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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STATE LAW AND MONASTIC DISCIPLINE AMID SOCIAL CHANGE IN THAI SOCIETY

Chattawat Shatnataphat^{1*}, Boonton Dockthaisong²

¹Faculty of Business Administration and Public Administration, Western University, Kanchanaburi, Thailand

²Faculty of Social Sciences, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Thailand

*Corresponding author E-mail: chattawat.sh@western.ac.th

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: For centuries, the principles of morality, cultural customs, and social structures in Thai society have been built on the foundation of Buddhism. At the same time, the Thai state has used legal authority over the Sangha in order to maintain public order, institutional accountability, and public confidence in religious institutions. Thus, Buddhist monks are subject to two interrelated systems: Monastic discipline and state law. In contemporary Thailand, rapid social and technological changes, particularly in digital communication and heightened public awareness, have raised expectations for transparency and good governance in religious organizations. This study aimed to examine the role of state law in regulating the Sangha, to analyze the relationship between state law and monastic discipline in Sangha governance, and to investigate the impact of social change on legal enforcement and the maintenance of monastic discipline in Thai society.

Methodology: This research used qualitative research. The data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with thirty key informants, including government officials, ecclesiastical administrators, legal scholars, scholars of Buddhist studies, and civil society representatives. The participants were carefully chosen on the grounds of their knowledge and direct experience of the administration and governance of religion. Also, Sangha laws, regulations, governance policies, and academic literature pertinent to religion and public administration were used as documentary analysis. All interview data were transcribed and analyzed using qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. The findings were categorized into themes on governance mechanisms, institutional accountability, legal authority, and social transformation.

Main Results: The study results suggest that the state law is very important in the regulation of the Sangha, especially in the areas of organizational management, temple asset administration, and maintenance of public order. Legal frameworks provide transparency, accountability, and institutional legitimacy. Monastic discipline remains the key method by which monks control their behavior, emphasizing morality, good conduct, and the observance of religious purity. The study concluded that state law and monastic discipline generally complement rather than conflict with each other. Monastic discipline is concerned with internal ethical standards



and spiritual integrity; State law is concerned with external accountability, social responsibility, and public interest. In cases where the behavior of monks affects society or is contrary to legal regulations, the power of the state is needed to maintain social order and carry out legal procedures.

Involvement to Buddhhadhamma: The findings were in line with the Buddhist beliefs about morality, responsibility and harmony in society. Monastic discipline is ethical self-control, integrity, and spiritual responsibility; State law is justice, accountability, and collective welfare. Social and technological developments, in particular digital media, also contributed to public participation and scrutiny of temple administration, and increased transparency and responsiveness in state institutions and the Sangha.

Conclusions: Today's good governance of the Sangha in Thailand must balance state law, monastic discipline, and societal expectations. Transparency, public confidence, and the continued relevance and stability of Buddhism in Thailand require cooperation between the state, the Sangha, and the public. At the same time, linking legal systems to Buddhist ethics can increase institutional legitimacy and foster sustainable governance in the face of continuing social and technological changes.

Keywords: Public Governance, State-Religion Relations, Buddhist Monastic Discipline (Vinaya), Religious Regulation, Thailand

Introduction

Buddhism has traditionally been a key influence on Thai society, affecting moral values, cultural traditions, and social life patterns. The Sangha has long served not only as a religious institution but also as a social and cultural basis in the local communities. In the context of the modern Thai state, however, Buddhism is intimately tied to legal and administrative structures designed to preserve public order and institutional stability. Thus, the state-religion relation in Thailand is not only about the issue of belief or ritual practice but also of governing, regulating, and public legitimacy (Fox, 2013). Existing research on state-religion relations has suggested that state engagement with religious institutions often reflects broader issues of social order and institutional governance within modern societies (Stepan, 2000). This relationship is quite evident in Thailand in the Sangha Act and the centralized administrative structure of the Sangha. Such legal provisions give the state power to control the management of the temple, its finances, and some elements of the church administration. The monastic discipline (Vinaya) still governs the behavior and moral duties of the monks. Thus, monks are part of two interrelated regimes: The religious regime of the monastic discipline and the legal regime of the state. This confluence of religious and legal authority is especially relevant in cases of public accountability, disciplinary control, and institutional governance (Sandberg, 2011). The Sangha Act and the centralized administrative structure of the Sangha in Thailand are clear manifestations of this relationship. These legal instruments empower the state to supervise temple administration, financial management, and elements of ecclesiastical governance, whereas monastic discipline



