratification consistent with the sampling design. The mean organizational tenure was 8.6 years (SD = 4.2), suggesting that participants had sufficient experience to evaluate leadership behaviors and workplace culture meaningfully. Overall, the demographic characteristics confirmed that the sample adequately represented Thai organizational contexts in which Buddhist-oriented leadership practices were observable. The diversity in age, education, and hierarchical positions strengthened the generalizability of the findings and the reliability of the regression outcomes.

2. Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Bivariate Correlations

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, internal reliability coefficients, and bivariate correlations among all major constructs used in this study, including the eight Buddhist Leadership Dimensions (Derived from The Four Brahmavihāras and Four Iddhipāda), Workplace Mindfulness (WM), and Employee Well-being (EWB). The table provided a comprehensive overview of the relationships between each leadership dimension and the dependent variables. The inclusion of Cronbach's alpha, mean, and Standard Deviation (SD) ensured that the scales met acceptable psychometric standards and offered insights into the respondents' general perceptions. This table also served as a preliminary diagnostic step before regression analysis, confirming the direction and strength of associations hypothesized in H1-H3.



Table 2 Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Bivariate Correlations

Correla*	Met	Karu	Mudi	Upek	Chan	Viri	Cit	Vīma	WM	EWB
Mettā	—	.68*	.63*	.59*	.52*	.55*	.50*	.57*	.54*	.56*
Karuṇā		—	.71*	.65*	.56*	.60*	.55*	.59*	.58*	.61*
Muditā			—	.67*	.54*	.59*	.53*	.56*	.57*	.55*
Upekkhā				—	.58*	.63*	.61*	.65*	.64*	.66*
Chanda					—	.70*	.68*	.69*	.61*	.59*
Viriya						—	.71*	.68*	.63*	.60*
Citta							—	.72*	.67*	.62*
Vīmaṃsā								—	.69*	.65*
Workplace Mindfulness (WM)									—	.65*
Employee Well- being (EWB)										—
Cronbach's Alpha	.83	.85	.81	.8	.87	.84	.86	.88	.89	.91
Mean	5.91	5.86	5.78	5.82	5.95	5.89	5.84	5.92	5.76	5.88
Standard Deviation	.74	.7	.79	.68	.72	.76	.7	.69	.73	.71

Note: * All correlations are significant at $p < .001$.

The results presented in Table 2 indicated three key patterns of association among the study variables.

Internal Consistency Reliability: All constructs demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .80 to .91, surpassing the recommended threshold of .70 (Hair et al., 2019). This indicated that the items measuring Buddhist leadership dimensions, workplace mindfulness, and employee well-being were statistically reliable and conceptually cohesive. Among the subdimensions, wisdom or investigation (Vīmaṃsā) and effort (Viriya) yielded the highest reliability scores (.88 and .84, Respectively), reflecting their consistent conceptual alignment within Buddhist leadership theory.

Descriptive Statistics: The mean scores for all variables ranged from 5.76 to 5.95 (On a 7-Point Scale), indicating that respondents generally perceived high levels of Buddhist leadership behaviors, mindfulness, and well-being within their organizations. The relatively low standard deviations (0.68-0.79) suggested moderate variability and consistent perceptions across participants.

Bivariate Correlations: All eight Buddhist Leadership Dimensions exhibited strong positive intercorrelations ($r = .50-.72$, $p < .001$), confirming that the moral, emotional, and wisdom-based aspects of Buddhist leadership were interconnected yet distinct. Significant correlations were also observed between each leadership dimension and the outcome variables.



With Workplace Mindfulness (WM) ($r = .54-.69, p < .001$), the results indicated that leaders who embodied Buddhist virtues fostered mindfulness among employees.

With Employee Well-being (EWB) ($r = .55-.66, p < .001$), the findings demonstrated significant positive correlations between leadership dimensions and well-being outcomes. These associations provided preliminary support for the proposed conceptual relationships, although causal inferences required further regression analysis.

Notably, equanimity (Upekkhā) and wisdom or investigation (Vīmaṃsā) displayed the strongest associations with both mindfulness and well-being, underscoring their pivotal role as leadership virtues that bridged internal awareness with outer harmony, consistent with Buddhist teachings on sati (Mindfulness) and paññā (Wisdom).

Table 2 reports reliability indices and bivariate correlations that demonstrate statistically significant associations among the constructs. The results indicated internal consistency of the measures and positive relationships between Buddhist leadership dimensions, workplace mindfulness, and employee well-being. These findings provided initial empirical support for the proposed relationships, while more definitive conclusions were examined through subsequent regression analyses.

3. Multiple Regression Results

Table 3 presents the results of the multiple regression analyses used to test the three hypotheses (H1-H3). Model 1 examined how the eight Buddhist Leadership Dimensions predicted Workplace Mindfulness. Model 2 assessed the direct effects of those dimensions on Employee Well-being, while Model 3 introduced Workplace Mindfulness as a mediating variable to evaluate indirect effects. The results collectively revealed which dimensions exerted significant influence, the strength of their predictive power, and whether Workplace Mindfulness mediated these relationships.

Table 3 Multiple Regression Results

	1) Workplace Mindfulness		2) Employee Well-being		3) Employee Well-being	
	β	t-value	β	t-value	β	t-value
Mettā	0.07	1.42	.15**	3.02	0.06	1.12
Karuṇā	.13*	2.28	.18**	3.54	0.09	1.68
Muditā	.06	1.21	.05	0.97	.04	0.76
Upekkhā	.19**	3.67	.21***	4.32	.12*	2.48
Chanda	0.09	1.83	0.08	1.65	0.05	1.01
Viriya	.15**	3.12	0.1	1.94	0.07	1.46
Citta	.11*	2.06	0.09	1.73	0.06	1.22
Vīmaṃsā	.22***	4.51	.19**	3.89	.13*	2.66
Workplace Mindfulness	—	—	—	—	.41***	8.62
F-value	—	—	—	—	—	—



Table 3 Multiple Regression Results (Continued)

	1) Workplace Mindfulness		2) Employee Well-being		3) Employee Well-being	
	β	t-value	β	t-value	β	t-value
R ²	45.32***		37.85***		46.12***	
Adjusted R ²	0.61		0.56		0.68	

Note: *: p<.05; **: p<.01; ***: p<.001 (Two-tailed)

N = 400

Model 1 - Predicting Workplace Mindfulness (H1)

The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 45.32, p < .001$) and explained 61% of the variance in Workplace Mindfulness ($R^2 = .61$), indicating substantial explanatory power. Among the eight dimensions, *Vīmaṃsā* (Wisdom or Investigation) ($\beta = .22, p < .001$) and *Upekkhā* (Equanimity) ($\beta = .19, p < .01$) demonstrated moderate effect sizes, while *Viriya* (Effort) ($\beta = .15, p < .01$) and *Citta* (Concentration) ($\beta = .11, p < .05$) exhibited smaller but statistically significant effects. These coefficients indicated that cognitive and attentional leadership dimensions were more strongly associated with workplace mindfulness than affective dimensions. In contrast, *Muditā* (Sympathetic Joy) and *Chanda* (Zeal) were not statistically significant predictors in this model.

Model 2 - Predicting Employee Well-being (H2)

The direct-effect model was statistically significant ($F = 37.85, p < .001$) and explained 56% of the variance in Employee Well-being ($R^2 = .56$). *Upekkhā* ($\beta = .21, p < .001$), *Karuṇā* ($\beta = .18, p < .01$), and *Mettā* ($\beta = .15, p < .01$) showed moderate effect sizes, indicating meaningful practical associations with employee well-being. These findings suggested that moral-emotional dimensions of leadership were more strongly related to well-being outcomes than motivational-cognitive dimensions in the absence of the mediator. Other dimensions did not reach statistical significance in this model.

Model 3 - Testing Mediation through Workplace Mindfulness (H3)

When Workplace Mindfulness was introduced into the model, the explained variance increased to $R^2 = .68$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .66$), indicating improved model fit. Workplace Mindfulness emerged as a substantial predictor of Employee Well-being ($\beta = .41, t = 8.62, p < .001$), representing a moderate-to-strong effect size and suggesting considerable practical importance. Following the inclusion of the mediator, the standardized coefficients for *Upekkhā* decreased from $\beta = .21$ to $\beta = .12$ and for *Vīmaṃsā* decreased from $\beta = .19$ to $\beta = .13$, although both remained statistically significant. This pattern was consistent with partial mediation. In contrast, *Mettā*, *Karuṇā*, and *Viriya* became non-significant after the inclusion of Workplace Mindfulness, indicating that their associations with well-being may have operated indirectly through mindfulness. However, given the cross-sectional design, these findings should be interpreted as evidence of statistical mediation rather than definitive causal pathways.



Discussion

Theoretical Interpretation and Conceptual Implications

The regression results provided differentiated empirical evidence regarding how specific Buddhist leadership dimensions were related to workplace mindfulness and employee well-being. Model 1 explained 61% of the variance in workplace mindfulness ($R^2 = .61$), with wisdom ($\beta = .22$) and equanimity ($\beta = .19$) demonstrating moderate effect sizes, while Effort ($\beta = .15$) and Concentration ($\beta = .11$) showed smaller but statistically significant associations. These findings suggest that cognitive-discerning and attentional dimensions of leadership are more strongly associated with collective mindfulness processes than purely affective dimensions.

In Model 2, 56% of the variance in employee well-being was explained ($R^2 = .56$), with Equanimity ($\beta = .21$), Compassion ($\beta = .18$), and Loving-kindness ($\beta = .15$) demonstrating meaningful effect sizes. When workplace mindfulness was introduced (Model 3), the explained variance increased to 68% ($R^2 = .68$), and workplace mindfulness exhibited a substantial effect ($\beta = .41$), indicating moderate-to-strong practical importance. The reduction of coefficients for Equanimity and Wisdom after inclusion of the mediator was consistent with partial mediation, while other dimensions became non-significant, suggesting indirect statistical associations.

Importantly, the findings are consistent with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001); (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), which posits that leadership behaviors function as job resources that enhance employees' psychological capacities. Leaders who embody mindfulness-oriented virtues may contribute to the development of psychological resources, such as attention regulation, emotional stability, and resilience, thereby buffering job demands and supporting well-being. In this way, the study integrates Buddhist ethical principles with established organizational psychology frameworks, offering a spiritually grounded yet empirically informed perspective on sustainable leadership.

Conceptually, the differential effect sizes across dimensions indicate that Buddhist leadership should not be treated as a unidimensional construct. Cognitive-reflective virtues (Wisdom and Equanimity) appear more closely associated with mindfulness processes, whereas moral-emotional virtues (Compassion and Loving-kindness) show stronger direct associations with well-being outcomes. This multidimensional interpretation refines the theoretical understanding of how distinct doctrinal components operate through different psychological pathways.

Comparison with Prior Research

The present findings are broadly consistent with prior quantitative research linking mindfulness-oriented leadership to employee outcomes. Reb et al. (2014) reported significant associations between supervisor mindfulness and employee well-being, while Mohammed et al. (2023) identified indirect pathways connecting leadership mindfulness to well-being outcomes. Similarly, Kumprang & Suriyankietkaew (2024) found that organizational mindfulness significantly predicted psychological capital and engagement. However, the current study extends these findings by disaggregating leadership into eight doctrinal dimensions and reporting differential effect sizes. Whereas prior research typically operationalized mindful leadership as a composite



construct, the present analysis demonstrates that not all dimensions exert equivalent statistical influence. In particular, the relatively strong coefficient for workplace mindfulness ($\beta = .41$) is comparable to effect magnitudes reported in mindfulness-well-being studies, suggesting that collective mindfulness may function as a central explanatory mechanism in leadership-well-being relationships.

Strengths, Novelty, and Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes theoretically by operationalizing the Four Brahmavihāras and the Four Iddhipāda as measurable leadership dimensions and empirically examining their distinct statistical associations with organizational outcomes. The relatively high explanatory power of the final model ($R^2 = .68$) indicates that the multidimensional framework accounts for substantial variance in employee well-being within the sampled Thai organizations. The differentiation between cognitive, moral-emotional, and motivational dimensions provides greater conceptual precision than prior aggregate models of spiritual or mindful leadership. By demonstrating partial mediation effects and varying coefficient magnitudes, the study advances a more nuanced understanding of how doctrinal virtues may translate into psychological processes within organizational settings.

Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, the substantial effect size of workplace mindfulness ($\beta = .41$) suggests that organizational initiatives aimed at strengthening collective attentional awareness and emotional regulation may have meaningful implications for employee well-being. Leadership development programs that emphasize wisdom or investigation (*Vīmaṃsā*) and Equanimity (*Upekkhā*) may be particularly relevant for fostering mindfulness processes, while Compassion (*Karuṇā*) and Loving-kindness (*Mettā*) appear more directly associated with well-being outcomes. However, given the cross-sectional design, these findings should be interpreted as statistical associations rather than definitive causal relationships. Organizations considering the integration of Buddhist-informed leadership principles should combine developmental interventions with ongoing evaluation to assess practical effectiveness.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

This study makes an original and substantive contribution to the scholarly discourse on leadership, mindfulness, and well-being by integrating Buddhist doctrinal principles with contemporary organizational behavior theory. While prior studies have explored mindful or ethical leadership as broad, unified constructs, this research advances the field by deconstructing Buddhist leadership into eight doctrinally grounded dimensions: The Four Brahmavihāras: Loving-kindness (*Mettā*), compassion (*Karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*Muditā*), and equanimity (*Upekkhā*), and the Four Iddhipāda: Zeal (*Chanda*), Effort (*Viriya*), concentration (*Citta*), and wisdom or investigation (*Vīmaṃsā*). This multidimensional approach represents the first empirical operationalization of Buddhist leadership that captures its full moral, emotional, and cognitive scope. By examining these dimensions individually rather than collectively, the study introduces a novel analytical lens that



deepens understanding of how specific Buddhist virtues shape employee well-being both directly and through workplace mindfulness.

This study makes theoretical, methodological, and contextual contributions to the leadership literature. Theoretically, it connects Buddhist ethics with mindfulness-based leadership perspectives and interprets the findings through the lens of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) perspective, offering a spiritually grounded and empirically supported account of sustainable leadership. Although the study does not explicitly test the full JD-R model, it draws on its core logic by treating Buddhist leadership dimensions as leadership-related resources that foster workplace mindfulness and, in turn, enhance employee well-being. The findings particularly underscore wisdom or investigation (*Vīmaṃsā*) and equanimity (*Upekkhā*) as key mechanisms through which inner cultivation is translated into positive well-being outcomes. In doing so, the study reframes leadership not merely as interpersonal influence, but as a process of inner development expressed through mindful action and moral integrity. Methodologically, the study advances prior research by operationalizing canonical Buddhist constructs as measurable organizational variables and validating them through rigorous quantitative analysis. The use of multiple regression to examine both direct and mediating relationships among Buddhist leadership dimensions, workplace mindfulness, and employee well-being further provides a replicable framework for future research in both Eastern and Western contexts. Contextually, the study contributes evidence from Thailand, a Buddhist-majority society in which Buddhist values remain deeply embedded in social and organizational life. By grounding the analysis in a setting of lived Buddhist practice, the study broadens leadership scholarship beyond predominantly Western paradigms and highlights the wider relevance of mindfulness-based ethics for promoting sustainable employee well-being.

In sum, this study enriches the global body of knowledge by positioning Buddhist leadership as a multidimensional and empirically verifiable framework that connects inner moral consciousness, workplace mindfulness, and employee well-being. It challenges existing leadership theories dominated by transactional and transformational models, proposing instead a paradigm of mindfulness-centered ethical leadership grounded in ancient wisdom yet highly relevant to contemporary organizational realities. This research thus opens a new frontier in Applied Buddhism and organizational psychology, providing both a theoretical foundation and empirical evidence for how leadership rooted in compassion, wisdom, and balance can enhance human well-being and organizational harmony in an era of accelerating change. (As Illustrated in Figure 2).

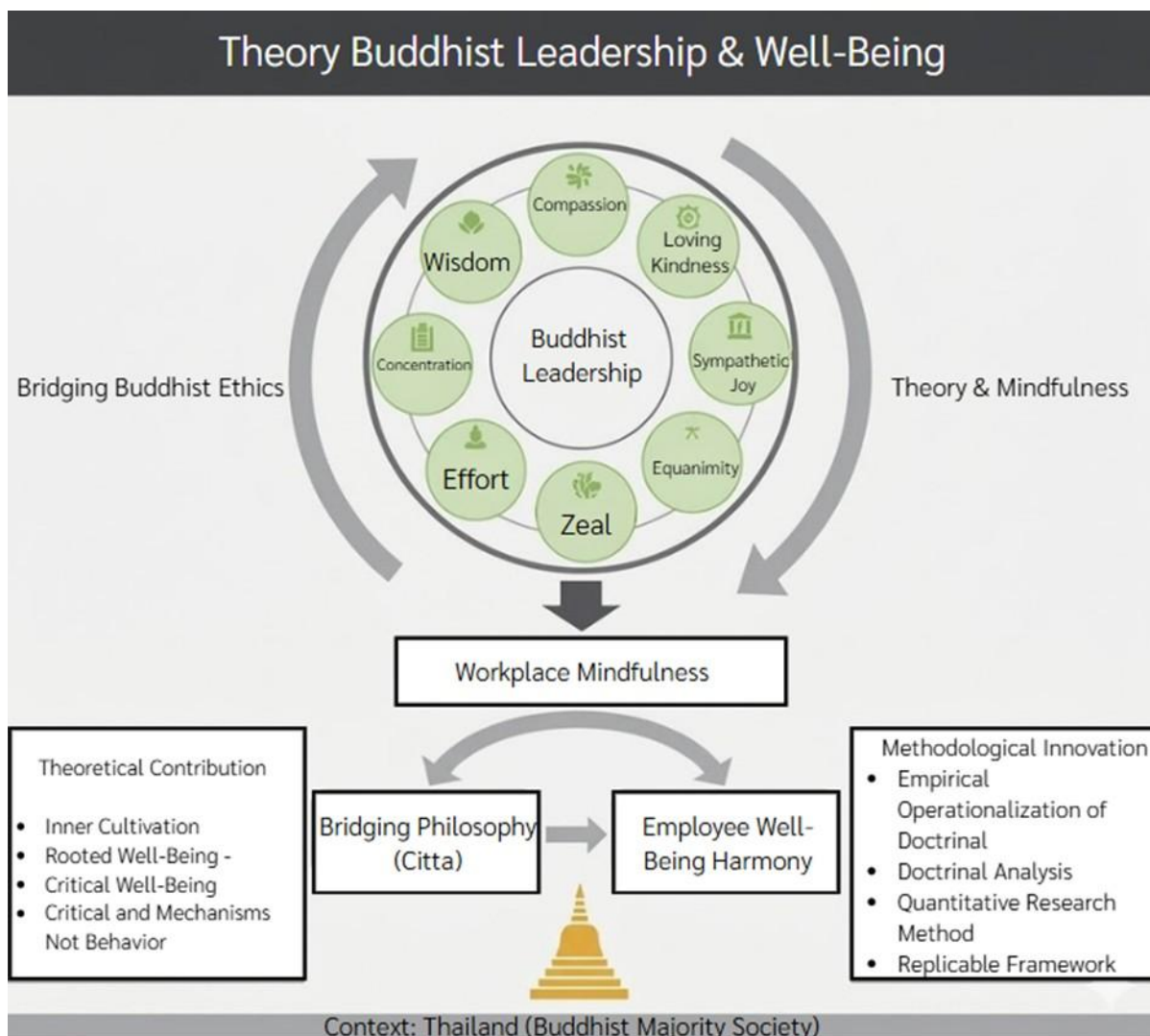


Figure 2 Analytical Model of Buddhist Leadership Dimensions and Their Effects on Workplace Mindfulness and Employee Well-Being

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study achieved its objective by examining the multidimensional nature of Buddhist leadership and its relationship with employee well-being through the mediating role of workplace mindfulness in Thai organizational contexts. The findings showed that the model explained a substantial proportion of variance in employee well-being ($R^2 = .68$). Workplace mindfulness was a strong predictor of employee well-being, while Wisdom and Equanimity were significantly associated with workplace mindfulness. Equanimity, Compassion, and Loving-kindness were also positively associated with employee well-being. The reduced coefficients of some leadership dimensions after the inclusion of workplace mindfulness provide evidence consistent with partial mediation, suggesting that Buddhist leadership operates through distinct psychological pathways rather than as a single undifferentiated construct. These findings suggest that organizations may strengthen employee well-being by incorporating Buddhist leadership dimensions into leadership



development and well-being programs, particularly through reflective practice and mindfulness-based training. Although the results can be interpreted through the lens of the Job Demands-Resources perspective, the cross-sectional design does not permit causal inference. Future research should apply longitudinal, experimental, or multilevel designs and use structural equation modeling to further validate the proposed relationships. Overall, the study contributes empirical evidence linking Buddhist leadership to measurable organizational outcomes and offers context-sensitive implications for organizations in Buddhist-majority settings.

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DIGITAL PEDAGOGY AS HUMAN CULTIVATION: A BUDDHIST ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF ONLINE ENGLISH INSTRUCTION

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: As online English instruction becomes pervasive in contemporary Thailand, existing scholarship primarily focuses on instructional efficiency, leaving the anthropological impact on learner formation underexplored. This study addresses this gap by advancing Buddhist anthropology to examine secular digital education as a contemporary terrain of ethical-epistemic formation. The primary objective is to investigate how digital pedagogy operates as a formative environment where discipline, attention, and discernment are structured and normalized. By reinterpreting the Tri-sikkhā (Sīla, Samādhī, and Paññā) as an analytical grammar rather than a doctrinal schema, this research specifically aims to analyze how technologically mediated learning enacts, approximates, or distorts these three dimensions of cultivation. Through this framework, the study demonstrates how Buddhist categories illuminate the subtle processes through which digital environments produce subjects and shape cognitive dispositions within modern educational life.

Methodology: This study employed a qualitative interpretive design, treating online instructional materials not as neutral tools but as cultural artifacts that reflect broader technological and educational regimes. Data Collection and Analysis Using purposive sampling, ten publicly accessible Thai online English instruction video clips were selected to represent contemporary asynchronous pedagogy. Data corpus includes instructional sequencing, visual organization, narrative framing, and pedagogical pacing. The analysis was systematically aligned with the Tri-sikkhā framework, comprising Sīla (Discipline), Samādhī (Attention), and Paññā (Discernment), utilizing it as an analytical grammar to trace ethical-epistemic formation. The interpretive process was conducted through five explicit stages. First, a detailed transcription of both verbal and non-verbal pedagogical cues was performed. Second, data classification was conducted, where findings were categorized through the heuristic lenses of the three Tri-sikkhā dimensions. Third, thematic reduction was employed to distill complex interactions into core pedagogical themes. Fourth, the synthesis stage utilized these themes to map patterns across cases and identify how digital environments structured learner dispositions. Last, the analysis underwent validation by cross-referencing findings with canonical Buddhist scholarship to ensure interpretive integrity. By documenting these



structured procedures, the study explicitly demonstrates how digital pedagogy enacts, approximates, or distorts traditional architectures of human cultivation.

Main Results: Applying the Tri-sikkhā framework revealed an uneven enactment of Buddhist principles in digital English instruction. *Sīla* exposed how platforms enforced procedural discipline through routinized sequencing, yet rarely cultivated internalized ethical awareness. *Samādhi* revealed a reliance on engineered attentional strategies, such as short segments and visual stimulation, that produced momentary focus but limited sustained contemplation. Finally, *Paññā* was profoundly constrained; Pedagogy privileged mechanized translation and surface comprehension over deep reflexive inquiry. Ultimately, these categories demonstrated how digital environments intensified behavioral order while structurally marginalizing wisdom-centered human cultivation.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: Classified within Applied Buddhism, this study contributes to the intersection of Buddhism, globalization (Information Technology), and the development of wisdom and morality. By repositioning the Tri-sikkhā as a critical analytical resource for secular practices, the research revealed that online instruction operated as ethical-epistemic training where discipline and attention were amplified, and discernment was limited. This situates digital education within the anthropology of formation, extending applied Buddhist anthropology to analyze how platform infrastructures reshape contemporary modes of conduct and knowing beyond religious domains.

Conclusions: The study concludes that online English instruction functions as a formative environment rather than a mere pedagogical tool. Findings confirmed that digital pedagogy enforced proceduralized discipline and engineered attention while profoundly constraining wisdom. This research offers a conceptual contribution to Buddhist anthropology by extending its analytical scope into secular spaces and to digital education by demonstrating that platforms actively recalibrate how learners perceive experience, intensifying behavioral control while narrowing the conditions for insight.

Keywords: Tri-sikkhā, Buddhist Anthropology, Online English Instruction

Introduction

The rapid migration of education into digital environments has fundamentally reconfigured the structural conditions of learning, where behavioral restraint, sustained attention, and reflective discernment are unsettled by the speed and fragmentation of platform-mediated instruction (Selwyn, 2016); (Williamson, 2020). While contemporary global educational discourse increasingly prioritizes measurable outcomes and standardized performance (UNESCO, 2015), critical digital pedagogy has recently highlighted that technology is never a neutral tool but a formative environment that actively shapes learner subjectivity (Bayne, 2015); (Knox, 2019). Despite the proliferation of asynchronous online English instruction, now a dominant mode of secular pedagogy in Thailand, existing scholarship remains largely confined to instructional efficiency and user satisfaction (Teräs et al., 2020). There is a significant research gap regarding the anthropological and ethical-epistemic impact of these platforms: Specifically, how digital architectures produce "Subjects" in the absence of reciprocal watchfulness and embodied social consequences.



This study addresses this gap by proposing the Tri-sikkhā (Sīla, Samādhī, and Paññā) as a canonical lens for re-reading contemporary digital pedagogy. Traditionally understood as an integrated architecture of ethical discipline, mental cultivation, and wisdom, the Tri-sikkhā is reinterpreted here not as a doctrinal schema, but as an analytical grammar applicable to secular contexts. By advancing beyond existing critiques of platform learning, which often remain confined to issues of datafication, labor, or instructional efficiency, this Buddhist anthropological reading offers a significant conceptual advancement in digital pedagogy debates. It provides a nuanced vocabulary to address the "Inner" ontological loss of the learner, moving the conversation from a mere critique of technological tools to a radical re-evaluation of how digital environments reconfigure the very possibility of human cultivation. This approach aligns with Buddhist modernism, which reframes traditional categories within rational idioms to engage with modern institutions (Lopez, 2012); (McMahan, 2009). By bringing Buddhist educational thought, which emphasizes holistic human development over mere information transfer, into dialogue with online English instruction videos in Thailand, this article renders visible what is sustained, constrained, or reconfigured in the digital age. Methodologically, the study employs an interpretive qualitative analysis to examine how current online practices implicitly align with or diverge from this Buddhist educational architecture, contributing a model that remains normatively grounded yet heuristically functional for interpreting technologically mediated modernity. By doing so, this study strategically employs the Tri-sikkhā not as a religious doctrine for proselytization but as an interpretive grammar to diagnose the ethical-epistemic conditions of digital environments. The urgency of this analysis is underscored by the current educational governance in Thailand, where national policies on digital transformation often prioritize technological infrastructure over pedagogical depth. Within this reform dynamic, online instruction is frequently reduced to a delivery mechanism for human capital development, a context that further marginalizes the formative goals of education and necessitates a critical re-evaluation through more holistic anthropological lenses.

Objectives

The primary objective is to investigate how digital pedagogy operates as a formative environment where discipline, attention, and discernment are structured and normalized. By reinterpreting the Tri-sikkhā (Sīla, Samādhī, and Paññā) as an analytical grammar rather than a doctrinal schema, this research specifically aims to analyze how technologically mediated learning enacts, approximates, or distorts these three dimensions of cultivation.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative interpretive design, approaching online instructional videos not as neutral tools for content delivery, but as cultural artifacts that reflected broader pedagogical regimes. This interpretive approach was intentionally positioned in dialogue with design-based research traditions, acknowledging that pedagogical artifacts were never static but were products of deliberate instructional design. A hybrid framing that merged Buddhist anthropology with digital pedagogy was chosen because it allowed for an evaluation of not only



the technical efficiency of the design but also its profound impact on the ontological formation of the learner. The analytical framework utilized in this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

To ensure procedural transparency, the study utilized purposive sampling to select ten Thai online English instruction video clips from major open-access platforms, specifically YouTube and Facebook. The selection followed a systematic three-step process: First, identifying high-reach, teacher-generated content through common search terms (e.g., "Basic English Grammar"); Second, screening for asynchronous videos lacking live interaction to capture the structural characteristics of platform-mediated pedagogy; And third, selecting cases representing dominant instructional styles. This sample size of ten was justified by analytic saturation, where recurring pedagogical patterns became sufficiently evident.

The Tri-sikkhā was operationalized here as a functional analytical grammar rather than a doctrinal framework, focusing on how technology mediated learner dispositions. The analytical process moved through five rigorous stages. First, a detailed transcription captured both verbal instructions and non-verbal cues. Second, data classification was conducted by mapping these findings onto the three heuristic lenses of the Tri-sikkhā: Identifying "Procedural Discipline" (Sīla), mapping "Engineered Attention" (Samādhi), and diagnosing the "Foreclosure of Reflection" (Paññā). Third, thematic reduction distilled complex interactions into core pedagogical themes. Fourth, synthesis involved mapping these themes across all cases to identify consistent structural tendencies within digital environments. Finally, validation was achieved by cross-referencing the findings with canonical Buddhist scholarship (Gethin, 1998) to ensure interpretive integrity.

Analytical Framework and Procedures

This study employed a qualitative interpretive design, approaching online instructional materials as cultural artifacts that reflect broader pedagogical and technological regimes. To ensure procedural transparency and methodological rigor, ten video clips were identified through a systematic search on YouTube and Facebook conducted between January and June 2025. To further enhance methodological rigor, the study employed investigator triangulation, where data interpretations were independently reviewed and then synthesized by the research team. Additionally, an audit trail was maintained through a detailed coding matrix and researcher memos, documenting the iterative shifts in thematic development from raw transcriptions to the final synthesis. The search strategy utilized specific English-translated keywords, including English Language Learning, English Grammar, and English-Speaking Practice. The selection followed strict inclusion criteria, requiring that videos were teacher-generated, publicly accessible, asynchronous, and produced by Thai creators within the last five years to reflect contemporary pedagogy. Conversely, promotional clips or those under five minutes were excluded to ensure sufficient pedagogical sequencing for analysis. The sample size of ten was determined by analytic saturation, the point at which additional data ceased to yield new structural patterns regarding the Tri-sikkhā dimensions. As the materials are third-party content publicly shared for educational purposes, the study adheres to "Fair Use" principles, focusing on pedagogical representation rather than personal identity. The analysis was systematically aligned with the Tri-sikkhā framework, operationalized as



an analytical grammar consisting of *Sīla* (Procedural Discipline), *Samādhi* (Attentional Rhythms), and *Paññā* (Modes of Discernment). The interpretive process involved three iterative stages of coding and interpretation. It began with within-case analysis and annotation, where each video was viewed repeatedly to record verbal instructions and non-verbal cues such as pacing and visual layout. This was followed by cross-case synthesis and iterative coding, where notes were systematized into a coding matrix to refine themes and ensure they captured the structural orientations of the digital environment. Finally, these patterns were integrated and situated within the broader architecture of Buddhist educational thought. To minimize individual bias and enhance academic credibility, the analysis included a peer-debriefing process where preliminary coding and findings were cross-checked by the research team for interpretive consistency. This rigorous procedure renders visible the implicit pedagogical dimensions that shape conduct, attention, and understanding in technologically mediated modernity. Coding transparency was ensured through the use of an explicit coding scheme based on the *Tri-sikkhā* dimensions, where pedagogical cues were systematically tagged and compared across all ten cases. This process clarified how interpretations were stabilized, ensuring that the identified patterns of "Engineered Attention" or "Procedural Discipline" were consistently grounded in the empirical data of each video artifact.

The selection of ten representative video artifacts was determined not for statistical generalization, but for the depth of qualitative "Thick Description" they afford regarding digital subject formation. While this sample size presents limits of representativeness across the vast landscape of online education, it establishes a focused analytical boundary that allows for a rigorous mapping of recurring pedagogical patterns. This approach prioritizes interpretive credibility by uncovering the structural "DNA" of asynchronous instruction within a specific, high-reach Thai context, rather than providing an exhaustive survey.

Results and Discussion

Drawing on the interpretive analysis of ten Thai online English instruction video clips through the *Tri-sikkhā* framework, the findings indicated that digital pedagogy shaped patterns of discipline, attention, and understanding in structurally uneven ways. The analysis identified recurring configurations of *Sīla*, *Samādhi*, and *Paññā* within asynchronous instructional design as follows:

1. **Predominance of Procedural *Sīla*** Across the dataset, *Sīla* appeared most visibly at the level of communicative tone and instructional organization. Instructors consistently employed polite and supportive language, implicitly modeling a respectful pedagogical space. In videos focusing on Business English, *Sīla* was frequently manifested through the instruction of professional etiquette. For instance, several clips provided scripts for corporate interactions, emphasizing phrases such as "I am Afraid I have to Disagree" or "Could you Please Clarify your Point?" Here, the pedagogy framed *Sīla* as "Business Decorum," a set of linguistic rules designed to maintain professional harmony and social face. However, this remained primarily procedural; Ethical comportment was expressed as a social contract for professional success rather than an internal commitment to moral restraint. This



observation explicitly addressed the research objective to investigate how discipline was structured and normalized within digital environments.

2. Conditional Realization of Samādhī Elements associated with Samādhī appeared through design features such as rhythmic pacing, repetitive drills, and visual cues intended to "Capture" attention. These techniques generated what was termed "Engineered Attention," a temporary cognitive focus maintained through external stimulation. For example, observed clips utilized rapid-fire editing and high-contrast text overlays to sustain engagement during long explanations of business terminologies. However, the asynchronous format allowed learners to pause or skip instruction without structural consequence, making attentional continuity contingent on individual motivation. The reliance on continuous visual stimulation actually limited opportunities for reflective pause; Thus, attentional control was supported instrumentally to ensure content consumption but was rarely deepened as disciplined mental training.

3. Systematic Under-Realization of Paññā The least developed dimension was Paññā. Instruction predominantly emphasized rule explanation, translation, and rote practice. The limitation of Paññā was particularly evident in how business vocabulary was taught; Instead of encouraging a deep understanding of cultural nuances, the instruction often relied on the memorization of "Power Verbs." A concrete example from the dataset included lists of words like "Leverage," "Streamline," and "Optimize," where learners were instructed to "Just Use these Words to Sound Professional" without exploring the strategic or ethical implications of such language. The under-realization of Paññā carried profound pedagogical implications; By prioritizing linguistic efficiency over critical discernment, the instruction risked producing learners who possessed technical fluency but lacked the meta-cognitive capacity to navigate complex ethical communication. This deficiency indicated that digital pedagogy recalibrated learning into a mechanistic acquisition of data rather than a transformative process of wisdom.

4. Structural Asymmetry of the Tri-sikkhā Taken together, the findings revealed a structural asymmetry in the enactment of the Tri-sikkhā. Sīla was present as procedural order, Samādhī was conditionally supported through attentional management (Stimulation), and Paññā remained comparatively constrained. These results demonstrated that online English instruction constituted only a partial realization of Buddhist educational architecture, prioritizing the "How to" of professional communication over the "Why" of holistic human cultivation. By mapping these patterns, the study fulfilled its objective to analyze how technologically mediated learning enacted, approximated, or distorted the three dimensions of cultivation.

Discussion

The structural asymmetry identified in the findings reflects a fundamental tension between the instrumental logic of digital pedagogy and the holistic architecture of Buddhist education. Online platforms are inherently optimized for algorithmic delivery and engagement metrics, features that prioritize "User Retention" over the non-linear processes of ethical formation. As Hershock (2006) argues, the rearticulation of Buddhism within modern public spheres occurs under technological conditions that tend to colonize attention and instrumentalize human relationships for



market-driven ends. Consequently, the migration of instruction into platform-mediated environments reconfigures the conditions under which education, as understood within the Tri-sikkhā, can manifest, often reducing ethical discipline and mental stabilization to mere functional requirements for efficient digital consumption. Crucially, this interpretive model advances existing digital pedagogy frameworks by distinguishing itself from mindfulness-based learning, which often focuses on individual stress reduction, and critical media studies, which centers on power and labor. Instead, this Buddhist anthropological lens focuses on ontological formation, providing a unique scholarly contribution by showing how the "Grammar" of digital platforms reconfigures the possibility of stable ethical and mental states. This convergence with and divergence from secular frameworks clarify the study's specific interdisciplinary relevance.

The analytical approach of this study is further informed by the structural conditions of digitally mediated learning, specifically the loss of embodied presence and social risk as identified by Dreyfus (2001). Dreyfus argues that without physical presence, the pedagogical relationship loses the "Situatedness" and the "Finitude" necessary for deep ethical commitment and transformative learning. In contemporary contexts, these conditions are exacerbated by the "Platformization" of education, where learning is reconfigured into discrete, low-risk transactions of information that prioritize efficiency over interpersonal depth (Bayne et al., 2020). This framework operates within the cultural logic of late modernity, a period characterized by what Taylor (2007) describes as the "Buffered Self," an identity that seeks security within an imminent, secular frame, detached from transcendent or communal demands. In the digital age, this buffered existence is amplified by algorithmic environments that filter out challenging or "Other" encounters, leading to what Byung-Chul Han (2018) terms "The Expulsion of the Other." Within such a context, digital pedagogy often prioritizes individualistic efficiency and "Social Acceleration" (Rosa, 2013) over the holistic and relational development envisioned in the Tri-sikkhā. By situating the analysis within this digital immanent frame, the study renders visible how platform-mediated instruction reinforces the secular fragmentation of attention and discernment, moving away from a canonically grounded architecture of human cultivation. These platforms are designed to optimize accessibility, engagement, and continuity, conditions that align more readily with behavioral regulation and attentional management than with insight-oriented cultivation.

The study adopts a Buddhist anthropological perspective, which shifts the focus from canonical orthodoxy to the lived, structural, and mediated realities of Buddhist practice in contemporary society (Abeysekara, 2002); (Houtman, 1999). The structural asymmetry identified in this study, where Sīla and Samādhī are reduced to technical functions while Paññā remains unrealized, resonates with the observations of Kitiarsa (2012) regarding the "Popular Commodification" of Thai Buddhism. Kitiarsa argues that in contemporary Thailand, religious symbols and spiritual practices are often reconfigured into marketable assets that prioritize immediate utility over transformative depth. This mirrors the findings of the present study, where the Tri-sikkhā is operationalized within digital platforms as a set of procedural competencies, effectively transforming education from a formative practice into a consumptive activity.



This framing allows for an examination of how the Tri-sikkhā is not merely an abstract ethical code but a site of contested discipline and attention within digital environments. By analyzing English instruction through this lens, the study clarifies how pedagogical designs act as modern "Regimes of Care" or "Disciplines of the Self" that reconfigure traditional Buddhist educational architecture (Asad, 1993); (McMahan, 2009). It constitutes a formative process through which dispositions are shaped. The predominance of procedural Sīla suggests that digital pedagogy stabilizes conduct through routinized structure rather than through ethical interiorization. Ethical conduct in Buddhist thought extends beyond rule-following to encompass intentional and relational responsibility (Keown, 2005). This reflects broader critiques of educational technology as structurally shaped by market and platform logics (Selwyn, 2016). Similarly, engineered attentional techniques approximate Samādhi while remaining oriented toward engagement metrics rather than sustained contemplative discipline (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). The relative absence of Paññā-oriented design further indicates that interpretive depth and reflexive discernment are structurally constrained in platform-based environments.

Within the Tri-sikkhā, Sīla provides the ethical foundation, Samādhi stabilizes attention, and Paññā enables insight. When attentional practices are externally driven and temporally fragmented, the transition toward insight becomes difficult to sustain. Digital pedagogy thus intensifies control over conduct and attention while narrowing conditions for wisdom-centered development. Importantly, this discussion does not frame online instruction as deficient or incompatible with Buddhist thought (Gethin, 1998). Rather, it highlights how technological infrastructures reorganize the conditions under which formation occurs. Digital environments do not merely host learning; They actively shape its ethical and epistemic contours. Such dynamics resonate with Rosa (2013) analysis of social acceleration in late modernity. In this sense, online English instruction exemplifies how secular educational practices can be read as sites of moral and cognitive structuring (Bell, 2007), even when not explicitly framed as such. To clarify the necessity of a Buddhist anthropological reading, it is essential to distinguish this lens from standard digital pedagogy frameworks such as Cognitive Load Theory or Connectivism. By advancing beyond existing critiques of platform learning, which often focus on datafication or labor, this Buddhist anthropological reading offers a significant advancement in digital pedagogy debates. It provides a nuanced vocabulary to discuss the inner loss of the learner, proposing that the crisis of digital education is essentially a crisis of human cultivation that requires an ontological, rather than merely technical, intervention. While these secular models excel at optimizing information processing and network navigation, they often remain silent on the ethical epistemic stabilization of the learner's inner disposition. The Tri-sikkhā lens is therefore not merely supplementary; It is necessary for rendering visible the "Formative" dimension of human education and cultivation that is frequently obscured by the instrumental focus on cognitive efficiency and engagement metrics.

By positioning the Tri-sikkhā as an analytical grammar, this study contributes to Buddhist anthropology by extending its interpretive reach into digital modernity. Educational reform is frequently framed through a discourse of crisis that privileges rapid transformation over reflective



cultivation (Zhao et al., 2019). It suggests that contemporary technological environments can be understood not simply as tools but as formative regimes that condition how subjects attend, interpret, and orient themselves toward knowledge. The anthropological task, therefore, is not to evaluate digital education against religious ideals, but to analyze how new media environments reconfigure long-standing architectures of cultivation. The anthropological task, therefore, is not to evaluate digital education against religious ideals, but to analyze how new media environments reconfigure long-standing architectures of cultivation. Drawing on the contemplative lens proposed by de Vries (2024), this study extends the framework into a diagnostic tool that renders visible dimensions of formation often obscured by platform logics. Digital pedagogy can therefore be understood not only in terms of content transmission but in terms of what forms of conduct, attention, and understanding are cultivated or constrained within technologically mediated learning. Mindfulness within Buddhist pedagogy is grounded in sustained, embodied awareness rather than episodic cognitive focus (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1999). Technologies function not merely as neutral tools but as mediating actors within educational assemblages (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010).

Originality and Body of Knowledge

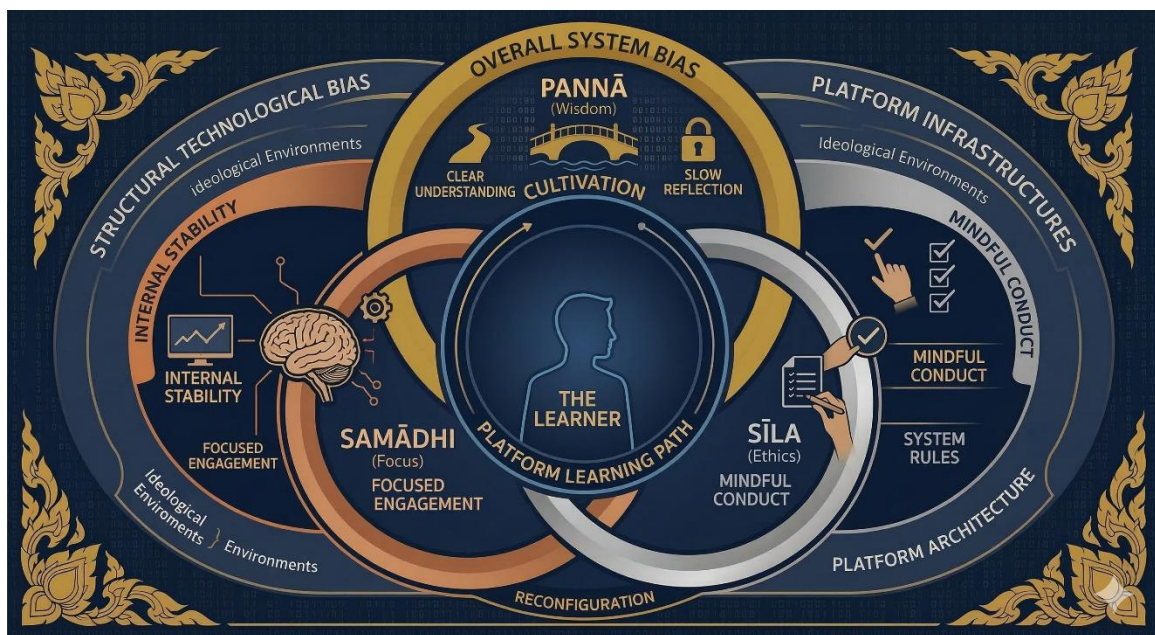


Figure 1 Proposed Tri-sikkhā analytical framework for examining digital pedagogy as human cultivation

Specifically, the figure maps the conceptual links between traditional Buddhist pillars and modern digital pedagogy: *Sīla* provides the ethical grounding for digital conduct, *Samādhī* addresses mental focus amidst online distractions, and *Paññā* facilitates critical inquiry into digital information. The analytical process focuses on critiquing the hidden asymmetries of online instruction through a Buddhist anthropological perspective. By adapting Tri-sikkhā analysis to secular online contexts, the study highlights its originality by repositioning Buddhadhamma as an analytical



resource capable of revealing how platform infrastructures participate in reshaping contemporary modes of conduct and knowing beyond traditional religious settings.