(Vinaya) continues to guide the conduct and ethical responsibilities of monks. Thus, monks are positioned within two overlapping systems: The religious system of monastic discipline and the legal system of the state. This overlap of religious authority and legal authority is particularly important in issues of public accountability, disciplinary control, and institutional governance. These legal mechanisms provide the state with the right to oversee the administration of the temple, the financial management, and some of the ecclesiastical governance, while monastic discipline (Vinaya) continues to govern the conduct and ethical responsibilities of monks. Monks are thus part of two overlapping systems, the religious system of monastic rules and the legal system of the state. This overlap of religious and legal authority becomes particularly important in cases of public accountability, disciplinary control, and institutional governance. (Sandberg, 2011).

One issue that arises from this relationship is the tension between religious autonomy and state intervention. The discipline of the monastic order is mainly concerned with spiritual conduct, moral integrity, and internal regulation within the Buddhist order. On the other hand, state law is concerned with legal responsibility, social order, and the protection of public interests. As Thai society continues to evolve socially and institutionally, the interaction between these two systems has become increasingly complex and important. The former mainly involves the spiritual behavior, moral quality, and internal control of the Buddhist community, while the latter concerns legal liability, social order, and the safeguard of public interests. The interaction of these two systems has become more complex and significant as the Thai society is changing socially and institutionally. Recent years have seen a growing public interest in religious institutions, especially as a result of social and technological change. The proliferation of digital media and the rapid dissemination of information have increased public demand for transparency and accountability (Campbell, 2013). In Thailand, controversies over temple finances, alleged misconduct by monks, and disputes over temple administration have often received extensive public attention through online media and digital communication channels. These incidents have raised questions about the effectiveness of existing Sangha governance mechanisms and the ability of state law and monastic discipline to uphold public trust and institutional legitimacy (Schonthal, 2017). As a result, the governance of the Sangha is increasingly shaped not only by legal and religious principles, but also by growing public expectations in a rapidly changing digital society. The rapid flow of information and the explosion of digital media have raised public expectations for transparency and accountability (Campbell, 2013). In Thailand, online media and digital communication channels have often been used for public discussions of temple finance disputes, allegations of wrongdoings by monks, and temple management conflicts. These incidents have called into question the efficacy of existing mechanisms of Sangha governance and the efficacy of state law and monastic discipline to maintain public trust and institutional legitimacy (Schonthal, 2017). In this context, the governance of the Sangha is increasingly shaped not only by legal and religious principles but also by rising public expectations within a rapidly changing digital society.



While Buddhism, religious governance, and state-religion relations have been considered in a range of settings in previous scholarship, there have been comparatively few empirical studies that have specifically addressed the interaction between Thai state law and monastic Vinaya, particularly in times of contemporary social change. Most contemporary scholarship treats legal regulation, monastic discipline, and Sangha administration in isolation, with little attention to how these regulatory systems intersect in an increasingly digital and socially connected environment. Moreover, there has yet to be enough analysis of the way the Sangha Act and existing ecclesiastical governance structures respond to contemporary challenges in Thailand surrounding accountability, public scrutiny, and institutional legitimacy. The gap in the literature signifies the need for a more integrated study of the links between state law, monastic discipline, and social transformation in contemporary Thai society. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between state law and monastic discipline in the context of ongoing social change in Thailand. The present study investigates the functions and mechanisms of state law in the regulation of the Sangha, the interrelationship between state law and monastic discipline in the administration and disciplinary maintenance of the Sangha, and the effect of social change on the enforcement and preservation of monastic discipline in Thailand. This study attempts to contribute to the discussion of religious governance in contemporary Thai society by providing a more holistic perspective of the interrelationship between legal regulation, monastic discipline, and institutional change in a time of social and technological change. The findings may also offer useful insights for developing governance approaches that balance religious autonomy, legal accountability, and public legitimacy in the Thai context.

Objectives

This study aimed to examine the role of state law in regulating the Sangha, to analyze the relationship between state law and monastic discipline in Sangha governance, and to investigate the impact of social change on legal enforcement and the maintenance of monastic discipline in Thai society.

Methodology

1. Research Design: This study used qualitative research methodology to examine the relationship between state law and monastic discipline in the context of social change in Thai society. The study aimed to understand people's perceptions and interpretations of the interaction between legal authority and religious authority in governing the Sangha, and therefore, a qualitative approach was deemed appropriate. The research did not measure variables quantitatively but focused on participants' experiences, views, and interpretations in their social and institutional contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study was conducted from an interpretive research paradigm. The paradigm was based on the assumption that individuals create meanings in relation to social phenomena and institutional practices. The research was carried out for six months, from June to November 2025. During this period,



the researcher conducted interviews, reviewed documentary materials, transcribed data, and performed thematic interpretation.

2. Selection of Key Informants: Using purposive sampling, we identified and recruited 30 key informants with direct experience and relevant expertise in Sangha administration, religious governance, legal regulation, and monastic discipline. Participant selection was based on the following criteria for inclusion. In particular, each informant had to have a minimum of five years of professional experience in a relevant area and possess (Or Have Possessed) responsibilities related to religious administration, legal governance, Buddhist studies, or public administration. Participants were divided into five groups to provide a wider range of perspectives. They comprised 6 government officials involved in the administration of law and religion; 8 ecclesiastical administrators who supervised the governance of the Sangha; 5 legal professionals working on public or religious law; 7 scholars working on Buddhist studies and public administration; And 4 civil society representatives working on issues of religious accountability and transparency. Participants were accessed through institutional coordination, professional contacts, and referral-based recruitment. This approach made it possible to reach individuals with specialized knowledge relevant to the objectives of the study. But the researcher acknowledged that the use of purposive and referral sampling may have introduced a degree of selection bias, particularly since participants who were more accessible or more willing to talk about sensitive governance issues were more likely to participate.

3. Research Instruments and Data Collection: The main tool for data collection was a semi-structured interview guide developed based on research objectives and a review of related literature. The interview guideline comprised open-ended questions on three broad themes: The role of state law in the regulation of the Sangha, the relationship between legal authority and monastic discipline, and the impact of social change on religious governance and accountability. The interview questions were reviewed by three specialists in qualitative research, Buddhist studies, and public administration to improve clarity, relevance, and content validity prior to data collection. Data collection was through in-depth semi-structured interviews, face-to-face or through online communication platforms, depending on the convenience and availability of participants. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, typically. All interviews were conducted in Thai, audio-recorded with the permission of the participants, and transcribed verbatim for the analysis. Field notes were also written during and after the interviews to capture contextual details, observations, and non-verbal cues that might assist with interpretation. The data collection was carried out in a number of well-defined stages. First, the researcher contacted potential participants and scheduled interview appointments. Second, informed consent was obtained prior to each interview. Third, interviews were held and recorded. Fourth, the recordings were transcribed and checked for accuracy. The transcripts were finally organized and prepared for coding and thematic analysis. Documentary research was also employed to corroborate and triangulate the interview findings. The relevant



documents were the Sangha Act, ecclesiastical regulations, public policy documents, legal materials, and academic studies on governance and religion (Bowen, 2009).

4. Adequacy of the Sample Size: The number of 30 informants was considered appropriate for the qualitative inquiry, as the aim of the study was to gather rich and detailed data from participants representing different institutional sectors. Previous qualitative research has shown that interview-based studies generally reach sufficient depth and thematic saturation with an estimated sample size of 20 - 30 participants (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Data collection was continued until thematic saturation was reached, i.e., no new information or themes emerged from the interviews. Thus, the adequacy of the sample was not only evaluated in terms of quantity, but also in terms of depth, consistency, and repetition of the collected data (Saunders et al., 2018). Previous qualitative studies have suggested that interview-based studies generally achieve adequate depth and thematic coverage with 20 - 30 participants (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Interviews were conducted until thematic saturation was achieved, in that additional interviews did not produce substantially new insights or emerging themes. Sample adequacy was therefore assessed not only numerically, but also based on the depth, consistency, and repetition of the data collected (Saunders et al., 2018).

5. Data Analysis: The collected material was analyzed using a systematic multistage qualitative content analysis combined with thematic analysis. First, all the interview transcripts and documentary material were read several times to get familiar with the data. Then, open coding was performed to extract meaningful statements, recurring ideas, and important concepts pertinent to the research questions. This was followed by axial coding in which related codes were associated and organized into higher-level conceptual categories. Finally, selective coding was used to combine the categories into key themes that represented the relationships among state law, monastic discipline, governance mechanisms, and social change. The coding was performed manually and not with the use of qualitative analysis software, such as NVivo. In the course of the analysis, the researcher engaged in a constant comparative process across participant groups and documentary sources to identify similarities, differences, and recurring patterns. Themes were reviewed and refined through multiple iterations until they achieved conceptual clarity and internal consistency. The results were then contextualized in relation to theories of public governance, state-religion relations, and Buddhist monastic administration in order to explain the larger institutional dynamics in contemporary Thai society.