This study addresses a critical scholarly gap by shifting the analytical focus from the instrumental efficiency of digital tools toward the ontological and ethical reconfiguration of the learner within platform-mediated environments. While contemporary pedagogical research frequently evaluates online learning through the lens of technical engagement, it often overlooks how digital infrastructures fundamentally alter the structures of human attention and moral discernment. This research substantively contributes to Buddhist anthropology and digital education studies through the following original frameworks:

A primary contribution of this study is the identification of a structural technological bias within online English instruction. By integrating a conceptual critique of technological totalizing, the findings demonstrate that digital platforms are not neutral conduits but ideological environments that privilege procedural efficiency over educational formation. The research reveals that online pedagogy often functions as a system where the efficiency of the interface and algorithmic delivery displace the traditional goals of human cultivation. This displacement effectively marginalizes the relational and contemplative depth inherent in the Tri-sikkhā, shifting the focus from the holistic development of the learner to the optimized performance of the digital transaction. By articulating this gap, the study highlights how the "Platformization" of education reconfigures the very possibility of ethical and mental stabilization in the digital age.

The core originality of this study lies in repositioning the Tri-sikkhā not as a prescriptive doctrinal benchmark, but as an interpretive and diagnostic grammar for secular pedagogy. By operationalizing this framework, the research renders visible a profound structural asymmetry inherent in digital learning environments. Specifically, the analysis reveals that Sīla (Ethics) is often reduced to mere procedural compliance and interface conduct, while Samādhi (Concentration) is approximated through engineered attentional techniques geared toward screen endurance rather than deep, embodied concentration. The observed pedagogical patterns demonstrate a clear link to the Tri-sikkhā uneven enactment. For instance, the constant use of high-contrast text and upbeat background music functions as a technological proxy for Samādhi, attempting to manufacture focus through external stimulation. This pattern explicitly demonstrates how digital architectures prioritize "Engineered Attention" over the internal mental stability required for the eventual arising of Paññā. Most significantly, Paññā (Wisdom) remains largely unrealized, as the platform's logic of immediacy and algorithmic delivery forecloses the slow, reflective processes essential for authentic human cultivation.

Finally, this research extends Buddhist anthropology into the critical analysis of platform-mediated subject formation. It argues that the observed absence of Paññā is not merely an incidental pedagogical failure, but rather a symptomatic outcome of an educational orientation that prioritizes consumption over cultivation. By articulating these implications within a canon-informed interpretive horizon, the study enriches contemporary educational discourse with a depth of moral and anthropological analysis. This extension situates digital pedagogy within



broader scholarly debates on how technology mediates human conduct and understanding, ultimately proposing that the recovery of formative depth requires a radical re-evaluation of the ethical and mental stabilization of the learner.

Ultimately, the necessity of this Buddhist anthropological lens lies in its ability to offer an ontological intervention rather than a merely technical one. While contemporary digital pedagogy critiques identify the symptoms of platform logic, this study's engagement with the Tri-sikkhā provides a diagnostic depth that reconnects digital learning with the broader ethical project of being human. In doing so, it proposes that the future of digital education requires not just better software, but a fundamental recovery of the formative spaces necessary for mental and ethical stabilization.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study concludes that online English instruction functions as a formative environment where the Tri-sikkhā illuminates the ethical-epistemic dimensions embedded in digital pedagogy. By utilizing Buddhist categories as a diagnostic tool, the research revealed that digital pedagogy proceduralized Sīla through routinized discipline, engineered Samādhi through attentional management, and structurally constrained Paññā. This asymmetry demonstrated how platform-mediated learning privileges efficiency and immediacy over reflective depth, thereby reshaping the conditions of human cultivation. To address these findings, the study recommends that instructional designers move beyond platform scalability toward insight-oriented design by incorporating "Reflective Gaps" and "Intentional Friction" asynchronous tasks that require meta-cognitive inquiry rather than mere procedural clicks. Shifting from information delivery to insight-oriented practice ensures that deep discernment is structurally supported within digital infrastructures. While the study was limited by its focus on instructional artifacts and a sample of ten videos, it provided a usable framework for future pedagogical reform. Future research should incorporate ethnographic data to triangulate how students negotiate these digital formations, thereby enhancing the interpretive credibility of Buddhist anthropological findings within a broader analytical scope.

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THE APPLICATION OF THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF IDDHIPADA IN THE SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION OF SCOPUS-INDEXED AUTHORS: A CASE STUDY OF SRINAKHARINWIROT UNIVERSITY, THAILAND

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Scholarly communication is the creation, peer review, sharing and preservation of a wide variety of academic outputs. It functions as a recognized metric of academic performance, which includes emerging formats such as preprints and online scholarly exchanges. Bibliometrics is used to evaluate scholarly communication, with publication and citation counts as the primary metrics. However, quantitative metrics ignore internal and cultural factors that drive academic success. To address this gap and extend existing scholarly communication research, this study explores how Buddhist principles contextualize the research practices of Thai scholars. The findings indicate that the four principles of Iddhipada are essential teachings in Buddhism that address internal qualities. They are: 1) Chanda (Aspiration), representing satisfaction and passion in work; 2) Viriya (Effort), supporting perseverance when facing obstacles; 3) Citta (Focus), involving concentration and mindfulness, and 4) Vimamsa (Investigation), using wisdom for reflection and improvement. The four principles of Iddhipada are crucial internal drivers for scholars to produce high-quality academic work in order to promote their success in academia. Therefore, this study aimed to explore how the four principles of Iddhipada (Four Paths to Success) Buddhist principles are applied within the scholarly communication process of authors affiliated with Srinakharinwirot University, whose works are indexed in the Scopus database.

Methodology: This qualitative study employed purposive sampling to include 18 key informants, namely, authors at Srinakharinwirot University with high citation rates indexed in Scopus. The data were collected from semi-structured in-depth interviews from October 2024 to August 2025, with a valid instrument designed to explore the application of the four principles of Iddhipada while they work. Furthermore, expert validation was undertaken for the interviews, and a pilot phase was implemented to establish reliability. The data analysis adopted content analysis, triangulation, and inductive analysis. This integrated approach ensured the reliability of the results and facilitated the synthesis of various information sources into a unified framework.

Main Results: The initial bibliometric analysis revealed that 5,504 Scopus-indexed publications were produced across 26 academic units from 1981 to 2025. Building on this context, the qualitative findings demonstrated that international publication success is not merely a result of academic skills



but is systematically driven by integrating the four principles of Iddhipada. The informants utilized Chanda to transform personal intent into public-oriented research commitments. Furthermore, Viriya and Citta functioned synergistically to overcome unwholesome states (Akusala-dhamma), such as mental stagnation, fostering grit and a growth mindset amidst complex academic duties. Lastly, Vimamsa was applied as a strategic and analytical tool for critical decision-making throughout the publication cycle.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: In accordance with the scope of Applied Buddhism, this study conceptualizes the four principles of Iddhipada as a practical framework for scholarly communication. Integrating these traditional teachings with contemporary research practices provides a philosophical foundation for knowledge creation. Specifically, internal cultivation through mindfulness and wise reflection enhances the academic management process. Ultimately, this applied approach strengthens researchers' ethical commitments and sustains their engagement with international publication standards.

Conclusions: Based on these findings, the four principles of Iddhipada could be framed for academic excellence. Academic institutions should focus on context-specific support that models these enablers. In this way, universities would implement policies that help researchers apply Vimamsa (Investigation) to address peer-review feedback and cultivate Viriya (Effort) to build emotional resilience, thereby enhancing research productivity and scholarly quality.

Keywords: Scholarly Communication, Srinakharinwirot University, Iddhipada, Internal Drivers

Introduction

Scholarly communication involves creating, peer reviewing, sharing, and preserving various academic outputs such as research articles, books, and conference proceedings. It also includes emerging formats such as preprints and online scholarly exchanges (Association of College & Research Libraries, 2013); (Das, 2015); (Wolfram, 2019) and functions as a recognized metric of academic performance (Patel et al., 2013). Scholarly communication is often evaluated using bibliometrics, primarily considering publication and citation counts (Pritchard, 1969). However, quantitative metrics tend to overlook internal and cultural factors that drive academic success, especially in Thai academia where Buddhist principles influence research practices (Ignat et al., 2021); (Phra Thiti Kittipanyo (Jamnong Suk), 2019); (Pöder, 2022).

The four principles of Iddhipada (Four Paths to Success) are essential Buddhist teachings focused on strengthening internal qualities. These include: 1) Chanda (Aspiration), or satisfaction and passion for one's work; 2) Viriya (Effort), meaning perseverance and effort; 3) Citta (Focus), which involves mindfulness and concentration; and 4) Vimamsa (Investigation), using wisdom for reflection and discernment (Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P.A. Payutto), 2002). The four principles of Iddhipada serves as a crucial internal motivator for scholars to produce high-quality academic work. These principles enhance motivation, improve well-being, and foster the perseverance, sustained attention, and reflection necessary for academic success (Hanjai et al., 2024); (Phabua et al., 2024); (Somkhane, 2023).



Most scholarly communication research relies on quantitative methods that use metrics such as the h-index, Impact Factor, and citation counts, qualitative research has not fully explored the deeper parts of the communication process (Chuang & Chen, 2003). There is limited interpretation of socio-cultural contexts and local philosophies, especially Buddhist principles, which influence how Thai researchers communicate and succeed internationally.

Most research on the four principles of Iddhipada concentrates on education, local government, and community-based studies (Phra Teerawat Jaranathammo (Khanungsub), 2017); (Tantalanutkul et al., 2025); (Yulek et al., 2022). Very little work links these Buddhist principles to scholarly communication, such as creating research, responding to peer review, or overcoming publication obstacles (Wang et al., 2023). These aspects are crucial for understanding the role of the four principles of Iddhipada in Thai higher education. Investigating high-impact Scopus outputs through the lens of the four principles of Iddhipada provides a crucial psychological and motivational alternative to standard bibliometrics, explaining the internal stamina required to navigate rigorous international peer-review processes.

A bibliometric analysis at Srinakharinwirot University shows that from 1981 to 2025, a total of 5,504 academic works were published and indexed in Scopus. These works originated from 26 academic units. However, this bibliometric analysis does not offer a qualitative view of what supports authors within Thailand's unique socio-cultural context. Therefore, this research explores the perspectives of key informants, authors affiliated with Srinakharinwirot University, whose academic works are published and indexed in the Scopus database. Using a qualitative approach, the study aims to explain how the four Buddhist Iddhipada principles are enacted in scholars' lived experiences of international scholarly communication, particularly across stages of research production, peer review, and publication. By foregrounding these internal and culturally grounded enablers, the study provides a contextualized explanation of academic success that extends beyond bibliometric indicators. Furthermore, it offers a conceptual framework for researcher development, mentoring, and sustainable research productivity within Buddhist-influenced higher education contexts.

Objective

This study aimed to explore how the four principles of Iddhipada (Four Paths to Success) Buddhist principles are applied within the scholarly communication process of authors affiliated with Srinakharinwirot University, whose works are indexed in the Scopus database.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative case study design to interpret the internal motivational factors of the researchers.

Selection of Key Informants

Key informants were identified through a systematic analysis of the Scopus database. Authors affiliated with Srinakharinwirot University were ranked according to their citation counts, a proxy for scholarly impact and international visibility. Based on this analysis, the top 30



authors were initially selected to represent researchers who had demonstrated sustained success in international scholarly communication. The final selection of key informants was guided by three criteria: 1) Current affiliation with Srinakharinwirot University; 2) Having academic publications indexed in the Scopus database; and 3) Willingness to participate in in-depth interviews conducted either face-to-face or via online platforms.

Development of Research Instruments

The research instruments for data collection were developed through a multi-stage process. First, a comprehensive review of relevant literature on the four principles of Iddhipada and scholarly communication was conducted to ensure adequate theoretical and conceptual coverage. Based on this review, a semi-structured interview guide was created, consisting of four key areas: 1) Informants' general background and academic achievements; 2) Sources of inspiration for engaging in scholarly communication; 3) Factors contributing to academic success; and 4) The application of Buddhist principles in overcoming challenges encountered in the international publication process, particularly in Scopus-indexed journals. To enhance content validity, thematic adequacy, and linguistic clarity, the interview guide was reviewed by three subject-matter experts, and revisions were made in accordance with their recommendations. Finally, the refined instrument was piloted with five Scopus-indexed researchers affiliated with Srinakharinwirot University who were not part of the target group of 30 key informants. The try-out confirmed the instrument's clarity, relevance, and practical suitability for the main study.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted in accordance with established ethical and qualitative research standards. Ethical approval was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Srinakharinwirot University (Project Code: SWUEC-672534) prior to data collection. Following approval, formal invitations to participate in the study were sent to the target informants via official university email. In-depth interviews were conducted between October 2024 and August 2025, lasting approximately 30-60 minutes each. All interviews were audio-recorded with informants' consent, and supplementary field notes were taken to capture contextual and observational details. Data collection concluded after 18 interviews when data saturation was reached, as no new themes or substantive insights emerged from subsequent interviews. The final sample consisted of 18 participants from the initial pool of 30, selected based on their fulfillment of inclusion criteria and their continued availability. Data collection concluded after 18 interviews when data saturation was operationalized and reached; Specifically, when no new themes, conceptual codes, or substantive insights emerged from the final interviews.

Data Processing and Analysis

Data analysis used a structured qualitative process based on established content and thematic analysis. All audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim into text files for systematic organization. The analysis integrated a deductive framework guided by the four principles of Iddhipada with an inductive approach. This combination allowed specific practices and lived experiences to emerge, thereby minimizing interpretive bias. Specifically, the data



were then examined through content analysis, guided by the Buddhist principles framework to inform categorization and interpretation of relevant information. To increase credibility, triangulation was used to verify findings and confirm data saturation, as evidenced by the absence of new perspectives or themes in the dataset. Subsequently, the data were coded and organized through thematic content analysis, followed by an inductive analytical approach to synthesize patterns and meanings across cases. The findings were finally interpreted and presented in a descriptive-analytical narrative to explain the phenomenon under investigation. The overall qualitative research process and the application of Buddhist Principles are summarized, as shown in Figure 1.

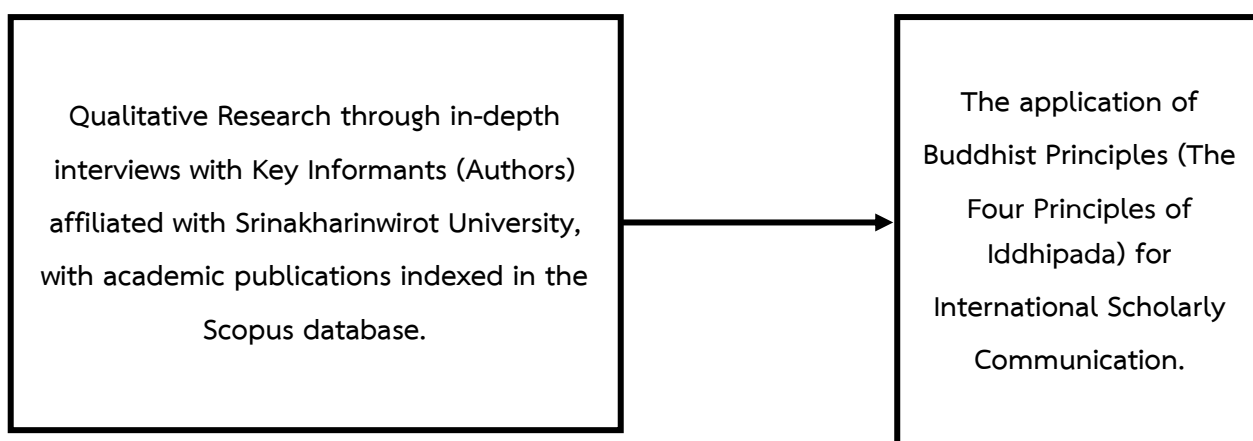


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Results and Discussion

Research Results

As the context of the case study, the initial bibliometric analysis indicated that from 1981 to 2025, a total of 5,504 Scopus-indexed works originated from 26 academic units across the university, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Distribution of Scopus-Indexed Publications for the Top Academic Units

Rank	Academic Unit	Publications
1	Faculty of Science	1,321
2	Faculty of Medicine	1,282
3	Faculty of Engineering	946
4	Faculty of Pharmacy	367
5	Faculty of Dentistry	215
6	Faculty of Agricultural Product Innovation and Technology	162
7	Behavioral Science Research Institute	140
8	Faculty of Physical Therapy	110
9	Faculty of Environmental Culture and Ecotourism	99
10	Faculty of Physical Education	99



Table 1 Distribution of Scopus-Indexed Publications for the Top Academic Units (Continued)

Rank	Academic Unit	Publications
11	Innovative Learning Center	94
12	Faculty of Economics	81
13	Faculty of Humanities	77
14	Faculty of Business Administration for Society	75
15	Faculty of Social Sciences	69
16	Faculty of Nursing	66
17	Faculty of Education	61
18	Graduate School	43
19	Faculty of Fine Arts	42
20	Bodhivijjalaya College	41
21	International College for Sustainability Studies	39
22	College of Creative Industry	31
23	College of Social Communication Innovation	12
24	Prasarnmit Demonstration School	12
25	Patumwan Demonstration School	11
26	Educational Research Development and Demonstration Institute	9

Source: Secondary data processed on September 1, 2025, as a source

From this diverse institutional landscape, the findings from interviews with 18 key informants showed that they applied the four principles of Iddhipada to succeed in scholarly communication within international databases. The details were as follows:

1. Chanda (Aspiration): Satisfaction in wholesome qualities for the creation of wisdom.

The key informants focused on conducting research to solve problems for organizations, communities, and society, motivated by internal goodwill. This was illustrated by the following testimonies.

"I Constantly Reflect on How to Ensure that My Engineering Students at SWU Find Employment with Top International Organizations. Therefore, I Began Encouraging Fourth-Year Students to Participate in Research and Publish in the Scopus Database. I have Committed Myself to this Goal for 15 Years. It is this Power of Aspiration (Chanda) that has Helped My Students Secure Jobs with Multinational Companies and Earn Scholarships for Further Study Abroad. By Maintaining this Annual Practice, our Scopus-indexed Articles have Steadily Increased, Along with Citations and Academic Promotions." (Key Informant 1, 2025)

"I Started My Research Career with a Sincere Desire to Address Specific Problems. My Research Interests Developed During My Master's and Doctoral Studies. When I Returned to Serve as a Faculty Member at SWU, I Maintained that Same Passion. I Began Building My Own Research Niche Because I Believe that if We have Love (Chanda) for the Research We Pursue, the Answers We Discover will be More Meaningful. The Quality of My Work will be High Enough for Publication in Scopus." (Key Informant 5, 2025)



"My Research is Driven by a Strong Determination (Chanda). This Goal Came from my Interactions with Colleagues in Professional Associations, Which Provided Insights into Complex Industrial Problems. I Worked on Research Projects to Develop Solutions for Industrial Entrepreneurs. SWU's Research Output has Helped Reduce the Import of Technology and Innovation by Hundreds of Millions of Baht. Additionally, the Research Funding from the Industrial Sector has Offered Ongoing Scholarships for Master's and Doctoral Students. This Results in More than 10 Generations of Success Graduates." (Key Informant 17, 2025)

In synthesis, Chanda transcended mere personal ambition; It functioned as a prosocial catalyst for research aimed at public benefit.

2. Viriya (Effort): Perseverance and Persistence in International Publishing

The key informants emphasized the need for continuous effort to maintain a presence in international databases. This was reflected in their experiences:

"During My Early Years as a Faculty Member, My First Scopus-indexed Article was Difficult to Publish. I had to Exert Immense Effort (Viriya) because the Manuscript was Rejected 11 Times. Naturally, I Felt Disappointed, but I Made Sure to take the Reviewers' Suggestions Seriously and Improve the Draft. Success Finally Came on the 12th Submission. Being Rejected 11 Times and then Accepted on the Next Attempt Serves as Powerful Proof of Perseverance." (Key Informant 2, 2025)

"During My Doctoral Studies Abroad, I was Trained to Critique Theories and Challenge Traditional Concepts with New Perspectives to Foster Academic Innovation. Initially, I had to Dedicate a Lot of Effort (Viriya) to Rigorous Reading and Writing. It Took Significant Time to Gain the Experience Needed to Achieve a Q1 Ranking. In My Specific Discipline, I was the First Person in Thailand to Accomplish This." (Key Informant 9, 2025)

"In Terms of Publishing, I Specifically Aim for Q1 and Q2 Journals in the Scopus Database. Although this requires extraordinary Effort (Viriya) to Meet the Strictest Screening Standards, my Doctoral Students and I Work to Our Fullest Potential. We Recognize that Producing High-impact Work is a Vital Mission that Enhances the Prestige of My Students as They Return to Develop their Home Institutions. I Believe that Perseverance is the Key that Allows Me to Continually Develop My Work Until It Gains Acceptance." (Key Informant 14, 2025)

Analytically, Viriya provided the psychological resilience necessary to navigate the iterative and often discouraging peer-review process.

3. Citta (Focused Attention): Mindfulness and Intentionality Amidst Competing Responsibilities.

This principle involved maintaining focus on research despite the burdens of teaching and administration. The key informants shared their strategies for time and resource management:



"Despite Teaching Loads, Academic Services, and Administrative Duties, Research must Remain Ongoing. I Allocate One to Two Hours Each Day Solely for Research, Refusing All Other Tasks During This Time. This Ensures My Mind Stays Fully Focused (Citta) On the Work, Preventing Any Stagnation." (Key Informant 8, 2025)

"I See Research Writing as a Form of Mental Training. It Demands Sustained Focus to Produce Meaningful Work. Even When Faced with Urgent Interruptions, Keeping A Steady and Focused Mind (Citta) Is Crucial. It Helps Me Maintain Mental Sharpness and Enables Me to Communicate My Findings with Maximum Impact." (Key Informant 15, 2025)

Thus, Citta acted as a cognitive anchor, empowering researchers to compartmentalize demanding duties and maintain deep concentration.

4. Vimamsa (Investigation): Critical Reflection and Analytical Discernment

The key informants applied Yoniso Manasikara (Wise Reflection) to critically analyze their data and respond to peer review feedback:

"Lessons Learned from Publishing in Scopus Q1 Journals have Made Me Meticulous, Starting with the Research Title. I Must Think Deeply (Vimamsa) to Ensure the Title Reflects a Compelling Issue and Contains Keywords That Align Perfectly with The Journal's Scope. This Serves as a Signal to The Editor that The Work Is a Suitable Fit." (Key Informant 3, 2025)

"After Receiving Feedback from The Peer Review Process, I Check the Comments Carefully and With Investigation (Vimamsa). I Do Not See Them as Fault-Finding, But Rather as An Opportunity for Academic Validation. This Reflection Helps Improve the Article's Quality, Increasing Its Chances of Being Published in Q1 Or Q2 Journals." (Key Informant 9, 2025)

Ultimately, Vimamsa represented the epistemological dimension of publishing, where authors applied critical reflection to effectively integrate peer-review feedback.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the four principles of Iddhipada serve as a key factor in academic success. They illustrate their practical application in enhancing researchers' potential through spiritual integration based on Buddhist principles. In the modern academic landscape, scholarly communication facilitates the ongoing production of academic outputs. It also includes emerging formats such as preprints and informal scholarly exchanges through online social media (Association of College & Research Libraries, 2013); (Das, 2015); (Wolfram, 2019). Consequently, scholarly communication is a comprehensive process covering the entire knowledge cycle, from creation and peer review to dissemination and digital preservation (Wolfram, 2019). This process serves as an internationally recognized indicator of academic performance (Patel et al., 2013).



The research findings thus indicate that success in scholarly communication is not merely a result of academic skills or external resources. Instead, it results from a systematic integration of the four principles of Iddhipada into professional practice. This study effectively addresses the gap left by quantitative bibliometric indicators, which often fail to explain the true internal motivations behind scholarly output (Ignat et al., 2021); (Pretolesi et al., 2025). The findings suggest that Chanda (Aspiration) acts as a strong internal motivation, turning personal intent into a commitment to public good. This has led to high-quality research and ongoing international recognition.

Regarding the publication process, the achievement of 5,504 Scopus-indexed publications across 26 academic units could be explained by the strong presence of Viriya (Effort) and Citta (Focus). These principles help researchers in overcoming "Akusala-dhamma" (Unwholesome States), such as laziness or mental stagnation, and help them endure the emotional challenges of manuscript rejections. This reflects the traits of Grit and a Growth Mindset. The ability of researchers to maintain Deep Focus (Citta) amid complex administrative and teaching loads provides evidence that the four principles of Iddhipada supports Academic Performance. This aligns with the findings of Phra Teerawat Jaranathammo (Khanungsub) (2017) & Tantalankul et al. (2025). These studies confirmed that applying the four principles of Iddhipada within organizations or communities' helps individuals stay committed despite various obstacles.

Furthermore, the authors applied Vimamsa (Investigation) to analyze peer-review feedback and strategically choose titles and keywords. This practice aligns with the interpretations of Phra Brahmaganabhorn (P.A. Payutto) (2002), who emphasizes achieving success through wisdom and vigilance. These findings support the views of Somkhane (2023) and Pöder (2022), who highlighted that internal cultural factors and spiritual principles foster the perseverance, sustained attention, and critical reflection necessary for academic success. Consequently, this reveals that Thai society has long used Buddhist principles as a core professional philosophy. This research broadens that scope by establishing the four principles of Iddhipada as a practical scholarly communication strategy. This framework helps researchers go beyond limitations, publish in international journals, and contribute to sustained international visibility.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

In terms of originality and body of knowledge, success in international scholarly communication is fundamentally linked to the internal enablers of authors. These authors incorporate the four principles of Iddhipada to drive the publication process through all stages, as shown in Figure 2. Furthermore, while derived from a specific institutional context, this study advances the theoretical landscape. It conceptualizes these Buddhist principles as transferable internal enablers for global academic success. This process starts with Chanda (Aspiration), which functions as the main internal motivation for conducting research aimed at the public interest. It is supported by Viriya (Effort), which demonstrates perseverance and a growth mindset. These qualities are essential for overcoming challenges and maintaining mental strength during the evaluation stage, especially when dealing with manuscript rejections. Furthermore, Citta (Focus) plays a crucial



role in maintaining deep focus and consistency amidst complex professional duties to ensure high-quality performance. Finally, Vimamsa (Investigation) involves strategic thinking and analytical wisdom, which are essential for creating academic impact and building a unique academic identity. Ultimately, this body of knowledge provides a crucial theoretical foundation that transcends specific institutional boundaries. Consequently, it enhances national research competitiveness and establishes a sustainable global presence in academia.

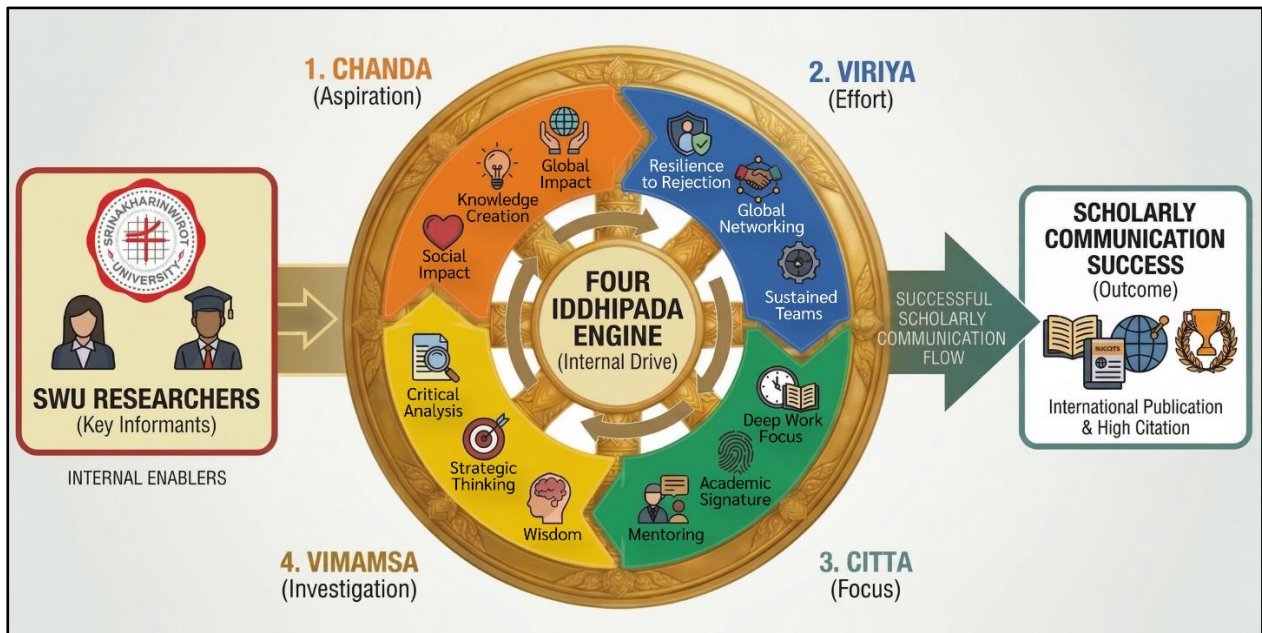


Figure 2 The conceptualization of the four principles of Iddhipada as an Internal Engine driving the continuous flow of international scholarly communication.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings emphasize that success in international scholarly communication depends on integrating the four principles of Iddhipada as an internal catalyst. Based on the empirical findings, it is recommended that academic institutions focus on context-specific support that models these internal enablers. For example, institutions can train researchers to apply Vimamsa (Investigation) when addressing rigorous peer-review feedback and help them cultivate Viriya (Effort) to build emotional resilience against publication hurdles. While the findings of this qualitative case study are context-specific, they offer crucial analytical insights into how culturally embedded spiritual principles shape research productivity. Future research should expand to include other higher education institutions or conduct comparative studies across different disciplines. Additionally, longitudinal studies are recommended to track the effects of incorporating spiritual principles from Buddhism into researcher development. This could enhance the quality of scholarly communication and increase international citations.



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การประยุกต์หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาในการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรม:

กรณีศึกษาผู้ประกอบการร้านอาหารในจังหวัดสงขลา

APPLYING BUDDHIST PRINCIPLES TO CROSS-CULTURAL MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF RESTAURANT ENTREPRENEURS IN SONGKHLA PROVINCE

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บทคัดย่อ

ความเป็นมาและวัตถุประสงค์: การจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมเป็นประเด็นสำคัญในธุรกิจบริการที่ต้องปฏิสัมพันธ์กับลูกค้าและพนักงานจากหลากหลายวัฒนธรรม อย่างไรก็ตาม งานศึกษาส่วนใหญ่มักอธิบายผ่านกรอบแนวคิดการจัดการตะวันตก ขณะที่การประยุกต์ใช้หลักจริยธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา ซึ่งเป็นองค์ความรู้สำคัญในบริบทสังคมไทย ยังได้รับการศึกษาค่อนข้างจำกัด ทั้งนี้หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนามีศักยภาพในการส่งเสริมความเข้าใจ ความเมตตา และการอยู่ร่วมกันอย่างสันติท่ามกลางความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรม การวิจัยครั้งนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการประยุกต์ใช้หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาในการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมของผู้ประกอบการร้านอาหารในจังหวัดสงขลา และเพื่อสังเคราะห์แนวทางหรือโมเดลการจัดการที่ผสมผสานหลักธรรมเข้ากับการบริหารธุรกิจบริการ

วิธีดำเนินการวิจัย: การวิจัยนี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ โดยศึกษาประสบการณ์และมุมมองของผู้ประกอบการที่ต้องบริหารจัดการในบริบทพหุวัฒนธรรม ผู้ให้ข้อมูลหลักคือผู้ประกอบการร้านอาหารจำนวน 15 รายในจังหวัดสงขลาที่มีลูกค้าหรือพนักงานต่างชาติ โดยใช้การเลือกแบบเจาะจง และกำหนดจำนวนผู้ให้ข้อมูลตามหลักความอิ่มตัวของข้อมูล เครื่องมือที่ใช้คือแบบสัมภาษณ์กึ่งโครงสร้าง การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลใช้การวิเคราะห์เชิงเนื้อหา โดยถอดเทปการสัมภาษณ์ อ่านทบทวนข้อมูล สร้างรหัสจากหน่วยความหมาย จัดกลุ่มรหัสเป็นหมวดหมู่ และสังเคราะห์เป็นธีมหลักที่สะท้อนรูปแบบการประยุกต์ใช้หลักธรรมในการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมพร้อมตรวจสอบความน่าเชื่อถือของข้อมูลด้วยการตรวจสอบสามเส้า

ผลการวิจัย: ผลการวิจัยพบว่าผู้ประกอบการสามารถประยุกต์ใช้หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาในการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมได้อย่างเป็นรูปธรรม โดยเฉพาะหลักสังคหวัตถุ 4 ได้แก่ ทาน ปิยวาจา อตถจริยา และสมานัตตตา ซึ่งช่วยสร้างความสัมพันธ์ที่ดีกับลูกค้าและพนักงานต่างวัฒนธรรม หลักพรหมวิหาร 4 ได้แก่ เมตตา กรุณา มุทิตา และอุเบกขา ถูกนำมาใช้เป็นแนวทางในการบริหารบุคลากรด้วยความเข้าใจและเห็นอกเห็นใจ ขณะที่หลักอิทธิบาท 4 ได้แก่ ฉันทะ วิริยะ จิตตะ และวิมังสา ช่วยเสริมสร้างแรงบันดาลใจและการพัฒนาตนเองของผู้ประกอบการจากการสังเคราะห์ข้อมูลนำไปสู่การพัฒนา “โมเดลการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมเชิงพุทธสำหรับธุรกิจร้านอาหาร” ซึ่งประกอบด้วย 3 มิติหลัก ได้แก่ มิติแห่งความสัมพันธ์ มิติแห่งการบริหารคน และมิติแห่งการพัฒนาและความยั่งยืน



โมเดลดังกล่าวสะท้อนการบูรณาการระหว่างหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนากับแนวคิดการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมสมัยใหม่ ช่วยลดความขัดแย้งจากความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรม เพิ่มความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า และส่งเสริมบรรยากาศการทำงานที่เกื้อกูลกัน

ความเกี่ยวข้องกับหลักธรรมคำสอนทางพระพุทธศาสนา: จุดเด่นสำคัญของงานวิจัยนี้ คือ การนำหลักสังคหวัตถุ 4 (ทาน ปิยวาจา อตถจริยา สมานัตตตา) พรหมวิหาร 4 (เมตตา กรุณา มุทิตา อุเบกขา) และ อิทธิบาท 4 (ฉันทะ วิริยะ จิตตะ วิมังสา) มาใช้ในการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรม

สรุป: ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่าหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาสามารถนำมาประยุกต์ใช้เป็นกรอบแนวคิดในการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมในธุรกิจบริการได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ ทั้งในด้านการสร้างความสัมพันธ์ การบริหารบุคลากร และการพัฒนาศักยภาพของผู้ประกอบการ งานวิจัยนี้จึงเสนอกรอบแนวคิดที่บูรณาการหลักธรรมกับการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมในบริบทธุรกิจบริการ และเป็นแนวทางสำหรับผู้ประกอบการในการพัฒนาองค์กรอย่างสมดุลและยั่งยืน

คำสำคัญ: หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา, การจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรม, ผู้ประกอบการร้านอาหาร, สงขลา

Abstract

Background and Objectives: Cross-cultural management is a crucial issue in the service industry, which interacts with customers and employees from diverse cultures. However, most studies focus on Western management frameworks, while the application of Buddhist ethics, a vital body of knowledge within the Thai social context, has been studied relatively limited. This is despite the fact that Buddhist principles have the potential to promote understanding, compassion, and peaceful coexistence amidst cultural differences. This research therefore aims to study the application of Buddhist principles in cross-cultural management by restaurant operators in Songkhla province and to synthesize management models that integrate Buddhist principles into service business administration.

Methodology: This qualitative research studies the experiences and perspectives of entrepreneurs managing in a multicultural context. The primary informants were 15 restaurant owners in Songkhla province who serve foreign customers or employ foreign staff. A purposive sampling method was used, and the number of informants was determined based on data saturation. The research instrument was a semi-structured interview questionnaire. Data analysis employed content analysis, involving transcription of interviews, data review, semantic coding, categorization of codes, and synthesis into key themes reflecting the application of ethical principles in cross-cultural management. Data reliability was verified using triangulation.

Main Results: The research findings indicate that entrepreneurs can concretely apply Buddhist principles to cross-cultural management, particularly Sangahavatthu 4 (Generosity, Kind Speech, Helpful Conduct, and Equality), which foster positive relationships with customers and employees from different cultures. Brahmavihara 4 (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity) are used as guidelines for managing personnel with understanding and empathy. Meanwhile, Iddhipada 4 (Aspiration, Effort, Thoughtfulness, and Investigation) - Enhance entrepreneurial motivation and self-development. This data synthesis led to the development of a "Buddhist Cross-cultural Management Model for Restaurant Business," comprising three main dimensions:



relationship, human management, and self-development. This model reflects the integration of Buddhist principles with modern cross-cultural management concepts, reducing conflict arising from cultural differences, increasing customer satisfaction, and promoting a supportive work environment.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: The main highlight of this research is the application of Sangahavatthu 4 (Generosity, Kind Speech, Helpful Conduct, and Equality); Brahmavihara 4 (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity); and Iddhipada 4 (Aspiration, Effort, Thoughtfulness, and Investigation) in cross-cultural management.

Conclusions: Research findings demonstrate that Buddhist principles can be effectively applied as a conceptual framework for cross-cultural management in the service industry, encompassing aspects such as relationship building, human resource management, and entrepreneurial potential development. This research therefore proposes a conceptual framework that integrates Buddhist principles with cross-cultural management within the service business context, providing a guideline for entrepreneurs to develop their organizations in a balanced and sustainable manner.

Keywords: Buddhist Principles, Cross-cultural Management, Restaurant Entrepreneurs, Songkhla

บทนำ

จังหวัดสงขลา โดยเฉพาะในพื้นที่เศรษฐกิจสำคัญ เช่น อำเภอหาดใหญ่ และอำเภอเมือง เป็นศูนย์กลางการค้า การท่องเที่ยว และการบริการของภาคใต้ตอนล่าง ซึ่งมีนักท่องเที่ยวและแรงงานต่างชาติจากประเทศมาเลเซีย สิงคโปร์ จีน และประเทศในตะวันออกกลางเข้ามาใช้ชีวิตและทำงานอย่างต่อเนื่อง ส่งผลให้ธุรกิจร้านอาหาร ต้องให้บริการแก่ลูกค้าที่มีความหลากหลายด้านภาษา ศาสนา และวัฒนธรรมอย่างหลีกเลี่ยงไม่ได้ (Songkhla Provincial Statistical Office, 2023) ในบริบทดังกล่าว ผู้ประกอบการจำนวนมากเผชิญกับปัญหาที่เกิดขึ้นจริง เช่น ความคลาดเคลื่อนในการสื่อสารกับพนักงานต่างชาติ ความแตกต่างด้านข้อกำหนดทางศาสนาเกี่ยวกับอาหาร (เช่น อาหารฮาลาล) ความคาดหวังด้านคุณภาพการบริการที่แตกต่างกันของลูกค้าต่างวัฒนธรรม และความเข้าใจที่ไม่ตรงกันเกี่ยวกับบทบาทหน้าที่ในการทำงาน ซึ่งปัญหาเหล่านี้อาจนำไปสู่ความขัดแย้ง ความไม่พึงพอใจของลูกค้า และประสิทธิภาพการดำเนินงานที่ลดลง หากขาดแนวทางการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมที่เหมาะสม

การจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรม (Cross-cultural Management) จึงเป็นสมรรถนะสำคัญสำหรับผู้ประกอบการร้านอาหารในบริบทพหุวัฒนธรรม เนื่องจากธุรกิจร้านอาหารเป็นธุรกิจบริการที่ต้องอาศัยปฏิสัมพันธ์โดยตรงระหว่างบุคลากรและลูกค้า งานวิจัยที่ผ่านมาแสดงให้เห็นว่าความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรมมีผลต่อพฤติกรรมการบริโภค ความคาดหวังด้านบริการ และการรับรู้คุณภาพของลูกค้าอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ (Tsang & Hsu, 2011); (Mak et al., 2012) ขณะเดียวกัน ความสามารถของผู้ประกอบการในการเข้าใจและจัดการความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรมมีความสัมพันธ์กับความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า ประสิทธิภาพของทีมงาน และความยั่งยืนของธุรกิจบริการ (Hofstede, 2011); (Earley & Ang, 2003); (Burinkote & Piyanusorn, 2022) อย่างไรก็ตาม งานวิจัยส่วนใหญ่ยังมุ่งเน้นกรอบแนวคิดการจัดการแบบตะวันตก และยังมีการศึกษาจำกัดเกี่ยวกับการใช้หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา ซึ่งเป็นองค์ความรู้ทางวัฒนธรรมที่มีรากฐานลึกซึ้งในสังคมไทย และมีศักยภาพในการเป็นแนวทางการจัดการความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคลในบริบทที่มีความหลากหลาย



หลักธรรมสำคัญทางพระพุทธศาสนา เช่น สังคหวัตถุ 4 ซึ่งเน้นการสร้างความสัมพันธ์และความเอื้อเพื่อพรหมวิหาร 4 ซึ่งส่งเสริมความเมตตาและความเข้าใจผู้อื่น และอิทธิบาท 4 ซึ่งเน้นการพัฒนาตนเองด้วยความเพียรและปัญญา อาจเป็นเครื่องมือสำคัญที่ผู้ประกอบการสามารถนำมาใช้เพื่อจัดการความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรมในสถานการณ์จริง เช่น การสร้างความไว้วางใจกับพนักงานต่างชาติ การลดความขัดแย้งในการทำงาน และการสร้างประสบการณ์ที่ดีให้กับลูกค้าต่างวัฒนธรรม ดังนั้น การศึกษานี้จึงมุ่งสำรวจประสบการณ์ของผู้ประกอบการร้านอาหารในจังหวัดสงขลาว่าได้นำหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนามาประยุกต์ใช้อย่างไรในการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรม และหลักธรรมเหล่านี้มีบทบาทอย่างไรในการเสริมสร้างความเข้าใจ ความร่วมมือ และความยั่งยืนของธุรกิจร้านอาหารในบริบทวัฒนธรรม โดยมีเป้าหมายเพื่อพัฒนาองค์ความรู้ที่เชื่อมโยงระหว่างการจัดการธุรกิจบริการกับภูมิปัญญาทางวัฒนธรรมไทยอย่างเป็นระบบและมีความหมายในเชิงปฏิบัติ

วัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัย

เพื่อศึกษาการประยุกต์ใช้หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาในการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมของผู้ประกอบการร้านอาหารในจังหวัดสงขลา และเพื่อสังเคราะห์แนวทางหรือโมเดลการจัดการที่ผสมผสานหลักธรรมเข้ากับการบริหารธุรกิจบริการ

วิธีดำเนินการวิจัย

รูปแบบการวิจัย

การวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ (Qualitative Research) ซึ่งมุ่งทำความเข้าใจประสบการณ์ การรับรู้ และการให้ความหมายของผู้ประกอบการร้านอาหารเกี่ยวกับการประยุกต์ใช้หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาในการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมในบริบทการดำเนินธุรกิจจริง การเลือกใช้แนวทางการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพมีความเหมาะสมกับประเด็นการศึกษานี้ เนื่องจากการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมและการนำหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนามาใช้เป็นปรากฏการณ์ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับมิติทางความคิด ความเชื่อ ค่านิยม และประสบการณ์ส่วนบุคคล ซึ่งไม่สามารถวัดหรืออธิบายได้อย่างครบถ้วนด้วยข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณ (Creswell et al., 2024) การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพเปิดโอกาสให้ผู้วิจัยสามารถเข้าถึงมุมมองภายใน (Insider Perspective) ของผู้ให้ข้อมูล ทำให้เข้าใจบริบท กระบวนการ และความหมายที่ผู้ประกอบการสร้างขึ้นจากประสบการณ์จริงในการจัดการบุคลากรและลูกค้าต่างวัฒนธรรม (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) นอกจากนี้ แนวทางดังกล่าวยังเหมาะสำหรับการศึกษาในบริบททางสังคมและวัฒนธรรมเฉพาะพื้นที่ เช่น จังหวัดสงขลา ซึ่งมีลักษณะพหุวัฒนธรรมและความสัมพันธ์กับบริบททางศาสนา และวิถีชีวิตของผู้ประกอบการ การใช้การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพจึงช่วยให้สามารถอธิบายปรากฏการณ์ได้อย่างลึกซึ้งครอบคลุม และสอดคล้องกับบริบทจริง อันนำไปสู่การพัฒนาองค์ความรู้ใหม่เกี่ยวกับการบูรณาการหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนากับการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมในภาคธุรกิจบริการ

กลุ่มผู้ให้ข้อมูลหลัก

ผู้ประกอบการร้านอาหารจำนวน 15 รายในจังหวัดสงขลา ซึ่งมีลูกค้าต่างชาติหรือพนักงานต่างชาติ โดยเลือกแบบเจาะจง (Purposive Sampling) เพื่อให้ได้ข้อมูลที่ครอบคลุมกลุ่มธุรกิจอาหารหลากหลาย เช่น ร้านอาหารไทย ร้านอาหารซีฟู้ด ร้านอาหารฮาลาล และร้านอาหารแนวฟิวชัน โดยเมื่อครบจำนวนดังกล่าวพบว่าข้อมูลที่ได้อิ่มตัว เนื่องจากผู้วิจัยใช้หลักการความอิ่มตัวของข้อมูล (Data Saturation) เป็นเกณฑ์ในการกำหนดขนาดกลุ่มตัวอย่าง โดยในระหว่างการเก็บข้อมูล ผู้วิจัยพบว่าหลังจากการสัมภาษณ์ประมาณ รายที่ 12 เป็นต้นไป ข้อมูลที่ได้รับเริ่มมีรูปแบบและประเด็นซ้ำกัน และไม่มีประเด็นใหม่ที่มีนัยสำคัญเพิ่มเติม ซึ่งสอดคล้องกับแนวคิดของ Guest et al. (2006) ที่ระบุว่า การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพสามารถบรรลุความอิ่มตัวของข้อมูลได้ในกลุ่มตัวอย่างประมาณ 12-15 ราย นอกจากนี้ Creswell et al. (2024) ยังระบุว่า การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพที่ใช้การสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกมักใช้กลุ่มตัวอย่างขนาดเล็ก แต่เน้นความลึกของข้อมูลมากกว่าปริมาณ ดังนั้น



จำนวนผู้ให้ข้อมูล 15 รายจึงถือว่าเพียงพอสำหรับการสะท้อนปรากฏการณ์ที่ศึกษาอย่างครอบคลุมและมีความน่าเชื่อถือ

เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัย

ใช้แบบสัมภาษณ์กึ่งโครงสร้าง (Semi-Structured Interview) ประกอบด้วย 3 ส่วนหลัก ได้แก่

1. ข้อมูลทั่วไปของผู้ประกอบการ
2. ประสบการณ์ในการบริหารลูกค้าหรือพนักงานต่างชาติ
3. การประยุกต์ใช้หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาในการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรม

โดยมีการตรวจสอบคุณภาพของเครื่องมือเพื่อหาความเที่ยงตรง (Validity) และความถูกต้องของเนื้อหา โดยมีผู้ทรงคุณวุฒิ จำนวน 3 ท่าน การประเมินความชัดเจนและความเหมาะสมของคำถามใช้ Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) ตรวจสอบความสอดคล้องระหว่างข้อคำถามกับวัตถุประสงค์ พบว่าคำถามทั้งหมดมีค่า $IOC \geq 0.5$ จึงถือว่าสอดคล้องกับวัตถุประสงค์ สามารถนำแบบสัมภาษณ์ที่ผ่านการตรวจสอบไปใช้ในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลกับผู้ให้ข้อมูลหลักได้

การเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล

ผู้วิจัยดำเนินการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกแบบพบหน้า (Face-to-face In-depth Interview) ใช้เวลาครั้งละ 45-60 นาที โดยมีการขออนุญาตบันทึกเสียงและจดบันทึกประกอบการสัมภาษณ์ เพื่อเก็บรายละเอียดเชิงคุณภาพเกี่ยวกับมุมมองและการปฏิบัติของผู้ประกอบการ

การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล

ใช้การสังเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพ (Qualitative Synthesis) เพื่อเรียบเรียงประเด็นสำคัญอย่างเป็นระบบและรัดกุม โดยการตีความและสังเคราะห์ (Qualitative Interpretive and Thematic Analysis) ประกอบกับการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหา (Content Analysis) โดยจำแนกและจัดหมวดหมู่ข้อมูลตามกรอบหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา (สังคหวัตถุ 4 พรหมวิหาร 4 และอิทธิบาท 4) และแนวคิดการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมของ Hofstede (1980) Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1998) และ Hall (1976) ตามแนวทางของ Graneheim & Lundman (2004) และ Elo & Kyngäs (2008) โดยมีขั้นตอนอย่างเป็นระบบดังนี้ ขั้นตอนแรก ผู้วิจัยถอดเทปการสัมภาษณ์แบบคำต่อคำ (Verbatim Transcription) และอ่านข้อมูลซ้ำหลายครั้งเพื่อทำความเข้าใจภาพรวมของข้อมูล (Familiarization) ขั้นตอนที่สอง ผู้วิจัยดำเนินการสร้างรหัสข้อมูลแบบเปิด (Open Coding) โดยการระบุหน่วยความหมาย (Meaning Units) จากข้อความสัมภาษณ์ และกำหนดรหัส (Codes) ที่สะท้อนแนวคิดหรือประเด็นสำคัญ เช่น “การให้โอกาสพนักงานต่างชาติ” “การใช้ความเมตตาในการบริหารงาน” และ “การพัฒนาตนเองเพื่อเข้าใจลูกค้าต่างวัฒนธรรม” ขั้นตอนที่สาม ผู้วิจัยจัดกลุ่มรหัสที่มีความสัมพันธ์กันเป็นหมวดหมู่ (Categories) โดยพิจารณาความคล้ายคลึงและความเชื่อมโยงของเนื้อหา เช่น หมวดหมู่ด้านการสร้างความสัมพันธ์ หมวดหมู่ด้านการบริหารบุคลากร และหมวดหมู่ด้านการพัฒนาตนเอง ขั้นตอนที่สี่ ผู้วิจัยสังเคราะห์หมวดหมู่ต่าง ๆ เพื่อพัฒนาเป็นธีมหลัก (Themes) และมีมิติแนวคิด (Conceptual Dimensions) ที่สะท้อนรูปแบบการประยุกต์ใช้หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาในการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรม ได้แก่ มิติด้านความสัมพันธ์ (Relational Dimension) มิติด้านการบริหารบุคลากร (Human Resource Management Dimension) และมิติด้านการพัฒนาและความยั่งยืน (Self-development Dimension) ในการนำเสนอข้อมูล ผู้วิจัยใช้รหัสแทนชื่อผู้ให้ข้อมูล เช่น R1, R2, R3 เพื่อรักษาความลับและความเป็นส่วนตัวของผู้ให้ข้อมูล ตามหลักจริยธรรมการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ (Creswell et al., 2024)



การตรวจสอบความน่าเชื่อถือของข้อมูล

เพื่อเสริมสร้างความน่าเชื่อถือ (Credibility) ความสอดคล้อง (Dependability) และความยืนยันได้ (Confirmability) ของผลการวิจัย การวิจัยนี้ใช้เทคนิคการตรวจสอบแบบสามเส้า (Triangulation) ซึ่งเป็นวิธีการสำคัญในการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ เพื่อยืนยันความถูกต้องของข้อมูลจากหลายมุมมอง (Denzin, 2017); (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) ประกอบด้วย การตรวจสอบจากหลายแหล่งข้อมูล (Data Triangulation) การตรวจสอบโดยผู้เชี่ยวชาญ (Expert Review) และการตรวจสอบโดยผู้ให้ข้อมูล (Member Check) ดังรายละเอียดต่อไปนี้

1. การตรวจสอบจากหลายแหล่งข้อมูล (Data Triangulation) เป็นกระบวนการเปรียบเทียบข้อมูลจากแหล่งที่แตกต่างกัน เพื่อเพิ่มความถูกต้องของข้อค้นพบ (Denzin, 2017) ในการวิจัยครั้งนี้ผู้วิจัยได้ดำเนินการโดยเปรียบเทียบข้อมูลจากแหล่งสำคัญ 3 ประเภท ได้แก่

1.1 แหล่งข้อมูลบุคคล (Person Triangulation) ได้แก่ ผู้ประกอบการร้านอาหารจำนวน 15 ราย ซึ่งมีประสบการณ์ในการบริหารจัดการลูกค้าหรือพนักงานต่างชาติ โดยมีลักษณะธุรกิจที่แตกต่างกัน เช่น ร้านอาหารที่มีลูกค้าชาวยุโรปเป็นหลัก ร้านอาหารที่มีพนักงานชาวเมียนมา ร้านอาหารที่มีลูกค้าชาวมาเลเซีย สิงคโปร์ และจีน การเปรียบเทียบข้อมูลจากผู้ให้ข้อมูลหลายรายช่วยให้สามารถตรวจสอบความสอดคล้องของประสบการณ์ และลดอคติจากมุมมองของบุคคลใดบุคคลหนึ่ง

1.2 แหล่งข้อมูลเอกสาร (Document Triangulation) ผู้วิจัยได้เปรียบเทียบข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์กับเอกสารที่เกี่ยวข้อง ได้แก่ เอกสารหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา เช่น หลักสังคหวัตถุ 4 พรหมวิหาร 4 และอิทธิบาท 4 งานวิจัยด้านการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรม งานวิจัยด้านพุทธศาสนากับการบริหารจัดการ เพื่อยืนยันว่าข้อค้นพบมีความสอดคล้องกับแนวคิดทางทฤษฎีและองค์ความรู้ที่ได้รับการยอมรับในทางวิชาการ

1.3 แหล่งข้อมูลประสบการณ์และบริบท (Contextual Triangulation) ผู้วิจัยได้เปรียบเทียบข้อมูลจากสถานการณ์จริงที่ผู้ให้ข้อมูลอธิบาย เช่น การจัดการความขัดแย้งกับพนักงานต่างชาติ การสื่อสารกับลูกค้าต่างวัฒนธรรม และการสร้างความสัมพันธ์ในที่ทำงาน เพื่อยืนยันความสอดคล้องของรูปแบบการประยุกต์ใช้หลักธรรมในบริบทจริง

การใช้ Data Triangulation ดังกล่าวช่วยเพิ่มความน่าเชื่อถือของข้อค้นพบ และยืนยันว่าผลการวิจัยมีความสอดคล้องในหลายแหล่งข้อมูล (Denzin, 2017)

2. การตรวจสอบโดยผู้เชี่ยวชาญ (Expert Review) เป็นวิธีการสำคัญในการเพิ่มความถูกต้องของการตีความข้อมูลและความสอดคล้องทางวิชาการ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) ในการวิจัยครั้งนี้ผู้วิจัยได้ให้ผู้เชี่ยวชาญจำนวน 2 ท่าน ตรวจสอบองค์ประกอบสำคัญของการวิจัย ได้แก่

2.1 ผู้เชี่ยวชาญด้านพระพุทธศาสนา จำนวน 1 ท่าน ทำหน้าที่ตรวจสอบความถูกต้องของการเชื่อมโยงข้อมูลกับหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา ความเหมาะสมของการตีความหลักสังคหวัตถุ 4 พรหมวิหาร 4 และอิทธิบาท 4 ในบริบทการจัดการ

2.2 ผู้เชี่ยวชาญด้านการจัดการและการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ จำนวน 1 ท่าน ทำหน้าที่ตรวจสอบความเหมาะสมของแนวคำถามสัมภาษณ์ ความถูกต้องของกระบวนการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล เช่น การกำหนดรหัสข้อมูล (Coding) และการจัดหมวดหมู่ข้อมูล (Categorization) ความสอดคล้องระหว่างข้อมูลดิบกับข้อค้นพบ

ข้อเสนอแนะจากผู้เชี่ยวชาญถูกนำมาปรับปรุงเครื่องมือวิจัยและการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล เพื่อเพิ่มความถูกต้องและความน่าเชื่อถือของผลการวิจัย

3. การตรวจสอบโดยผู้ให้ข้อมูล (Member Check) เป็นวิธีการสำคัญในการตรวจสอบความถูกต้องของการตีความข้อมูล โดยให้ผู้ให้ข้อมูลตรวจสอบข้อค้นพบ เพื่อยืนยันว่าผลการวิจัยสะท้อนประสบการณ์จริงของผู้ให้ข้อมูล (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) ในการวิจัยครั้งนี้ผู้วิจัยได้ดำเนินการตรวจสอบโดยผู้ให้ข้อมูลกับผู้ให้ข้อมูลทุกราย โดยดำเนินการตามขั้นตอน ดังนี้



- นำเสนอข้อค้นพบเบื้องต้น เช่น การใช้หลักเมตตาในการบริหารพนักงาน และ การใช้หลักทานในการสร้างความสัมพันธ์กับลูกค้า

- ให้ผู้ให้ข้อมูลตรวจสอบว่าข้อค้นพบสอดคล้องกับประสบการณ์จริงของตนหรือไม่
- เปิดโอกาสให้ผู้ให้ข้อมูลเพิ่มเติมหรือแก้ไขข้อมูล

ผลการตรวจสอบพบว่า ผู้ให้ข้อมูลยืนยันว่าข้อค้นพบสะท้อนประสบการณ์จริง และไม่มีข้อแก้ไขที่มึนัยสำคัญ ซึ่งช่วยยืนยันความถูกต้องของผลการวิจัย

ผลการวิจัยและอภิปรายผล

จากการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกผู้ประกอบการร้านอาหารในจังหวัดสงขลาจำนวน 15 ราย ซึ่งมีลูกค้าหรือพนักงานต่างชาติ ผลการวิจัยสามารถสรุปได้เป็น 3 ประเด็นหลักดังนี้

1. การประยุกต์ใช้หลักสังคหัตถ์ 4 ในการสร้างความสัมพันธ์ข้ามวัฒนธรรม

ผู้ประกอบการส่วนใหญ่เห็นว่าการบริหารธุรกิจในสังคมพหุวัฒนธรรมต้องอาศัยความเข้าใจ ความเคารพ และการวางตัวอย่างเหมาะสม หลักสังคหัตถ์ 4 จึงถูกนำมาใช้เป็นแนวทางในการสร้างความสัมพันธ์กับลูกค้าและพนักงานต่างชาติ ดังนี้

ทาน (การให้) - ผู้ประกอบการหลายรายกล่าวว่าการให้ไม่จำเป็นต้องเป็นทรัพย์สิน แต่เป็นการให้ความเข้าใจ เช่น การยืดหยุ่นเวลาทำงานในช่วงเดือนรอมฎอนสำหรับพนักงานมุสลิม หรือการให้บริการพิเศษแก่ลูกค้าต่างชาติที่มีข้อจำกัดด้านภาษา การให้ในลักษณะนี้ช่วยลดความตึงเครียดและสร้างความไว้วางใจระหว่างวัฒนธรรม ผู้ให้ข้อมูลหลายรายสะท้อนว่า การให้ไม่จำกัดเพียงวัตถุ แต่รวมถึงโอกาส ความช่วยเหลือ และความจริงใจ ซึ่งช่วยสร้างความสัมพันธ์กับพนักงานและลูกค้าต่างชาติ ตัวอย่างเช่น ผู้ให้ข้อมูลรายหนึ่งกล่าวว่า

“ผมจะให้โอกาสพนักงานต่างชาติที่ยังพูดไทยไม่คล่อง ไม่ได้ตำหนิ แต่สอนเขา เพราะเราเคยเริ่มต้นเหมือนกัน เขาจะรู้สึกที่เราไม่ได้เอาเปรียบเขา” (R3, 2025)

ผู้ให้ข้อมูลอีกรายกล่าวว่า

“บางครั้งลูกค้าต่างชาติไม่เข้าใจเมนู ผมจะอธิบายให้ละเอียด หรือให้ลองชิมก่อน เขาจะรู้สึกที่เราใส่ใจ และเขาจะกลับมาอีก” (R7, 2025)

สะท้อนให้เห็นว่าการให้ในรูปแบบของโอกาสและความช่วยเหลือช่วยสร้างความไว้วางใจ ซึ่งสอดคล้องกับแนวคิดของพระพุทธศาสนาที่ว่าทานเป็นพื้นฐานของการสร้างความสัมพันธ์ที่ดี (Harvey, 2013)

ปิยวาจา (การพูดจาด้วยถ้อยคำไพเราะ) - การสื่อสารกับลูกค้าต่างชาติด้วยคำพูดที่สุภาพ เป็นมิตร และมีรอยยิ้ม เป็นกลยุทธ์ที่สอดคล้องกับแนวคิด Thai Hospitality และช่วยลดความขัดแย้งที่อาจเกิดจากความเข้าใจผิดทางภาษา อีกทั้งการใช้คำพูดที่สุภาพและเหมาะสมกับบริบททางวัฒนธรรมเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญในการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรม ผู้ให้ข้อมูลรายหนึ่งกล่าวว่า

“พนักงานต่างชาติบางคนกลัวถ้าเราพูดเสียงดัง ผมเลยเลือกใช้คำพูดที่นุ่มนวล และอธิบายเหตุผลมากกว่าสั่งอย่างเดียว” (R1, 2025)

อีกตัวอย่างหนึ่ง

“ลูกค้าฝรั่งชอบให้เราอธิบาย ไม่ใช่แค่รับออเดอร์เฉย ๆ ถ้าเราพูดดี เขาจะรู้สึกประทับใจมาก” (R9, 2025)



แสดงให้เห็นว่าการใช้ปิยวาจาช่วยลดความตึงเครียดและส่งเสริมความเข้าใจระหว่างวัฒนธรรม

อรรถจริยา (การทำตนให้เป็นประโยชน์) - ผู้ประกอบการที่ประสบความสำเร็จมักให้ความช่วยเหลือพนักงานต่างชาติ เช่น การช่วยจัดหาที่พัก การให้คำแนะนำด้านกฎหมายแรงงาน หรือการส่งเสริมให้พนักงานพัฒนาทักษะภาษาไทย ซึ่งสะท้อนความเอื้อเฟื้อในฐานะผู้นำทางจิตใจ ผู้ประกอบการหลายรายกล่าวว่าการช่วยเหลือพนักงานต่างชาติทั้งในเรื่องงานและชีวิตส่วนตัวช่วยสร้างความผูกพัน ตัวอย่างเช่น

“พนักงานเมียนมาบางคนมีปัญหาเรื่องเอกสาร ผมช่วยแนะนำและพาไปติดต่อหน่วยงาน เขาจะรู้สึกที่เราไม่ได้มองเขาเป็นแค่ลูกจ้าง” (R5, 2025)

สมานัตตตา (การวางตนเสมอภาค) - หลายรายให้ความสำคัญกับการไม่แบ่งแยกศาสนาหรือเชื้อชาติ เช่น การจัดโต๊ะอาหารแยกสำหรับอาหารฮาลาล และการให้พนักงานทุกศาสนาร่วมกิจกรรมของร้านในลักษณะเท่าเทียม ผู้ให้ข้อมูลเน้นว่าการปฏิบัติต่อพนักงานต่างชาติอย่างเท่าเทียมช่วยลดความขัดแย้ง ตัวอย่างเช่น

“ผมปฏิบัติกับพนักงานทุกคนเหมือนกัน ไม่ว่าจะเป็นคนไทยหรือคนต่างชาติ เพราะถ้าเราลำเอียง จะเกิดปัญหาทันที” (R8, 2025)

จากผลการวิจัยดังกล่าวสามารถสรุปได้ว่า หลักสังคหวัตถุ 4 ทำหน้าที่เป็นกลไกเชิงความสัมพันธ์ที่ช่วยให้ผู้ประกอบการสามารถสร้างความไว้วางใจ ลดความตึงเครียด และส่งเสริมความร่วมมือระหว่างบุคคลต่างวัฒนธรรมได้อย่างเป็นรูปธรรม โดยเฉพาะการให้โอกาส (ทาน) การสื่อสารอย่างเคารพ (ปิยวาจา) การช่วยเหลือเกื้อกูล (อรรถจริยา) และการปฏิบัติอย่างเท่าเทียม (สมานัตตตา) ซึ่งช่วยให้เกิดความรู้สึกเป็นส่วนหนึ่งขององค์กรในหมู่พนักงานต่างชาติ และสร้างความประทับใจแก่ลูกค้าต่างชาติ อันนำไปสู่ความสัมพันธ์ระยะยาวและความมั่นคงของธุรกิจ

ในการนำหลักสังคหวัตถุ 4 มาใช้ในการบริหารร้านอาหารในบริบทวัฒนธรรมสอดคล้องกับแนวคิดของ Hofstede (1980) ที่ระบุว่า วัฒนธรรมที่ให้ความสำคัญกับความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคลสูง (High-Context Culture) ต้องอาศัยการสื่อสารเชิงอารมณ์และความสัมพันธ์มากกว่าข้อเท็จจริงเชิงเหตุผล นอกจากนี้ยังสอดคล้องกับแนวคิดของ Thomas & Peterson (2017) ที่ระบุว่าการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมที่มีประสิทธิภาพต้องอาศัยความไว้วางใจและความเข้าใจระหว่างบุคคลเป็นพื้นฐาน โดยเฉพาะในธุรกิจบริการที่มีปฏิสัมพันธ์โดยตรงกับลูกค้า นอกจากนี้ยังสอดคล้องกับผลการศึกษาของ Chiarakul (2022) ซึ่งพบว่าผู้ประกอบการร้านอาหารไทยใช้ความเอื้อเฟื้อและการสื่อสารอย่างสุภาพเป็นเครื่องมือสำคัญในการสร้างความพึงพอใจของลูกค้าต่างชาติ อย่างไรก็ตาม ผลการวิจัยครั้งนี้ได้ขยายองค์ความรู้เดิมโดยชี้ให้เห็นว่า พฤติกรรมดังกล่าวไม่ได้เป็นเพียงกลยุทธ์ทางธุรกิจเท่านั้น แต่มีรากฐานมาจากกรอบแนวคิดทางจริยธรรมของหลักสังคหวัตถุ 4 ซึ่งทำหน้าที่เป็นกรอบแนวคิดเชิงคุณค่า (Value-based Framework) ที่ช่วยกำหนดแนวทางการปฏิบัติของผู้ประกอบการในสถานการณ์ข้ามวัฒนธรรม นอกจากนี้ยังสอดคล้องกับ Changpongpan et al. (2025) และ Sritho et al. (2025) ที่พบว่าการใช้หลักจริยธรรมและความเห็นอกเห็นใจช่วยเสริมสร้างความผูกพันของพนักงานในองค์กรพหุวัฒนธรรม แต่การวิจัยครั้งนี้ได้แสดงให้เห็นอย่างชัดเจนว่าหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาสามารถทำหน้าที่เป็นเครื่องมือเชิงปฏิบัติในการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมในระดับผู้ประกอบการรายย่อยได้อย่างเป็นรูปธรรม

อย่างไรก็ตาม ผลการวิจัยนี้ควรพิจารณาภายใต้ข้อจำกัดบางประการ เนื่องจากข้อมูลได้มาจากการประกอบการร้านอาหารในจังหวัดสงขลาจำนวนจำกัด ซึ่งเป็นพื้นที่ที่มีบริบทพหุวัฒนธรรมเฉพาะและมีอิทธิพลของวัฒนธรรมไทยและพุทธศาสนาอย่างชัดเจน ดังนั้น รูปแบบการประยุกต์ใช้หลักสังคหวัตถุ 4 ที่พบอาจแตกต่างจากธุรกิจในพื้นที่



อื่นที่มีบริบททางวัฒนธรรมและศาสนาที่แตกต่างกัน นอกจากนี้ การวิจัยนี้สะท้อนมุมมองของผู้ประกอบการเป็นหลัก จึงควรมีการศึกษาเพิ่มเติมจากมุมมองของพนักงานต่างชาติและลูกค้าต่างชาติเพื่อยืนยันความสอดคล้องของผลการวิจัยในอนาคต ผลการวิจัยในประเด็นนี้ต่อบัณฑิตผู้ประกอบการวิจัยข้อที่ 1 ซึ่งมุ่งศึกษาการประยุกต์ใช้หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาในการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรม โดยแสดงให้เห็นว่าหลักสังคหวัตถุ 4 สามารถทำหน้าที่เป็นแนวทางในการสร้างความสัมพันธ์ ความไว้วางใจ และความเข้าใจระหว่างผู้ประกอบการ พนักงาน และลูกค้าต่างวัฒนธรรมในบริบทธุรกิจร้านอาหารได้อย่างเป็นรูปธรรม

2. การประยุกต์ใช้หลักพรหมวิหาร 4 ในการบริหารพนักงานต่างวัฒนธรรม

หลักพรหมวิหาร 4 ปรากฏในหลายมิติของการบริหารจัดการบุคลากรในร้านอาหาร โดยเฉพาะในบริบทที่มีพนักงานต่างเชื้อชาติและศาสนา กล่าวคือ

เมตตา (ความปรารถนาให้ผู้อื่นมีความสุข) – ผู้ประกอบการมองว่าการเข้าใจพื้นเพและความเชื่อของพนักงานเป็นสิ่งสำคัญ ตัวอย่างเช่น การอนุญาตให้พนักงานชาวมุสลิมละหมาดในเวลาทำงาน หรือการให้วันหยุดในวันสำคัญทางศาสนา เป็นการแสดงเมตตาที่สร้างความศรัทธาในองค์กร ดังเช่นที่ผู้ให้ข้อมูลกล่าวว่า

“เราต้องเข้าใจว่าพนักงานต่างชาติมาอยู่ไกลบ้าน ถ้าเราแสดงความเมตตา เขาจะตั้งใจทำงานมากขึ้น” (R12, 2025)

กรุณา (การช่วยเหลือเมื่อผู้อื่นเดือดร้อน) – ผู้ประกอบการบางรายกล่าวว่า การดูแลพนักงานต่างชาติเมื่อมีปัญหาส่วนตัว เช่น การเจ็บป่วยหรือปัญหาด้านเอกสารแรงงาน เป็นสิ่งที่ช่วยเสริมสร้างความผูกพันในองค์กร และลดอัตราการลาออก อีกทั้งความเห็นอกเห็นใจพนักงานก็เป็นเรื่องสำคัญ ตัวอย่างเช่น

“บางครั้งเขาทำผิดเพราะไม่เข้าใจภาษา เราต้องเข้าใจเขา ไม่ใช่ตำหนิอย่างเดียว” (R6, 2025)

มูทิตา (การยินดีเมื่อผู้อื่นได้ดี) – หลายรายมีแนวทางส่งเสริมพนักงานให้เติบโต เช่น การฝึกอบรมให้ป็นหัวหน้ากะหรือเซฟประจำร้าน สะท้อนความยินดีในความสำเร็จของผู้อื่น ดังคำกล่าวของผู้ประกอบการรายหนึ่งที่ว่า

“เมื่อพนักงานต่างชาติพัฒนาขึ้น ผมจะชมเขา เขาจะภูมิใจและอยากทำงานให้ดีขึ้น” (R14, 2025)

อุเบกขา (การวางใจเป็นกลาง) – ผู้ประกอบการให้ความสำคัญกับการตัดสินใจอย่างเที่ยงธรรม เช่น ไม่ลำเอียงตามเชื้อชาติ ศาสนา หรือความสัมพันธ์ส่วนตัว ซึ่งช่วยให้เกิดความยุติธรรมในที่ทำงาน ดังคำกล่าวของผู้ประกอบการที่ว่า

“เวลามีปัญหาระหว่างพนักงานไทยกับต่างชาติ ผมต้องฟังทั้งสองฝ่าย ไม่เข้าข้างฝ่ายใด” (R10, 2025)

จากผลการวิจัยสามารถสรุปได้ว่า หลักพรหมวิหาร 4 ทำหน้าที่เป็นกลไกเชิงภาวะผู้นำด้านจิตใจที่ช่วยให้ผู้ประกอบการสามารถบริหารพนักงานต่างวัฒนธรรมด้วยความเข้าใจ ความยุติธรรม และความเห็นอกเห็นใจ โดยเมตตาและกรุณาช่วยสร้างความไว้วางใจและความผูกพัน มูทิตาช่วยเสริมแรงจูงใจและการพัฒนาตนเองของพนักงาน ขณะที่อุเบกขาช่วยให้การตัดสินใจมีความเป็นธรรมและลดความขัดแย้งในองค์กร องค์กรประกอบเหล่านี้



ร่วมกันส่งเสริมให้เกิดบรรยากาศการทำงานที่ปลอดภัยทางจิตใจ (Psychological Safety) และเอื้อต่อความร่วมมือในบริบทพหุวัฒนธรรม

ผลการวิจัยนี้สอดคล้องกับแนวคิดของ Goleman (2006) และ Mahamud & Punto (2020) ที่ระบุว่าความฉลาดทางอารมณ์ของผู้นำ โดยเฉพาะความเห็นอกเห็นใจและการควบคุมอารมณ์ เป็นปัจจัยสำคัญในการสร้างความผูกพันของพนักงานและลดความขัดแย้งในองค์กรพหุวัฒนธรรม นอกจากนี้ยังสอดคล้องกับ Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1998) ที่เสนอว่าการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพต้องตั้งอยู่บนพื้นฐานของความเข้าใจในคุณค่าของความเป็นมนุษย์ อย่างไรก็ตาม ผลการวิจัยครั้งนี้ได้ขยายองค์ความรู้เดิมโดยแสดงให้เห็นว่า หลักพรหมวิหาร 4 ไม่เพียงสอดคล้องกับแนวคิดความฉลาดทางอารมณ์หรือการจัดการเชิงมนุษยสัมพันธ์เท่านั้น แต่ยังทำหน้าที่เป็นกรอบจริยธรรมเชิงระบบ (Systematic Ethical Framework) ที่ช่วยกำหนดพฤติกรรมผู้นำอย่างเป็นรูปธรรม โดยเฉพาะในบริบทของธุรกิจร้านอาหารที่มีปฏิสัมพันธ์ใกล้ชิดและต่อเนื่องระหว่างผู้ประกอบการและพนักงานต่างชาติ ผลการวิจัยนี้ยังสอดคล้องกับ Leesmidt (2020) และ Bunsiri & Kheowvongsri (2024) ที่พบว่าการบริหารด้วยความเมตตาและความยุติธรรมช่วยเพิ่มความพึงพอใจและความผูกพันของพนักงาน แต่การวิจัยครั้งนี้ได้แสดงให้เห็นอย่างชัดเจนว่าหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาสามารถทำหน้าที่เป็นรากฐานเชิงคุณค่าที่สนับสนุนภาวะผู้นำในบริบทพหุวัฒนธรรมได้อย่างเป็นรูปธรรม

อย่างไรก็ตาม ข้อค้นพบนี้ควรพิจารณาภายใต้ข้อจำกัดของการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพที่ใช้กลุ่มตัวอย่างจำนวนจำกัด และอยู่ในบริบทเฉพาะของธุรกิจร้านอาหารในจังหวัดสงขลา ซึ่งเป็นพื้นที่ที่มีพื้นฐานทางวัฒนธรรมและศาสนาที่เอื้อต่อการนำหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาไปใช้ในการบริหารองค์กร ดังนั้น ระดับและรูปแบบของการประยุกต์ใช้หลักพรหมวิหาร 4 อาจแตกต่างกันออกไปในบริบทของธุรกิจหรือพื้นที่ที่มีโครงสร้างทางวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่างกัน และควรมีการศึกษาเพิ่มเติมในบริบทที่หลากหลายเพื่อยืนยันความสามารถในการประยุกต์ใช้ในระดับที่กว้างขึ้น ผลการวิจัยในประเด็นนี้ต่อบัณฑิตผู้ประสงค์การวิจัยข้อที่ 2 ซึ่งมุ่งวิเคราะห์แนวทางการนำหลักธรรมมาใช้ในการบริหารบุคลากรในบริบทพหุวัฒนธรรม โดยชี้ให้เห็นว่าหลักพรหมวิหาร 4 สามารถใช้เป็นกรอบจริยธรรมในการบริหารพนักงานต่างวัฒนธรรมที่ช่วยเสริมสร้างความไว้วางใจ ความผูกพัน และความยุติธรรมในองค์กรได้อย่างเป็นรูปธรรม

3. การประยุกต์ใช้หลักอิทธิบาท 4 เพื่อพัฒนาตนเองและสร้างความยั่งยืนของธุรกิจ

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ผู้ประกอบการส่วนใหญ่ใช้หลักอิทธิบาท 4 ในการพัฒนาตนเองและรักษาธุรกิจให้อยู่รอดในสถานการณ์ที่มีการแข่งขันสูงและความหลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรม กล่าวคือ

ฉันทะ (ความพอใจในสิ่งที่ทำ) - ผู้ประกอบการที่รักในงานบริการจะสามารถปรับตัวกับลูกค้าหลากหลายวัฒนธรรมได้ดีกว่า เพราะมองความแตกต่างเป็นโอกาสในการเรียนรู้ ดังที่ผู้ประกอบการรายหนึ่งกล่าวว่า

“ผมมีความสุขที่ได้ทำงานกับคนหลายชาติ เพราะได้เรียนรู้วัฒนธรรมใหม่ ๆ” (R13, 2025)

วิริยะ (ความเพียร) - การเรียนรู้ภาษาต่างประเทศ ดังที่ผู้ประกอบการรายหนึ่งกล่าวว่า

“ผมพยายามเรียนรู้ภาษาอังกฤษเพิ่มเติม เพื่อสื่อสารกับลูกค้าให้ดีขึ้น” (R7, 2025)

นอกจากนี้ยังมีการพัฒนาสูตรอาหารให้เหมาะกับลูกค้าชาติอื่น เช่น มาเลเซีย จีน หรือสิงคโปร์ เป็นตัวอย่างของความเพียรที่ทำให้ธุรกิจเติบโต



จิตตะ (ความตั้งใจ) - ผู้ประกอบการให้ความสำคัญกับการควบคุมอารมณ์และสมาธิในเวลาบริหารงาน โดยเฉพาะในสถานการณ์ขัดแย้งทางวัฒนธรรม เช่น ความเข้าใจผิดเรื่องอาหารฮาลาล ดังที่ผู้ประกอบการรายหนึ่งกล่าวว่า

“เวลาลูกค้าต่างชาติมีปัญหา ผมจะตั้งใจฟังเขาอย่างเต็มที่” (R11, 2025)

วิมังสา (การใช้ปัญญาไตร่ตรอง) - การวิเคราะห์พฤติกรรมผู้บริโภคต่างชาติอย่างรอบคอบก่อนตัดสินใจทางธุรกิจ เช่น การปรับรูปแบบการบริการ การออกแบบเมนูใหม่ ๆ ให้เหมาะสมกับกลุ่มลูกค้า ดังที่ผู้ประกอบการรายหนึ่งกล่าวว่า

“ผมจะคิดเสมอว่าทำอย่างไรให้ลูกค้าต่างชาติพอใจมากขึ้น” (R9, 2025)

จากผลการวิจัยสามารถสรุปได้ว่า หลักอิทธิบาท 4 ทำหน้าที่เป็นกลไกเชิงแรงจูงใจและการพัฒนาตน ที่ช่วยให้ผู้ประกอบการสามารถปรับตัวและพัฒนาธุรกิจในปีบริบทวัฒนธรรมได้อย่างต่อเนื่อง โดยฉันทะเป็นแรงผลักดันภายในที่ทำให้ผู้ประกอบการเปิดรับความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรม วิริยะเป็นพลังแห่งความเพียรที่ช่วยให้เกิดการพัฒนาทักษะที่จำเป็น จิตตะช่วยเสริมความมั่นคงทางอารมณ์และสมาธิในการจัดการสถานการณ์ที่ซับซ้อน ขณะที่วิมังสาส่งเสริมการคิดเชิงวิเคราะห์และการตัดสินใจอย่างมีเหตุผล องค์ประกอบทั้งสี่ประการร่วมกันช่วยเสริมสร้างความสามารถในการปรับตัวเชิงกลยุทธ์และความยั่งยืนของธุรกิจในระยะยาว

ผลการวิจัยนี้สอดคล้องกับแนวคิดของ Hall (1976) ที่ระบุว่าความสามารถในการตระหนักรู้และปรับตัวตามบริบททางวัฒนธรรมเป็นทักษะสำคัญของผู้บริหารในสังคมพหุวัฒนธรรม และสอดคล้องกับ Maneethon et al. (2025) และ Srisuk (2022) ที่พบว่าการพัฒนาตนเองของผู้ประกอบการมีความสัมพันธ์กับความสามารถในการจัดการความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรม อย่างไรก็ตาม ผลการวิจัยครั้งนี้ได้ขยายองค์ความรู้เดิมโดยแสดงให้เห็นว่า อิทธิบาท 4 ไม่เพียงเป็นแรงจูงใจในการพัฒนาตนในเชิงทั่วไป แต่ยังทำหน้าที่เป็นกรอบแนวคิดเชิงพุทธจริยธรรมที่สนับสนุนการพัฒนาความสามารถด้านการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมอย่างเป็นระบบ โดยเฉพาะการผสมผสานระหว่างแรงจูงใจภายใน (Intrinsic Motivation) และการไตร่ตรองอย่างมีปัญญา (Reflective Wisdom) ซึ่งช่วยให้ผู้ประกอบการสามารถเรียนรู้จากความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรมและนำมาปรับใช้เป็นข้อได้เปรียบเชิงกลยุทธ์ นอกจากนี้ยังสอดคล้องกับ Tupsai & Phaowongsakul (2025) และ Thongpragob (2025) ที่ระบุว่าผู้ประกอบการที่มีการเรียนรู้อย่างต่อเนื่องและมีแรงจูงใจภายในสูงจะสามารถปรับตัวต่อสภาพแวดล้อมที่เปลี่ยนแปลงได้ดีกว่า แต่การวิจัยครั้งนี้ได้เพิ่มมิติใหม่โดยชี้ให้เห็นว่าหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาสามารถทำหน้าที่เป็นพื้นฐานทางจิตใจที่ช่วยเสริมสร้างความสามารถดังกล่าวได้อย่างเป็นรูปธรรม

อย่างไรก็ตาม ข้อค้นพบนี้ควรพิจารณาภายใต้ข้อจำกัดของการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพที่มุ่งเน้นการทำความเข้าใจประสบการณ์ของผู้ประกอบการในบริบทเฉพาะของจังหวัดสงขลา ซึ่งเป็นพื้นที่ที่มีความหลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรม และมีพื้นฐานทางสังคมที่เอื้อต่อการเรียนรู้ข้ามวัฒนธรรม ดังนั้น ระดับและรูปแบบของการประยุกต์ใช้อิทธิบาท 4 อาจแตกต่างกันออกไปในพื้นที่หรือธุรกิจที่มีบริบทแตกต่างกัน นอกจากนี้ การใช้กลุ่มตัวอย่างจำนวนจำกัดอาจไม่สามารถสะท้อนรูปแบบการพัฒนาตนของผู้ประกอบการทั้งหมดได้ จึงควรมีการศึกษาเพิ่มเติมในกลุ่มตัวอย่างและบริบทที่หลากหลายเพื่อยืนยันและขยายข้อค้นพบดังกล่าว ผลการวิจัยในประเด็นนี้ต่อบัณฑิตผู้ประสงค์การวิจัยข้อที่ 2 ในมิติของการพัฒนาศักยภาพของผู้ประกอบการ โดยแสดงให้เห็นว่าหลักอิทธิบาท 4 สามารถทำหน้าที่เป็นกรอบแนวคิดในการเสริมสร้างแรงจูงใจ การเรียนรู้ และความสามารถในการปรับตัวของผู้ประกอบการซึ่งมีส่วนสนับสนุนความยั่งยืนของธุรกิจในปีบริบทวัฒนธรรม



องค์ความรู้ใหม่

การวิจัยครั้งนี้ได้พัฒนาโมเดลการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมเชิงพุทธสำหรับธุรกิจร้านอาหาร (Buddhist Cross-cultural Management Model for Restaurant Business) จากการวิเคราะห์แนวทางการนำหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนามาใช้ในการบริหารจัดการบุคลากรและลูกค้าต่างวัฒนธรรม ซึ่งประกอบด้วย 3 มิติหลัก ดัง Figure 1

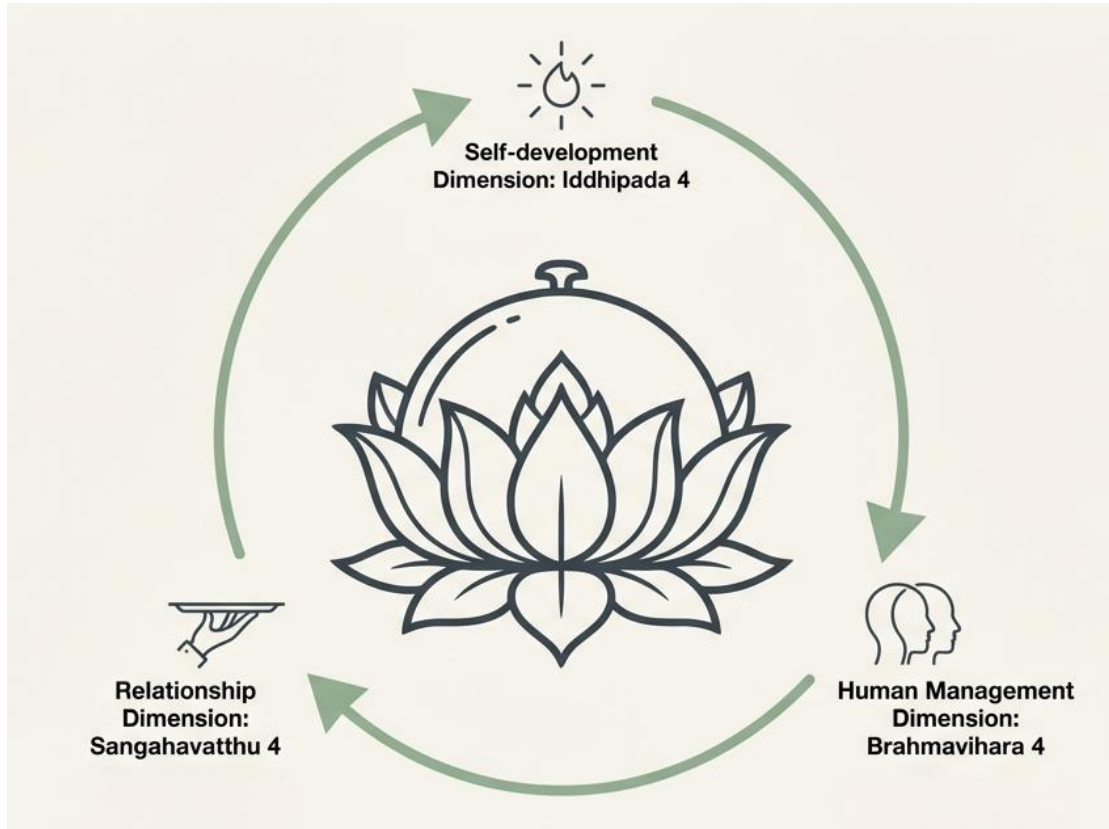


Figure 1 Buddhist Cross-cultural Management Model for Restaurant Business

1. มิติแห่งความสัมพันธ์ (Relationship Dimension): ใช้หลักสังคหวัตถุ 4 เป็นเครื่องมือในการสร้างความสัมพันธ์กับลูกค้าและพนักงานต่างชาติ
2. มิติแห่งการบริหารคน (Human Management Dimension): ใช้หลักพรหมวิหาร 4 เป็นแนวทางในการบริหารบุคลากรข้ามวัฒนธรรม
3. มิติแห่งการพัฒนาและความยั่งยืน (Self-development Dimension): ใช้หลักอิทธิบาท 4 เป็นแนวคิดในการพัฒนาผู้ประกอบการ

โมเดลนี้สะท้อนแนวคิดการจัดการที่ผสมผสานจิตวิญญาณพุทธกับการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมสมัยใหม่อย่างลงตัว ช่วยให้ผู้ประกอบการเข้าใจความแตกต่างของผู้คนอย่างลึกซึ้งและใช้เมตตาเป็นเครื่องมือในการสร้างความร่วมมือ อันจะช่วยลดความขัดแย้งเนื่องจากความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรมที่อาจเกิดขึ้น ในขณะเดียวกันก็ช่วยเพิ่มความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า ทั้งยังสนับสนุนบรรยากาศในการทำงานแบบเกื้อกูลกัน อันจะนำไปสู่ความยั่งยืนของธุรกิจที่สำคัญ โมเดลการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมเชิงพุทธสำหรับธุรกิจร้านอาหารที่พัฒนาขึ้นจากการวิจัยครั้งนี้มิได้เป็นเพียงการรวบรวมหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาที่มีอยู่เดิม แต่เป็นการสังเคราะห์เชิงแนวคิดจากข้อมูลเชิงประจักษ์ของผู้ประกอบการร้านอาหารในบริบทพหุวัฒนธรรม โดยแสดงให้เห็นบทบาทเชิงหน้าที่ (Functional Roles) ของหลักธรรมแต่ละหมวดในกระบวนการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมอย่างเป็นระบบ กล่าวคือ สังคหวัตถุ 4 ทำหน้าที่



เป็นกลไกเชิงความสัมพันธ์ (Relational Mechanism) ที่ช่วยสร้างความไว้วางใจระหว่างผู้ประกอบการ พนักงาน และลูกค้าต่างวัฒนธรรม พรหมวิหาร 4 ทำหน้าที่เป็นกลไกเชิงการบริหารบุคลากร (Human Management Mechanism) ที่ช่วยให้เกิดความยุติธรรม ความเข้าใจ และความผูกพันในองค์กร ขณะที่อิทธิบาท 4 ทำหน้าที่เป็นกลไกเชิงการพัฒนาตนและการปรับตัว (Adaptive Self-development Mechanism) ที่ช่วยให้ผู้ประกอบการสามารถเรียนรู้และตอบสนองต่อความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรมได้อย่างต่อเนื่อง การตีความเชิงกลไกดังกล่าวถือเป็น การขยายองค์ความรู้เดิมจากการมองหลักธรรมในฐานะหลักจริยธรรมทั่วไป ไปสู่การเป็นกรอบแนวคิดเชิงการจัดการที่สามารถอธิบายกระบวนการและผลลัพธ์ของการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมได้อย่างเป็นรูปธรรม

นอกจากนี้ โมเดลที่พัฒนาขึ้นยังสะท้อนลำดับขั้นของการนำไปใช้ในทางปฏิบัติ โดยเริ่มจากระดับปฏิสัมพันธ์ระหว่างบุคคล (Interpersonal Level) ผ่านการใช้หลักสังคหวัตถุ 4 เพื่อสร้างความไว้วางใจและลดความขัดแย้งทางวัฒนธรรม ต่อมาคือระดับการบริหารองค์กร (Organizational Level) โดยใช้หลักพรหมวิหาร 4 เป็นแนวทางในการสร้างสภาพแวดล้อมการทำงานที่มีความเข้าใจและยุติธรรม และสุดท้ายคือระดับการพัฒนาผู้นำ (Leadership Development Level) ผ่านการใช้อิทธิบาท 4 เพื่อเสริมสร้างความสามารถในการเรียนรู้ การปรับตัว และการตัดสินใจของผู้ประกอบการ กระบวนการทั้งสามระดับนี้มีความเชื่อมโยงกันอย่างเป็นพลวัต โดยเริ่มจากการสร้างความสัมพันธ์ที่ดี นำไปสู่การบริหารจัดการบุคลากรอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ และส่งผลต่อการพัฒนาศักยภาพของผู้ประกอบการและความยั่งยืนขององค์กรในระยะยาว

ในเชิงผลลัพธ์ โมเดลนี้แสดงให้เห็นความเชื่อมโยงระหว่างการใช้หลักธรรมกับผลลัพธ์ที่เป็นรูปธรรมในระดับองค์กร โดยข้อมูลจากผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์สะท้อนว่า การใช้หลักสังคหวัตถุ 4 และพรหมวิหาร 4 ช่วยลดความขัดแย้งระหว่างพนักงานต่างวัฒนธรรม เพิ่มความไว้วางใจ และเสริมสร้างบรรยากาศการทำงานที่เกื้อกูลกัน ขณะที่การใช้อิทธิบาท 4 ช่วยให้ผู้ประกอบการสามารถพัฒนาตนเองและปรับกลยุทธ์ทางธุรกิจให้สอดคล้องกับความต้องการของลูกค้าต่างชาติ ส่งผลให้เกิดความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า การกลับมาใช้บริการซ้ำ และความมั่นคงของธุรกิจ ดังนั้น โมเดลนี้จึงไม่เพียงเป็นกรอบแนวคิดเชิงจริยธรรม แต่ยังเป็นกรอบแนวคิดเชิงการจัดการที่สามารถอธิบายความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างหลักธรรม กระบวนการจัดการ และผลลัพธ์ทางธุรกิจได้อย่างเป็นระบบ และสามารถนำไปประยุกต์ใช้เป็นแนวทางในการพัฒนาศักยภาพของผู้ประกอบการในบริบทพหุวัฒนธรรมได้อย่างเป็นรูปธรรม

สรุปและข้อเสนอแนะ

ผู้ประกอบการร้านอาหารในจังหวัดสงขลาที่มีลูกค้าหรือพนักงานต่างชาติได้นำหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา มาใช้ในการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมอย่างหลากหลาย ทั้งการใช้หลักสังคหวัตถุ 4 เพื่อสร้างความสัมพันธ์ที่ดี และส่งเสริมความไว้วางใจ การใช้หลักพรหมวิหาร 4 เพื่อบริหารบุคลากรด้วยความเมตตา ความเข้าใจ และความเป็นธรรม และการใช้หลักอิทธิบาท 4 เพื่อพัฒนาตนเองและองค์กรให้สามารถปรับตัวและเติบโตได้อย่างยั่งยืน ในบริบทของสังคมพหุวัฒนธรรม ผลลัพธ์ของการประยุกต์ใช้หลักธรรมดังกล่าวสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงการเพิ่มขึ้นของความเข้าใจและความร่วมมือระหว่างบุคคลต่างวัฒนธรรม การลดความขัดแย้งในการทำงาน รวมทั้งการเพิ่มขึ้นของความพึงพอใจของลูกค้าและพนักงาน ซึ่งส่งผลเชิงบวกต่อประสิทธิภาพการดำเนินธุรกิจและความยั่งยืนขององค์กร อย่างไรก็ตาม การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีข้อจำกัดบางประการที่ควรพิจารณาในการตีความผลการวิจัย ประการแรก การวิจัยนี้เป็นการศึกษาเชิงคุณภาพในกลุ่มผู้ประกอบการร้านอาหารในจังหวัดสงขลาเพียงพื้นที่เดียว ซึ่งมีบริบททางสังคม วัฒนธรรม และศาสนาที่เฉพาะเจาะจง ดังนั้น ผลการวิจัยอาจไม่สามารถสรุปอ้างอิงไปยังผู้ประกอบการในพื้นที่อื่น หรือธุรกิจบริการประเภทอื่นที่มีบริบทแตกต่างกันได้โดยตรง ประการที่สอง การเก็บข้อมูลใช้วิธีการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกจากผู้ประกอบการเป็นหลัก ซึ่งสะท้อนมุมมองของผู้บริหารหรือเจ้าของธุรกิจ แต่ไม่ได้รวมมุมมองโดยตรงจากพนักงานต่างชาติหรือลูกค้าต่างชาติ ซึ่งอาจมีประสบการณ์และการรับรู้ที่แตกต่างออกไป



ประการที่สาม การวิจัยนี้มุ่งเน้นการอธิบายและทำความเข้าใจปรากฏการณ์เชิงคุณภาพ จึงไม่ได้มีการวัดผลเชิงปริมาณของผลลัพธ์ เช่น ระดับความพึงพอใจ หรือประสิทธิภาพองค์กรอย่างเป็นตัวเลข ทำให้ไม่สามารถสรุปความสัมพันธ์เชิงเหตุและผลได้อย่างชัดเจน และประการสุดท้าย การตีความข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพอาจมีความเกี่ยวข้องกับบริบทและประสบการณ์ของผู้วิจัย แม้ว่าผู้วิจัยจะใช้เทคนิคการตรวจสอบความน่าเชื่อถือของข้อมูลเพื่อเพิ่มความน่าเชื่อถือของผลการวิจัยแล้วก็ตาม จากข้อจำกัดดังกล่าว การวิจัยครั้งนี้จึงนำไปสู่ข้อเสนอแนะเชิงปฏิบัติ เชิงนโยบาย และเชิงวิชาการ ดังนี้ ในเชิงปฏิบัติ ผู้ประกอบการธุรกิจร้านอาหารและธุรกิจบริการควรส่งเสริมการประยุกต์ใช้หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา โดยเฉพาะหลักสังคหวัตถุ 4 และพรหมวิหาร 4 เพื่อพัฒนาทักษะด้านมนุษยสัมพันธ์ การสื่อสาร และการจัดการความหลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรมในองค์กร รวมทั้งควรส่งเสริมการพัฒนาด้านตนเองของผู้บริหารและพนักงานตามหลักอิทธิบาท 4 เพื่อเพิ่มความสามารถในการปรับตัวและพัฒนาองค์กรอย่างต่อเนื่อง ในเชิงนโยบาย หน่วยงานภาครัฐ องค์กรศาสนา และหน่วยงานที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการพัฒนาธุรกิจและการท่องเที่ยว ควรส่งเสริมการจัดกิจกรรมฝึกอบรม การสัมมนา และการแลกเปลี่ยนเรียนรู้เกี่ยวกับการประยุกต์ใช้หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาในการจัดการองค์กรและการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรม เพื่อเสริมสร้างความเข้าใจและการอยู่ร่วมกันอย่างสันติในสังคมพหุวัฒนธรรม โดยเฉพาะในพื้นที่ที่มีความหลากหลายทางวัฒนธรรมและมีการติดต่อกับนักท่องเที่ยวต่างชาติ ในเชิงวิชาการ การวิจัยในอนาคตควรขยายขอบเขตการศึกษาไปยังธุรกิจบริการประเภทอื่น เช่น ธุรกิจโรงแรม ธุรกิจการท่องเที่ยว หรือธุรกิจบริการระหว่างประเทศ เพื่อเปรียบเทียบรูปแบบและลักษณะการประยุกต์ใช้หลักธรรมในบริบทที่แตกต่างกัน นอกจากนี้ควรมีการศึกษาวิจัยเชิงปริมาณเพื่อทดสอบความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างระดับการประยุกต์ใช้หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา กับตัวแปรด้านผลลัพธ์ทางธุรกิจ เช่น ความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า ความผูกพันของพนักงาน และประสิทธิภาพองค์กร เพื่อพัฒนาองค์ความรู้ที่มีความครอบคลุมทั้งในเชิงลึกและเชิงกว้าง และเพื่อสนับสนุนการพัฒนาแนวทางการจัดการข้ามวัฒนธรรมที่เหมาะสมกับบริบทของสังคมร่วมสมัย

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ASSESSING EQUANIMITY IN A THAI BUDDHIST CONTEXT: PSYCHOMETRIC VALIDATION OF THE THAI EQUANIMITY SCALE-16

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Equanimity (Upekkhā) is a foundational virtue in Theravāda Buddhist psychology and a central Brahmavihāra representing emotional balance. Despite its doctrinal prominence, empirical operationalization of equanimity in Thai Buddhist contexts remains limited. In contemporary psychology, equanimity is often conceptualized as affective neutrality or emotional detachment, obscuring its ethical and wisdom-based dimensions emphasized in Buddhist thought. In contrast, Thai Theravāda traditions understand upekkhā as a balanced mode of awareness grounded in insight (Paññā), sustained by compassion (Karūṇā), and characterized by non-attachment (Anupādāna) rather than emotional indifference. Within this framework, equanimity enables practitioners to encounter experiences without reactivity while maintaining ethical awareness. Although equanimity is widely cultivated in Thai contemplative traditions, existing psychological measures often operationalize it primarily as emotional regulation or reduced reactivity, overlooking the doctrinal meaning of upekkhā in Theravāda Buddhism. The present study aimed to examine the factorial structure, reliability, and convergent validity of the Thai version of the Equanimity Scale-16 (ES-16), while also evaluating its conceptual coherence with Buddhist understandings of upekkhā within a Thai cultural context.

Methodology: Two independent samples of Thai mindfulness-oriented adults participated. The primary sample included 437 participants who completed the Thai Equanimity Scale-16 (ES-16) and the Self-Other Four Immeasurables Scale (SOFI), which assesses loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity toward self and others within the Brahmavihāra framework. A secondary subsample from monastic-university networks (n = 211) completed a second administration of the ES-16 one week later to evaluate temporal stability. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted using the Weighted Least Squares Mean and Variance Adjusted (WLSMV) estimator, appropriate for ordinal Likert-type data, to examine the hypothesized two-factor structure of Experiential Acceptance (EA) and Non-Reactivity (NR). Internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and convergent validity were assessed.

Main Results: The hypothesized two-factor model demonstrated excellent fit to the data ($\chi^2(76) = 89.8, p = .134; CFI = 0.994; TLI = 0.990; RMSEA = 0.020; SRMR = 0.028$), supporting the structural



validity of the Thai ES-16. Standardized loadings were adequate to strong, and the latent correlation between EA and NR indicated distinct but related dimensions of equanimity. Internal consistency was high ($\alpha = .84$; $\omega = .84$), and test-retest reliability over one week was strong ($r = .89$, $p < .001$). Convergent validity was supported through theoretically coherent associations with the SOFI, indicating that higher equanimity was associated with greater benevolence and fewer aversive tendencies, consistent with Buddhist accounts of equanimity as insight (Paññā)-informed non-attachment accompanied by compassion (Karunā).

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: The Thai ES-16 operationalizes upekkhā consistent with its doctrinal meaning in Theravāda Buddhist psychology. Equanimity is conceptualized as a balanced, compassion-infused form of non-reactive awareness cultivated through insight meditation (Vipassanā). Within the Brahmavihāras, upekkhā regulates craving and aversion while preserving ethical orientation and concern for others. This framing differentiates equanimity from apathy or indifference and reflects its role in Buddhist mental cultivation. This study, therefore, contributes to the application of Buddhist teachings in contemporary psychological research, particularly within the domain of Applied Buddhism related to the development of wisdom and morality.

Conclusions: The Thai ES-16 demonstrates strong psychometric properties and cultural-doctrinal coherence for assessing equanimity as conceptualized in Theravāda Buddhist psychology. Its reliability and validity support its use in research on contemplative mechanisms and wisdom-compassion dynamics in Thai Buddhist contexts. By providing the first Thai quantitative measure of equanimity grounded in classical interpretations of upekkhā and modern psychometric standards, this study contributes to Buddhist-informed psychological assessment, contemplative science, and cross-cultural research, and future studies should examine its generalizability across diverse cultural contexts and clinical populations.

Keywords: Equanimity, Buddhist Psychology, Experiential Acceptance, Non-Reactivity

Introduction

Equanimity, often rendered in Thai discourse as *ploi-wang*, refers to an even-minded composure toward pleasant and unpleasant experiences alike. In early Buddhist texts, equanimity (Upekkhā) is described as one of the four Brahmavihāras (Divine Abodes) together with loving-kindness (Mettā), compassion (Karunā), and sympathetic joy (Muditā), a set of qualities cultivated for the development of an ethically balanced mind (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000); (Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, 2010). It is explicitly distinguished from apathy by its clarity, ethical sensitivity, and balanced concern for both self and others (Gethin, 1998); (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2005); (Harvey, 2013). Rather than emotional disengagement, upekkhā denotes a mature quality of awareness grounded in insight and sustained by compassion, enabling practitioners to remain present without being driven by craving or aversion. Contemporary psychology converges on this view, defining equanimity as a trait-like tendency toward nonreactive, impartial awareness that stabilizes attention and affect, particularly under emotionally salient conditions (Kabat-Zinn, 2003); (Desbordes et al., 2015). Although equanimity overlaps conceptually with constructs such as acceptance, non-judgment, and emotional regulation, Buddhist psychological



accounts distinguish *upekkhā* as a balanced awareness grounded in wisdom (*Paññā*) and compassion (*Karuṇā*), rather than merely reduced emotional reactivity.

A growing body of empirical research situates equanimity as a central mechanism through which contemplative practice fosters emotional balance and psychological well-being. Evidence from randomized and quasi-experimental studies indicates that mindfulness-based programs are most effective when attentional monitoring is coupled with acceptance or equanimity skills, yielding reductions in stress reactivity, loneliness, anxiety, and depression beyond monitoring-focused approaches alone (Goyal et al., 2014); (Lindsay & Creswell, 2017); (Goldberg et al., 2022). Mechanistic accounts further elucidate these effects. The decoupling model, for instance, proposes that equanimity weakens habitual linkages between hedonic tone and craving-aversion responses, thereby dampening automatic reactivity and permitting more flexible, adaptive responding (Desbordes et al., 2015); (Hadash et al., 2016). Together, these accounts position equanimity not merely as an outcome of training but as an active process through which the benefits of contemplative practice accrue.

Despite its conceptual prominence, the measurement of equanimity has lagged behind the theory. This issue is particularly salient in cultural contexts where Buddhist concepts of equanimity are widely known yet interpreted in diverse ways. In Thailand, where the present study was conducted with Thai-speaking adults, such interpretations may vary across lay understandings and contemplative traditions. Definitions remain heterogeneous, and conceptual overlap with related constructs such as non-judgment and acceptance complicates discriminant validity (Sauer et al., 2013); (Juneau et al., 2020). The Equanimity Scale-16 (ES-16) advances a theoretically grounded, two-factor operationalization of Experiential Acceptance (EA) and Non-Reactivity (NR) that aligns with leading models of mindfulness-based change (Lindsay & Creswell, 2017); (Rogers et al., 2021). However, in Buddhist-majority contexts such as Thailand, culturally embedded meanings of equanimity shape lay interpretations and may increase the risk of conflation with emotional indifference. These nuances diverge from Western secular interpretations and underscore the importance of validating equanimity measures within their cultural and doctrinal context (Grossman & Van Dam, 2011). Consequently, measurement instruments developed primarily within Western psychological frameworks may not fully capture culturally embedded and doctrinally grounded interpretations of equanimity in Thai Buddhist contexts, highlighting the need for culturally grounded validation.

The present study addressed this gap by examining the factorial structure, reliability, and convergent validity of the Thai version of the ES-16 in a Thai mindfulness-oriented sample. We examined the scale's factor structure using confirmatory factor analysis, assessed internal consistency and one-week test-retest reliability, and evaluated convergent validity with the Thai Self-Other Four Immeasurable (SOFI). Given the cultural salience of interpersonal harmony in Thai Buddhist contexts, we further explore potential nuances within non-reactivity, distinguishing interpersonal from intrapersonal aspects as an ancillary question. By delivering a psychometrically sound and culturally attuned Thai measure of equanimity, this study supports mechanism-focused research and strengthens the evaluation of mindfulness-based interventions across Southeast Asian settings.



More broadly, culturally grounded assessment of equanimity may inform contemplative science, culturally sensitive mental health research, and mindfulness-based educational initiatives within Buddhist cultural contexts.

Objectives

The present study aimed to examine the factorial structure, reliability, and convergent validity of the Thai version of the Equanimity Scale-16 (ES-16), while also evaluating its conceptual coherence with Buddhist understandings of *upekkhā* within a Thai cultural context.

Methodology

The present study employed a cross-sectional psychometric validation design with a test-retest component using two independent samples, allowing separate evaluation of structural validity and temporal stability.

Participants

The total sample comprised 648 Thai-speaking adults (60.5% Male, 35.5% Female, and 4.0% Other), with a mean age of 38.93 years ($SD = 15.62$). Participants were drawn from two independent subsamples: A mindfulness meditation-oriented sample ($n = 437$) and a retest subsample recruited through monastic-university networks ($n = 211$).

Participants were recruited via social media announcements, peer referrals, and monastic-university networks. Inclusion criteria required that participants be aged 18 years or older, possess adequate literacy in Thai to complete the study materials, and report an interest in mindfulness or meditation practice. Participants in the retest subsample ($n = 211$) completed a second administration of the ES-16 one week later for the assessment of test-retest reliability.

This recruitment strategy constitutes convenience sampling and reflects typical access points for mindfulness-interested adults in Thai contemplative communities. As such, the sample may not fully represent the broader Thai population, and potential selection bias should be considered when interpreting generalizability.

Across both subsamples, participants reported varied experiences with mindfulness and meditation practices, including breath meditation (*Ānāpānasati*), body-based practices (*Kāyaḡatā-sati*), *mettā-bhāvanā*, and mixed approaches. Most participants described their practice as intermittent rather than continuous, reflecting typical patterns of engagement in everyday contemplative contexts.

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical guidelines, including the Belmont Report, the Declaration of Helsinki, and the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) guidelines. Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Review System for Research Involving Human Participants at Chulalongkorn University (COA No. 253/66). All participants provided informed consent prior to participation.

Demographics

Demographic characteristics of the two samples are presented in Table 1. The first sample comprised 211 participants recruited through monastic-university networks for the assessment of test-retest reliability. The second sample comprised 437 lay mindfulness practitioners who



completed both the ES-16 and SOFI measures. Demographic characteristics of both samples, including gender, age, educational attainment, religious affiliation, and mindfulness practice experience, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Two Independent Samples

Characteristic	Sample 1: Retest subsample (n = 211)	Sample 2: Main sample (n = 437)
Gender		
- Male	165 (78.2%)	227 (51.9%)
- Female	40 (19.0%)	190 (43.5%)
- Other	6 (2.8%)	20 (4.6%)
Age, Mean (SD)	43.21 (13.78)	35.67 (15.82)
Education		
- Under High School	14 (6.6%)	5 (1.1%)
- Secondary Education	35 (16.6%)	28 (6.4%)
- Bachelor's, Master's	151 (71.6%)	269 (84.4%)
- Doctoral or Higher	11 (5.2%)	35 (8.0%)
Religious Affiliation		
- Buddhist	206 (97.6%)	420 (96.1%)
- Christian	-	10 (2.3%)
- Islamic	-	2 (0.5%)
- Multiple Religions	3 (1.4%)	3 (0.7%)
- No Religion	2 (0.9%)	2 (0.5%)
Mindfulness practice		
- Practice	189 (89.6%)	358 (81.9%)
- No practice	22 (10.4%)	79 (18.1%)

Note: Sample 1: Retest subsample (Recruited Via Monastic, University Networks) (n = 211), Sample 2: Main sample (ES-16 × SOFI group) (n = 437)

Procedure

Participants accessed the survey via an online platform. After reviewing the participant information sheet, eligibility was confirmed (Thai-speaking Adults Aged 18 Years or Older), and informed consent was provided electronically by selecting the designated consent option. The survey comprised a demographic questionnaire, the Thai version of the Equanimity Scale-16 (ES-16), and the Thai version of the Self-Other Four Immeasurable (SOFI) scale. Participants were invited to provide an email address for follow-up, enabling a second survey administration one week later to assess test-retest reliability.

Measures

Equanimity Scale-16 (ES-16), Thai Version

The Thai version of the Equanimity Scale-16 (ES-16) is a self-report measure designed to assess equanimity across two dimensions: Experiential Acceptance (EA) and Non-Reactivity (NR), with eight items per subscale. The translation followed Brislin's back-translation procedure to



ensure linguistic accuracy and cultural appropriateness. The original English items were translated into Thai and independently back-translated into English, and discrepancies were reviewed by an expert panel to ensure conceptual equivalence within the Thai cultural and linguistic context. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), yielding total scores from 16 to 80, with higher scores indicating greater equanimity.

The ES-16 was developed based on traditional Buddhist and empirical psychological conceptualizations of equanimity, capturing the capacity to accept experiences without resistance and to disengage from automatic emotional reactivity. The original scale demonstrated strong psychometric properties, including high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$), test-retest reliability ($r = .87, p < .001$), and convergent validity (Rogers et al., 2021), supporting its adaptation for use in the Thai cultural context.

Self-Other Four Immeasurables (SOFI), Thai Version

The Thai version of the Self-Other Four Immeasurables (SOFI) scale (Saenubon et al., 2020), adapted from Kraus & Sears (2009), assesses the four immeasurable qualities using paired adjectives representing each quality and its opposing tendencies. Participants rate each adjective as it applies to themselves and to others; The item assessing jealousy is rated only toward others due to conceptual considerations. The Thai SOFI has demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency ($\alpha = .86$) and convergent validity.

Data Analyses

Statistical analyses were conducted using Jamovi version 2.3.28. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was performed to examine the latent structure of the Thai Equanimity Scale-16 (ES-16) using the Weighted Least Squares Mean and Variance Adjusted (WLSMV) estimator. This estimator was selected due to the ordinal nature of Likert-type items, for which WLSMV provides more accurate parameter estimates and model fit indices than maximum likelihood methods (Li, 2016); (Shi & Maydeu-Olivares, 2020).

Model fit was evaluated using multiple indices, including the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR) (Hu & Bentler, 1999); (Berle et al., 2011). Following commonly accepted guidelines, good model fit was indicated by CFI and TLI values of .95 or higher, RMSEA values below .06, and SRMR values below .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Given evidence that the performance of certain fit indices may vary under WLSMV estimation when applied to ordered categorical data, interpretation was undertaken with methodological caution, and particular attention was directed to SRMR as a comparatively stable indicator under ordinal estimation conditions (Xia & Yang, 2019).

Internal consistency was assessed using the model-based coefficient omega (Flora, 2020). Convergent validity was examined through Pearson correlation coefficients between ES-16 scores and scores on the Self-Other Four Immeasurable (SOFI) scale. Test-retest reliability was evaluated by correlating ES-16 scores obtained at baseline and at a one-week follow-up. Gender differences in ES-16 subscale scores were examined using independent-samples t-tests, and associations with age were assessed using Pearson correlation coefficients.



Results and Discussion

Preliminary Analyses

Prior to conducting the confirmatory factor analysis, preliminary analyses were performed to evaluate the suitability of the ES-16 data for factor analysis. Table 2 presents the intercorrelation between the two observed subscales, Experiential Acceptance (EA) and Non-Reactivity (NR). The two subscales were modestly but significantly correlated ($r = .232, p < .001$), indicating that they represent related yet distinct facets of equanimity.

The adequacy of the dataset for factor analysis was further supported by Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 2360, df = 120, p < .001$) and a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy of 0.863, which is considered meritorious. These results indicate that the inter-item correlations were sufficient to justify proceeding with confirmatory factor analysis.

Table 2 Correlation Matrix of Observable Variables in the ES-16 Two-Factor Model

Variables	EA	NR
EA	1.000	.232***
NR	.232***	1.000

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: $\chi^2 = 2360, df = 120, p < .001, KMO = .863$

*** $p < .001$

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to examine the theoretically proposed two-factor model distinguishing Experiential Acceptance (EA) and Non-Reactivity (NR). The refined two-factor model demonstrated excellent fit to the data after allowing three theoretically justifiable minor cross-loadings ($\chi^2(76) = 89.8, p = .134; CFI = 0.994; TLI = 0.990; RMSEA = 0.020 [90\% CI = 0.00-0.035]; SRMR = 0.028$). A comparison of model fit indices between the original English ES-16 and the Thai ES-16 is presented in Table 3.

Standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.46 to 0.89 (all $p < .001$), indicating adequate to strong associations between observed items and their respective latent factors. The latent correlation between EA and NR was moderate ($r = .31, p < .001$), supporting the conceptualization of equanimity as comprising related yet distinct dimensions.

Three items (E04, E08, and E14) exhibited minor cross-loadings on the non-target factor. These cross-loadings were theoretically coherent and reflect the experiential overlap between receptive awareness and emotional non-reactivity described in contemplative practice. Retaining these items improved overall model fit without compromising the interpretability or structural integrity of the two-factor solution. Accordingly, the refined two-factor model was retained for subsequent reliability and validity analyses.



Table 3 Model Fit Comparison Between the Original and Thai ES-16 Two-Factor Models

Fit Index	Acceptance Criteria	Original ES-16	Thai ES-16	Evaluation
χ^2	Close to 0	426.925	89.800	Thai model passed
df	-	103	76	-
χ^2/df	≤ 2	4.145	1.182	Thai model passed
CFI	$\geq .95$	0.948	0.994	Thai model passed
TLI	$\geq .95$	0.940	0.990	Thai model passed
RMSEA	$< .06$	0.089	0.020	Thai model passed
SRMR	$< .08$	0.054	0.028	Thai model passed

Note. Model fit criteria follow Hu & Bentler (1999). Original English model values were extracted from Cheever et al. (2023). SRMR was emphasized as the most robust index under WLSMV estimation (Xia & Yang, 2019).

Reliability

The Thai ES-16 demonstrated strong internal consistency and short-term temporal stability. For the total scale, Cronbach's α was .837 and McDonald's ω was .838. Subscale reliabilities were likewise high (EA α = .820; NR α = .854). Over a one-week interval, test-retest reliability coefficients were $r = .886$ for the total score, $r = .802$ for EA, and $r = .890$ for NR (all $p < .001$). Item-level stability across time was also strong ($\alpha = .914$ for ES01-ES16). These findings indicate that the Thai ES-16 assesses a stable dispositional construct rather than transient state-like fluctuations.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity of the ES-16 was supported through theoretically consistent associations with the Self-Other Four Immeasurables (SOFI; As shown in Table 4). The ES-16 total score correlated positively with SOFI-positive qualities ($r = .39$, $p < .001$) and negatively with SOFI-negative qualities ($r = -.47$, $p < .001$).

At the subscale level, Experiential Acceptance (EA) was positively associated with SOFI-positive qualities ($r = .42$, $p < .001$) and weakly negatively associated with SOFI-negative qualities ($r = -.17$, $p < .001$). In contrast, Non-Reactivity (NR) showed a smaller positive association with SOFI-positive qualities ($r = .22$, $p < .001$) but a stronger negative association with SOFI-negative qualities ($r = -.52$, $p < .001$). These differential patterns suggest that EA is more closely linked to approach-oriented and benevolent affective qualities, whereas NR primarily reflects the attenuation of aversive and reactive tendencies.

Together, these results provide clear evidence of convergent validity for the Thai ES-16, supporting its capacity to capture both the positively oriented and aversive-reducing aspects of equanimity.

Table 4 Correlations Between ES-16 Dimensions and SOFI Subscales

Variable	ES-16 Total	EA	NR
SOFI Positive-Self	.38***	.32***	.36***
SOFI Positive-Other	.27***	.27***	.20***
SOFI Negative-Self	-.45***	-.35***	-.47***



Table 4 Correlations Between ES-16 Dimensions and SOFI Subscales (Continued)

Variable	ES-16 Total	EA	NR
SOFI Negative-Other	-.41***	-.33***	-.43***

Note. All correlations are significant at $p < .001$. ES-16 = Equanimity Scale-16; EA = Experiential Acceptance; NR = Non-Reactivity; SOFI = Self-Other Four Immeasurable (Kraus & Sears, 2009).

Ancillary Analyses: Gender and Age Effects

Additional analyses examined the effects of gender and age on equanimity. A small but statistically significant gender difference was observed for the ES-16 total score, with females scoring slightly higher than males, $t(434) = -3.01, p = .003$, Cohen's $d = -0.29$. No significant gender difference was found for Experiential Acceptance (EA), $t(434) = -0.97, p = .331$, Cohen's $d = -0.09$. However, females scored higher on Non-Reactivity (NR), $t(434) = -3.46, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = -0.33$.

Age was positively associated with equanimity across dimensions, with correlation coefficients ranging from small to moderate ($r_s = .18-.37$, all $p_s < .001$). Younger participants tended to report lower equanimity, whereas older participants reported higher overall scores.

Discussion

Contributions of the Present Study

The present study validated the Thai version of the Equanimity Scale-16 (Rogers et al., 2021) in two independent samples of mindfulness practitioners and addressed three primary objectives: Examining the factorial structure of the scale, assessing its reliability, and evaluating convergent validity with the Self-Other Four Immeasurable (SOFI). The findings demonstrate that the Thai ES-16 is a psychometrically robust and culturally coherent instrument suitable for use in both monastic and lay Buddhist populations in Thailand. By extending equanimity assessment to a Thai Buddhist context, this study advances empirical research on contemplative practice, emotional regulation, and well-being, complementing applied Buddhist research demonstrating associations between Buddhist practices and psychological well-being in Thai contexts (Klangrit et al., 2025).

Factorial Structure and Psychometric Properties

Confirmatory factor analysis supported the theorized two-factor structure distinguishing Experiential Acceptance (EA) and Non-Reactivity (NR), with excellent model fit indices (CFI = .994, TLI = .990, RMSEA = .020, SRMR = .028) and clear interpretability. This structure replicates the configuration established in the original English ES-16 (Rogers et al., 2021); (Cheever et al., 2023) and confirms the conceptual distinction between accepting internal experiences and maintaining emotional composure. The moderate latent correlation between EA and NR further aligns with theoretical models describing equanimity as comprising related yet distinguishable processes.

The observed cross-loadings among three items (E04, E08, and E14) were theoretically coherent and reflect the experiential overlap between receptive awareness and non-reactive responding emphasized in contemplative traditions. Retaining these items enhanced model fit without undermining factorial clarity, suggesting that the Thai ES-16 captures the integrative nature of equanimity rather than artificially separating its components.



Validity and Psychological Correlates

Convergent validity was demonstrated through theoretically consistent associations between the ES-16 and the Self-Other Four Immeasurable (SOFI). Higher equanimity was associated with greater loving-kindness, compassion, and appreciative joy ($r = .39, p < .001$) and with lower levels of anger, cruelty, and indifference ($r = -.47, p < .001$). This pattern aligns with compassion-based and affect-regulation models, indicating that equanimity co-occurs with benevolent emotional states while attenuating aversive reactivity.

At the subscale level, Experiential Acceptance (EA) showed stronger associations with approach-oriented positive qualities, whereas Non-Reactivity (NR) exhibited stronger inverse associations with negative affective tendencies. This differentiated pattern aligns with Buddhist psychological accounts in which *upekkhā* is understood not as emotional disengagement but as a balanced integration of receptive acceptance and emotional non-attachment (*Anupādāna*). From this perspective, equanimity is cultivated alongside ethical sensitivity and compassion, reflecting an integrated mode of balanced awareness that attenuates aversive reactivity while preserving relational attunement within lived Buddhist practice contexts (Siripattanayan et al., 2024).

Demographic and Contextual Insights

The demographic profiles of the two samples provide further support for the robustness and ecological validity of the Thai ES-16. The retest subsample, recruited through monastic-university networks, included participants whose daily routines emphasized academic and institutional responsibilities rather than intensive retreat practice. Despite variability in meditation engagement, equanimity scores remained highly stable over time, supporting the characterization of equanimity as a trait-like quality shaped by long-term contemplative and ethical development. Because most participants were Buddhist and reported interest in meditation practice, equanimity scores may partially reflect culturally embedded contemplative familiarity. This sampling profile may limit generalizability to secular or non-Buddhist populations.

In the main sample of lay mindfulness practitioners, equanimity was similarly stable and demonstrated meaningful associations with age and gender. Positive associations between age and equanimity are consistent with prior research linking emotional balance to life experience and socioemotional development. Gender differences were small in magnitude, with slightly higher non-reactivity observed among female participants, potentially reflecting sociocultural patterns of emotional regulation in Thai contexts.

Together, these findings indicate that the Thai ES-16 captures equanimity as an enduring dispositional quality that generalizes across demographic characteristics and practice environments, aligning closely with both traditional Buddhist psychological accounts and contemporary psychometric models.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

The present study offers an integrated conceptual contribution to Buddhist-informed psychological research by unifying doctrinal, psychological, and empirical perspectives on equanimity



into a coherent framework, as illustrated in Figure 1. Drawing on classical Theravāda sources, upekkhā is articulated as an even-minded and balanced quality situated within the Brahmavihāras and explicitly distinguished from emotional indifference (e.g., Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga). This doctrinal grounding clarifies equanimity as a wisdom-informed and ethically oriented mental quality rather than a form of affective disengagement.

Within contemporary psychological scholarship, the Equanimity Scale-16 (ES-16) operationalizes this construct through two observable processes, Experiential Acceptance, and Non-Reactivity, consistent with contemplative science perspectives that conceptualize equanimity as openness to experience without habitual emotional reactivity. The empirical findings of the present study, including the confirmed two-factor structure, strong internal consistency, temporal stability, and convergent validity with the Self-Other Four Immeasurable (SOFI), provide robust support for this operationalization within a Thai Buddhist cultural context.

Collectively, this integrated model advances the body of knowledge by offering the first psychometrically validated, culturally grounded measure of equanimity that bridges classical Buddhist doctrine and contemporary psychological mechanisms. By demonstrating how upekkhā can be both theoretically faithful and empirically measurable, the study establishes a foundation for future research in Buddhist-informed psychological assessment, contemplative science, and cross-cultural validation of wisdom-based constructs. This integrative framework links doctrinal teachings on upekkhā in Theravāda Buddhism, psychological operationalization through Experiential Acceptance and Non-Reactivity, and empirical validation through psychometric analysis.



Figure 1 Integrated Framework of Upekkhā: Doctrinal Foundations, Psychological Representation, and Empirical Validation



Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, the present study establishes the Thai version of the Equanimity Scale-16 (ES-16) as a psychometrically robust, conceptually coherent, and culturally grounded measure of equanimity. The findings support a two-factor structure comprising Experiential Acceptance and Non-Reactivity, demonstrate strong internal consistency and temporal stability, and confirm convergent validity across diverse practice contexts. Together, these two dimensions reflect complementary processes through which equanimity operates as both openness to experience and stability of emotional response. Collectively, these results position equanimity as a measurable, trait-like regulatory capacity integrating emotional openness with non-reactive stability, consistent with both Buddhist contemplative frameworks and contemporary models of emotion regulation. By operationalizing *upekkhā* in a manner that is theoretically faithful and empirically rigorous, the Thai ES-16 serves as a bridge between doctrinal understanding and psychological assessment, thereby advancing cross-cultural contemplative research. Nevertheless, several limitations warrant consideration. The predominantly Thai Buddhist samples may reflect culturally embedded interpretations of equanimity and practice intensity, as well as doctrinal familiarity, which were not directly assessed. Background variables were self-reported and not experimentally controlled, limiting causal inference, and the exclusive reliance on community-based self-report data precludes conclusions regarding clinical applicability. Measurement invariance across cultural and experiential groups was not formally examined, and divergent validity as well as predictive sensitivity require further empirical clarification. Future research should therefore extend validation across more diverse populations, incorporate longitudinal and intervention-based designs, formally test measurement invariance, and integrate multi-method or neuroscientific approaches to further consolidate the Thai ES-16 as a culturally sensitive and methodologically rigorous instrument for examining equanimity, emotional balance, resilience, and well-being in both contemplative and secular contexts.

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CONSUMER ATTITUDES TOWARD UNMANNED CONVENIENCE STORES IN THAILAND: APPLYING THE YONISOMANASIKARA APPROACH

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Unmanned convenience stores represent an emerging retail innovation that integrates artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and automated payment systems to deliver cashierless shopping experiences. Although these formats have expanded rapidly in technologically advanced economies, consumer acceptance remains uneven due to concerns related to trust, privacy, system reliability, and the absence of human interaction. Previous studies have predominantly examined these issues through functional and instrumental perspectives, often overlooking reflective, ethical, and culturally embedded dimensions of consumer decision-making. In particular, technology acceptance research grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) has emphasized perceived usefulness and trust while paying comparatively limited attention to culturally informed reflective reasoning. In Thailand, unmanned convenience stores are still at an early stage of diffusion, and empirical research on consumer attitudes toward this retail format remains limited. Given Thailand's strong Buddhist cultural context, understanding technology acceptance through reflective and mindful evaluation is particularly relevant. Accordingly, this study pursued multiple interrelated objectives. First, it examined demographic and behavioral determinants of consumer attitudes toward unmanned convenience stores. Second, it analyzed perceived benefits (Assada) associated with unmanned retail systems. Third, it investigated perceived drawbacks (Adinava) and coping mechanisms (Nissarana) that influence consumer acceptance. Finally, it integrated the Yonisomanasikara reflective framework with established Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) constructs to assess its incremental explanatory power.

Methodology: A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was conducted with 396 consumers in Chonburi Province, Thailand, using a multi-stage sampling technique to capture urban, suburban, and tourism-related consumer segments. A structured questionnaire measured demographic characteristics, shopping behavior, TAM constructs (Perceived Usefulness, Ease of Use, Perceived Risk, Trust, and Attitude), and the three dimensions of Yonisomanasikara: Asada (Benefits), adinava (Drawbacks), and nissarana (Coping or Resolution). Hierarchical regression analysis was employed to compare a baseline TAM model with an extended integrative model incorporating reflective cognition.



Main Results: The results indicated generally positive consumer attitudes toward unmanned convenience stores. While perceived usefulness and trust significantly predicted attitudes in the baseline TAM model, hierarchical regression analysis revealed that the inclusion of Yonisomanasikara constructs significantly enhanced explanatory power. Most notably, nissarana emerged as the strongest predictor of consumer attitude, suggesting that acceptance was shaped not merely by recognizing benefits or minimizing risks, but by the ability to cognitively reconcile perceived drawbacks through reflective coping. Even when perceived risks and drawbacks were acknowledged, attitudes remained favorable when credible coping mechanisms were identified.

Involvement to Buddhaddhamma: This study is positioned within Applied Buddhism. By empirically operationalizing Yonisomanasikara, a core Buddhist principle of wise reflection and analytical discernment, the research demonstrates how Buddhist cognitive training can inform contemporary technology acceptance behavior. The integration of Yonisomanasikara with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) positions Buddhist analytical reasoning as a reflective mechanism that shapes consumer evaluation beyond instrumental rationality. This applied approach illustrates the relevance of Buddhist principles in understanding modern digital retail systems and their implications for Buddhism and sustainable development.

Conclusions: The study concludes that reflective coping and resolution (Nissarana) constitute the most critical determinant of Thai consumers' attitudes toward unmanned convenience stores. Demographic characteristics exert comparatively limited influence, reinforcing the argument that acceptance is shaped more by reflective cognitive processing than by static personal attributes. Integrating Yonisomanasikara with TAM provides a culturally sensitive and ethically grounded framework that explains consumer acceptance as a process of mindful evaluation rather than uncritical adoption. The findings contribute to Buddhist-informed consumer research and offer guidance for designing unmanned retail systems that foster trust, transparency, and responsible engagement.

Keywords: Unmanned Convenience Stores, Consumer Attitudes, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Yonisomanasikara Approach, Trust

Introduction

The retail sector has undergone a profound transformation in the last decade as digital technologies, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and automation reshape consumer experiences. From an experiential perspective, retail environments are not merely transactional spaces but embodied and spatial settings in which consumers construct meaning through interaction with physical, technological, and social elements (García-Nieto et al., 2025); (Yakhlef, 2015). Among these innovations, unmanned convenience stores, characterized by the absence of in-store staff and the reliance on advanced technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), computer vision, and automated payment systems, have attracted global attention as a disruptive retail format (Park & Zhang, 2022); (Wang et al., 2022). Prominent examples include Amazon Go in the United States, BingoBox in China, and FamilyMart's automation strategy in Japan. These models are promoted as solutions to rising labor costs, consumer demand for frictionless shopping, and the growing diffusion of cashless transactions (Juan, 2025).



In parallel, data-driven retail analytics such as spatio-temporal clustering and sequential pattern mining have been increasingly applied to understand customer behavior and optimize retail operations in technology-enabled store environments (Chen et al., 2020). Globally, semi-automated unmanned convenience stores had a market worth approximately USD 61.8 million in 2019, representing a substantial share ($\approx 91.6\%$) of unmanned convenience market types at that time (Denuwara et al., 2021). Additionally, empirical studies suggest strong consumer acceptance of unmanned convenience stores driven by trust, perceived usefulness, performance expectancy, and technology readiness (Ee et al., 2024); (Szabó-Szentgróti et al., 2023a); (Wang et al., 2022); (Wang et al., 2023).

Despite such potential, adoption has been uneven across regions. While Asian markets such as Taiwan and China report relatively favorable consumer acceptance, studies in Europe demonstrate stronger resistance, reflecting cultural and contextual variations in technology adoption (Szabó-Szentgróti et al., 2023a). Key concerns include technological reliability, the absence of human interaction, and risks related to data privacy and payment security (Pantano et al., 2022); (Sari et al., 2023); (Wang et al., 2021). A recent choice experiment study found that though consumers generally prefer unmanned stores, their preference declines as stores adopt more advanced technology attributes, suggesting that increased automation may amplify concerns over trust, reliability, and privacy (Nam et al., 2025). These findings highlight the complex interplay of perceived usefulness, ease of use, trust, and risk in shaping consumer attitudes toward unmanned retail formats (de Luca & Pegan, 2011). Prior empirical research in online retail contexts also demonstrates that financial, product, and security risks do not directly suppress purchase intention when trust functions as a mediating mechanism, underscoring the central role of trust in risk-laden digital consumption environments (Dunggio & Rasyid, 2024).

However, most existing studies conceptualize consumer acceptance primarily as a functional and instrumental evaluation of technology, emphasizing efficiency, convenience, and performance-related outcomes. Such approaches tend to underrepresent the reflective and ethical dimensions of consumer decision-making, particularly in contexts where advanced technologies directly affect personal data, privacy, and social values (Bombaerts et al., 2023). In unmanned convenience stores, consumers are not merely evaluating whether the technology is useful or easy to use but are also required to reflect on potential negative consequences, such as surveillance, data misuse, and the erosion of human interaction in everyday consumption. This limitation becomes particularly salient in digitally mediated retail environments where issues of data governance, labor displacement, and regulatory preparedness intersect with everyday consumption practices. Conventional TAM-based models, while effective in explaining utilitarian evaluations, provide limited insight into how consumers reconcile awareness of such socio-ethical implications with continued adoption (Dastorani & Khoshneshin, 2017); (Hsu & Lin, 2022); (Saleh et al., 2020). This theoretical insufficiency highlights the need for a reflective and culturally grounded analytical framework capable of explaining how awareness of drawbacks is transformed into reasoned acceptance.



In Thailand, unmanned convenience stores are a nascent phenomenon. Lotus's Pick & Go by True Digital, launched in Bangkok in mid-2023, introduced Thai consumers to cashierless, fully automated retail via over 400 product items, QR code entry, and automated charging through TrueMoney Wallet. Early accounts praise the speed and convenience of the experience, although there are caveats noted in media reports regarding concerns over technological reliability and data privacy. Given Thailand's status as a dynamic retail market in Southeast Asia, high smartphone penetration, rapid urbanization, and growing demand for 24-hour convenience, understanding consumer acceptance of this retail format is both timely and strategically significant (Szabó-Szentgróti et al., 2023b). Moreover, as unmanned retail expands within Thailand's digital economy, policy considerations relating to data protection standards, employment restructuring, and institutional oversight become increasingly prominent, reinforcing the importance of examining acceptance as a socially embedded and ethically informed evaluative process rather than a purely individual preference (Diana et al., 2025).

To address these complexities, this study incorporates the Yonisomanasikara approach, a Buddhist analytical framework that emphasizes systematic reflection through three interrelated dimensions: Recognition of benefits (Assada), acknowledgment of drawbacks or dangers (Adinava), and discernment of appropriate coping strategies or resolutions (Nissarana). In Buddhist epistemology, Yonisomanasikara represents a form of wise and mindful consideration that enables individuals to evaluate phenomena beyond immediate gratification, encouraging balanced judgment grounded in ethical awareness.

In the context of unmanned convenience stores, such reflective cognition becomes particularly relevant, as consumers are required to evaluate not only functional attributes of the technology but also broader concerns related to privacy, trust, automation, and social implications. By structuring evaluation into the interconnected processes of assada, adinava, and nissarana, Yonisomanasikara provides a systematic cognitive pathway through which consumers reinterpret perceived risks and arrive at reasoned acceptance rather than impulsive rejection or uncritical adoption.

While prior studies have relied heavily on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and its extensions to explain consumer attitudes toward unmanned retail (Park & Zhang, 2022); (Wang et al., 2022), Yonisomanasikara offers a culturally grounded framework that captures reflective processes often omitted from conventional technology adoption models. Importantly, rather than replacing TAM, the Yonisomanasikara approach complements existing constructs by elucidating how consumers cognitively and ethically assess both positive and negative aspects of technology before forming attitudes and intentions.

Whereas TAM primarily emphasizes instrumental evaluations such as perceived usefulness and ease of use, the Yonisomanasikara framework introduces a higher-order reflective mechanism that explains how individuals transform awareness of drawbacks (Adinava) into adaptive coping and resolution (Nissarana). This integrative perspective therefore extends technology acceptance theory by highlighting reflective cognition as a regulatory process that shapes balanced consumer attitudes in technologically mediated retail environments.



Although existing studies have provided valuable insights into automated retail adoption, limited research has examined unmanned convenience stores in Thailand, where the format is still at an early stage of diffusion. Moreover, previous research rarely operationalizes Buddhist cognitive principles as measurable constructs within empirical models. This study addresses these gaps by quantitatively operationalizing the three dimensions of Yonisomanasikara and integrating them with TAM-derived constructs, thereby offering a more holistic and culturally sensitive explanation of consumer attitudes toward unmanned convenience stores. Given that adoption in Thailand remains concentrated among digitally literate, economically active youth, including working students who combine formal education with part-time or full-time employment, the present focus is theoretically aligned with examining early-stage diffusion dynamics rather than making broad population-level generalizations. By combining instrumental evaluations with reflective judgment, the proposed framework advances theoretical discussions on technology acceptance while generating practical implications for retailers, policymakers, and technology developers seeking to implement unmanned retail formats in diverse sociocultural contexts.

Objectives

This study pursued multiple interrelated objectives. First, it examined demographic and behavioral determinants of consumer attitudes toward unmanned convenience stores. Second, it analyzed perceived benefits (Assada) associated with unmanned retail systems. Third, it investigated perceived drawbacks (Adinava) and coping mechanisms (Nissarana) that influence consumer acceptance. Finally, it integrated the Yonisomanasikara reflective framework with established Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) constructs to assess its incremental explanatory power.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to investigate consumer attitudes toward unmanned convenience stores in Thailand. The research framework was grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). It was extended through the Yonisomanasikara approach, which was operationalized as measurable cognitive constructs. These constructs reflected consumers' evaluation of benefits (Assada), drawbacks (Adinava), and coping mechanisms (Nissarana). This design was chosen to provide both empirical measurement of consumer attitudes and a culturally grounded explanation of how consumers cognitively and ethically assess automated retail technologies.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study comprised consumers residing in or visiting Chonburi Province, Thailand, a regional hub of economic activity and tourism. A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted to ensure both diversity and representativeness of respondents. In the first stage, Chonburi was selected as the focal province due to its heterogeneous consumer base. In the second stage, the province was stratified into three zones: Metropolitan centers (e.g., Chonburi City, Pattaya), suburban districts (e.g., Si Racha, Bang Lamung), and tourism-oriented areas (e.g., Bang Saen and Coastal Destinations). In the third stage, clusters of high consumer traffic were



identified within each zone, including shopping malls, residential neighborhoods, and transport or tourism hubs. In the fourth stage, respondents were recruited through systematic and convenience sampling within these clusters, ensuring proportional representation across zones. The final stage yielded a total sample of 396 valid responses, distributed as approximately 40% urban, 35% suburban, and 25% tourism-based consumers. This multi-stage procedure ensured that the sample captured demographic and behavioral variation within the province. As a result, the robustness of the analysis was enhanced.

The sample was predominantly composed of working-age students who reported concurrent employment alongside formal education. This segment reflects an economically active and digitally engaged cohort rather than a purely dependent student population. Considering that unmanned convenience stores in Thailand remain at an early stage of diffusion, concentrating on this technologically adaptive group is analytically appropriate for examining initial adoption dynamics. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted within this stage-specific and segment-bound context rather than as population-level generalizations.

Research Instruments

A structured questionnaire was developed based on prior research in technology acceptance and unmanned retail. It comprised six sections: 1) Demographics (Gender, Age, Education, Occupation, Income), 2) Consumer behavior (Frequency of Visits, Spending Per Visit), 3) Perceived benefits (Assada), 4) Perceived drawbacks (Adinava), 5) Coping mechanisms (Nissarana), and 6) TAM-related, including Perceived Usefulness (labeled in this Study as Advantage / Usefulness), Ease of Use, Perceived Risk, Trust, and Attitude.

The Yonisomanasikara constructs were operationalized as multi-item scales reflecting systematic reflection in consumer decision-making. Assada captured perceived advantages of unmanned convenience stores, adinava represented perceived risks and negative consequences, and nissarana measured perceived coping strategies or resolutions that enable consumers to engage with the technology despite potential concerns.

Within the adinava dimension, privacy concerns were conceptualized as consumers' recognition of potential vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities were associated with automated data collection and digital payment systems. In this framework, privacy reflects the acknowledgment of possible harm as part of reflective evaluation, rather than a generalized assessment of technological risk. This distinction allows the study to analytically separate the recognition of drawbacks (Adinava) from broader evaluative constructs such as perceived risk and trust within the TAM framework. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

Content validity was confirmed through expert review, and reliability testing showed Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.70 for all constructs, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. The overall structure of the survey instrument, including its key sections and measured constructs, was summarized in Table 1.



Construct validity was assessed using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure was 0.962, indicating excellent sampling adequacy. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 10388.43$, $p < .001$), confirming the suitability of the data for factor analysis. All items loaded strongly on the primary factor, with factor loadings ranging from 0.67 to 0.84, supporting convergent validity and structural coherence of the measurement model.

Table 1 Structure of the Survey Instrument

Section	Description
Demographics	Gender, Age, Education, Occupation, Income
Consumer Behavior	Frequency of visits, Spending per visit
Perceived Benefits (Assada)	Items measuring speed, convenience, technological innovation, 24-hour access
Perceived Drawbacks (Adinava)	Items measuring concerns about reliability, job displacement, privacy, lack of human interaction
Coping Mechanisms (Nissarana)	Items measuring digital literacy, coping strategies, trust in data security, support systems
TAM Constructs	Items measuring perceived usefulness, ease of use, perceived risk, trust, and overall attitude

Note: All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale

To ensure the internal consistency of the measurement scales, reliability analysis was conducted for all multi-item constructs. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to assess the consistency of responses within each construct. The reliability coefficients for all constructs were presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Reliability Results of Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Advantage / Usefulness	0.81
Ease of Use	0.83
Perceived Risk	0.79
Trust	0.88
Attitude	0.85

Note: All constructs showed acceptable reliability ($\alpha > 0.70$).

Data Collection

The survey was conducted in Chonburi Province between January 2024 and June 2025. A multi-stage sampling procedure was applied, beginning with stratification of urban, suburban, and tourism zones, followed by cluster selection of shopping malls, residential areas, and transport hubs. Within each cluster, respondents were approached through systematic and convenience methods. A total of 396 valid questionnaires were obtained. Participation was



voluntary and anonymous, with all respondents providing informed consent. Ethical guidelines regarding confidentiality and the right to withdraw were strictly observed.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS Statistics version 25. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were employed to summarize demographic characteristics, consumer behavior, and the three dimensions of Yonisomanasikara. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine associations among the main constructs.

Multiple regression analysis was applied in two stages. First, a baseline regression model tested the influence of TAM-related variables, advantage/usefulness, ease of use, perceived risk, and trust, on consumer attitudes toward unmanned convenience stores. The model demonstrated strong explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.514$, $F(4,391) = 103.51$, $p < 0.001$), with trust and advantage emerging as significant predictors, while ease of use and perceived risk showed no significant effects.

In the second stage, the Yonisomanasikara constructs (Assada, Adinava, and Nissarana) were incorporated into the regression model to examine their incremental explanatory power beyond traditional TAM variables. This hierarchical regression approach enabled assessment of whether reflective evaluation grounded in Buddhist cognitive principles significantly enhanced the prediction of consumer attitudes toward unmanned convenience stores.

The conceptual framework illustrated the integration of TAM constructs with the Yonisomanasikara dimensions, positioning assada, adinava, and nissarana as reflective cognitive factors that complement functional evaluations of technology acceptance, as illustrated in Figure 1.

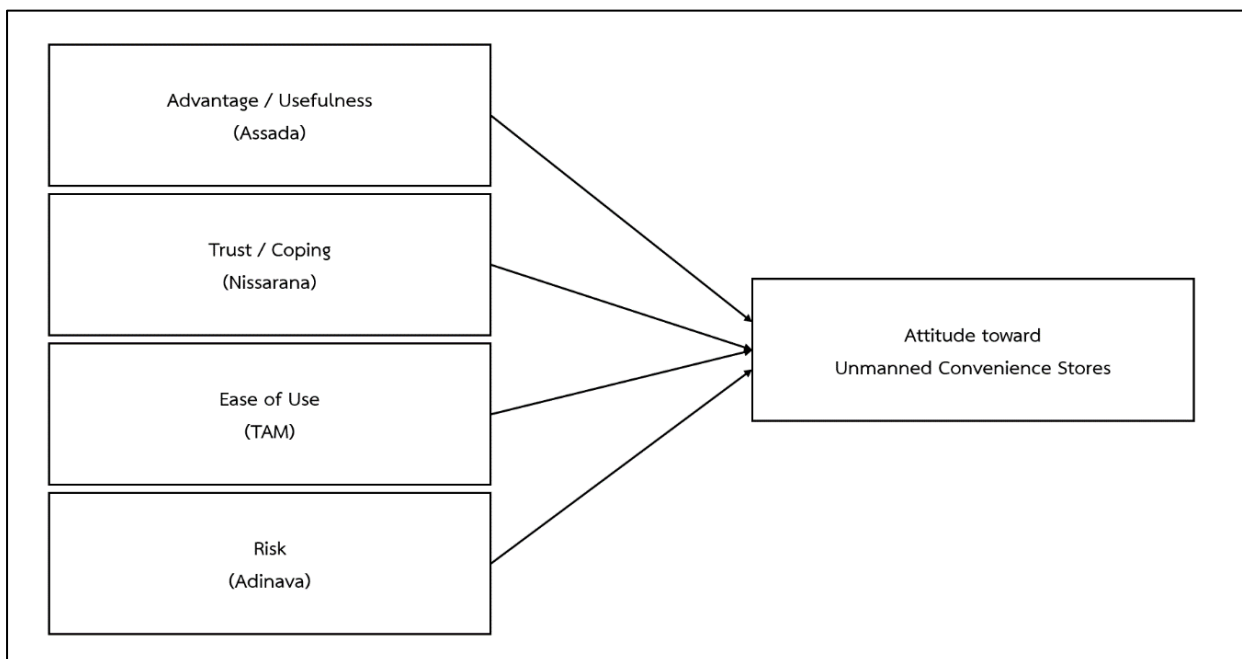


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework



Results and Discussion

Descriptive Results of Respondents

A total of 396 valid responses were obtained from consumers residing in or visiting Chonburi Province who had used convenience stores within the past year. The sample was predominantly female (71.7%), with males accounting for 28.3%. Most respondents were under 30 years of age (82.3%), followed by those aged 30–39 (16.2%), while 1.5% were aged 40 years and above. In terms of education, the majority held a bachelor's degree (75.8%), while 23.0% had completed secondary education, and 1.2% reported postgraduate qualifications. Almost half of the respondents reported a monthly income below THB 15,000 (47.5%), and 39.1% earned between THB 15,001 - 30,000, with the remaining respondents reporting incomes above THB 30,000. Students constituted the largest occupational group (98.5%), reflecting the youthful and digitally familiar profile of the sample. It is important to note that many respondents classified as students were simultaneously engaged in part-time or full-time employment, indicating that this category reflects educational status rather than economic inactivity.

Regarding shopping behavior, convenience stores played a central role in daily consumption. Approximately 42.7% of respondents visited convenience stores two to three times per week, and 26.5% reported daily visits. Most respondents (73.2%) spent between THB 51 and 100 per visit, indicating frequent, low-value transactions characteristic of routine convenience shopping.

With respect to Objective 1, and consistent with the four research objectives guiding this study, the results indicated that demographic and behavioral characteristics primarily described the profile of current users but exerted limited explanatory influence on consumer attitudes when compared with cognitive evaluation constructs. This suggested that acceptance was shaped less by who consumers were and more by how they interpreted benefits, drawbacks, and coping possibilities.

Descriptive Statistics of TAM and Yonisomanasikara Constructs

To provide an overview of consumer perceptions, descriptive statistics were calculated for all major constructs, including the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) variables and the three dimensions of Yonisomanasikara.

Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations of the TAM and Yonisomanasikara constructs, were presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of Key Constructs

Construct	Mean	SD
Attitude	4.09	0.79
Advantage / Usefulness	4.22	0.64
Ease of Use	4.31	0.65
Perceived Risk	4.11	0.73
Trust	4.17	0.65
Assada (Perceived Benefits)	4.24	0.62



Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of Key Constructs (Continued)

Construct	Mean	SD
Adinava (Perceived Drawbacks)	4.11	0.73
Nissarana (Coping / Resolution)	4.17	0.65

The results indicated that respondents generally held positive evaluations of unmanned convenience stores. Attitude toward using and recommending unmanned convenience stores was high ($M = 4.09$), suggesting strong openness to this retail format (de Luca & Pegan, 2011). Among TAM-related constructs, perceived ease of use received the highest mean score ($M = 4.31$), followed by perceived advantage/usefulness ($M = 4.22$) and trust ($M = 4.17$). Although perceived risk was also rated relatively high ($M = 4.11$), this did not necessarily translate into negative attitudes.

The standard deviation values, ranging from 0.62 to 0.79 across constructs, indicated relatively low to moderate variability in responses, suggesting a considerable degree of consensus among participants. In particular, the lower dispersion observed for perceived benefits (Assada) and ease of use reflects consistent agreement regarding the functional advantages of unmanned convenience stores.

Importantly, the Yonisomanasikara dimensions exhibited a balanced pattern. Assada (Perceived Benefits) recorded the highest mean ($M = 4.24$), indicating strong recognition of convenience, efficiency, and technological advantages. Addressing Objective 2, this finding indicated that perceived benefits played a substantial role in shaping favorable evaluations of unmanned retail systems. Adinava (Perceived Drawbacks) was also acknowledged at a moderate-to-high level ($M = 4.11$), reflecting awareness of privacy, security, and reliability concerns. In relation to Objective 3, the recognition of drawbacks suggests that consumers were not uncritical adopters, but rather demonstrated awareness of potential constraints. However, Nissarana (Coping or Resolution) demonstrated a high mean score ($M = 4.17$), suggesting that respondents identified viable strategies and justifications that enabled them to engage with unmanned convenience stores despite perceived risks. Addressing Objective 4, the prominence of nissarana suggests that coping mechanisms play a central role in shaping consumer acceptance of unmanned convenience stores.

While adinava showed slightly higher variability compared to assada, this pattern implies that perceptions of potential drawbacks were more diverse, even though overall evaluations remained favorable.

Reliability Analysis of Constructs

The reliability coefficients for all TAM and Yonisomanasikara constructs were summarized in Table 4. To ensure internal consistency of the measurement scales, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for all composite constructs.

Table 4 Reliability Results of TAM and Yonisomanasikara Constructs

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Advantage / Usefulness	0.81
Ease of Use	0.83



Table 4 Reliability Results of TAM and Yonisomanasikara Constructs (Continued)

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Perceived Risk	0.79
Trust	0.88
Attitude	0.85
Assada	0.86
Adinava	0.82
Nissarana	0.88

All constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. The reliability coefficients for the Yonisomanasikara dimensions were particularly strong, supporting their use as empirically measurable cognitive constructs in subsequent analyses.

Although the Perceived Risk construct demonstrated a slightly lower coefficient ($\alpha = 0.79$) relative to other constructs, it remains well within the acceptable range for social science research.

Correlation Analysis

The correlations among the main study variables were reported in Table 5. Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships among the major constructs.

Table 5 Correlation Matrix of Key Constructs

Variable	Attitude	Advantage	Ease	Risk	Trust	Assada	Adinava	Nissarana
Attitude	1.000							
Advantage	0.676***	1.000						
Ease	0.608***	0.779***	1.000					
Risk	0.578***	0.700***	0.663***	1.000				
Trust	0.750***	0.813***	0.744***	0.741***	1.000			
Assada	0.702*	0.846*	0.781*	0.668*	0.825*	1.000		
Adinava	0.581*	0.693*	0.661*	0.902*	0.734*	0.706*	1.000	
Nissarana	0.769*	0.781*	0.706*	0.702*	0.842*	0.812*	0.748*	1.000

Note: ***p < 0.001.

The results showed strong and significant correlations among all constructs. Attitude was most strongly correlated with trust ($r = 0.750$) and nissarana ($r = 0.769$), followed by assada ($r = 0.702$). Although perceived risk and adinava were positively correlated with attitude, these relationships were weaker than those involving trust and coping-related evaluations, suggesting that awareness of drawbacks does not necessarily suppress positive attitudes.

A very high correlation was observed between perceived risk and adinava ($r = 0.902$), reflecting their close conceptual association in capturing negative evaluations of unmanned retail technologies. Although strongly related, the two constructs represent distinct analytical dimensions within the integrated framework.



In addition, the strong association between nissarana and attitude ($r = 0.769$) underscores the importance of reflective coping mechanisms in shaping favorable consumer evaluations.

Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was first conducted using TAM-related variables as predictors of consumer attitude. The results of the baseline multiple regression analysis based on TAM constructs are presented in Table 6.

Table 6 Multiple Regression Analysis: Baseline TAM Model

Predictor	β	t	p
Advantage / Usefulness	0.354	6.21	< 0.001
Ease of Use	0.090	1.51	0.133
Perceived Risk	0.017	0.29	0.776
Trust	0.316	5.62	< 0.001

Model Summary: $R^2 = 0.514$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.509$, $F(4,391) = 103.51$, $p < 0.001$ All VIF values < 5

The baseline model explained 51.4% of the variance in attitude. Perceived advantage/usefulness and trust were significant predictors, whereas ease of use and perceived risk were not statistically significant.

Among the significant predictors, perceived advantage/usefulness ($\beta = 0.354$) exerted a slightly stronger effect than trust ($\beta = 0.316$), indicating that functional evaluations of utility played the most influential role in shaping attitudes within the baseline TAM model.

Although ease of use and perceived risk were significantly correlated with attitude in the bivariate analysis, their effects became non-significant in the multivariate model. This pattern diverges from several international studies in which perceived risk retained a direct negative influence on adoption intentions (Wang et al., 2022); (Nam et al., 2025).

Instead, the present findings align more closely with research emphasizing the buffering role of trust in digital consumption contexts (Dunggio & Rasyid, 2024). This suggests that within the Thai context, risk awareness does not necessarily translate into resistance when reflective coping mechanisms are present.

The findings further suggest the presence of shared variance among TAM constructs, particularly with advantage and trust, which may account for the diminished unique contribution of these variables when entered simultaneously into the regression model.

Hierarchical Regression: Incremental Effect of Yonisomanasikara

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis examining the incremental contribution of the Yonisomanasikara dimensions are presented in Table 7. To assess whether Yonisomanasikara contributed explanatory power beyond TAM, a hierarchical regression was performed. In Step 1, TAM-related variables were entered. In Step 2, the three Yonisomanasikara dimensions were added to examine incremental variance explained.



Table 7 Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Predictor	β (Final Model)	t	p
Advantage / Usefulness	0.155	2.44	0.015
Ease of Use	0.048	0.81	0.419
Perceived Risk	0.012	0.21	0.833
Trust	0.091	1.42	0.156
Assada	0.082	1.31	0.190
Adinava	-0.041	-0.88	0.381
Nissarana	0.553	9.21	< 0.001

Model Summary:

- Step 1 (TAM): $R^2 = 0.514$
- Step 2 (TAM + Yonisomanasikara): $R^2 = 0.586$
- $\Delta R^2 = 0.072$, $\Delta F(3,388) = 24.67$, $p < 0.001$

The inclusion of Yonisomanasikara significantly improved the model's explanatory power. Among the three dimensions, nissarana emerged as the strongest predictor of attitude, while assada and adinava were not significant once coping-related evaluations were considered.

The incremental increase in explanatory power ($\Delta R^2 = 0.072$) indicated that the Yonisomanasikara framework contributed meaningful additional insight beyond traditional TAM variables. Notably, the prominence of nissarana indicated that consumer acceptance was not determined solely by the recognition of benefits or drawbacks. Instead, acceptance depended on consumers' ability to reconcile these evaluations through reflective coping processes.

Finally, addressing Objective 4, the integration of Yonisomanasikara with TAM significantly enhanced explanatory power and demonstrated the added value of Buddhist cognitive principles in technology acceptance research.

Discussion

To strengthen the alignment between the stated objectives and the empirical findings, this discussion is organized according to the four research objectives, ensuring that each aim is systematically addressed and theoretically interpreted. The findings provide strong empirical support for integrating Buddhist cognitive principles into technology adoption research. While traditional TAM constructs, particularly perceived usefulness and trust, explained a substantial proportion of variance in consumer attitudes, the addition of Yonisomanasikara significantly enhanced explanatory power. This result is consistent with foundational TAM research emphasizing perceived usefulness as a primary determinant of acceptance (Davis, 1989), as well as subsequent refinements highlighting the role of contextual and structural factors in technology adoption (Malatji et al., 2020); (Szabó-Szentgróti et al., 2023a).

Most notably, nissarana (Coping and Resolution) emerged as the dominant predictor of consumer attitude. This suggests that Thai consumers do not simply adopt unmanned convenience stores because they perceive benefits or ignore risks; Rather, acceptance is driven by their ability



to articulate viable resolutions that allow them to manage perceived drawbacks (Ajzen, 2008); (Nam et al., 2025); (Zirena-Bejarano & Zirena, 2024). In line with Yonisomanasikara logic, respondents appeared capable of acknowledging *adinava* (Drawbacks) while maintaining favorable attitudes when *nissarana* (Resolutions) was strong. This finding aligns with prior research indicating that trust mechanisms and perceived control can buffer the negative influence of perceived risk in digital consumption contexts (Hong et al., 2011); (Park & Yoon, 2022); (Dunggio & Rasyid, 2024). Importantly, the magnitude of *nissarana*'s standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.553$) substantially exceeded that of traditional TAM predictors in the final model. This indicates that reflective coping mechanisms outweighed instrumental evaluations such as usefulness and trust in shaping attitudes.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings advance technology acceptance research by introducing reflective reconciliation as a higher-order cognitive regulatory process. Whereas TAM conceptualizes adoption primarily through functional assessments, the present study demonstrates that consumers may accept technology even in the presence of acknowledged risks when credible coping pathways are identified. Such reflective processing is consistent with prior empirical work on Yonisomanasikara as a structured cognitive training process that enhances balanced and intelligent consumption behavior (Satier et al., 2017), as well as broader Buddhist-informed accounts of mindful and ethically grounded awareness (Shonin et al., 2015); (Grossman, 2015).

The non-significance of perceived risk and *adinava* in the final model does not imply that risks are unimportant, but rather that their influence is mediated by coping-related evaluations. For a young, digitally literate population, concerns about privacy or system reliability may be cognitively recognized yet rendered less decisive when respondents trust institutional arrangements and perceive sufficient readiness to engage with technology (Seo & Lee, 2021).

Overall, this study advances the literature by empirically demonstrating how Yonisomanasikara complements TAM, offering a culturally grounded explanation of reflective consumer decision-making in automated retail contexts. From a practical perspective, retailers should focus not only on enhancing functional benefits but also on strengthening consumers' perceived resolution pathways through trust-building mechanisms, transparent communication, and supportive service systems (Denuwara et al., 2021). Beyond managerial implications, these findings highlight the importance of visible regulatory frameworks, transparent data governance, and institutional accountability in strengthening perceived coping pathways. Ethical and legal clarity may therefore function as structural supports for *nissarana*, reinforcing socially sustainable technology adoption.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

This study contributes original and contextually grounded knowledge to research on unmanned convenience stores by empirically integrating the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) with the Yonisomanasikara approach. Although unmanned convenience stores have been widely examined as a disruptive retail innovation driven by artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and automated payment systems, most existing studies emphasize functional and instrumental determinants of adoption. In Thailand, where cashierless retail formats such as



Lotus's Pick & Go have only recently been introduced, consumer acceptance remains closely tied to cultural norms, ethical concerns, and reflective judgment. The originality of this research lies in demonstrating how technology adoption can be explained through both functional evaluation and Buddhist analytical reflection.

A key body of knowledge generated by this study is the recognition that unmanned convenience stores represent a socio-cultural transformation of retail rather than merely a technological upgrade. Unmanned retail simultaneously presents efficiency gains and socio-cultural tensions related to trust, inclusion, and reduced human interaction. Empirical evidence from online shopping contexts further indicates that consumer adoption is constrained by multiple factors, including perceived risk, trust deficits, and system-related concerns, which collectively shape resistance to digital purchasing environments. Consistent with this literature, the present findings show that Thai consumers simultaneously acknowledge benefits and drawbacks. This supports arguments that adoption decisions should be evaluated not only in terms of convenience and cost efficiency, but also in terms of inclusivity and social well-being, particularly for groups with limited digital literacy or economic vulnerability.

This pattern extends prior TAM-based research in two important ways. First, while many TAM extensions incorporate perceived risk and trust as parallel predictors of attitude, the present findings suggest a more dynamic mechanism in which risk awareness does not directly suppress adoption but is cognitively processed through reflective evaluation. In contrast to models that treat risk and trust as competing forces, the dominance of *nissarana* implies that consumers actively reconcile perceived uncertainty through resolution-oriented reasoning rather than simply weighing positive and negative attributes.

Second, from the perspective of risk–trust literature, prior studies often emphasize institutional trust as a buffer against perceived risk. The present findings refine this view by suggesting that trust alone is insufficient; Instead, what appears most decisive is the consumer's perceived ability to formulate workable coping strategies. This shifts the explanatory focus from external assurances to internal cognitive regulation.

More broadly, the results contribute to culturally grounded decision-making theories by demonstrating how reflective cognition, conceptualized through *Yonisomanasikara*, functions as a mediating interpretive process between evaluation and behavioral intention. Unlike purely utilitarian models, this framework accounts for how individuals consciously integrate benefits, drawbacks, and resolutions within a culturally embedded logic of balanced judgment.

The study further contributes by clarifying the role of attitude as the central outcome variable in unmanned retail adoption. Attitude is widely understood as a multidimensional construct that shapes both adoption and recommendation behavior. Attitudes toward unmanned retail are shaped not only by functional evaluation but also by broader socio-contextual considerations. This research demonstrates that attitudes toward unmanned convenience stores emerge from a combination of functional judgments and reflective reasoning, offering a more comprehensive explanation of consumer acceptance.



From a theoretical perspective, this study advances TAM-based research by addressing limitations related to cultural and ethical sensitivity. TAM has consistently shown that perceived usefulness and ease of use predict attitudes toward technology adoption, and extensions of TAM emphasize trust and perceived benefits as key enablers. However, TAM has been criticized for insufficient attention to contextual and cultural factors. By integrating trust, perceived risk, and Yonisomanasikara into a unified framework, this study responds directly to these critiques.

An important empirical contribution concerns the relationship between perceived risk and trust. Perceived risk is often treated as a barrier to technology adoption; However, the present findings indicate that risk does not directly undermine attitudes when reflective coping mechanisms are present. The findings indicate that trust can mitigate perceived risk and facilitate acceptance, particularly when consumers perceive credible ways to manage and resolve concerns. Evidence from online commerce further confirms that trust mediates the effects of financial and security risks on consumer intention, even in high-risk digital purchasing contexts. The present study extends this knowledge by showing that acceptance is further strengthened when consumers perceive credible ways to manage and resolve concerns.

The most distinctive contribution of this research, and its strongest alignment with the Journal of Buddhist Anthropology, is the empirical operationalization of the Yonisomanasikara approach. Yonisomanasikara conceptualizes reflective evaluation through *assada* (Recognition of Benefits), *adinava* (Acknowledgment of Drawbacks), and *nissarana* (Discernment of Coping Strategies). While previous studies discuss Buddhist ethics and mindfulness conceptually, this study demonstrates that Buddhist analytical reflection can be translated into measurable constructs. The findings reveal that *nissarana* plays a decisive role in shaping consumer attitudes, indicating that acceptance arises not from denying drawbacks, but from identifying workable resolutions that enable mindful engagement with technology.

More precisely, acceptance appears to emerge through a reflective process in which perceived drawbacks are cognitively acknowledged and subsequently reframed through resolution-oriented reasoning. This suggests that consumers do not passively tolerate technological risks; Rather, they actively construct justifications that allow balanced and informed engagement.

Taken together, the body of knowledge produced by this study can be conceptualized as a TAM-Yonisomanasikara Reflective Acceptance Model.

The proposed model consists of two analytically distinct yet interconnected layers. The first layer reflects traditional TAM constructs, perceived usefulness, ease of use, perceived risk, and trust, which serve as instrumental evaluative predictors of consumer attitude. These constructs operate through functional assessment of efficiency, utility, and system reliability. The second layer introduces Yonisomanasikara as a reflective cognitive mechanism structured through *assada* (Recognition of Benefits), *adinava* (Acknowledgment of Drawbacks), and *nissarana* (Discernment of Coping or Resolution Pathways).



Acceptance emerges when perceived benefits and trust are balanced against acknowledged drawbacks and supported by credible coping mechanisms, consistent with Buddhist teachings emphasizing discernment, moderation, and well-being.

Directionally, the empirical results indicate that while TAM variables explain substantial baseline variance in consumer attitude, nissarana exerts the strongest standardized effect in the integrated model. This suggests that reflective coping functions as a higher-order regulatory construct that transforms awareness of risk into constructive acceptance rather than simple risk tolerance.

Unlike prior TAM extensions that incorporate trust or perceived risk as parallel predictors, the present model specifies reflective reconciliation as a distinct explanatory pathway. In doing so, it advances technology acceptance theory beyond additive variable inclusion and instead conceptualizes adoption as a layered cognitive process integrating instrumental evaluation with ethical reflection.

Although grounded in Buddhist analytical principles, the reflective acceptance mechanism identified in this study is theoretically transferable beyond the Thai context. The model contributes to international technology adoption literature by offering a generalizable explanation of how individuals cognitively process automation-related concerns, data privacy issues, and technological uncertainty in emerging digital retail environments.

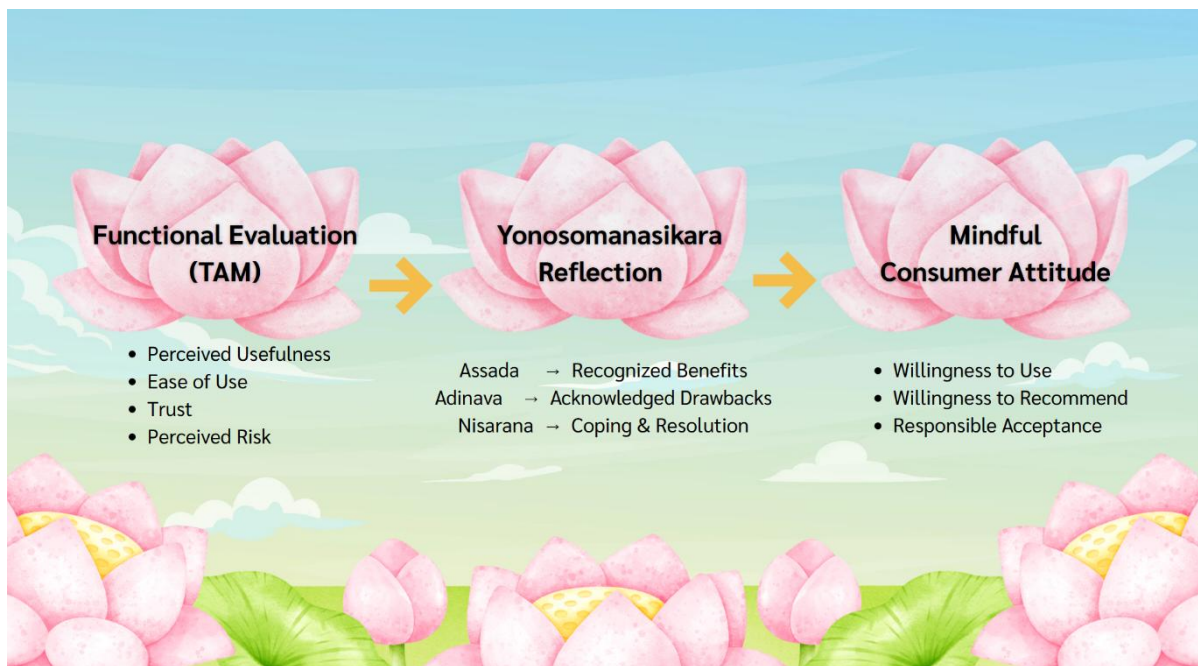


Figure 2 The TAM-Yonisomanasikara Reflective Acceptance Model

The integrative TAM-Yonisomanasikara Reflective Acceptance Model derived from the findings is illustrated in Figure 2. The model specifies a layered structure in which instrumental TAM constructs provide the baseline evaluative foundation, while Yonisomanasikara functions as a reflective regulatory mechanism that shapes how benefits and risks are cognitively reconciled. In contrast to conventional TAM extensions that incorporate additional predictors in parallel form,



the present model conceptualizes reflective coping (Nissarana) as a theoretically central construct that exerts a dominant directional influence on attitude formation.

In conclusion, the originality of this research lies in producing an integrative model that connects modern technology acceptance theory with Buddhist analytical reflection to explain consumer attitudes toward unmanned convenience stores.

More specifically, the model advances technology acceptance theory by demonstrating that adoption in culturally embedded contexts is not solely the result of perceived usefulness or trust, but of a structured reflective process in which acknowledged drawbacks are transformed into acceptable outcomes through resolution-oriented reasoning.

By combining TAM constructs with the Yonisomanasikara framework, the study offers culturally sensitive and ethically grounded knowledge that supports the sustainable and responsible development of automated retail in Thailand.

Importantly, although empirically grounded in the Thai context, the reflective acceptance mechanism proposed here contributes to broader international discussions on technology adoption by offering a transferable conceptual lens for understanding how individuals process ethical, privacy, and automation-related concerns in digitally mediated environments.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study concludes that consumer attitudes toward unmanned convenience stores in Thailand are shaped not merely by functional evaluations of technology, but more fundamentally by reflective discernment consistent with the principle of Yonisomanasikara. Although consumers recognize the benefits of unmanned convenience stores in terms of convenience, efficiency, and innovation (Assada), they are simultaneously aware of potential drawbacks related to trust, privacy, and the absence of human interaction (Adinava). The findings demonstrate that positive attitudes emerge most strongly when consumers perceive clear and credible coping pathways (Nissarana), enabling them to engage with automated retail in a mindful, confident, and responsible manner. This finding extends prior TAM-based studies by demonstrating that acceptance is not solely determined by perceived usefulness, ease of use, or trust, but by a reflective reconciliation process through which acknowledged risks are cognitively transformed into manageable and acceptable conditions for engagement. Importantly, while demographic and usage-related variables were examined, their influence on consumer attitudes was comparatively limited, indicating that acceptance is shaped less by who consumers are in terms of age, gender, or income, and more by how they cognitively process perceived benefits, drawbacks, and coping possibilities. This suggests that acceptance of unmanned convenience stores does not arise from ignoring risks, but from thoughtful consideration and balanced judgment, reflecting Buddhist teachings that emphasize wisdom, moderation, and right understanding rather than blind adoption of novelty. From a policy perspective, relevant authorities should support the development of unmanned retail through ethical governance, data protection standards, and initiatives that enhance digital literacy, ensuring that technological progress does not marginalize vulnerable groups. Strengthening



transparent data governance frameworks and visible regulatory safeguards may directly enhance consumers' perceived coping capacity and reinforce reflective acceptance. From a practitioner perspective, retailers should move beyond promoting speed and automation alone, and instead design systems that visibly foster trust, transparency, and consumer readiness, thereby strengthening *nissarana* as the foundation of acceptance. Nevertheless, the predominantly young, working-age student sample limits the generalizability of the findings, and the results should therefore be interpreted within the context of early-stage adoption among digitally engaged consumers. From an academic perspective, future research is encouraged to further integrate Buddhist analytical frameworks with contemporary consumer behavior theories, to test the proposed TAM-Yonisomanasikara Reflective Acceptance Model across more demographically diverse populations, to employ longitudinal designs examining changes in reflective coping over time, and to incorporate qualitative approaches exploring culturally embedded decision-making processes. Overall, this study affirms that the sustainable and socially responsible development of unmanned convenience stores in Thailand depends on aligning technological innovation with Buddhist principles of discernment, balance, and concern for collective well-being.

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RETHINKING LIVING BUDDHIST HERITAGE: MONASTIC NETWORKS AND TRANSREGIONAL AUTHORITY IN SRI LANKA AND SOUTH ASIA

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Abstract

Background: This study examines how core Buddhist teachings are constituted and perpetuated through lived religious practices and institutional forms. *Buddhadhamma* refers to the teachings generated during the enlightenment of the Buddha, which have been transmitted over the past 2,560 years through doctrinal teaching, moral practice, and the Buddhist monastic institutions. However, it has been preserved within the Pāli canon and understood for centuries of Buddhist learning. Their persistence depends not only on textual but also on the social and institutional processes of reproduction. Since the Mauryan period (321-185 BCE), Buddhism has shaped both the material and immaterial landscapes of South Asia. While scholarship has frequently approached Buddhist heritage through architecture, archaeological documentation, or textual transmission, this study argues that Buddhist heritage in Sri Lanka is better understood as a dynamic socio-religious process that is sustained through interconnected monastic networks. From its early expansion, Buddhism moved across political and cultural boundaries through the circulation of monks, relics, texts, and ritual practices, embedding doctrinal authority within institutional and ritual forms. Sri Lanka, one of the most enduring centers of Theravāda continuity, provides a compelling case. Sacred sites such as Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, and the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy function not merely as historical monuments but as active religious environments sustained through monastic lineages, ritual traditions, and devotional communities.

Involvement to *Buddhadhamma*: Living heritage traditions associated with these sacred landscapes embody core principles of *Buddhadhamma*. Monastic discipline enacts *sīla* (Ethical Conduct) as a foundational structure for both monastic and lay communities, while the preservation of the monastic regulations reflects the persistence of the tradition of the *Vinaya* in the Theravāda practice. Pilgrimage promotes acts of piety and charity that bring about *puñña* (Merit), which underlies mutualism between the monastic *Saṅgha* and lay followers. In this exchange, the Buddhist ethical values are replicated in everyday social life. Ritual cycles materialize teachings on *anicca* (Impermanence) through repetition, renewal, and commemorative performance. At the same time, *Paññā* (Wisdom) and compassion are cultivated not solely through scriptural study but through embodied participation in ritual practices, religious education, and communal activities



which are organized by monastic institutions. Monastic networks thus operate as the structural nexus through which ethical practice, sacred sites, doctrinal continuity, and social organization are continuously reproduced. In this way, Buddhadhamma is sustained not merely as textual doctrine but as lived, relational practice embedded within heritage sites and institutional structures. This framework highlights how religious institutions transform doctrinal teachings into lived practices that sustain the Theravāda tradition.

Conclusions: By situating sacred centers within networks of monastic lineage, governance, and transregional affiliation, the article challenges static models of heritage that isolate monuments from lived religious practice. Instead, it advances a processual understanding of Theravāda continuity in which authority and identity are actively negotiated through ethical discipline, ritual performance, institutional organization, and devotional participation. From this perspective, Sri Lanka emerges as a pivotal doctrinal and institutional node within both South Asian and global Buddhist networks. The endurance of Buddhadhamma in this context does not rely only on the preservation of texts or monuments but on the ongoing interaction between monastic communities, sacred landscapes, and lay practitioners. Living Buddhist heritage, therefore, represents an active religious framework in which the teachings of the Buddha are sustained through embodied practice, interdependence, and institutional resilience rather than preservation alone.

Keywords: Living Buddhist Heritage, Monastic Networks, Theravāda Continuity, Cultural Diplomacy, South Asian Buddhism

Introduction

Architectural preservation, archaeological documentation, and textual transmission have long structured the study of Buddhist heritage in South Asia. However, such approaches often isolate monuments, ritual practice, and monastic institutions into analytically separate domains. As critical heritage scholarship has argued, heritage is not merely the safeguarding of objects but a cultural process through which meanings, identities, and authority are actively produced (Harrison, 2013); (Smith, 2006). Laurajane Smith's formulation of the "Authorized Heritage Discourse" further demonstrates how heritage regimes privilege particular narratives of preservation while marginalizing lived religious practice. What remains insufficiently examined is how these elements function together as an integrated socio-religious system that sustains doctrinal authority across time and changing political contexts. This article addresses that gap by reconceptualizing "Living Buddhist Heritage" not as a category of preservation but as a relational process through which monastic institutions reproduce ethical practice, ritual continuity, and religious legitimacy.

From its early formation, Buddhist doctrine, monastic organization, and pilgrimage networks extended beyond political boundaries, generating shared yet locally inflected traditions of art, architecture, and ritual (Sen, 2003). Rather than separating material and intangible domains, this study defines living heritage as the dynamic integration of sacred landscapes, institutional lineages, and ritual performance through which authority and identity are continually negotiated.



In this framework, monastic networks constitute the structural nexus linking stūpas, vihāras, pilgrimage circuits, and educational institutions into a coherent system of religious reproduction.

Sri Lanka provides a particularly compelling case. As one of the most enduring centres of Theravāda continuity (Malalgoda, 1976), the island has sustained monastic lineages that mediate doctrinal legitimacy and transregional affiliation. Sacred sites such as the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy and the monastic complexes of Anuradhapura function not merely as monuments but as active religious fields embedded in networks of governance, patronage, and regional exchange (Behrendt, 2007). Through these networks, Sri Lanka has operated both as a site of preservation and as a node of doctrinal transmission and regional religious diplomacy.

Drawing on historical and anthropological analysis, this article examines pilgrimage, monastic education, ritual performance, and transnational affiliation as arenas in which religious authority is negotiated and institutional continuity sustained. By advancing a processual account of Theravāda continuity, the study contributes to Buddhist anthropology by demonstrating how relational networks integrate material heritage, lived religious practice, and regional exchange into a unified analytical framework. The relational interaction is illustrated in Figure 1.

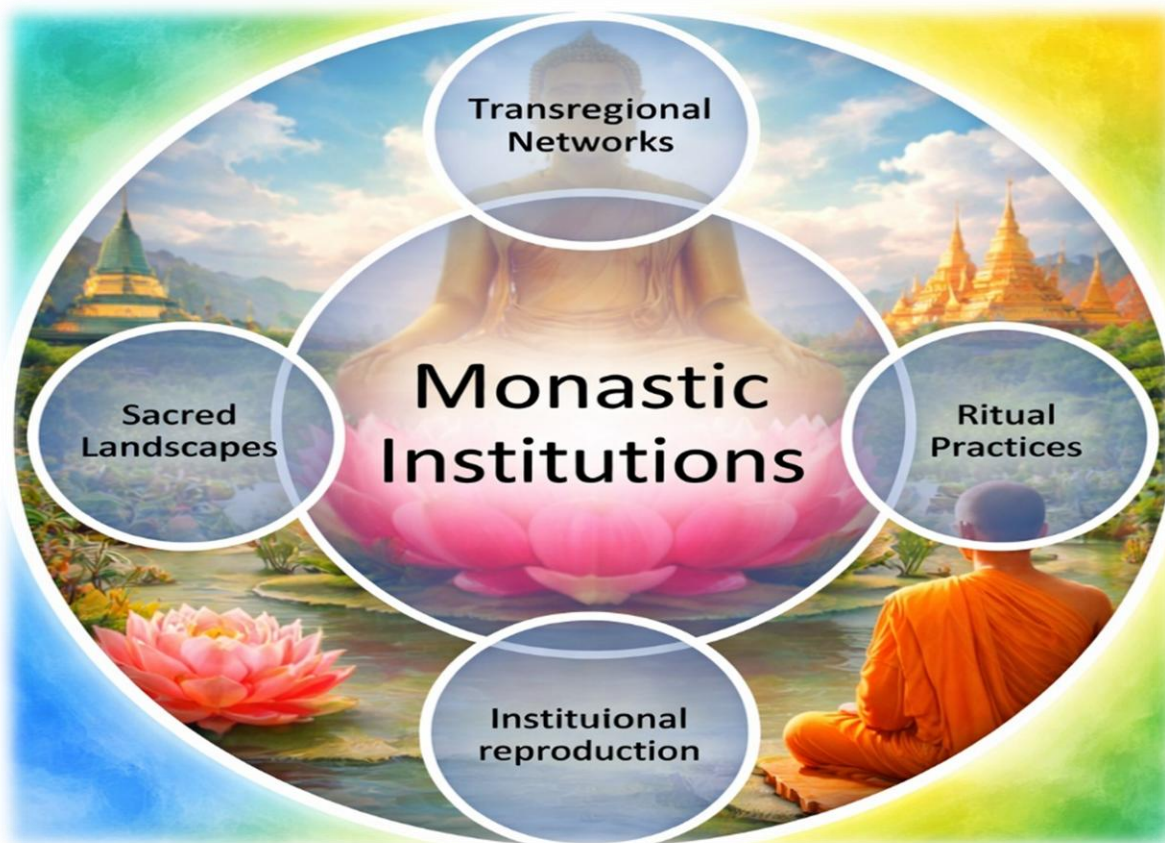


Figure 1 Conceptual framework of living Buddhist heritage showing the relational interaction between sacred landscapes, monastic institutions, ritual practices, and transregional networks.



Buddhism Across South Asia: Monastic Networks and the Reproduction of Religious Authority

The study argues that Buddhist heritage in South Asia should be understood as a dispersed collection of sacred monuments. Rather, it functions as a system of institutional reproduction sustained through monastic mobility, ritual circulation, and regimes of patronage. From its early doctrinal formulation in the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path (Walpola, 1974); (Gethin, 1998), Buddhism developed mechanisms for transmitting authority beyond localized communities. Under Mauryan imperial patronage, particularly during the reign of Ashoka, Buddhist moral sovereignty became territorially articulated while remaining dependent upon itinerant monastic networks (Thapar, 2012). Expansion proceeded along commercial corridors and pilgrimage routes linking urban centers and maritime circuits (Neelis, 2011). Sites such as Bodhgayā, Sārnāth, and Anurādhapura thus functioned not as isolated devotional spaces but as nodes within a relational sacred geography shaped by these movements.

Material institutions anchored this networked system. Stūpas, monasteries, and scholastic complexes were not merely symbolic expressions of faith; They functioned as institutional infrastructural sites through which authority was stabilized and reproduced. Monastic establishments operated within legal and economic frameworks that secured patronage, land grants, and ritual legitimacy (Schopen, 1997).

Intellectual centers in eastern India facilitated transregional scholastic exchange while artistic production in Gandhāra and later Pāla domains demonstrates adaptive engagement with wider cultural forms (Behrendt, 2007); (Sen, 2003). In this sense, material heritage functions as institutional architecture. It operates as an apparatus of continuity rather than a passive remnant of devotion.

Sectarian differentiation reconfigures but does not dissolve these networks. The Buddhist Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna traditions generated distinct textual canons and ritual regimes while remaining interconnected through ordination lineages and scholarly mobility. In the Kathmandu Valley, Buddhist authority evolved through sustained interaction with Hindu ritual systems, producing locally embedded yet networked forms of legitimacy (Lewis, 2000). In Bhutan, Vajrayāna institutions became integrated with governance structures, illustrating the political elasticity of monastic authority (Ura, 2015). Such developments demonstrate that Buddhist heritage operated through adaptive coherence rather than doctrinal uniformity.

Political disruptions fragmented certain circuits of exchange, yet institutional transmission persisted through reconstituted networks. Modern heritage regimes have recast Buddhist sites as objects of national and global patrimony, often privileging conservation frameworks over monastic custodianship (Smith, 2006). Nevertheless, pilgrimage movements, ordination exchanges, and scholastic collaborations continue to sustain regional connectivity. Buddhist heritage, therefore, remains a dynamic system sustained through pilgrimage, ordination exchange, and scholastic mobility rather than a static archive of sacred antiquity.

Within this broader South Asian configuration, Sri Lanka occupies a structurally stabilizing position. From the third century BCE onward, the island consolidated Theravāda institutional frameworks grounded in the Pāli Canon and sustained through royal-monastic alliances articulated in



the Mahāvamsa (Geiger, 1912). Rather than functioning merely as a peripheral repository of orthodoxy, Sri Lanka operated as a nodal center for the preservation and retransmission of ordination lineages during periods of institutional decline elsewhere in the subcontinent (Gombrich, 2006). Ritual institutions such as the Temple of the Tooth further linked sovereignty and monastic authority, embedding Buddhist custodianship within processes of state formation (Holt, 1991).

Sri Lanka's historical role, therefore, lies not in isolationist preservation but in its capacity to stabilize and regenerate transregional Theravāda networks. By situating the island within broader systems of circulation and institutional reproduction, this study reframes Buddhist heritage as a dynamic structure of authority maintenance, one sustained through mobility, adaptation, and continuity across political and regional transformations.

Intersecting Cultural Heritage across South Asia

The historical expansion of Buddhism across South Asia facilitated the circulation of religious doctrines, artistic forms, architectural models, and philosophical traditions. These processes created a shared yet regionally diverse cultural landscape. It is through networks of monastic mobility, pilgrimage, and trade. Buddhist communities transmitted texts, relics, ritual specialists, and aesthetic practices across political and geographical boundaries.

Material heritage, especially stūpas, monasteries, and sculptural traditions, reflects this long process of transregional exchange. Indic stūpa architecture, visible in India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, alongside the sculptural innovations of Gandhāra and Mathurā, exemplifies the emergence of shared visual languages through sustained monastic and pilgrimage networks. These networks enabled the movement of texts, relics, ritual specialists, and artistic conventions across political boundaries, underscoring Buddhism's role as a medium of cultural interaction. Recognition of Buddhist sites across SAARC countries as UNESCO World Heritage Sites emphasizes their transnational significance and potential as platforms for regional cooperation (UNESCO, 2019). Pilgrimage centers such as Bodhgayā, Lumbinī, and Anurādhapura therefore form a part of a broader sacred geography that transcends contemporary political divisions.

In Nepal, monumental stūpas such as Boudhanath and Swayambhunath combine hemispherical domes with the iconic painted Buddha eyes, structuring ritual and social life (Slusser, 1982). Newar artisans developed refined sculptural and pictorial traditions, including intricate paubha paintings that influenced Tibetan thangka art and facilitated the trans-Himalayan circulation of aesthetic forms (Levy, 1991). Nepalese Buddhist art also exhibits a significant interaction with Hindu traditions in sacred spaces, iconography, and ritual practices.

Bhutan presents another example of the regional adaptations of Buddhist heritage. Vajrayāna influenced Dzongs fortress-monasteries, integrating religious, administrative, and defensive functions (Aris, 1979), while Thangka paintings and Tsechu masked dances serve devotional, pedagogical, and performative roles (Rhie & Thurman, 2000). In Gandhāra (Modern Pakistan and Afghanistan), naturalistic schist and stucco sculptures were produced, merging Hellenistic, Persian, and Indic artistic traditions (Rosenfield, 1967). Monastic complexes in this region, including the Bamiyan Buddhas, highlight



Gandhāra's historical importance within trans-Asian trade and pilgrimage networks (Flood, 2009). In Bangladesh, Pāla-era monastic institutions such as Somapura Mahāvihāra demonstrate large-scale monastic planning and refined iconography, influencing Buddhist practices in Tibet, Myanmar, and Java (Chakrabarti, 1992); (Huntington, 1985). The Maldives preserve fragmentary pre-Islamic stūpas and monasteries, indicating the maritime reach of Buddhist cultural networks (Forbes, 1987).

Alongside these material forms, intangible heritage rituals, festivals, monastic practices, and performance traditions continue to sustain Buddhist cultural life across the region. Practices such as circumambulation at Nepalese stūpas, Tsechu dances in Bhutan, and regional pilgrimage rituals articulate shared cosmological frameworks while reinforcing communal identity. These traditions exhibit the enduring continuity of Buddhism across political and geographic boundaries.

Within this regional context, Sri Lanka particularly occupies a strategic position. Its uninterrupted custodianship of major heritage sites, preservation of Theravāda textual traditions, and continuous monastic practices establish the island as both a repository and conduit of Buddhist culture in South Asia. Sites such as Anurādhapura, Polonnaruwa, Dambulla, and Kandy serve as platforms for ritual practice, education, and international pilgrimage. They also reflect the historical development of monastic architecture and institutional Buddhist landscapes in Sri Lanka (Bandaranayake, 2023). These historical and institutional foundations provide Sri Lanka with considerable cultural authority and symbolic power to influence the Buddhist heritage as a form of soft power within and beyond the framework of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (Nye, 2004).

Although SAARC has struggled to fulfill its political and economic mandates due to regional rivalries, its cultural pillar offers a practical avenue for cooperation (Jha, 2004). Sri Lanka leverages Buddhist heritage to advance SAARC's three pillars: Culturally, by preserving and promoting shared traditions; Socially, by enabling scholarly, monastic, and community exchanges; and economically, by fostering heritage tourism and regional development. Initiatives such as regional Buddhist forums, relic exhibitions, promoting cross-border monastic exchanges, and developing transnational pilgrimage circuits help to strengthen these networks. Institutional mechanisms, such as the SAARC Cultural Centre and interconnected cultural trails, further support regional engagement. Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate that Buddhist art, architecture, and living traditions function not only as markers of historical identity but also as dynamic instruments of regional integration and cultural diplomacy.

Sustaining these initiatives requires careful attention to preservation, inclusivity, and sustainability. Authenticity in architecture, murals, and craftsmanship must be maintained, and local communities should be engaged as custodians of heritage sites. Moreover, intangible traditions, including monastic education, ritual performance, and artisanal knowledge, must be nurtured. By integrating material and intangible heritage with cultural diplomacy, Sri Lanka exemplifies how Buddhist traditions can serve as living, participatory mechanisms for regional cohesion and cultural engagement, even amidst the political and economic challenges faced by SAARC.

The South Asian country Sri Lanka also offers a compelling example of how Buddhist heritage can be mobilized within national cultural diplomacy. Major pilgrimage sites such as Anurādhapura,



Polonnaruwa, Dambulla, and Kandy attract international visitors drawn by their religious, historical, and artistic significance. Within the framework of national identity, Buddhism occupies a central place in Sri Lanka's cultural consciousness.

Heritage sites, therefore, function as symbols of historical continuity, moral authority, and civilizational legitimacy.

Through initiatives such as relic exhibitions, international pilgrimages, and heritage tourism, Sri Lanka projects its image as a custodian of Buddhist tradition not only for its own society, but also for the wider Buddhist and SAARC worlds. These practices reinforce Buddhism's role as a unifying cultural resource while contributing to economic development through tourism. In this sense, Buddhist heritage operates at the intersection of religious devotion, national identity formation, and international cultural engagement.

At the same time, the use of Buddhist heritage as an instrument of cultural diplomacy also presents significant challenges, particularly in the areas of preservation, inclusivity, and sustainability. Many heritage sites face threats from environmental degradation, urban encroachment, inadequate conservation, and insufficient maintenance. Preserving authenticity, whether in architectural structures, mural paintings, or traditional craftsmanship, requires continuous investment, technical expertise, and institutional commitment. Equally important is the challenge of balancing heritage diplomacy with religious and ethnic pluralism. As a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, Sri Lanka must ensure that Buddhist-based cultural diplomacy remains inclusive and does not marginalize other religious or cultural traditions (Spencer, 2007); (Tambiah, 1992). It is an overly exclusive approach that risks reinforcing perceptions of cultural bias and social exclusion, thereby undermining the unifying potential of heritage.

Strategically, effective deployment of heritage diplomacy and tourism requires enhanced infrastructure development, including transportation networks, visitor facilities, conservation laboratories, and interpretive resources such as trained guides and multilingual signage. Regional cooperation is also essential for developing transnational heritage trails, particularly in areas where Buddhist communities are minorities or where heritage sites are affected by political sensitivities. Crucially, heritage initiatives must be implemented in close collaboration with local communities, respecting their custodianship and ensuring equitable participation. Sustaining intangible dimensions such as monastic education, ritual performance, festival arts, and traditional crafts is essential to prevent heritage from being reduced to static monuments. Continued support for Pāli learning, monastic training, and the transmission of artisanal knowledge ensures that Buddhist heritage remains a living tradition rather than a purely touristic or symbolic resource.

Across South Asia, Buddhist art and architecture reveal a pattern of shared symbolic vocabularies combined with localized adaptations. Cave temples in Gandhāra, monumental stūpas in Sri Lanka and Nepal, monastic universities in Bengal, and maritime relics in the Maldives collectively reflect a connected historical landscape shaped by pilgrimage, patronage, and monastic mobility. These sites embody a shared cultural past that transcends contemporary political boundaries while remaining rooted in local social contexts.



Such transregional continuities provide a foundation for understanding Buddhist heritage as a potential medium of regional cultural engagement. Within the SAARC context, shared Buddhist traditions offer opportunities for collaborative heritage preservation, pilgrimage tourism, and intercultural dialogue. As a long-standing center of Theravāda continuity, Sri Lanka occupies a particularly strategic position in mobilizing Buddhist art and architecture as instruments of cultural diplomacy, facilitating renewed connections across South Asia through a historically grounded framework of shared religious heritage.

Literary Traditions, Ritual Practices, and Festive Traditions

While Buddhist art and architecture constitute visible and enduring markers of religious heritage across South Asia, the cultural dimensions of Buddhism extend equally into literary traditions, ritual practices, and lived customs. Intangible forms of heritage, including canonical texts, oral transmission, festivals, and performative traditions, have played a crucial role in preserving Buddhist teachings while simultaneously adapting them to diverse social and cultural environments. Together, these practices provide a shared cultural framework across the SAARC region, enabling both regional continuity and local differentiation in Buddhist life.

Among the earliest and most influential textual traditions is the Pāli Canon (Tipiṭaka). It was transmitted orally for several centuries before being committed to writing in Sri Lanka during the first century BCE, traditionally associated with the reign of Vaṭṭagaṃaṇī Abhaya. This act of textual preservation established Sri Lanka as a major center of Theravāda literary authority and contributed decisively to the dissemination of canonical traditions throughout South and Southeast Asia.

The Pāli Canon represents the earliest complete corpus of Buddhist scripture and forms the doctrinal foundation of Theravāda Buddhism. Its transcription in Sri Lanka ensured the continuity of textual transmission at a time when Buddhist institutions elsewhere in the subcontinent were facing political and social upheaval (Gombrich, 2006). This preservation enables Sri Lanka to function as a principal center for the transmission of Theravāda literature, influencing monastic education and ritual practice across regions such as Myanmar, Thailand, and Cambodia.

The codification of Theravāda doctrine and meditative discipline reached a critical moment in the fifth century CE with the work of Buddhaghosa, particularly his composition of the Visuddhimagga. Drawing upon earlier Sinhala commentarial traditions, this text systematized ethical conduct, meditation, and wisdom into a coherent framework that standardized Theravāda orthodoxy across South Asia (Malalasekera, 1928). The material culture of manuscript production, including palm-leaf texts, decorated covers, and monastic libraries, further reinforced the authority of these traditions and facilitated their circulation through transregional monastic networks.

Parallel to the Theravāda corpus, Mahāyāna Buddhism generated an extensive body of Sanskrit literature. The corpus includes influential sūtras such as the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra and the philosophical works of figures such as Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga. These texts articulated sophisticated doctrines of emptiness, compassion, and bodhisattva practice that profoundly shaped Buddhist intellectual life across Asia.



Major monastic universities, including Nālandā, Vikramaśīla, and Odantapurī, served as important centers of literary production and scholarly exchange, attracting students from across the Asian continent (Huntington, 1985). Following the decline of Buddhism in much of the Indian subcontinent, Nepal assumed a significant custodial role in preserving Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna manuscripts. Many of these texts survive today only in Nepalese or Tibetan recensions (Slusser, 1982). In this capacity, Nepal emerged as a key mediator in the transmission of Buddhist literary heritage.

Beyond canonical scriptures, Buddhist narrative literature played a formative role in shaping the vernacular literary traditions across South Asia. Stories from the Jātaka tales, which recount the previous lives of the Buddha, were translated into several languages, including Sinhala, Bengali, and Nepali. Through these translations, Buddhist ethical ideals became embedded within local folklore and oral storytelling traditions. Literary works such as Pūjāvaliya in Sinhala and Caryāpada corpus in Bengali further illustrate how Buddhist thought influenced both narrative prose and mystical poetry. These compositions blended religious instruction with vernacular expression, allowing Buddhist teachings to circulate beyond monastic and scholastic contexts (Chakrabarti, 1992).

Ritual practices and liturgical celebrations constitute another important dimension of Buddhist cultural life in South Asia. These practices function as embodied forms through which ethical values, communal identity, and spiritual discipline are maintained. Observances such as uposatha days emphasize restraint, mindfulness, and moral reflection within monastic and lay communities. In contrast, large-scale public festivals integrate performance, visual symbolism, and collective participation. For example, the masked dance festivals known as Tsechu in the Himalayan regions integrate ritual practice, demonstrating how Buddhist traditions have historically shaped both literary culture and communal religious life in the region.

Anthropologically, these ritual forms operate as mechanisms of social cohesion and religious continuity. They link individual practitioners to wider networks of meaning, authority, and communal belonging. Despite regional variations in form and expression, Buddhist ritual traditions across South Asia share common orientations toward devotion, ethical cultivation, and collective memory. As living practices rather than static inheritances, they demonstrate how Buddhism continues to adapt to changing social contexts while sustaining a transregional cultural heritage rooted in shared historical experience.

Among these ritual observances, Vesak is also known as Vesak, Buddha Jayānti, or Buddha Pūrṇimā. This is the most widely celebrated Buddhist festival across South Asia. The festival commemorates three pivotal events in the life of Gautama Buddha: His birth, enlightenment, and parinirvāṇa. It is celebrated on the full moon day in May and functions as a shared religious and cultural observance across countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), particularly in Sri Lanka, Nepal, India, and Bangladesh. The festival has also received international recognition through the designation of the Day of Vesak by the United Nations in 1999 (United Nations General Assembly, 1999). Although Vesak reflects a shared devotional focus on the Buddha, its modes of celebration vary considerably across regions, shaped by local historical experiences and cultural



traditions. As Table 1 illustrates, the shared ritual framework of Vesak is alongside its diverse regional expressions across South Asia.

Table 1 Framework for the Development of South Asian Buddhism

Dimension	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Outcome	Social Outcome	Cultural Function
Canonical Texts	Core Buddhist Doctrines	Scriptural Transmission	Philosophical Interpretation	Consolidation of Core Buddhist Doctrines	Intellectual and philosophical traditions	Preservation and interpretation of doctrine
Narrative Literature	Local Folklore	Adaptation into Narrative Traditions	Vernacular Prose and Poetry	Ethical and Liturgical Traditions	Cultural and literary development	Transmission through folklore and vernacular expression
Ritual Practices	Ethical and Liturgical Traditions	Ritual Observances	Ritual Observances and Festivals	Communal Religious Practices	Festivals, rituals, and collective identity	Embodied religious practice and communal participation

In Sri Lanka, Vesak is marked by the public display of illuminated lanterns (*Vesak kūḍu*), elaborate pandals depicting episodes from the life of the Buddha, religious processions, and extensive practices of *dāna* (Almsgiving). In Nepal, the festival is observed through large-scale pilgrimages to Lumbinī, the birthplace of the Buddha, where rituals, chanting, and communal offerings take place. In India, Bodhgayā, the site of the Buddha's enlightenment, becomes the focal point for international gatherings of monastics and lay devotees (Goonatilake, 1998). These parallel yet distinct practices underscore Vesak's role as a unifying Buddhist observance while accommodating diverse regional ritual expressions. In recent decades, Vesak has also gained significance within the framework of cultural diplomacy. International Vesak conferences, particularly those organized in Sri Lanka, bring Buddhist leaders, scholars, and diplomatic representatives from across Asia. Through such gatherings, the festival serves not only as a religious commemoration but also as a platform for transnational dialogue and cultural exchange within the global Buddhist community.

Beyond Vesak, South Asia hosts a range of Buddhist festivals rooted in specific ethnic and historical traditions. In Sri Lanka, the Esala Perahera of Kandy, centred on the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, represents one of the most elaborate ritual spectacles in the region. The procession featured caparisoned elephants, drummers, dancers, and monastic participants. Through these elements, the festival symbolically integrates Buddhist religious authority with historical notions of kingship and state patronage (Holt, 1991). Such celebrations function not only as acts of devotion but also as instruments of cultural continuity, social cohesion, and heritage tourism.



In Bhutan, annual Tsechus are characterized by masked ritual dances known as cham. These performances re-enact episodes from the lives of Buddhist saints and tantric masters. They represent a synthesis of Vajrayāna ritual, theatrical expression, and communal participation, while reinforcing collective identity and moral instruction (Aris, 1979).

In Nepal, the Newar Buddhist community observes Samyak Mahādāna, a grand public ceremony of almsgiving that embodies ideals of generosity, merit-making, and social solidarity. Similarly, in Bangladesh, Madhu Pūrṇimā is observed primarily among Buddhist communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. This commemorates narratives of reconciliation associated with Gautama Buddha. The festival highlights the continuity of Buddhist traditions within a predominantly non-Buddhist cultural environment.

Buddhism has exerted a profound influence on the performing arts of South Asia, particularly through narrative adaptations of the Jātaka Tales. These accounts of the previous lives of Gautama Buddha have inspired a range of dramatic and dance traditions across the region. Examples include Sinhalese theatre in Sri Lanka, Tibetan opera known as Lhamo, and masked ritual dances in Bhutan. Through these performances, ethical teachings are communicated in embodied and accessible forms. As a result, performing arts function simultaneously as educational, devotional, and aesthetic expressions within Buddhist cultural life.

Musical and chant traditions further constitute an important dimension of Buddhist intangible heritage. In Sri Lanka, Pāli chanting forms a central component of ritual and devotional practice. In India, diverse liturgical innovations and musical traditions accompany temple rituals and public ceremonies. In Vajrayāna contexts in Bhutan and Nepal, ritual music performed with instruments and chants creates sonic environments that support meditation and ceremonial efficacy. These vocal and musical forms function both as religious practices and as cultural expressions, preserving sacred soundscapes across generations (Gombrich & Obeyesekere, 1989).

An oral narrative tradition, particularly folktales derived from Jātaka Tales, continues to circulate widely in rural regions of South Asia. These narratives shape popular moral consciousness and facilitate the intergenerational transmission of Buddhist values. Through festivals, performances, and oral storytelling traditions, Buddhism remains embedded in everyday cultural life. In this way, Buddhist teachings extend beyond monastic institutions to the broader social and cultural fabric of South Asian societies.

Culinary Heritage, Pilgrimage Rituals, and Vernacular Cultural Expressions

Buddhism exerts a sustained influence on everyday cultural practices across South Asia, and culinary traditions provide a significant expression of Buddhist ethical values. Vegetarianism, grounded in the principle of ahimsā (Non-violence), represents one of the most visible manifestations of Buddhist moral philosophy in daily life. In regions such as Sri Lanka and Nepal, vegetarian food practices are commonly observed, particularly during religious occasions and observance days. Closely associated with this culinary ethic is the practice of Dāna (Generosity), especially the offering of food to monastic communities.



The ritualized distribution of food has historically structured relationships between monastics and lay communities. It fosters patterns of reciprocity, compassion, and communal responsibility. Through these practices, Buddhist ethical principles become embedded in everyday social life and continue to shape the cultural fabric of South Asian societies.

Pilgrimage constitutes another central dimension of Buddhist cultural practice and serves as a unifying force among the countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Within a broader spiritual and ethical framework, pilgrimage facilitates both the accumulation of personal religious merit and forms of collective cultural exchange. Major pilgrimage sites such as Lumbinī in Nepal, Bodhgayā in India, Anurādhapura in Sri Lanka, Boudhanāth in Nepal, and Somapura Mahavihara in Bangladesh attract devotees from across South Asia and beyond.

These sacred sites form a network of transregional devotion. They encourage intercultural interaction among pilgrims and religious communities. In this way, Buddhist pilgrimage landscapes reinforce the role of Buddhism as a cross-border integrative tradition within South Asia.

Although the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have witnessed a notable resurgence of Buddhism in several South Asian countries, earlier historical periods saw a decline in Buddhist institutional presence in parts of the region. In countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the Maldives, this revival has taken different social and cultural forms. In India, the emergence of the Navayāna movement under the leadership of B. R. Ambedkar marked a significant re-articulation of Buddhism as a framework for social justice, equality, and emancipation for historically marginalized communities (Zelliot, 2013). This reinterpretation underscores Buddhism's capacity for adaptation while retaining its core ethical foundations.

In Bangladesh, Buddhist communities, particularly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, continue to preserve Theravāda Buddhism through practices such as Pāli chanting, monastic discipline, and ritual observance. These practices demonstrate the resilience of Buddhist ritual culture despite demographic marginalization of Buddhist communities in the region. At the same time, processes of globalization have expanded the scope of Buddhist intangible heritage beyond regional boundaries. Practices such as meditation and mindfulness, although not exclusively Buddhist, are strongly influenced by Buddhist contemplative traditions and have gained international recognition as approaches to mental well-being and ethical living. Through this global circulation, elements of Buddhist cultural practice continue to shape contemporary discussions on spirituality, health, and ethical self-cultivation.

Within the context of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), these practices are increasingly promoted as elements of cultural diplomacy. In this sense, Buddhism is positioned not only as a historical legacy but also as a contemporary resource within global wellness culture. Through the continued vitality of culinary customs, pilgrimage networks, ritual traditions, and revitalised movements, Buddhism remains deeply embedded in vernacular cultural expressions. These practices sustain their relevance in both local communities and transnational cultural contexts.



Although the historical prominence of Buddhism in South Asia is often demonstrated through its material culture, particularly artistic and architectural achievements, the domain of intangible cultural heritage most vividly illustrates the continued vitality of Buddhism in the region. Festivals such as Vesāk and the Esala Perahera, together with Pāli and Sanskrit literary traditions, oral narratives, masked ritual performances, and pilgrimage practices collectively attest to Buddhism's enduring role in shaping cultural identities within the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC, 1985).

The persistence of these intangible forms, despite significant political transformation and shifts in religious dominance, underscores their remarkable resilience and adaptive capacity.

Even in contexts where institutional Buddhism experienced periods of decline, Buddhist narratives, ethical values, and ritual practices were absorbed into local folk traditions and communal life. This diffusion enabled Buddhist ideas to survive beyond formal religious institutions and become embedded within vernacular cultural expressions. As a result, intangible heritage provides an important foundation for regional cultural integration within the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Shared festivals, narratives, and ritual practices transcend political boundaries and foster a sense of collective cultural affinity rooted in a common Buddhist legacy.

Conclusions

This article argues that Buddhist tradition in South Asia, and particularly in Sri Lanka, should not be understood as a static reservoir of monuments but rather as a relational system through which doctrinal authority, ethical practice, and institutional continuity are continually reproduced. It therefore proposes a theoretical shift in understanding of "Living Buddhist Heritage," conceptualizing it as a networked process that links sacred sites, monastic lineages, ritual performance, and transregional affiliations. Where heritage is not simply preserved but actively produced through ongoing negotiations of authority, identity, and legitimacy. By approaching heritage as a relational and diplomatic resource, the study advances how monastic networks and sacred sites can function as instruments of cultural diplomacy and regional connectivity. At the same time, these networks may also become embedded in nationalist narratives, soft-power politics, and heritage economies. The politicization of Buddhist symbols in statecraft and tourism, therefore, reveals the tension between devotional continuity and political instrumentalization, highlighting the need for a processual perspective that attends not only to institutional continuity but also to the ethical and political stakes of heritage deployment within plural and globalized contexts. Sri Lanka's long-standing Theravāda tradition provides a particularly compelling case for examining these dynamics as the island's dense institutional history and resilient monastic lineages demonstrate how doctrinal transmission is sustained through networked structures across time. Although historically specific, this case provides a comparative framework for analyzing Buddhist heritage formations elsewhere in South Asia and Southeast Asia. By foregrounding adaptation, relational interdependence, and contested renewal, the study contributes to the fields of Buddhist Anthropology and Heritage Studies. It



exhibits that religious traditions endure not through preservation alone, but through dynamic processes of negotiation and transformation.

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ทัศนะของวัยรุ่นไทยต่อความสำคัญของการนับถือพระพุทธศาสนากับชีวิตที่ดี

THAI ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF BUDDHISM FOR A GOOD LIFE

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บทคัดย่อ

ความเป็นมาและวัตถุประสงค์: ตลอดช่วงประวัติศาสตร์ไทย พระพุทธศาสนาทำหน้าที่เป็นกรอบจริยธรรมและแหล่งสร้างความหมายชีวิต ผ่านหลักศีลธรรมและการฝึกสติที่กำกับพฤติกรรมส่วนบุคคลและความสัมพันธ์ทางสังคม อย่างไรก็ตาม ในบริบทสังคมดิจิทัลและเศรษฐกิจแข่งขันสูงช่วงทศวรรษที่ผ่านมา บทบาทของศาสนาในชีวิตประจำวันของวัยรุ่นไทยลดลงอย่างเห็นได้ชัด การปฏิบัติศาสนกิจและการศึกษาหลักธรรมมีความสับสนน้อยลง ขณะที่ความสำเร็จทางวัตถุและการยอมรับในสื่อสังคมออนไลน์กลับกลายเป็นเกณฑ์วัดคุณค่าชีวิตหลัก ภาวะดังกล่าวสัมพันธ์กับปัญหาความเครียด ความสับสนเชิงอัตลักษณ์ และการขาดหลักยึดเหนี่ยวทางจิตใจ จึงก่อให้เกิดคำถามสำคัญว่า “ชีวิตที่ดี” ของเยาวชนไทยร่วมสมัยยังมีรากฐานเชื่อมโยงกับหลักศาสนาเพียงใด

วิธีดำเนินการวิจัย: การวิจัยใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ กลุ่มผู้ให้ข้อมูลคือ นักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรี มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่ ปีการศึกษา 2567 คัดเลือกโดยใช้การสุ่มแบบเจาะจงและการสุ่มแบบสโนว์บอล แบ่งออกเป็น 2 กลุ่ม ได้แก่ วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและเข้าร่วมกิจกรรมชมรมพุทธศิลป์ จำนวน 10 คน และวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนา ซึ่งเคยนับถือพระพุทธศาสนามาก่อนและประกาศตนว่าไม่นับถือศาสนาเป็นระยะเวลาไม่น้อยกว่า 1 ปี จำนวน 10 คน รวมเป็นจำนวนทั้งสิ้น 20 คน หรือจนกว่าข้อมูลถึงจุดอิ่มตัว (Data Saturation) เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยประกอบด้วยแบบสอบถามข้อมูลทั่วไป แบบสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง และการสังเกตแบบไม่มีส่วนร่วม ข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์ถูกบันทึกเสียงและถอดความแบบคำต่อคำ จากนั้นผู้วิจัยอ่านบทวนข้อมูลหลายครั้งเพื่อทำความเข้าใจข้อมูลและดำเนินการเข้ารหัสข้อมูล (Coding) จากประเด็นสำคัญที่ปรากฏในข้อมูล ต่อมาเข้ารหัสที่มีความสัมพันธ์กันมาจัดกลุ่มและสังเคราะห์เป็นประเด็นหลักและประเด็นย่อยตามแนวทางการวิเคราะห์ตามประเด็น (Thematic Analysis) แล้วนำเสนอผลการวิเคราะห์ในรูปแบบการพรรณนาเชิงวิเคราะห์ตามประเด็น (Thematic Analytical Description) โดยใช้คำกล่าวของผู้ให้ข้อมูลประกอบการอธิบายผลการวิจัย

ผลการวิจัย: วัยรุ่นไทยทั้งที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและไม่นับถือศาสนาเห็นพ้องกันว่า หลักธรรมบางประการของพระพุทธศาสนาสามารถนำไปใช้ส่งเสริมการดำเนินชีวิตที่ดีได้จริงในทางปฏิบัติ โดยเฉพาะในฐานะเครื่องมือในการทำความเข้าใจปัญหา ควบคุมอารมณ์ และตัดสินใจอย่างมีเหตุผล แม้วัยรุ่นที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาจะไม่มองว่าชีวิตที่ดีจำเป็นต้องตั้งอยู่บนศาสนาโดยตรง แต่ยังคงเลือกใช้หลักธรรมบางประการ เช่น อริยสัจ 4 ไตรลักษณ์ กฎแห่งกรรม และการฝึกสติสมาธิ เป็นแนวทางในการจัดการชีวิตประจำวัน



ความเกี่ยวข้องกับหลักธรรมคำสอนทางพระพุทธศาสนา: เมื่อพิจารณาในเชิงพุทธจริยศาสตร์ ผลการวิจัยสะท้อนว่าทัศนคติของวัยรุ่นไทยเกี่ยวกับชีวิตที่ดีที่มีความสอดคล้องกับพุทธจริยศาสตร์ทั้งสามระดับ ได้แก่ ศีล 5 กุศลกรรมบถ 10 และอริยมรรคมีองค์ 8 อย่างไรก็ตาม ความแตกต่างที่สำคัญระหว่างวัยรุ่นทั้งสองกลุ่มอยู่ที่แรงจูงใจและฐานความชอบธรรมของการยึดถือศาสนา โดยวัยรุ่นที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนามักได้รับอิทธิพลจากสถาบันครอบครัว ศาสนา และการศึกษา ขณะที่วัยรุ่นที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาให้ความสำคัญกับเหตุผลเชิงปัจเจกนิยม ประโยชน์นิยม และประสบการณ์ตรงเป็นหลัก

สรุป: ผลการวิจัยนี้สะท้อนให้เห็นกระบวนการทำให้พระพุทธศาสนาเป็น “ฆราวาสนิยมเชิงจริยศาสตร์” (Secular Buddhist Ethics) ที่ไม่ได้ปฏิเสธศาสนา แต่ทำให้ศาสนาแปรรูปเป็นกรอบคุณค่าทางจริยธรรมที่อิงเหตุผล ประสบการณ์ และความรับผิดชอบของปัจเจกบุคคล

คำสำคัญ: ชีวิตที่ดี, พุทธจริยศาสตร์, ปัจเจกนิยม, ประโยชน์นิยม, ฆราวาสนิยม

Abstract

Background and Objectives: Historically, Buddhism has served as a major ethical framework in Thai society, providing moral orientation and a source of existential meaning through the observance of precepts and the cultivation of mindfulness. In the context of rapid digitalization and intensified economic competition over the past decade, however, the role of religion in the everyday lives of Thai adolescents appears to have diminished. Regular participation in religious activities and sustained engagement with Buddhist teachings have become less consistent, while material achievement and social recognition, particularly within social media environments, are increasingly used as benchmarks for self-worth. This shift may be linked to growing concerns regarding psychological distress, identity uncertainty, and the erosion of stable meaning structures among youth. It thus raises a critical question: To what extent does the contemporary conception of the "Good Life" among Thai adolescents remain grounded in religiously informed moral frameworks?

Methodology: This study employed a qualitative research methodology. The informants were undergraduate students at Chiang Mai University during the 2024 academic year. Participants were selected using purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques and were divided into two groups: 1) Thai youths who identified as Buddhists and actively participated in activities of a Buddhist Arts Club (n = 10), and 2) Thai youths who identified as non-religious but had previously been Buddhists and had declared themselves non-religious for at least one year (n = 10). A total of 20 participants were included, or until data saturation was reached. The research instruments consisted of a demographic questionnaire, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and non-participant observation. Interview data were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The researcher then repeatedly reviewed the transcripts to gain familiarity with the data and conducted initial coding to identify key issues emerging from the data. Related codes were subsequently grouped and synthesized into themes and sub-themes using thematic analysis. The findings were then presented through thematic analytical description, supported by direct quotations from participants to illustrate and substantiate the interpretations.



Main Results: The findings indicate that both Buddhist and non-religious Thai youths share the view that certain Buddhist teachings can be practically applied to promote a good life. In particular, these teachings are perceived as useful tools for understanding life problems, regulating emotions, and making rational decisions. Although non-religious youths do not consider a good life to be necessarily grounded in religion, they still selectively adopt certain Buddhist principles, such as the Four Noble Truths, the Three Characteristics of Existence, the law of karma, and mindfulness and meditation practices, as practical guidelines for managing their daily lives.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: From a Buddhist ethical perspective, the findings reflect that Thai youths' conceptions of the good life are consistent with three progressive levels of Buddhist ethics: The Five Precepts (Pañca-sīla), the Ten Wholesome Courses of Action (Kusala-kammamagga), and the Noble Eightfold Path (Ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika-magga). However, a key difference between the two groups lies in their motivational foundations and sources of justification. Buddhist youths tend to be influenced by institutional factors such as family, religion, and education, whereas non-religious youths place greater emphasis on individual reasoning, utilitarian considerations, and direct personal experience.

Conclusion: The findings of this study reveal an ongoing process of transforming Buddhism into what may be termed "Secular Buddhist Ethics." Rather than rejecting religion, this transformation reconfigures Buddhism into a rationally grounded ethical framework anchored in individual experience, critical reflection, and personal responsibility.

Keywords: Good Life, Buddhist Ethics, Individualism, Utilitarianism, Secularism

บทนำ

แม้ว่าสังคมไทยจะเปิดกว้างต่อเสรีภาพในการนับถือศาสนา แต่ในเชิงประวัติศาสตร์และวัฒนธรรมคนไทยส่วนใหญ่ยังคงยึดถือพระพุทธศาสนาเป็นรากฐานของค่านิยมและจริยธรรมในการดำเนินชีวิตมาอย่างยาวนาน อย่างไรก็ตาม งานสำรวจเยาวชนไทยระดับอุดมศึกษาพบว่า แม้นักศึกษาร้อยละ 86 จะระบุว่าตนเป็นพุทธศาสนิกชน แต่ระดับการมีส่วนร่วมในกิจกรรมทางศาสนากลับอยู่เพียงระดับปานกลาง โดยมีเพียงส่วนน้อยที่สวดมนต์หรือเข้าวัดอย่างสม่ำเสมอ และมีเพียงประมาณครึ่งหนึ่งที่เห็นว่าค่านิยมทางพุทธศาสนามีอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจที่สำคัญในชีวิต (Anamwathana, 2025)

การเปลี่ยนแปลงดังกล่าวเกิดขึ้นท่ามกลางบริบทของโลกาภิวัตน์ เทคโนโลยีดิจิทัล และระบบเศรษฐกิจที่เน้นการแข่งขันและบริโภคนิยม ซึ่งส่งผลให้กรอบคุณค่าของคนรุ่นใหม่เปลี่ยนแปลงไปอย่างมีนัยสำคัญความสำเร็จทางวัตถุและการยอมรับในสื่อสังคมออนไลน์กลายเป็นเกณฑ์สำคัญในการประเมินคุณค่าของชีวิต ขณะที่บทบาทของศาสนาในชีวิตประจำวันลดลงอย่างเห็นได้ชัด นักคิดทางพุทธศาสนาบางท่านชี้ว่าแนวโน้มดังกล่าวอาจนำไปสู่ความอ่อนแอทางสังคม เนื่องจากการพึ่งพาค่านิยมบริโภคนิยมและการแสวงหาผลประโยชน์ระยะสั้นอาจลดทอนความเพียรพยายามในการพัฒนาตนเองและสังคม (Phra Thammapitaka, 1999)

วัยรุ่นไทยในปัจจุบันต้องเผชิญกับการเปลี่ยนแปลงของกรอบคุณค่าดังกล่าวสัมพันธ์กับความท้าทายทางสังคมและจิตใจของเยาวชน เช่น ความเครียด ความสับสนเชิงอัตลักษณ์ และพฤติกรรมเสี่ยงบางประการ นอกจากนี้ กระแสโลกาภิวัตน์ยังทำให้คนรุ่นใหม่บางส่วนตั้งคำถามต่อบทบาทของสถาบันศาสนาและเล็งกนิยามตนเองว่าเป็นกลุ่ม Spiritual but Not Religious (SBNR) หรือไม่ระบุตนว่ามีศาสนา โดยมีได้จำเป็นต้องปฏิเสธคุณค่าทางจิตวิญญาณ แต่ไม่ยึดถือศาสนาในฐานะสถาบันหรือความเชื่อเหนือธรรมชาติที่ไม่สามารถพิสูจน์ได้



ด้วยเหตุผลหรือวิทยาศาสตร์ (Satchayanon, 2024) การเปลี่ยนแปลงดังกล่าวก่อให้เกิดคำถามสำคัญว่า ในบริบทของสังคมไทยร่วมสมัย แนวคิดเรื่อง “ชีวิตที่ดี” ของเยาวชนยังคงมีความเชื่อมโยงกับหลักคำสอนทางศาสนาเพียงใด ดังนั้น งานวิจัยนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาทัศนคติของวัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาที่มีต่อความสำคัญของพระพุทธศาสนาและความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับแนวคิดเรื่อง “ชีวิตที่ดี” ทั้งนี้ ผลการศึกษาคาดว่าจะป็นฐานข้อมูลเชิงวิชาการและเชิงนโยบายสำหรับการพัฒนาแนวทางเสริมสร้างคุณค่าจริยธรรม และสุขภาพทางจิตของเยาวชนในสังคมไทยร่วมสมัย

วัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัย

เพื่อศึกษาทัศนคติที่มีต่อการให้ความสำคัญของการนับถือพระพุทธศาสนากับชีวิตที่ดีของวัยรุ่นไทยตามทฤษฎีพุทธจริยศาสตร์และเปรียบเทียบทัศนคติที่มีต่อการนับถือพระพุทธศาสนากับชีวิตที่ดีของวัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนากับวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนา

วิธีดำเนินการวิจัย

การวิจัยเรื่องนี้ มีวิธีดำเนินการวิจัย ตามลำดับขั้นตอน ดังนี้

รูปแบบการวิจัยเป็นการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ (Qualitative Research) ประชากรเป็นนักศึกษาที่ศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรี มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่ ปีการศึกษา 2567 กลุ่มตัวอย่างใช้วิธีการสุ่มตัวอย่างแบบเจาะจง (Purposive Sampling) และวิธีการสุ่มตัวอย่างแบบสโนว์บอล (Snowball Sampling) แบ่งกลุ่มตัวอย่างออกเป็น 2 กลุ่ม ได้แก่ กลุ่มที่ 1 เป็นวัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนา โดยสังกัดชมรมพุทธศิลป์ มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่ จำนวน 10 คน และกลุ่มที่ 2 เป็นวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนา โดยเป็นวัยรุ่นที่เคยนับถือพระพุทธศาสนามาก่อน แต่ภายหลังประกาศตนว่าไม่นับถือศาสนาเป็นระยะเวลาไม่ต่ำกว่า 1 ปี จำนวน 10 คน รวมจำนวนทั้งสิ้น 20 คน หรือจนกว่าจะได้ข้อมูลอิ่มตัว (Data saturation) ทั้งนี้คัดเลือกจากผู้ให้ข้อมูลที่มีคุณสมบัติตรงตามที่ต้องการและเต็มใจให้ข้อมูล จากนั้นให้ผู้ได้รับการคัดเลือกคนแรกเสนอผู้ที่มีลักษณะใกล้เคียงต่อไปเรื่อย ๆ จนได้ข้อมูลครบตามจำนวนที่ต้องการ

เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัย เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลได้แก่ แบบสอบถามข้อมูลทั่วไป (Questionnaire) แบบสัมภาษณ์แบบเจาะลึก (In-dept Interview) และการสังเกตแบบไม่มีส่วนร่วม (Non-Participant Observation) ที่ผู้วิจัยได้สร้างขึ้นเอง โดยมีขั้นตอนในการสร้างแบบสอบถาม ดังนี้

1. ศึกษาเอกสารและงานวิจัยอื่น ๆ ที่เกี่ยวข้อง เพื่อนำมาเป็นกรอบในการกำหนดประเด็นคำถาม
2. สร้างแบบสอบถามข้อมูลทั่วไปและแบบสัมภาษณ์แบบเจาะลึกให้สอดคล้องกับวัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัย

3. นำเครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยเสนอต่อผู้ทรงคุณวุฒิด้านปรัชญา ศาสนา เพื่อตรวจสอบความตรงเชิงเนื้อหา (Content Validity) รวมทั้งให้ข้อเสนอแนะเพื่อปรับปรุงความเหมาะสมของภาษาและเนื้อหา

4. ทดลองใช้เครื่องมือ (Pilot Testing) กับกลุ่มที่มีลักษณะใกล้เคียงกับกลุ่มตัวอย่างจริง เพื่อประเมินความชัดเจนของคำถาม ลำดับคำถาม และระยะเวลาในการเก็บข้อมูล ก่อนนำมาปรับปรุงแก้ไขให้มีความสมบูรณ์ยิ่งขึ้น

การเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล ผู้วิจัยได้ดำเนินการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลด้วยตนเอง โดยการสังเกตแบบไม่มีส่วนร่วมกับกลุ่มตัวอย่าง เพื่อศึกษาแนวคิดและแนวการปฏิบัติเป็นเบื้องต้น และพยายามสร้างสัมพันธภาพและความไว้วางใจ จากนั้นจึงได้พูดคุยและชี้แจงวัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัย พร้อมทั้งขอความร่วมมือในการให้ข้อมูล

การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล ผู้วิจัยนำข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์ที่ถูกบันทึกเสียงและถอดความแบบคำต่อคำ จากนั้นผู้วิจัยอ่านทบทวนข้อมูลหลายครั้งเพื่อทำความเข้าใจกับข้อมูลและดำเนินการเข้ารหัสข้อมูล (Coding) จากประเด็นสำคัญที่ปรากฏในข้อมูล ต่อมานำรหัสที่มีความสัมพันธ์กันมาจัดกลุ่มและสังเคราะห์เป็นประเด็นหลัก



และประเด็นย่อยตามแนวทางการวิเคราะห์ตามประเด็น (Thematic Analysis) แล้วนำเสนอผลการวิเคราะห์ในรูปแบบการพรรณนาเชิงวิเคราะห์ตามประเด็น (Thematic Analytical Description) โดยใช้คำกล่าวของผู้ให้ข้อมูลประกอบการอธิบายผลการวิจัย

ส่วนการตรวจสอบความน่าเชื่อถือของข้อมูล ผู้วิจัยใช้วิธีการตรวจสอบข้อมูลแบบสามเส้า (Data Triangulation) โดยเปรียบเทียบข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์ การสังเกต และเอกสารที่เกี่ยวข้อง รวมทั้งใช้การตรวจสอบความถูกต้องของข้อมูลกับผู้ให้ข้อมูล (Member Checking) และการทบทวนกระบวนการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลอย่างต่อเนื่อง เพื่อให้ผลการวิจัยสะท้อนมุมมองของผู้ให้ข้อมูลอย่างถูกต้องและเชื่อถือได้

ผลการวิจัยและอภิปรายผล

1. ลักษณะทางประชากรของกลุ่มตัวอย่าง

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 20)

Characteristic	n	%
Religious affiliation		
- Buddhist	10	50
- No religion	10	50
Gender		
- Male	7	35
- Female	6	30
- LGBTQ+ / Gender diverse	7	35
Field of study		
- Health sciences	1	5
- Science and technology	3	15
- Humanities and social sciences	16	80
Grade point average (GPA)		
- Below 2.00	-	-
- 2.01-2.50	1	5
- 2.51-3.00	7	35
- 3.01-3.50	6	30
- Above 3.50	6	30
Region of hometown		
- Northern Thailand	12	60
- Northeastern Thailand	3	15
- Central Thailand (excluding Bangkok)	2	10
- Southern Thailand	1	5
- Bangkok	2	10
Current living arrangement		
- Living with parents	5	25
- Single dormitory	13	65
- Shared dormitory	-	-
- Relative's house	2	10
- Rental house	-	-



Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 20) (Continued)

Characteristic	n	%
- Apartment	-	-
- Other	-	-
Parents' educational level		
- Primary school	3	15
- Lower secondary school	1	5
- Upper secondary school	4	20
- Diploma / associate degree	-	-
- Bachelor's degree	7	35
- Higher than bachelor's degree	5	25
Monthly personal expenses (THB)		
- Below 1,000	-	-
- 1,001-2,000	-	-
- 2,001-3,000	-	-
- 3,001-4,000	3	15
- 4,001-5,000	5	25
- Above 5,001	12	60
Frequency of participation in religious activities		
- Never	3	15
- 3-6 times per year	8	40
- 6-12 times per year	9	45

ลักษณะทางประชากรของกลุ่มตัวอย่างแบ่งตามเพศประกอบด้วยเพศชาย คิดเป็นร้อยละ 35 เพศหญิง คิดเป็นร้อยละ 30 และเพศทางเลือก คิดเป็นร้อยละ 35 กลุ่มตัวอย่างแบ่งตามสาขาวิชาที่กำลังศึกษาประกอบด้วย สาขาวิชามนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์มากที่สุด คิดเป็นร้อยละ 80 รองลงมาคือสาขาวิชาวิทยาศาสตร์ และเทคโนโลยี คิดเป็นร้อยละ 15 และสาขาวิชาวิทยาศาสตร์สุขภาพ คิดเป็นร้อยละ 5 กลุ่มตัวอย่างส่วนใหญ่ มีช่วงเกรดเฉลี่ยสะสม 2.51-3.50 โดยไม่มีผู้ที่มีเกรดเฉลี่ยสะสมต่ำกว่า 2.00 กลุ่มตัวอย่างแบ่งตามภูมิลำเนาเดิม ประกอบด้วยภาคเหนือมากที่สุด คิดเป็นร้อยละ 60 ภาคตะวันออกเฉียงเหนือ คิดเป็นร้อยละ 15 ภาคกลาง คิดเป็นร้อยละ 10 กรุงเทพมหานคร คิดเป็นร้อยละ 10 และภาคใต้ คิดเป็นร้อยละ 5 กลุ่มตัวอย่างส่วนใหญ่ อยู่หอพักเดียวมากที่สุด คิดเป็นร้อยละ 65 รองลงมาอาศัยอยู่กับบิดามารดา คิดเป็นร้อยละ 25 และอาศัยอยู่บ้านญาติ คิดเป็นร้อยละ 10 ระดับการศึกษาของผู้ปกครองแบ่งออกเป็นผู้ปกครองที่จบการศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรีมากที่สุด คิดเป็นร้อยละ 35 รองลงมาคือผู้ปกครองที่จบการศึกษาระดับสูงกว่าปริญญาตรี คิดเป็นร้อยละ 25 ผู้ปกครอง ที่จบการศึกษาระดับมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 คิดเป็นร้อยละ 20 ผู้ปกครองที่สำเร็จการศึกษาระดับประถมศึกษาปีที่ 6 คิดเป็นร้อยละ 15 และผู้ปกครองที่จบการศึกษาระดับมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 3 คิดเป็นร้อยละ 5 ค่าใช้จ่ายเฉลี่ยต่อเดือน ของวัยรุ่นส่วนใหญ่อยู่ที่ 5,001 บาทขึ้นไป รองลงมาคือค่าใช้จ่ายต่อเดือนของวัยรุ่นอยู่ที่ 4,001-5,000 บาท ส่วนความถี่ของการเข้าร่วมพิธีกรรมทางศาสนาต่อปีส่วนใหญ่อยู่ระหว่าง 6-12 ครั้ง คิดเป็นร้อยละ 45 รองลงมา คือการเข้าร่วมพิธีกรรมทางศาสนาต่อปีอยู่ระหว่าง 3-6 ครั้ง คิดเป็นร้อยละ 40 และไม่เคยเข้าร่วมพิธีกรรม ทางศาสนาเลย คิดเป็นร้อยละ 15



จากลักษณะทางประชากรของกลุ่มตัวอย่างพบว่า ปัจจัยทางเพศ สาขาวิชาที่กำลังศึกษา เกรดเฉลี่ยสะสม ระดับการศึกษาของผู้ปกครอง ค่าใช้จ่ายเฉลี่ยของวัยรุ่นไทย ไม่พบความแตกต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญต่อการนับถือพระพุทธศาสนา เนื่องจากในสังคมปัจจุบันที่ได้รับอิทธิพลจากความเจริญก้าวหน้าทางวิทยาศาสตร์และเทคโนโลยี และในสถานศึกษาเน้นหลักสูตรที่มีการเรียนการสอนแบบวิทยาศาสตร์ที่ศึกษาสิ่งที่พิสูจน์ได้และสามารถอธิบายได้ด้วยหลักเหตุผล ทำให้วัยรุ่นไทยมีแนวโน้มเชื่อหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนาที่สามารถพิสูจน์และอธิบายได้ ไม่เชื่อเรื่องมงาย ดังเช่นผู้ให้ข้อมูลคนที่ 10 กล่าวว่า “รู้สึกว่ามันคือการที่เราอยู่กับความเป็นจริงเพราะว่าพระพุทธศาสนาสำหรับตัวเรา คิดว่ามันเป็นทางวิทยาศาสตร์ที่มีจุดที่สัมพันธ์กับความเป็นจริงนะคะ เราทำแบบนี้ เราจึงได้แบบนี้ อะไรอะคะ คิดว่ามันน่าจะสอดคล้องกับชีวิตความเป็นจริงที่เราต้องเรียนรู้ที่จะอยู่กับความเป็นจริง” (R10, 2025)

ส่วนปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อการนับถือพระพุทธศาสนา ได้แก่ ภูมิสำเนา ผู้ที่อาศัยอยู่ด้วย และความถี่ของการเข้าร่วมพิธีกรรมทางศาสนาในระยะเวลาหนึ่งปีที่ผ่านมาพบว่ามีความแตกต่างกัน กล่าวคือ วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนา และวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาที่มีภูมิสำเนาเดิมอยู่ในภาคเหนือจะมีความเชื่อทางไสยศาสตร์มากกว่าวัยรุ่นไทยที่มีภูมิสำเนาเดิมอยู่ในกรุงเทพฯ และภาคอื่น ๆ โดยวัยรุ่นไทยที่มีภูมิสำเนาอยู่ในภาคเหนือจะมีความเชื่อเรื่องผีบรรพบุรุษว่าเป็นผีที่คอยปกป้องรักษาและทำให้ชีวิตอยู่ดีมีสุข ส่วนปัจจัยที่มีผลต่อการนับถือพระพุทธศาสนาพบว่า ผู้ที่อาศัยอยู่ด้วยมีความสัมพันธ์กับความถี่ของการเข้าร่วมพิธีกรรมทางศาสนา โดยวัยรุ่นไทยที่อาศัยอยู่กับครอบครัวบิดามารดา ญาติพี่น้อง จะเข้าร่วมพิธีกรรมทางศาสนาบ่อยครั้งมากกว่าวัยรุ่นไทยที่อาศัยอยู่หอพัก โดยวัยรุ่นที่อาศัยอยู่กับครอบครัว บิดามารดา ญาติพี่น้อง มีอัตราการเข้าร่วมพิธีกรรมทางศาสนาประมาณ 6-12 ครั้งต่อปี ทำให้ได้รับการปลูกฝังหลักธรรมคำสั่งสอนของพระพุทธศาสนามากกว่าวัยรุ่นที่อยู่หอพัก ตัวอย่างเช่น ผู้ให้ข้อมูลคนที่ 3 กล่าวว่า “ตั้งแต่เด็กยกตัวอย่างนะครับเหมือนว่าตายายแบบปลูกฝังเราให้เข้าวัดทำบุญอะไรแล้วพอโตขึ้นมาแล้วก็เลยได้รับสิ่งที่ถูกปลูกฝังมาติดตัวเรามาด้วยพอโตมาแล้วก็กลายเป็นว่าติดเข้าวัดไปเลยอะไรแบบนี้ครับ” (R3, 2025) ซึ่งวัยรุ่นไทยที่เข้าร่วมพิธีกรรมทางศาสนามีแนวโน้มให้ความสนใจพระพุทธศาสนาและสามารถเข้าใจแก่นแท้ของพระพุทธศาสนามากกว่าวัยรุ่นที่ไม่ได้เข้าร่วมพิธีกรรมทางศาสนา ผู้ให้ข้อมูลคนที่ 2 กล่าวว่า “แก่นแท้ของพุทธศาสนาในความคิดผมน่าจะเป็นหลักธรรมคำสั่งสอนของพุทธเจ้าครับที่สอนเกี่ยวกับหลักต่าง ๆ หลักไตรลักษณ์ หรือว่าอาจจะเกี่ยวกับการไม่เที่ยงหรือว่าอะไรต่าง ๆ ที่เป็นหลักคำสั่งสอนจะเป็นแก่นแท้ของพุทธศาสนาอะไรอย่างเงี้ยอะครับ” (R2, 2025) จากการวิเคราะห์ลักษณะทางประชากรของกลุ่มตัวอย่างสะท้อนให้เห็นว่า วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและวัยรุ่นที่ไม่นับถือศาสนามีแนวโน้มการนับถือ “พระพุทธศาสนาในเชิงปฏิบัติ” โดยนำหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนา เช่น อริยสัจ 4 ชั้น 5 การฝึกสติ มีสมาธิ มาปรับใช้ในชีวิตประจำวันและเชื่อว่าทำให้ชีวิตดีขึ้นได้ ซึ่งสอดคล้องกับงานวิจัยของ Supanusont (2003) และ Phra Pittaya Sawekpan (2005) ที่ชี้ให้เห็นว่าชีวิตที่ดีในมุมมองทางพุทธจริยศาสตร์ หมายถึงการรู้เท่าทันทุกข์ ปราศจากการยึดมั่น ถือมั่น และสามารถเข้าถึงความสงบภายใน นอกจากนี้ยังสอดคล้องกับงานวิจัยของ Phra Suphakit Supanyo (2021) ที่ชี้ให้เห็นว่าการมีสติสัมปชัญญะช่วยให้บุคคลสามารถเผชิญกับเหตุการณ์และปัญหาต่าง ๆ ได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ โดยการฝึกสติจะนำไปสู่การมีสมาธิและปัญญา ซึ่งเป็นพื้นฐานสำคัญในการดำเนินชีวิต และงานวิจัยของ Mittsatsirikul (2022) พบว่าการนำหลักภาวนา 4 (กายภาวนา ศิลภาวนา จิตภาวนา และปัญญาภาวนา) มาใช้ในการดำเนินชีวิต ช่วยเสริมสร้างสุขภาวะทั้งด้านกาย จิตใจ สังคม และปัญญา

2. ทักษะที่มีต่อการนับถือพระพุทธศาสนากับชีวิตที่ดีของวัยรุ่นไทยตามทฤษฎีพุทธจริยศาสตร์

วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนามีทักษะป้องกันว่าหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนาทำให้มีชีวิตที่ดี เนื่องจากหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนาเป็นเครื่องยึดเหนี่ยวทางจิตใจ และสามารถนำมาปรับใช้ในการดำเนินชีวิต ตัวอย่างเช่น ผู้ให้ข้อมูลคนที่ 2 กล่าวว่า “ตามหลักคำสั่งสอนที่เป็นหลักธรรมต่าง ๆ นานาที่ใช้มาสอดคล้องกับชีวิตเรา ทั้งอริยสัจ 4 ทุกข์ สมุทัย นิโรธ มรรค อะไรต่าง ๆ ที่จะคอยสอนเราว่าให้เรามีแนวทางในการดำรงชีวิตและการปฏิบัติในชีวิตประจำวันของเราต่อไปครับและจะทำให้ชีวิตเรารู้สึกดีขึ้น”



(R2, 2025) โดยวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนามีทัศนคติว่าการมีชีวิตที่ดีไม่จำเป็นต้องขึ้นอยู่กับหลักธรรมของศาสนาเพียงอย่างเดียว แต่มีปัจจัยอื่นที่มีผลทำให้มีชีวิตดีขึ้นได้เช่นกันขึ้นอยู่กับจิตสำนึกของแต่ละบุคคล ครอบครัว และสังคม โดยวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนามีหลักปรัชญาชีวิตและแนวทางการดำเนินชีวิตของตนเอง ตัวอย่างเช่น ผู้ให้ข้อมูลคนที่ 17 กล่าวว่า “การที่มีชีวิตที่ดีหรือไม่ดี คิดว่าขึ้นอยู่กับที่การดำเนินชีวิตของเรามากกว่า อยู่ที่ตัวเรามากกว่าว่าจะดำเนินชีวิตแบบไหนครับ ต่อให้เราไม่มีศาสนา เราก็มีแนวทางการดำเนินชีวิตนะครับ...การที่เรารู้สึก เราไม่ได้นับถือศาสนา แต่เราก็ดำเนินไปได้ทุกวันแบบปกติสุขครับ ก็คือเราไม่ได้นับถือศาสนาแต่ที่เราอยู่บนเส้นทางที่เราคิดว่าอันนี้ถูกต้องนะ อันนี้ไม่ได้ทำให้ใครเดือดร้อนนะเรามองว่าจุดนี้ก็คือถือว่าเป็นชีวิตที่ดีแล้ว เขาก็คือดำเนินชีวิตไปได้ปกติแบบว่าไม่ได้ทำให้ใครเดือดร้อนครับ” (R17, 2025) แม้ว่าวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาจะไม่ยึดโยงกับระบบความเชื่อทางศาสนาโดยตรงแต่ก็ยังยอมรับและนำหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนาบางประการนำมาใช้ในวิถีชีวิตจริง เช่น หลักความไม่เบียดเบียน การรู้จักตนเอง และการใช้ชีวิตอย่างมีเมตตาสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงพุทธจริยศาสตร์ในลักษณะ **ฆราวาสนิยม (Secular Buddhist Ethics)** ที่แยกจริยธรรมออกจากความเชื่อทางศาสนา และสอดคล้องกับ **จริยศาสตร์แบบมนุษยนิยม (humanistic ethics)** ที่ให้ความสำคัญกับมนุษย์ในฐานะศูนย์กลางของคุณค่า โดยถือว่ามนุษย์มีศักยภาพในการกำหนดคุณธรรม ความดี และความหมายของชีวิตด้วยตนเอง นอกจากนี้ยังสอดคล้องกับ **แนวคิดจริยศาสตร์แบบประโยชน์นิยม (utilitarian ethics)** ที่ยึดผลของการกระทำและความสุขของตนและผู้อื่นเป็นหลักในการตัดสินคุณค่าทางศีลธรรม นักวิชาการชาวเบลเยียม (Verhaeghen, 2015) ในบทความที่มีชื่อว่า Good and Well: The Case for Secular Buddhist Ethics เขาเสนอว่าพุทธจริยศาสตร์สามารถตีความได้โดยไม่ต้องอาศัยความเชื่อเรื่องกรรม หรือการเวียนว่ายตายเกิด และสามารถวางอยู่บนฐานเหตุผลเชิงมนุษยนิยมและเชิงผลลัพธ์ได้ ผลการวิจัยชี้ให้เห็นว่า วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและไม่นับถือศาสนาต่างให้ความสำคัญของการนับถือพระพุทธศาสนาในการกำหนดกรอบแนวคิดด้วยชีวิตที่ดี โดยเลือกนำหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนาบางประการมาใช้ในชีวิตจริง ซึ่งสอดคล้องกับผลงานวิจัยของ Satyawongthip (2015) พบว่า ท่านพุทธทาสภิกขุเสนอว่า ปัญหาของวัยรุ่นเกิดจากการบังคับตัวเองไม่ได้ และเสนอแนวทางแก้ไขโดยการปลูกฝังสัมมาทิฐิ และการกลับมาของศาสนาเพื่อเลิกวัตถุนิยม และ Chueatpra (2020) พบว่า ประชาชนในชุมชนใช้หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา เช่น ศีล 5 พรหมวิหาร 4 ฆราวาสธรรม 4 และสังคหวัตถุ 4 เพื่อเสริมสร้างคุณภาพชีวิต กล่าวคือวัยรุ่นไทยทั้งสองกลุ่มนำหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนามาเป็นเครื่องยึดเหนี่ยวทางจิตใจและแนวทางการดำเนินชีวิต

วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนามีทัศนคติที่ต่างกันว่า ชีวิตที่ดีคือชีวิตที่มีความสุข ตนเอง ครอบครัว และคนรอบข้างมีความสุข ชีวิตที่ไม่ทำความเดือดร้อนให้แก่ตนเองและผู้อื่น และเป็นชีวิตที่บรรลุผลสำเร็จในชีวิตตามความคาดหวัง ตัวอย่างเช่น ผู้ให้ข้อมูลคนที่ 2 กล่าวว่า “ชีวิตที่ดีหรือครับ ก็คือในความคิดของผมคือการอยู่อย่างสบาย การใช้ชีวิตอย่างสบายสงบอะไรก็คือชีวิตที่ดีการดำรงชีวิตได้อย่างที่เราไม่มีอุปสรรค หรือสิ่งอะไรต่าง ๆ ที่เข้ามาขัด หรือว่ามาเป็นตัวที่ฉวนปรนชีวิตเรา หรือปัญหาต่าง ๆ ไม่มีปัญหารุมเร้าอันนี้คือน่าจะเป็นชีวิตที่ดีอะไรอย่างนี้ครับ” (R2, 2025) วัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาบางส่วนมีทัศนคติว่า ชีวิตที่ดีคือชีวิตที่เป็นอิสระ สามารถทำตามใจตนเองตามที่ต้องการ ไม่ต้องอยู่ภายใต้กรอบของสังคม ตัวอย่างเช่น ผู้ให้ข้อมูลคนที่ 15 กล่าวว่า “ชีวิตที่ดีคือชีวิตที่เราฝัน ชีวิตที่เราไม่ไปยุ่งกับใคร ชีวิตที่เราใช้ชีวิตด้วยตัวเองได้” (R15, 2025) ส่วนหลักการดำเนินชีวิตของทั้งสองกลุ่มพบว่า การใช้ชีวิตแต่ละวันให้มีความสุข ไม่เกิดความทุกข์ ทำวันนี้ให้ดีที่สุดเพื่อวันข้างหน้าที่มีความสุข เป็นที่น่าสังเกตว่า วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาไม่ได้เห็นว่าชีวิตที่ดีต้องสอดคล้องกับเป้าหมายสูงสุดของพระพุทธศาสนาคือการบรรลุนิพพาน จะเห็นได้ว่าวัยรุ่นทั้งสองกลุ่มมีทัศนคติว่าการดำเนินชีวิตคือการแสวงหาความสุข โดยนำหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนาบางประการมาปรับใช้ในการดำเนินชีวิตเพื่อให้เกิดความสุข สอดคล้องกับแนวคิดแบบ **สุขนิยม (Hedonism)** ที่มีทัศนคติว่าสิ่งที่ดีที่สุดของชีวิตคือการแสวงหาความสุขและสอดคล้องกับแนวคิดแบบ **บริโภคนิยม (Consumerism)**



วัยรุ่นไทยมีแนวโน้มให้ความสำคัญกับวัตถุ ความสะดวกสบาย และเทคโนโลยีมากกว่าการพัฒนาจิตใจ หรือจริยธรรม (Chotima & Blauw, 2016) ซึ่งให้เห็นว่า วัยรุ่นไทยที่ให้ความสำคัญกับความมั่งคั่ง ทรัพย์สิน และสถานะทางสังคม มีแนวโน้มมองว่าวัตถุเป็นแหล่งที่มาของความสำเร็จและความสุขในชีวิต ซึ่งสอดคล้องกับ ลักษณะพื้นฐานของบริโภคนิยมที่นิยามคุณค่าของตนผ่านการครอบครอง ชีวิตที่ดีในทัศนะของวัยรุ่นไทยทั้งสอง กลุ่มนี้หมายถึงการมีความสุข สุขภาพดี ทรัพย์สินเงินทอง และประสบความสำเร็จในชีวิต สะท้อนให้เห็นถึงค่านิยม แบบวัตถุนิยมซึ่งเบี่ยงเบนไปจากเจตนารมณ์ดั้งเดิมของพระพุทธศาสนา สอดคล้องกับงานของสอดคล้องกับงาน ของพระธรรมปิฎกอั้งโน Phra Pittaya Sawekpan (2005) ที่ว่าวิทยาศาสตร์และเทคโนโลยี ความเจริญของเทคโนโลยี ด้านข่าวสารข้อมูลและการสื่อสารได้ถูกนำมาหล่อมมนุษย์ให้ผลิตเพลินหลุ่มหลงในความมัวเมาต่าง ๆ มากกว่า จะใช้ในการพัฒนาคุณภาพชีวิตหรือพัฒนาตัวมนุษย์เอง เทคโนโลยีเหล่านั้นถูกใช้เป็นเครื่องมือแสวงหาสิ่งบำเรอ ความสุขสนองโลภะ โทสะรับใช้การทำลายความเกลียดชังกัน มีการแย่งชิงสิ่งบริโภคกัน การครอบงำกัน และการพยายามกำจัดการกักกันเพื่อผลประโยชน์ของตนและกลุ่ม ซึ่งขัดแย้งกับทัศนะการมีชีวิตที่ดีตามหลักพุทธธรรม ที่ในขั้นต้นชีวิตต้องการปัจจัย 4 เป็นหลักประกันขั้นพื้นฐานของการดำรงชีวิต และการมีโอกาสที่จะพัฒนาตน ให้เข้าถึงจุดหมายของชีวิตที่สูงขึ้นไป เหนือจากนั้นวัตถุในปัจจุบัน 4 เป็นเพียงเครื่องประกอบเสริมความสุขที่จะเสพอ อย่างรู้จักพอดี โดยไม่ลุ่มหลงมัวเมา มีชีวิตด้วยความเกื้อกูลพ้นจากการเบียดเบียนระหว่างมนุษย์กับสิ่งแวดล้อม โดยต่างฝ่ายต่างมีอิสรภาพทางสังคมด้วยกัน เพื่อเป็นฐานเข้าถึงอิสรภาพภายในตนเอง

วัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาบางคนมีทัศนะว่า ชีวิตที่ดีคือชีวิตที่เป็นอิสระ สามารถทำตามใจตนเอง ตามที่ต้องการ ไม่ต้องอยู่ภายใต้กรอบของสังคม สอดคล้องกับแนวคิดแบบอัตถิภาวนิยม (Existentialism) ที่ให้ความสำคัญกับเสรีภาพและการเลือกใช้ชีวิตของปัจเจกบุคคล วัยรุ่นไทยกลุ่มนี้ให้ความสำคัญกับการกำหนด ชีวิตด้วยตนเอง (Self-determination) และไม่ต้องการอยู่ภายใต้กรอบของศาสนา พิธีกรรมทางศาสนา แต่เลือก ที่จะกำหนดเป้าหมายของชีวิตด้วยตนเอง สอดคล้องกับงานวิจัยของ Phrakhrū Palad Nabhichaya Nāṅavīro Lapimthong (2021) วัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาให้ความสำคัญกับการพึ่งพาตนเองและหลักเหตุผลมากกว่า การยึดมั่นในพิธีกรรม

3. เปรียบเทียบทัศนะที่มีต่อการนับถือพระพุทธศาสนากับชีวิตที่ดีของวัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือ พระพุทธศาสนากับวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนา

3.1 เหตุผลของการนับถือพระพุทธศาสนา/ไม่นับถือศาสนา

วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนามีแรงจูงใจการนับถือศาสนามาจากครอบครัว ซึ่งครอบครัว เป็นสถาบันแรกที่ปลูกฝังความเชื่อและพฤติกรรมทางศาสนามาตั้งแต่เด็ก เช่น การพาเข้าวัด การเข้าร่วมพิธีกรรม ทางศาสนา และการอบรมสั่งสอนหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนา ทำให้เกิดการซึมซับหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนา และเมื่อโตขึ้นได้มีประสบการณ์และคิดทบทวนไตร่ตรองด้วยตนเองก็เห็นว่าหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนาสามารถ นำมาใช้ในชีวิตจริง เช่น อริยสัจ 4 หลักความเป็นเหตุและผล หลักไตรลักษณ์ หลักความเป็นจริงของสรรพสิ่ง และการใช้สติ มีสมาธิ ในการดำเนินชีวิต ซึ่งหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนาเหล่านี้สอดคล้องกับหลักการ ทางวิทยาศาสตร์จึงสามารถเข้าใจและยอมรับได้มากกว่าหลักความเชื่อที่ไม่สามารถพิสูจน์ได้ ซึ่งแสดงให้เห็นถึง แนวโน้มการตีความศาสนาในเชิงเหตุผลมากขึ้น ตัวอย่างเช่น ผู้ให้ข้อมูลคนที่ 3 กล่าวว่า “สำหรับผม ครอบครัวที่มีผล ต่อการนับถือศาสนาพุทธนะครับเพราะว่าตั้งแต่เกิดมาเราอยู่ในสถาบันของครอบครัวแล้วก็พ่อแม่ในฐานะ ผู้ปกครองมีอิทธิพลอย่างมากนะครับในการกล่อมเกลามาให้เราเลือกนับถือศาสนาพุทธนะครับ” (R3, 2025) นอกจากนี้ผู้ให้ข้อมูลคนที่ 3 ยังเห็นว่า หลักคำสอนของพระพุทธศาสนาสอดคล้องกับหลักการวิทยาศาสตร์ ซึ่งเป็นหลักคำสอนที่เป็นเหตุผล “มันจะทำให้เราพบว่าในหลักธรรมคำสอนที่มันสอดคล้องในหลักวิทยาศาสตร์ ที่เราได้รับจากสถาบันการศึกษาอย่างเช่นความเป็นเหตุเป็นผลในหลักของศาสนาพุทธมันสอดคล้องกับหลัก ความเป็นเหตุเป็นผลในวิทยาศาสตร์มีสิ่งนี้จึงเกิดสิ่งนั้นครับ” (R3, 2025) ส่วนวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนามีทัศนะ



ว่าจุดเปลี่ยนที่ทำให้ไม่นับถือศาสนาเนื่องจากเมื่อเติบโตขึ้นได้ผ่านประสบการณ์และคิดทบทวนไตร่ตรองด้วยตนเองจึงเห็นว่าการนับถือศาสนาไม่ได้ส่งผลต่อชีวิตจึงไม่จำเป็นต้องนับถือศาสนาและไม่จำเป็นต้องยึดติดกับศาสนาใดศาสนาหนึ่ง แต่เลือกที่จะยึดมั่นในปรัชญาของตนเองและเลือกทำในสิ่งที่ตนเองเห็นว่าถูกต้อง ตัวอย่างเช่น ผู้ให้ข้อมูลคนที่ 11 กล่าวว่า “จุดเปลี่ยนก็คือพอหนูโตขึ้นนะคะพอได้เรียนรู้ได้ผ่านอะไรหลาย ๆ อย่างมาค่ะ มันทำให้เข้าใจสิ่งต่าง ๆ ในชีวิตมากขึ้นก็เลยทำให้รู้สึกว่ามันไม่จำเป็นต้องยึดติดกับศาสนาอะไรค่ะ เพราะว่าสบายใจที่จะยึดมั่นในตนเองแล้วก็ยึดประสบการณ์ส่วนตัวในการตัดสินใจมากกว่าการยึดหลักการคำสอนจากศาสนา” (R11, 2025) นอกจากนี้วัยรุ่นที่ไม่นับถือศาสนายังเห็นว่าพิธีกรรมทางศาสนาต่าง ๆ และความเชื่อต่าง ๆ เป็นความเชื่อมงายเนื่องจากไม่สามารถพิสูจน์ได้ ทำให้ขาดความน่าเชื่อถือ บางคนยังเกิดความรู้สึกเบื่อองค์กร เบื่อพระ นักบวช ในศาสนาอีกด้วย อาจกล่าวได้ว่า ปัจจัยที่ทำให้วัยรุ่นไทยไม่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและไม่นับถือศาสนาสะท้อนถึงความเปลี่ยนแปลงทางวัฒนธรรมและโลกทัศน์ของคนรุ่นใหม่ที่ได้รับอิทธิพลจากความเจริญก้าวหน้าทางวิทยาศาสตร์เทคโนโลยี ซึ่งมีแนวโน้มใช้เหตุผลและประสบการณ์ส่วนตัวในการประเมินคุณค่าทางศาสนาแทนที่จะยึดถือจากขนบธรรมเนียมหรือการสืบทอดทางวัฒนธรรมเพียงอย่างเดียว สอดคล้องกับงานวิจัยของ Nithiuthai (2011) พบว่าการพัฒนาเยาวชนแนวพุทธด้วยไตรสิกขา โดยการส่งเสริมคุณธรรมจริยธรรม และการฝึกฝนอบรมตามหลักศีล สมาธิ ปัญญา มีผลต่อการดำเนินชีวิตอย่างมีความสุขของเยาวชน

3.2 ความเชื่อทางศาสนา

วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและวัยรุ่นที่ไม่นับถือศาสนามีความเชื่อหรือนับถือสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ เช่น การนับถือเทพเจ้าองค์ต่าง ๆ เช่น พระพิฆเนศ เจ้าแม่กวนอิม ส่วนวัยรุ่นไทยที่มีภูมิลำเนาภาคเหนือก็จะนับถือผีบรรพบุรุษด้วย เพื่อเป็นเครื่องยึดเหนี่ยวทางจิตใจและปกป้องคุ้มครองให้ชีวิตอยู่ดีมีสุข ตัวอย่างเช่น ผู้ให้ข้อมูลคนที่ 2 กล่าวว่า “ความเชื่อในการนับถือสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ ผมนับถือพระพุทธเจ้าเป็นหลักแล้วก็ตามด้วยพระรัตนตรัยนั่นแหละ ทั้งพระพุทธ พระธรรม พระสงฆ์ แต่ในสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ของผมด้วยการทำเป็นนับถือครูบาอาจารย์ต่าง ๆ อะไรระครับ แล้วก็มาเป็นในรูปแบบของอาจจะโยงเข้ามาในเรื่องของผี ผมเป็นคนภาคเหนือก็จะเชื่อเรื่องผีด้วยอะไรระครับ” (R2, 2025) ส่วนความเชื่อเรื่องกฎแห่งกรรม บุญ บาป เชื่อว่ามีอยู่จริง หากเราทำความดีทำให้เกิดความสบายใจ หากทำความชั่วทำให้เกิดความทุกข์ใจ เตือดร้อน อย่างไรก็ตาม มีวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาบางคนไม่เชื่อเรื่องกฎแห่งกรรม บุญ บาป เพราะไม่สามารถพิสูจน์ได้ว่าเป็นจริง เห็นได้จากเราทำดีกับใคร เขาอาจไม่ทำดีตอบแทนเราก็ได้ และจากสังคมในปัจจุบันที่พบว่า คนทำดีไม่ได้ดี คนทำชั่วได้ดีมีถมไป ส่วนทัศนคติของวัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาที่มีต่อความเชื่อเรื่องสิ่งที่อยู่เหนือธรรมชาติ เช่น นรก สวรรค์ ชีวิตหลังความตาย และนิพพาน ว่าไม่มีอยู่จริงเพราะพิสูจน์ไม่ได้ อย่างไรก็ตาม วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาส่วนใหญ่มีทัศนะว่า นิพพานมีอยู่จริง เป็นหลักคำสอนที่มีอยู่จริงตามหลักคำสอนของพระพุทธศาสนา ซึ่งนิพพานเป็นสภาวะที่ชีวิตดับไปเลย ไม่ต้องกลับมาเกิดอีก จะเห็นได้ว่าทัศนคติของวัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาแสดงให้เห็นถึงแนวโน้มของการเปลี่ยนโลกทัศน์ (Worldview Transformation) ศาสนาไปจากเดิมกล่าวคือ ในอดีตการนับถือศาสนามีลักษณะในเชิงพิธีกรรมและสถาบัน แต่ในปัจจุบันเนื่องด้วยอิทธิพลของวิทยาศาสตร์เทคโนโลยีที่ยอมรับความรู้ที่พิสูจน์ได้และหลักแห่งเหตุผล ทำให้เปิดโอกาสให้ตั้งคำถามต่อความเชื่อเดิม โดยเฉพาะสิ่งที่อยู่เหนือธรรมชาติและพิสูจน์ไม่ได้ ได้แก่ กฎแห่งกรรม นรก สวรรค์ บุญ บาป ชีวิตหลังความตาย และนิพพาน เป็นต้น อย่างไรก็ตาม วัยรุ่นไทยทั้งสองกลุ่มบางส่วนยังเชื่อหรือนับถือสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ เช่น การนับถือเทพเจ้าองค์ต่าง ๆ เช่น พระพิฆเนศ เจ้าแม่กวนอิม โดยเฉพาะวัยรุ่นไทยที่มีภูมิลำเนาอยู่ในภาคเหนือจะนับถือผีบรรพบุรุษด้วยเพื่อเป็นเครื่องยึดเหนี่ยวทางจิตใจและปกป้องคุ้มครองให้ชีวิตอยู่ดีมีสุข สะท้อนให้เห็นถึงโลกทัศน์แบบวิญาณนิยมที่เป็นการผสมผสานความเชื่อด้านไสยศาสตร์ พิธีกรรม และสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์เข้ากับการนับถือพระพุทธศาสนา โดยขาดการวิเคราะห์เชิงเหตุผลและความเข้าใจอย่างลึกซึ้งในหลักธรรมของพระพุทธเจ้า



วัยรุ่นไทยจำนวนไม่น้อยที่ยังคงนับถือศาสนาที่ไม่ได้แสดงถึงการนับถือศาสนาในรูปแบบของการยึดมั่นต่อพิธีกรรมอย่างเคร่งครัด แต่กลับเลือกนำหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนาบางประการเช่น อริยสัจ 4 ไตรลักษณ์ กฎแห่งกรรม หรือการเจริญสติ ทำสมาธิ ที่สอดคล้องกับความคิด ความรู้สึก และประสบการณ์ตรงของตนเอง มาเป็นแนวทางในการดำเนินชีวิต หากเห็นว่าหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนาบางประการนั้นสอดคล้องกับหลักเหตุผลและส่งผลดีต่อการดำเนินชีวิต ซึ่งสอดคล้องกับงานวิจัยของ Supanusont (2003) พบว่าหลักการดำเนินชีวิตที่ดีตามธรรมชาติของพุทธจริยศาสตร์ สามารถนำมาประยุกต์ใช้ได้อย่างสอดคล้องกับการดำเนินชีวิตของบุคคลในสังคมปัจจุบัน ถ้าบุคคลในสังคมสนใจและศึกษาแนวทางการดำเนินชีวิตอย่างมีเหตุและผล ไม่ยึดมั่นถือมั่น มองเห็นธรรมชาติของสิ่งต่าง ๆ ที่มีการเปลี่ยนแปลงอย่างอิสระ จะทำให้บุคคลนั้นลดปัญหาในการดำเนินชีวิตของเขาได้ และสอดคล้องกับงานวิจัยของ Phra Pittaya Sawekpan (2005) พบว่า การเข้าใจไตรลักษณ์สามารถทำให้บุคคลมีความสงบภายใน ซึ่งสะท้อนในคำให้สัมภาษณ์ของกลุ่มวัยรุ่นที่กล่าวถึงการฝึกสติและการปล่อยวาง

3.3 พฤติกรรมทางศาสนา

วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนามีทัศนคติที่ต่างกันว่า หลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนาเป็นสิ่งที่ดีและสามารถนำมาปรับใช้ในชีวิตประจำวันได้ เช่น ศีล 5 เป็นหลักธรรมขั้นพื้นฐานของการกระทำดี หลักอริยสัจ 4 เพื่อพิจารณาเหตุแห่งทุกข์และหนทางแห่งการดับทุกข์ หลักไตรลักษณ์ เพื่อพิจารณาถึงความไม่เที่ยงแท้และสอนให้ไม่ยึดมั่นถือมั่น และการใช้สติ ทำสมาธิ ในการดำเนินชีวิตในปัจจุบัน ตัวอย่างเช่น ผู้ให้ข้อมูลคนที่ 12 กล่าวว่า “ก็ยังคงนำมาในสิ่งที่ดีก็เอามาเป็นแนวทางแล้วก็เป็นหลักในการใช้ชีวิตอยู่ แต่ว่าก็ไม่ได้เคร่งมากมายขนาดนั้นนะว่าอะไรที่เขาห้ามทำก็ไม่ทำเพราะว่าบางทีเราก็กทำบ้างแต่ว่าก็คือเรียกว่าพยายามจะใช้หลักแนวคิดที่มันเป็นในเรื่องของการทำสิ่งดี ๆ ซะมากกว่า” (R12, 2025) นอกจากนี้วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาส่วนใหญ่เข้าร่วมพิธีกรรมทางศาสนาในวันสำคัญทางศาสนากับครอบครัวและการทำกิจกรรมร่วมกับเพื่อนในสถานศึกษา เช่น ทำบุญตักบาตร สวดมนต์ ไหว้พระ และอธิษฐานขอพร เพื่อให้เกิดความสุข ความสบายใจ ตัวอย่างเช่น ผู้ให้ข้อมูลคนที่ 9 กล่าวว่า “ผมก็จะสวดมนต์ช่วงใกล้สอบบ่อยครับ เพราะว่าจิตฟุ้งซ่านที่ผมบอกครับ ศาสนาคือปรัชญาสำหรับผม ผมเอาศาสนาเป็นที่พึ่งทางใจ ผมสวดมนต์ผมไหว้พระเพื่อให้สมาธิให้จิตของผมมันเป็นสมาธิให้ผมไม่ฟุ้งซ่าน” (R9, 2025) จะเห็นได้ว่า วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนามีทัศนคติที่ต่างกันว่า หลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนาเป็นเครื่องยึดเหนี่ยวทางจิตใจและสามารถนำมาปรับใช้ในชีวิตประจำวันได้จริง ตัวอย่างเช่น ศีล 5 อริยสัจ 4 หลักไตรลักษณ์ และการฝึกสติ ถูกมองว่าเป็นแนวทางที่ช่วยให้เข้าใจปัญหาในชีวิต ลดความทุกข์ และนำไปสู่การมีชีวิตที่ดีได้ โดยเฉพาะวัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาบางกลุ่มโดยเฉพาะผู้ที่พื้นฐานครอบครัวเข้มแข็งด้านศาสนาหรือเคยได้รับการปลูกฝังแนวคิดทางธรรมะอย่างลึกซึ้งซึ่งมีทัศนคติว่า หลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนา เช่น อริยสัจ 4 ไตรลักษณ์ และการเจริญสติ สามารถนำมาปรับใช้ในชีวิตประจำวันได้จริง เช่น ช่วยให้เข้าใจทุกข์ วางใจต่อปัญหาและดำเนินชีวิตอย่างมีสติ แนวคิดเหล่านี้สะท้อนให้เห็นแนวคิดแบบพุทธนิยมและพฤติกรรมตามพุทธจริยศาสตร์แท้ที่มุ่งเน้นการ “ปล่อยวาง” และการ “พัฒนาจิตใจ” มากกว่าการยึดถือในรูปแบบหรือผลลัพธ์ภายนอก Laksanawat (2020) พบว่าการนำหลักพุทธธรรมมาใช้ส่งผลต่อการพัฒนาทางกาย จิต และความสุขในชีวิต โดยเน้นการรู้เท่าทันตนเองและการเจริญสติ มากกว่าการแสวงหาความสุขจากปัจจัยภายนอก ทั้งนี้วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาเข้าร่วมพิธีกรรมทางศาสนากับครอบครัว สถาบันการศึกษา หรือชุมชน เช่น การสวดมนต์ ไหว้พระ ทำบุญ การอธิษฐานขอพร ให้มีความสุขที่ดี สอบได้ และประสบความสำเร็จในชีวิต แม้ว่าวัยรุ่นไทยทั้งสองกลุ่มจะไม่ได้ปฏิบัติตามพิธีกรรมทางศาสนาอย่างเคร่งครัดก็ตาม ซึ่งลักษณะการนับถือเช่นนี้สะท้อนแนวคิดแบบ “วิญญูธรรมนิยม” และ “บริโภคนิยม” ที่พบในงานของ Phra Pittaya Sawekpan (2005) ซึ่งระบุว่าศาสนาในรูปแบบนี้มักมีรากฐานจากความเชื่อผสมผสาน เช่น ไสยศาสตร์ การอธิษฐานขอพร หรือการบูชาสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์เพื่อ “หวังผล” เป็นหลัก มากกว่าการเข้าใจธรรมะอย่างแท้จริง ถึงแม้ว่าพฤติกรรมของวัยรุ่นกลุ่มนี้



จะยังเกี่ยวข้องกับพระพุทธศาสนา แต่ก็เป็นการเกี่ยวข้องในเชิง “วัฒนธรรม” หรือ “ประเพณี” มากกว่า การ “เข้าใจด้วยปัญญา” จึงอาจเรียกได้ว่าเป็น “พุทธศาสนาแบบหวังผลลัพธ์” (Result-oriented Buddhism) สะท้อนให้เห็นถึงพฤติกรรมทางศาสนาและทัศนคติที่มีต่อศาสนาเชิงพิธีกรรมและวัฒนธรรมมากกว่าที่จะเข้าใจ หลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนาอย่างลึกซึ้ง อย่างไรก็ตาม แม้ว่าวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาบางคนจะไม่เข้าร่วม พิธีกรรมทางศาสนาหรือไม่ปฏิบัติศาสนกิจอย่างสม่ำเสมอก็ตาม แต่พวกเขาก็ยึดหลักปรัชญาและมีหลักจริยธรรม การดำเนินชีวิตของตนเอง ซึ่งสะท้อนให้เห็นถึงแนวคิดแบบบราวนานิยมที่ยึดมั่นในตนเอง (Self-reliance) และ หลักแห่งเหตุผลทำให้เห็นได้ว่า วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนากับวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนามีแนวโน้ม ที่จะเลือกหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนามาปฏิบัติอย่างมีวิจารณญาณและให้คุณค่ากับประโยชน์ที่เกิดขึ้น ในการดำเนินชีวิตมากกว่าการยึดติดกับพิธีกรรมทางศาสนาอย่างเคร่งครัด ซึ่งผลการวิจัยนี้สอดคล้องกับงานวิจัย ของ Supanusont (2003) ซึ่งให้เห็นว่า ชีวิตที่ดีคือชีวิตที่มีการฝึกฝนตนเองตามหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนา สามารถเข้าถึงได้ด้วยปัญญา ด้วยการปฏิบัติตามหลักไตรสิกขา (ศีล สมาธิ ปัญญา) รู้เท่าทันเหตุและผลของสิ่ง ที่เกิดขึ้น สามารถนำมาใช้เป็นแนวทางการดำเนินชีวิตและแก้ไขปัญหาการดำเนินชีวิตของบุคคลในสังคมปัจจุบัน และสอดคล้องกับงานวิจัยของ Phra Pittaya Sawekpan (2005) ว่าหลักธรรมของพระพุทธศาสนาสามารถนำไปใช้ พัฒนาจิตใจและเป็นหลักการดำเนินชีวิตที่ดีได้

3.4 ศาสนาในฐานะเป็นเครื่องมือสร้างคนดี

วัยรุ่นไทยที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและวัยรุ่นไทยที่ไม่นับถือศาสนามีทัศนคติที่ต่างกันว่าหลักธรรม ของพระพุทธศาสนาเป็นเครื่องมือในการสร้างคนดี แม้วัยรุ่นที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาจะไม่ยึดติดกับคำสอนของศาสนาใด ศาสนาหนึ่ง แต่ก็ยอมรับว่าหลักธรรมของศาสนาโดยทั่วไปมีเนื้อหาที่ส่งเสริมให้คนทำความดีและเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญ ที่หล่อหลอมคุณธรรมภายในจิตใจ ตัวอย่างเช่น ผู้ให้ข้อมูลคนที่ 1 กล่าวว่า “ขอใช้คำว่าอีกหนึ่งปัจจัยที่จะช่วย ทำให้เป็นคนดี ดีกว่า แต่ว่าอาจจะไม่ใช่ปัจจัยเดียวหรือปัจจัยหลักแต่เป็นหนึ่งในเหตุปัจจัยว่าสามารถ หล่อหลอมให้คนเป็นคนดีได้” (R1, 2025) ทั้งนี้วัยรุ่นไทยทั้งสองกลุ่มเห็นว่าคนดีไม่ควรตัดสินจากการนับถือศาสนา แต่ควรดูจากพฤติกรรม การกระทำ และเจตนาของแต่ละบุคคล โดยนิยามคนดีคือคนที่ไม่ทำความเดือดร้อน ให้แก่ตนเองและผู้อื่นและสามารถอยู่ร่วมกับผู้อื่นในสังคมได้อย่างสงบสุข ตัวอย่างเช่น ผู้ให้ข้อมูลคนที่ 2 กล่าวว่า “ตัดสินความดีความชั่วตัดสินได้จากพฤติกรรม การกระทำของเราทำชั่วหรือเปล่า เราจะรู้อยู่แก่ใจว่าสิ่งที่เราทำไป ดีหรือไม่ดี” (R2, 2025) จากที่กล่าวมาแสดงให้เห็นว่าวัยรุ่นไทยทั้งสองกลุ่มมีแนวคิดด้านจริยธรรมที่เน้น การพิจารณาอย่างมีเหตุผล (Moral reasoning) มากกว่าการอ้างอิงอัตลักษณ์ทางศาสนาแบบดั้งเดิม ส่วนแนวทาง การเสริมสร้างคนดี วัยรุ่นไทยทั้งสองกลุ่มเห็นพ้องกันว่าครอบครัวเป็นสถาบันแรกที่มีบทบาทสำคัญในการปลูกฝัง คุณธรรมและการดำรงชีวิตอย่างมีจริยธรรม นอกจากนี้ยังมีสถาบันการศึกษาระดับโรงเรียนและมหาวิทยาลัย ก็มีบทบาทในการสนับสนุนและเสริมสร้างพฤติกรรมที่ดีได้เช่นกันซึ่งผลการวิจัยนี้สอดคล้องกับงานวิจัย ของ Phrakhru Palad Nabhichaya Nāṇavīro (Lapimthong) (2021) พบว่าวัยรุ่นที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาไม่ได้ปฏิเสธ คุณค่าของศาสนา แต่เลือกที่จะยึดถือหลักจริยธรรมและเหตุผลในการดำเนินชีวิต โดยไม่จำเป็นต้องยึดมั่น ในพิธีกรรมทางศาสนา และสอดคล้องกับงานวิจัยของ Nithiuthai (2011) พบว่าการนำหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา เช่น ศีล 5 และอริยสัจ 4 มาใช้ในชีวิตประจำวัน สามารถช่วยเสริมสร้างคุณธรรมและจริยธรรมในหมู่เยาวชนได้

โดยสรุป ผลการวิจัยพบว่า วัยรุ่นไทยมองว่าหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา เช่น อริยสัจ 4 ไตรลักษณ์ กฎแห่งกรรม และการฝึกสติสมาธิ มีคุณค่าในการส่งเสริมการดำเนินชีวิตที่ดี เนื่องจากช่วยให้เข้าใจปัญหาชีวิต ควบคุมอารมณ์ และตัดสินใจอย่างมีเหตุผล ซึ่งสอดคล้องกับแนวคิดพุทธจริยศาสตร์ที่เน้นการพัฒนาปัญญา และความรับผิดชอบต่อการกระทำของตนเอง เมื่อเปรียบเทียบระหว่างวัยรุ่นที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนากับวัยรุ่น ที่ไม่นับถือศาสนา พบว่าวัยรุ่นที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนา มองว่าพระพุทธศาสนาเป็นทั้งหลักยึดเหนี่ยวทางจิตใจและ แนวทางในการดำเนินชีวิต ขณะที่วัยรุ่นที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาแม้จะไม่ยึดถือศาสนาในฐานะสถาบัน แต่ยังคงนำหลักธรรม



บางประการมาใช้เป็นแนวทางในการทำความเข้าใจชีวิตและแก้ปัญหา อย่างไรก็ตาม ทั้งสองกลุ่มเห็นพ้องกันว่า หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาสามารถนำไปประยุกต์ใช้เพื่อพัฒนาชีวิตที่ดีได้ ดังนั้น ในเชิงนโยบายควรส่งเสริม การเรียนรู้หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาในลักษณะที่เน้นการประยุกต์ใช้เพื่อพัฒนาทักษะชีวิต การคิด เชิงวิจารณ์ญาณ และสภาวะทางจิตของเยาวชนในสังคมร่วมสมัย

องค์ความรู้ใหม่

งานวิจัยนี้เสนอองค์ความรู้ใหม่เกี่ยวกับพลวัตของพระพุทธศาสนาในสังคมไทยร่วมสมัย โดยพบว่า เยาวชนไทยทั้งที่นับถือพระพุทธศาสนาและไม่นับถือศาสนาไม่ได้ปฏิเสธพระพุทธศาสนาโดยสิ้นเชิง แต่เลือก ตีความและนำหลักธรรมบางประการมาใช้ในฐานะ “กรอบจริยธรรมสำหรับการดำเนินชีวิต” มากกว่าการยึดถือ ศาสนาในรูปแบบพิธีกรรมหรือสถาบันศาสนา ผลการศึกษาชี้ให้เห็นว่าพระพุทธศาสนาในมุมมองของเยาวชน กำลังแปรรูปไปสู่ลักษณะเป็น “ฆราวาสนิยมเชิงจริยศาสตร์” (Secular Buddhist Ethics) ซึ่งเน้นเหตุผล ประสพการณ์ชีวิต และความรับผิดชอบของปัจเจกบุคคลในการสร้างความหมายของ “ชีวิตที่ดี” ซึ่งองค์ความรู้นี้ แตกต่างจากงานศึกษาก่อนหน้านี้ซึ่งมักอธิบายความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างเยาวชนกับศาสนาในกรอบของการเสื่อมถอย ของศรัทธาทงศาสนา (Secularization) ที่ทำให้บทบาทของศาสนาในสังคมลดลง โดยผลการวิจัยนี้เสนอว่า แม้ระดับการปฏิบัติศาสนกิจของเยาวชนจะลดลง แต่หลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนายังคงถูกนำมาประยุกต์ใช้เป็น กรอบจริยธรรมร่วมสมัย และสามารถเชื่อมโยงกับแนวคิดจริยศาสตร์ตะวันตก เช่น ประโยชน์นิยม สุขนิยม เหตุผล นิยม อรรถิภาวนิยม ปัจเจกนิยม ในการอธิบายการแสวงหาความหมายและความดีงามของชีวิตในบริบทสังคมสมัยใหม่ จากการศึกษานี้สามารถสรุปเป็นองค์ความรู้ใหม่คือ กรอบแนวคิดของพุทธจริยศาสตร์แบบฆราวาสเชิงบูรณาการ ดังใน Figure 1

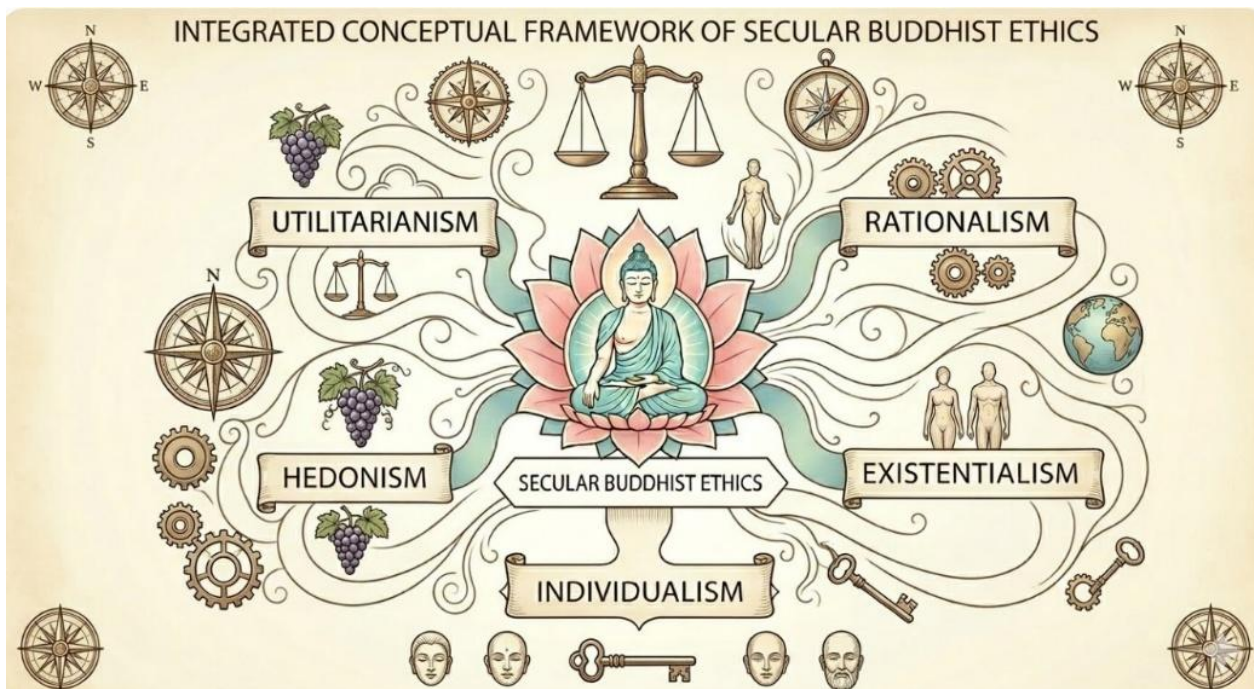


Figure 1 Integrated Conceptual Framework of Secular Buddhist Ethics



สรุปและข้อเสนอแนะ

ผลการวิจัยสรุปได้ว่า วัยรุ่นไทยทั้งกลุ่มที่นับถือและไม่นับถือศาสนามีทัศนคติสอดคล้องกันว่าหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาเป็นปัจจัยสำคัญที่ส่งเสริมการมีชีวิตที่ดี เนื่องจากทำหน้าที่เป็นเครื่องยึดเหนี่ยวทางจิตใจและเป็นกรอบทางจริยธรรมที่ยึดหยุ่นต่อการประยุกต์ใช้ในชีวิตประจำวัน แม้กลุ่มที่ไม่นับถือศาสนาจะให้ความสำคัญกับเหตุผลเชิงปัจเจกและการกำหนดตนเอง แต่จากการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกพบว่ากลุ่มที่ไม่นับถือศาสนายังคงยอมรับหลักอริยสัจ 4 ไตรลักษณ์ กฎแห่งกรรม และการฝึกสติ ในฐานะเครื่องมือเชิงปฏิบัติเพื่อแก้ปัญหาและสร้างความสุขโดยไม่เบียดเบียนผู้อื่น ปรากฏการณ์นี้สะท้อนถึงแนวโน้มของพุทธจริยศาสตร์เชิงฆราวาสนิยม (Secular Buddhist Ethics) ที่เยาวชนเลือกใช้แก่นคำสอนมากกว่าการยึดติดในเชิงสถาบันหรือพิธีกรรม อย่างไรก็ตาม ความแตกต่างสำคัญอยู่ที่แรงจูงใจ โดยกลุ่มผู้นับถือศาสนา มักได้รับอิทธิพลจากครอบครัวและสถาบันทางสังคม ในขณะที่กลุ่มไม่นับถือศาสนาจะอิงกับกรอบคิดประโยชน์นิยมและประสบการณ์ตรงเป็นหลัก ข้อเสนอแนะในงานวิจัยครั้งต่อไปคือ 1) ควรขยายกลุ่มตัวอย่างให้หลากหลายพื้นที่และช่วงวัยมากขึ้น 2) ควรเพิ่มวิธีวิจัยเชิงปริมาณควบคู่เพื่อเปรียบเทียบผลอย่างเป็นระบบ และ 3) ควรศึกษาต่อยอดเชิงลึกด้านการประยุกต์หลักธรรมกับบริบทดิจิทัลของวัยรุ่น

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BUDDHIST MONKS IN WATER GOVERNANCE: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND SOCIO-RELIGIOUS MEDIATION IN NORTHEASTERN THAILAND

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: In the context of Northeastern Thailand, water insecurity remains a persistent challenge shaped by environmental variability, limited infrastructure, and unequal resource distribution, which directly affects agricultural livelihoods and community well-being. Although national water policies have attempted to address these issues, many rural communities continue to face constraints in accessing sustainable and locally appropriate water management solutions. This situation highlights the importance of alternative, community-based approaches that are adaptive, participatory, and culturally grounded. Within this context, Buddhist monks have increasingly emerged as influential local actors who bridge the gap between state mechanisms and community needs. Their roles extend beyond spiritual leadership to include coordination, knowledge dissemination, and mobilization of collective action, thereby contributing to locally embedded forms of environmental governance and long-term community resilience. Therefore, the objectives of this study were to examine the role of Buddhist monks as socio-religious mediators in local governance and to explore how Buddhist teachings inform sustainable water management practices and community resilience.

Methodology: This study employed a qualitative multiple case study design, drawing on document analysis, non-participant observation, and semi-structured interviews with four monks who were recognized for their sustained engagement in water development initiatives. The analysis applied analytic induction and thematic content analysis to interpret how Buddhist doctrinal principles were operationalized in water governance practices and how these practices contributed to community resilience.

Main Results: The findings demonstrate that Buddhist monks function as key agents of socially engaged Buddhism by initiating and managing water resource systems that directly improve community well-being. In this context, Buddhist principles are not only interpreted as moral teachings but are operationalized as practical frameworks guiding collective action, infrastructure development, and equitable resource distribution. This reflects an expanded understanding of Buddhism for social benefits, where religious practice intersects with sustainable development,



environmental stewardship, and local governance, thereby contributing to community resilience in conditions of ecological uncertainty.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: This study applied Buddhism, particularly its focus on social benefits. It demonstrates the interconnectedness between Buddhist teachings and monastic engagement through the two dimensions of monks' roles in community development. First, in terms of practice, the traditional Vinaya-based duties of Gantha-dhura (Scriptural Study) and Vipassana-dhura (Meditation Practice) have been extended toward socially oriented responsibilities expressed through Sangaha-dhura, the duty of social benevolence. Second, core Buddhist doctrines have been applied as conceptual foundations guiding monks' community involvement, including generosity, the Four Brahma Vihāra Dharmas, communal harmony, the ethics of reciprocal obligations (The Six Directions), and self-reliance. More specifically, these activities can be understood through canonical principles such as the Saṅgahavatthu 4, dāna, piyavācā, atthacariyā, and samānattatā, which explain practices such as establishing drinking-water systems and underground water banks and coordinating community participation. In addition, the Sāraṇīyadhamma 6 and the ethical framework of the Sigālovāda Sutta (Dīgha Nikāya 31) emphasize communal harmony and reciprocal responsibilities, while the Cakkavatti-Sīhanāda Sutta (Dīgha Nikāya 26) highlights the moral duty of leadership in ensuring fair distribution of resources. Consequently, monastic engagement in water-resource development in Northeastern Thailand reflects an expansion of the temple's traditional domain into broader societal spheres, demonstrating how canonical teachings are applied to contemporary ecological and developmental challenges.

Conclusions: This study makes a distinctive contribution by integrating Buddhist doctrinal analysis with community development and water resource management, demonstrating how religious ethics function as an operational framework for environmental governance. It advances interdisciplinary scholarship by linking Engaged Buddhism, rural development, and sustainability studies within the context of community resilience.

Keywords: Water Resource Management, Sustainability, Socio-religious Mediation, Community Resilience, Northeastern Thailand

Introduction

Over the past four decades, the roles of Buddhist monks in Northeastern Thai society have expanded beyond traditional vinaya-based functions to encompass broader forms of social engagement, including education, community welfare, psychological support, and civic participation. This transformation reflects the three theoretical dimensions of social roles, ideal, perceived, and performed roles (Wannasarnmatha, 1996), and aligns with contemporary Buddhist interpretations that emphasize the ethical foundations of social well-being. In particular, Phra Dhammapitaka (Prayudh Payutto) highlights that principles of social harmony are grounded in sīla and its societal function, providing a conceptual framework for understanding social phenomena through Buddhist moral reasoning (Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacarya (P. A. Payutto), 2018). Complementing this perspective, (Phra Paisal Visalo, 2003) conceptualizes Buddhist civil society as a relational



domain in which moral regulation, behavioral discipline, and wisdom cultivation emerge through interconnected relationships between monks, laypersons, and the broader community, forming the basis of social order under the framework of "Dhamma Vinaya." These perspectives collectively underscore the multifaceted contributions of the Sangha to social development, including environmental conservation, local welfare, and socio-cultural sustainability (Public Welfare Department of the Sangha Supreme Council, 2021).

Within this evolving context, water insecurity remains a persistent structural challenge in Northeastern Thailand, where irregular rainfall, prolonged droughts, and limited water infrastructure continue to affect agricultural productivity and community livelihoods. The region, comprising approximately 104 million rai across the Chi, Mun, and Mekong River basins, frequently experiences droughts, floods, and water quality issues (Pongthong, 2021). These structural conditions are further exacerbated by uneven rainfall patterns, low soil water retention, and inefficient water utilization systems, leading to recurring disruptions in agriculture and local livelihoods (Sumpong et al., 2021). Despite ongoing national water management policies, including the 20-year National Water Resource Management Master Plan (2018-2037), many rural communities continue to face unequal access to water resources. This highlights the need for localized and adaptive governance approaches that extend beyond formal state mechanisms. The issue is therefore both socially significant, due to its impact on livelihoods and quality of life, and academically important, as it raises critical questions about alternative forms of environmental governance in resource-constrained contexts.

In response to these challenges, Buddhist monks in Northeastern Thailand have increasingly engaged in water resource development and management as part of their expanded social roles. The initiatives undertaken by four monks exemplify this transformation. For instance, Phra Nithes Sasanakun (Luang Phor Saman Saengson) developed underground water bank systems to address droughts, flooding, and water quality issues while promoting long-term community self-reliance. Phrakru Silathammasophon Thitsilo implemented clean drinking water systems to improve public health and community well-being. Phra Kru Kosol Sikkhakit established mountain water pipeline systems to ensure year-round water access, while Phra Ajarn Paphonphat Jirathammo facilitated the development of the Kham Pramong reservoir to support both monastic and community needs. These initiatives demonstrate how monks function as community-embedded actors who translate religious values into practical solutions for environmental challenges.

Despite the growing recognition of monastic social engagement, existing studies on Buddhism in Thai society have largely focused on general roles in education, morality, and welfare. There remains a limited analytical understanding of how Buddhist monks actively participate in resource management, particularly in community-based water development. More importantly, prior research has not sufficiently examined how Buddhist doctrinal concepts function as operational frameworks shaping governance processes, sustainability strategies, and community resilience outcomes. This study addresses this gap by moving beyond descriptive accounts to provide a theoretically grounded analysis of how religious principles are translated into environmental practices.



In relation to national policy, Thailand's water resource management framework increasingly emphasizes community participation and decentralized governance. Within this context, Buddhist monks emerge as influential local actors who mediate between state initiatives and community needs, particularly in rural areas where institutional capacity is limited. Their roles extend beyond spiritual leadership to include coordination, mobilization, and implementation of water management practices, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and adaptability of policy at the grassroots level.

Conceptually, this study treats Buddhist teachings not merely as background cultural elements but as analytical frameworks that inform decision-making and collective action. Principles such as Sangaha-dhura, compassion, and self-reliance are examined as operational logics that shape how water resources are managed, distributed, and sustained within communities. This perspective enables a systematic understanding of how ethical values are transformed into governance mechanisms and development practices.

Accordingly, the objective of this study was to analytically examine how Buddhist monks operationalize doctrinal principles in community-based water management and to interpret their role as a form of socio-religious mediation in environmental governance and community resilience. The study focuses on a selected group of monks in Northeastern Thailand who have demonstrated sustained and active involvement in water development initiatives. These monks were purposively chosen as significant and information-rich cases due to their recognized roles in implementing water infrastructure projects, mobilizing community participation, and applying Buddhist principles in practical problem-solving, thereby providing in-depth insights into the intersection of religion, development, and environmental management.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were to examine the role of Buddhist monks as socio-religious mediators in local governance and to explore how Buddhist teachings inform sustainable water management practices and community resilience.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design using a multiple case study approach to explore how Buddhist monks operationalized doctrinal principles in community-based water management in Northeastern Thailand. The design was selected to enable an in-depth and contextualized understanding of socio-religious practices within real-life environmental settings.

The population of the study consisted of Buddhist monks in Northeastern Thailand who had been involved in community development activities. From this population, a purposive sample of four monks was selected based on specific criteria, including 1) Sustained involvement in water development initiatives, 2) Active roles in community mobilization, and 3) Demonstrated application of Buddhist principles in addressing environmental challenges. Although the sample size was limited, these participants were identified as information-rich cases capable of providing deep analytical insights rather than statistical representation. Therefore, the study aimed for analytical generalization rather than statistical generalization.



The research instruments consisted of semi-structured interview guides, field observation protocols, and document analysis forms. The development of these instruments followed a systematic process: 1) Reviewing relevant literature on engaged Buddhism and community water management, 2) Identifying key analytical themes such as doctrinal application, governance practices, and development outcomes, 3) Drafting initial questions aligned with the research objectives, and 4) Refining the instruments for clarity and relevance.

Content validity was assessed by three experts in Buddhist studies, social development, and qualitative research methodology. Their feedback was used to revise the instruments to ensure conceptual clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. In addition, the study applied qualitative trustworthiness criteria, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation of data sources (Interviews, Observations, and Documents), while dependability and confirmability were ensured through systematic documentation and cross-checking of findings.

Data collection was conducted in a chronological sequence. First, preliminary contact was established with the selected monks to obtain consent and contextual understanding. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with each participant, followed by on-site observations of water management activities and community interactions. Third, relevant documents such as project records and local reports were collected and analyzed. This process allowed for iterative data gathering and verification. The data were collected over a period of three months, from October 2023 to December 2023, across selected communities in Sisaket Province, Sakon Nakhon Province, and Nong Khai Province in Northeastern Thailand, where the monks' water development initiatives were implemented.

Data analysis was conducted using analytic induction in a step-by-step manner. First, all interview transcripts and field notes were systematically coded to identify recurring themes related to Buddhist principles and water management practices. Second, these codes were grouped into broader analytical categories, such as governance mechanisms, community participation, and sustainability strategies. Third, patterns were compared across cases to identify similarities and differences in how doctrinal principles were operationalized. Fourth, the findings were interpreted by linking empirical evidence with relevant theoretical concepts in applied Buddhism and environmental governance. This methodological approach strengthened the study's rigor by ensuring transparency, systematic analysis, and theoretical grounding, thereby enhancing the credibility and scholarly contribution of the findings.

Results and Discussion

The findings indicated that the four monks played significant roles in community-based water management, which could be analytically categorized into three main themes: Leadership and coordination, community engagement, and sustainability-oriented practices. All cases showed that monks acted as key coordinators who initiated water development projects, mobilized community participation, and facilitated cooperation among stakeholders. While similarities



existed in their integration of religious leadership with practical development activities, differences were observed in management styles, levels of community involvement, and approaches to sustainability. These variations reflected contextual factors such as local environmental conditions and community needs, indicating that monastic engagement in water management was both structured and adaptable.

The case of Luang Phor Saman Siripanyo, also known as Phra Nitet Sasanakhun, illustrated how a monk assumed a leading role in water resource development. Drawing on his experience as a Buddhist missionary in the United States, he applied this knowledge to water management in Thailand after he recognized that surface-water storage was costly and unsustainable. He therefore initiated the concept of the "Underground Water Bank" to address drought, flooding, water pollution, and salinity while creating clean water sources for communities and agriculture. The project began in 2013 (2556 BE) in Ubon Ratchathani Province and later expanded nationwide through training programs, knowledge dissemination, and the establishment of supportive institutions. This case demonstrated how monastic leadership contributed to long-term community self-reliance.

The approach of Phra Nitet Sasanakhun represented a Buddhist-oriented model of public welfare based on the principle of "Development," which had the potential to sustainably address drought, flooding, salinity, and water pollution, as well as promote long-term water management. If the Underground Water Bank initiative had been implemented nationwide, it could have significantly resolved water-related problems for local residents and communities (Lapthananon et al., 2020). This reflected his role in fostering sustainable community development. The roles of the monk included: 1) Environmental conservationist, 2) Leader in community-based agricultural (Water) management, 3) Provider of knowledge for society (Water Bank), 4) Coordinator between internal and external networks, 5) development-oriented monk, 6) Social supporter, and 7) Practitioner who served as a model for others.

The findings indicated that Buddhist monks played a significant and multifaceted role in water resource development within local communities. Their engagement extended beyond traditional religious duties to include active participation in environmental conservation and community-based water management initiatives. Monks often contributed to the development and restoration of water sources such as reservoirs, ponds, and small-scale irrigation systems through collaboration with villagers, local authorities, and charitable networks. These activities were frequently supported by religious teachings that promoted environmental ethics, encouraging community members to recognize the importance of protecting natural resources.

The motivational foundations behind these initiatives were deeply rooted in Buddhist principles, particularly compassion (*Karuṇā*), merit-making (*Puñña*), and the ethical responsibility to alleviate suffering and promote collective well-being. By framing environmental stewardship within religious values, monks were able to inspire community participation and strengthen moral awareness regarding sustainable water use. The involvement of monks also generated positive impacts on community cohesion, as monasteries served as trusted spaces for coordination, cooperation, and collective action. Environmental initiatives led by monks contributed not only to improved



water availability and ecological balance but also to the cultivation of shared responsibility for natural resource conservation.

Furthermore, the findings reflected an important transformation in the social roles of Buddhist monastic institutions. Rather than being limited to ritual and spiritual guidance, monks increasingly functioned as community leaders who actively addressed social and environmental challenges. This expanding role aligned with the concept of socially engaged Buddhism, which emphasized the practical application of Buddhist teachings to contemporary issues such as environmental sustainability and rural development. Overall, the study demonstrated that the involvement of Buddhist monks in water development strengthened both environmental management and social solidarity while redefining the role of monastic institutions in modern society.

In Sakon Nakhon Province, the role of Phra Ajahn Paponpat Chiratammo of Wat Kham Pramong, Sawang Subdistrict, Phannanikhom District, reflected a form of monastic engagement that integrated religious practice with community-oriented water development. His involvement in the construction of the Santivorayan overflow weir and the institutional development of Wat Kham Pramong, as entrusted by Luang Pu Sim, illustrated an expansion of monastic functions beyond traditional religious responsibilities. This role was further extended through the formal petition to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) for the royal granting of the Kham Pramong Reservoir (Topanyawut, 2010), which enabled the establishment of a sustainable water source for both the temple and the surrounding community. Such engagement exemplified the model of a development-oriented monk, in which adherence to monastic discipline was combined with active participation in resource management and community development.

Phrakru Silathammasophon Thitsilo of Wat Non Sung Wanaram, Non Sung Subdistrict, Khun Han District, Sisaket Province, exemplified a form of monastic engagement grounded in long-term involvement in community development and service. With over four decades of continuous experience, his role reflected a sustained integration of religious practice and social responsibility. His interpretation of monastic duty, emphasizing that monks were indebted to the community and must reciprocate through service (Phrakru Silathammasophon, 2023); (Kanjanapimai, K., Interviewer), illustrated a value-based orientation rooted in the principle of giving. This perspective functioned as an ethical foundation guiding his engagement, positioning the monk not only as a spiritual leader but also as an active agent in community support and development.

Phrakru Silathammasophon Thitsilo's engagement in community development was particularly evident in the domain of clean water management, where his role extended into practical resource governance aimed at improving local quality of life. His initiatives in establishing community-based water systems, encompassing water sourcing, treatment aligned with public health standards, storage capacity development, and distribution to surrounding communities, demonstrated an integrated approach to ensuring equitable access to clean water. This engagement reflected a governance-oriented function in which technical management was combined with social responsibility. Underlying these practices was a value framework that positioned water as a fundamental basis of life and emphasized the reduction of household burdens as a pathway to



enhancing well-being. Furthermore, his adherence to the principles of giving and charity reinforced a reciprocal relationship between monks and the community, conceptualizing monastic engagement as both an ethical obligation and a socio-religious service.

Phrakru Kosol Sikkhakit (Luang Pu Suang) demonstrated a form of monastic leadership that emphasized social expectation, collective unity, and community development. With extensive experience in long-term development work, his conceptualization of the monk's role as a societal leader, moral exemplar, and unifying agent (Phrakru Kosol Sikkhakit, 2023); (Kanjapimai, K., Interviewer) reflected a governance-oriented perspective rooted in social responsibility. Central to this approach was the emphasis on internal cohesion within the monastic community, where alignment and shared direction among monks served as the foundational mechanism for broader social influence. This internal unity was then extended outward as a model for lay communities, reinforcing the idea that social cohesion functioned as a prerequisite for effective and sustainable development.

Phrakru Kosol Sikkhakit's engagement in community development was particularly reflected in his role in water resource management, where he applied an integrated and governance-oriented approach to addressing local water insecurity. His initiatives in developing mountain-based water supply systems, through coordination with upstream authorities, infrastructure installation, and equitable distribution mechanisms, demonstrated a structured effort to ensure stable, year-round access to water for both domestic use and community needs. This approach extended beyond technical management to incorporate broader socio-economic dimensions, as evidenced by the transformation of temple spaces into community service hubs and the promotion of livelihood activities such as beekeeping to support local income generation. Water management, in this context, was conceptualized as a foundational element of community well-being, linking resource access with economic stability and quality of life. His role, therefore, illustrated the application of Buddhist principles in practical development, emphasizing active engagement, social responsibility, and the promotion of sustainable self-reliance within the community.

Thematic Analysis of Monks' Roles in Water Development

Theme 1: Monks as Water Infrastructure Initiators

The four monks initiated concrete water infrastructure systems addressing drought and water insecurity, including the Underground Water Bank system, the royal-granted reservoir initiative, mountain pipeline water systems, and community-based drinking water production. These initiatives demonstrate monks' direct involvement in infrastructure planning, resource mobilization, and technical coordination.

Theme 2: Monks as Community Water Managers

Beyond infrastructure creation, monks serve as managers of water distribution systems, ensuring equitable access and sustainability. Their roles include supervising water storage systems, coordinating with local authorities, organizing community participation, and ensuring public health standards. This reflects a shift from purely spiritual leadership to operational governance roles.



Theme 3: Monks as Moral-Ecological Leaders

The monks frame water development as a moral responsibility rooted in Buddhist ethics, particularly generosity (*Dāna*), communal harmony (*Saṅgahavatthu*), and self-reliance. Water management is conceptualized not merely as technical work but as compassionate service to society.

Theme 4: Monks as Religion-Development Mediators

The monks operate at the intersection between religious duty and social development. Their activities extend traditional *Gantha-dhura* and *Vipassanā-dhura* toward *Sangaha-dhura* (Social Benevolence), reflecting an expanded interpretation of monastic responsibility.

Overall, the role of Buddhist monks in water development in Isan society has proven effective in addressing water access issues during droughts. They have created sources of water for community use, such as underground water banks, new local water sources, and provided access to tap water and direct drinking water from upstream sources to the community. The monks' roles reflect the community's expectations and emphasize their position as integral members of society who are closely connected with the people. Through these new roles, monks contribute to building a better society and demonstrate how their engagement can lead to tangible social improvements.

Discussion

The findings support the research objectives by showing that Buddhist doctrinal principles function as operational frameworks shaping water governance and community resilience. Concepts such as *Sangaha-dhura*, compassion, and self-reliance are translated into practices that guide coordination, promote inclusive participation, and sustain local resource management. This study extends previous research on engaged Buddhism by demonstrating how religious teachings are not merely symbolic but actively inform governance mechanisms and development outcomes. The variation across cases further suggests that these principles are flexibly applied depending on context, reinforcing the view of applied Buddhism as a dynamic and adaptive system. Overall, the study contributes to the understanding of Buddhism as a form of localized environmental governance that integrates ethical values with sustainable development practices.

Unlike prior studies that emphasize monks primarily as moral exemplars or cultural leaders, this research demonstrates that monks are also capable of operating within the technical, organizational, and collaborative dimensions of water resource management. This transformation reflects an adaptive process in which monastic roles evolve in response to environmental vulnerability, community needs, and the limited capacity of state institutions in rural regions.

The expansion of monastic roles in water development illustrates a localized form of environmental governance grounded in religious legitimacy and community trust. Rather than replacing state institutions, monks serve as mediators, mobilizers, and trust-based coordinators who facilitate cooperation among villagers, local authorities, and supporting networks.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding of Engaged Buddhism in Southeast Asia by demonstrating how doctrinal principles are translated into practical development activities, particularly through ecological infrastructure projects such as water management initiatives.



The integration of Vinaya-based discipline with development practice represents a contextual reinterpretation of monastic duty under contemporary environmental and social conditions.

The role of Buddhist monks in water development in Isan society has been observed to include duties aligned with the Vinaya (Buddhist Monastic Code) as well as responsibilities performed for society, in addition to their own self-practice. In other words, the benefits derived from the monks' roles indicate their obligations toward themselves, society, and religion.

When considering these duties, the benefits of monks' actions originate from their personal perspective, then extend to the community, and further to the public (Society). From the perspective of self, the researcher categorizes three patterns: 1) The role toward oneself as a monk (Religion), 2) The role toward oneself as a member of society, and 3) The role toward oneself in the relationship between religion and society.

This interpretation aligns with the context of Isan, where monks are expected to take on increasingly significant roles to develop society, improving both the physical and mental well-being of the community. The development is intended to follow ideals, which include upholding virtue according to the principles of *sīla* (Moral Conduct), *saṃādhi* (Concentration), and *pañña* (Wisdom). The purpose is to act in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha, practicing Dharma to achieve liberation from suffering and guiding laypeople toward the same goal.

In addition, Buddhist monks are responsible for propagating and preserving the Buddha's teachings through governance, education, dissemination, social welfare, and showing compassion to all sentient beings. This is a direct duty of monks as successors of Buddhism because monks serve as moral exemplars and spiritual supporters for the people in their communities.

These findings are consistent with the research by Phanupong Sudphungyang titled "The Role of Monks in Local Development in Education and Culture: A case study of Phrakru Sunthon Panyawimol." The study found that Phrakru Sunthon Panyawimol has the role of a monk-developer in education and culture, serving as a positive role model for the community. The role of monks in development requires characteristics, knowledge, and abilities that enable community members to participate in local development. Monks should be moral exemplars to cultivate faith among the local population, and they must continuously develop themselves to keep pace with social changes, which in turn enhances their potential to contribute to educational development. (Sudphungyang et al., 2023).

This also aligns with the research of Ekaphon Congkrarian titled "The Role of Thai Monks in Social Public Development: A case study of Phra Thammamongkolyan (Luang Phor Viriyang Sirintharo)." The study found that monks' developmental roles encompass both physical and mental aspects of individuals, along with skill development such as craftsmanship (e.g., Furniture) and physical development related to humans and the environment. This includes housing, livelihood, food, clothing, medicine, public utilities, and scholarships. (Congkrarian, 2019).

In other words, by addressing the basic needs of the community, monks help people achieve happiness alongside wisdom, leading to mental and physical stability, and strengthening social resilience in a rapidly changing world. However, in contemporary society, many traditional



roles of monks have diminished because modern social institutions have taken over functions that temples traditionally performed. The world has undergone significant changes in economics, society, politics, education, religion, and culture, influenced by foreign ideas, leading to the transfer of knowledge, attitudes, values, and cultural practices.

From the aforementioned roles, the role of Buddhist monks in water development in Isan society aligns with the guidelines of the Sangha Supreme Council of Thailand regarding the sixfold mission and social development approach. Their objectives correspond with principles and methods of human resource development, characterized by four main aspects.

1. Competence Monks should possess knowledge, skills, and expertise in specific fields such as engineering, medicine, or nursing, enabling them to support themselves, their families, and also serve the community and society.

2. Virtue Monks should think, speak, and act rightly, engage in honest occupations without harming themselves or others, practice compassion and kindness, continually seek knowledge, know themselves, be selfless for the common good, have foresight, avoid negligence, and uphold moral principles.

3. Happiness Monks should maintain a clear and peaceful mind in daily life.

4. Environmental Awareness: Monks should know how to utilize natural resources such as soil, water, and forests while maintaining ecological balance and preserving biodiversity (Sanyawiwat, 2004). It is evident that water development and management constitute a central aspect of this development approach.

The findings of this study can also be analytically interpreted through the perspectives of Engaged Buddhism, Role Theory, and Buddhist social ethics. From the standpoint of Engaged Buddhism, the involvement of monks in water resource development reflects the practical application of Buddhist teachings in addressing contemporary social and environmental challenges. Rather than remaining confined to ritual or doctrinal functions, monks actively translate moral and spiritual values into concrete actions that promote community well-being and ecological sustainability.

When examined through the lens of Role Theory, the activities of monks in water development illustrate the expansion and transformation of traditional monastic roles within modern social contexts. Monks increasingly perform multiple roles, not only as religious leaders but also as community facilitators, environmental advocates, and moral authorities who mobilize collective action. This role diversification demonstrates the dynamic interaction between religious institutions and evolving community expectations.

Furthermore, the findings resonate strongly with the framework of Buddhist social ethics, which emphasizes moral responsibility toward both human society and the natural environment. Principles such as compassion (*Karuṇā*), interdependence, moderation, and collective well-being encourage ethical engagement with ecological issues. In this context, water resource development becomes not merely a technical or economic activity but a moral endeavor grounded in ethical awareness and communal cooperation.



The integration of these theoretical perspectives demonstrates that monastic participation in water management represents a form of ethically grounded social engagement. Such engagement strengthens community resilience, promotes environmental stewardship, and redefines the contemporary relevance of Buddhist institutions in addressing local development challenges.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

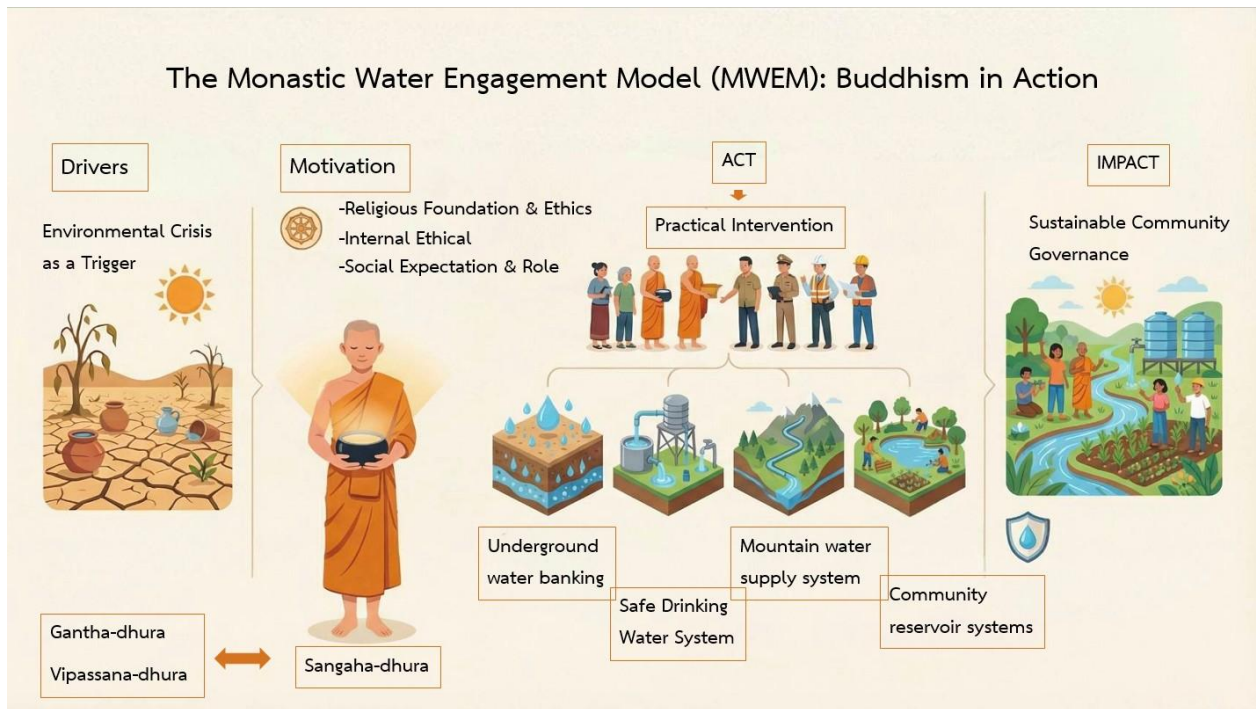


Figure 1 Conceptual Model: Monastic Water Engagement Model (MWEM)

Internal Factors: Internal factors in the Monastic Water Engagement Model (MWEM) refer to Buddhist doctrinal principles that provide the ethical foundation for action. Key concepts such as Sangaha-dhura, compassion (Karuṇā), and self-reliance shape how monks perceive community problems, guide decision-making processes, and establish moral priorities in water resource management.

External Factors: External factors represent the contextual conditions that influence the application of these principles, including environmental challenges such as drought and water scarcity, national water policies promoting decentralized governance, and local socio-economic needs. These factors function as both constraints and opportunities that shape how water management practices are implemented.

Monastic Roles (Mediating Mechanism): Within this framework, monks act as mediating agents who translate internal ethical principles and external conditions into practical action. Their roles include leadership in initiating projects, mediation between stakeholders, and mobilization of community participation, thereby bridging religious values and development practices.

Process Mechanisms: The interaction of internal and external factors through monastic roles generates key processes, including community engagement, participatory water governance,



and ethical decision-making. These processes structure how resources are managed, how decisions are made, and how collective action is sustained within the community.

Outcomes: The outcomes of these processes include environmental sustainability, community resilience, and social coexistence, which emerge from equitable resource distribution, cooperation, and shared responsibility. Additionally, participation in these processes leads to the development of self-perception in three dimensions: Awareness of interdependence, sense of collective responsibility, and moral commitment, reflecting both individual and collective transformation within the community.

As shown in Figure 1, the Monastic Water Engagement Model (MWEM) provides a systematic explanation of how Buddhist monks mediate between doctrinal principles and environmental practices to support community-based water governance and social resilience. The model integrates internal factors, including Buddhist ethical principles such as Sangaha-dhura, compassion, and self-reliance, with external factors such as environmental conditions, national water policies, and community needs. Monks function as mediating agents who translate these elements into practical processes, including community engagement, participatory governance, and ethical decision-making. These processes lead to key outcomes, namely environmental sustainability, community resilience, and social coexistence, which are understood as the result of equitable resource management, cooperation, and shared responsibility. In addition, the model explains the development of self-perception in three dimensions: Awareness of interdependence, sense of collective responsibility, and moral commitment, as experiential outcomes of participation in these processes. Overall, MWEM contributes new knowledge by demonstrating how Buddhist doctrine can function as a form of localized environmental governance, offering a theoretically grounded and interdisciplinary framework linking religion, sustainability, and social development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings clearly demonstrate that core principles, such as Sangaha-dhura, compassion, and self-reliance, are effectively translated into concrete practices through leadership, participatory decision-making, and community mobilization, resulting in improved water accessibility, enhanced collective participation, and sustainable resource management. These outcomes confirm that monastic engagement functions as a form of localized, culturally embedded environmental governance that complements state-led systems. The study also contributes theoretically through the Monastic Water Engagement Model (MWEM), which explains the relationship between ethical principles, contextual factors, and development outcomes. Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that policymakers formally integrate monastic actors into community-based water governance frameworks by supporting decentralized, culturally grounded approaches, while local communities should strengthen collaboration with monks to promote inclusive planning and equitable water distribution. Additionally, the Sangha and religious institutions should develop structured training programs that enhance monks' capacities in leadership, environmental management, and community facilitation, thereby reinforcing the application of Buddhist ethics in addressing contemporary environmental challenges. For further research,



comparative studies across different regions and socio-cultural contexts are recommended to validate and extend the MWEM, alongside quantitative research to measure the impacts of monastic-led initiatives on sustainability and resilience outcomes, as well as policy-oriented studies exploring systematic integration of religious actors into national governance frameworks. Overall, this study highlights Buddhism as an adaptive and practical framework for sustainable development, demonstrating that the integration of ethical principles, community participation, and local knowledge is essential for achieving long-term environmental sustainability and social coexistence.

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