6. Trustworthiness and Research Ethics: To increase the trustworthiness of the research, several strategies were used, which include credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation and member checking. Interview data were cross-checked with documentary evidence to confirm consistency between data sources. Selected participants were asked to review summaries and interpretations of the findings to ensure accuracy of the researcher's interpretation. The findings were found to be dependable by maintaining a detailed audit trail of the steps of data collection, the procedures



of coding, the decisions of analysis, and the processes of interpretation. Confirmability was established through researcher reflexivity and through a constant awareness of possible personal bias in interpreting the findings. Reflexive notes were kept throughout the study to enhance transparency and to reduce subjective bias in the analytical process. To enhance transferability, a description of the research context in detail, characteristics of the participants, institutional settings, and the governance structures associated with the Sangha in Thai society was provided. This contextual information allows readers to judge the extent to which the findings may be relevant to other settings or related studies. The research process was carefully observed for ethical considerations. Participants were told about the aim of the study, that they could volunteer to participate, and that they could withdraw at any time with no adverse consequences. To protect confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms and coded identifiers were used instead of the participants' real names. All research data were securely stored and used exclusively for academic purposes in line with accepted research ethics guidelines (Neuman, 2014).

Results and Discussion

1. Role and Mechanisms of State Law in Governing the Sangha: The findings revealed that state law functioned as a central institutional mechanism for regulating Sangha governance in Thailand. Participants reported that legal frameworks played an important role in organizing ecclesiastical administration, supervising temple asset management, and maintaining public order. Government officials emphasized that legal regulations established administrative standards and strengthened accountability mechanisms, particularly in relation to financial management and institutional transparency. Ecclesiastical administrators similarly indicated that state law facilitated coordination between the Sangha and state agencies in areas involving organizational administration and conflict management. The findings further showed that participants viewed legal intervention as particularly necessary when issues affected public interests, including financial misconduct, corruption, and disputes concerning temple administration. Informants consistently reported that legal enforcement contributed to preserving institutional credibility and sustaining public trust in Buddhism. However, many participants emphasized that legal authority should remain limited in matters directly related to monastic discipline and religious practice. Several informants additionally identified bureaucratic complexity, institutional fragmentation, and sensitivity surrounding religious authority as constraints affecting the effectiveness of legal enforcement procedures.

Discussion: These findings suggest that Sangha governance in Thailand reflects a model of institutional interdependence rather than strict separation between religion and the state. The coexistence of legal authority and religious authority demonstrates that state law functions primarily as an external governance mechanism supporting administrative accountability and public legitimacy, while monastic institutions preserve moral and spiritual authority. This interpretation supports Fox's (2013) argument that state-religion relations frequently operate through negotiated



cooperation rather than adversarial separation. The findings contribute to broader governance debates by demonstrating that legal legitimacy and religious legitimacy can coexist within a shared institutional framework. Similar patterns have been identified in studies of religious governance in South and Southeast Asia, where state institutions selectively intervene in religious administration to maintain social order while preserving institutional autonomy (Schonthal, 2017). However, the present study further demonstrates that contemporary Thai society increasingly expects religious institutions to comply with standards of transparency and accountability commonly associated with modern public governance systems. This indicates that Sangha governance is becoming progressively influenced by public-sector governance principles, particularly institutional responsiveness and administrative transparency. From a policy perspective, the findings suggest the need for clearer coordination mechanisms between ecclesiastical authorities and state agencies. Institutional fragmentation and bureaucratic delays may weaken public confidence in religious governance, particularly in high-profile cases involving public resources or allegations of misconduct. Strengthening administrative coordination and legal clarity, therefore, appears essential for sustaining institutional legitimacy in contemporary Thai society.

2. Relationship Between State Law and Monastic Discipline in Sangha Governance:

The findings indicated that monastic discipline (Vinaya) remained the principal ethical framework governing the conduct, integrity, and spiritual responsibilities of monks, whereas state law primarily addressed issues concerning public accountability and legal compliance. Participants consistently described the relationship between these two systems as complementary rather than conflicting. Informants reported that Vinaya regulated internal moral conduct and religious legitimacy within the monastic community, while state law provided external mechanisms for institutional regulation and social responsibility. The analysis further revealed that participants clearly differentiated between ecclesiastical authority and legal authority. Monastic discipline was perceived as essential for preserving the ethical foundations and spiritual identity of Buddhism, whereas state law was viewed as necessary for regulating the social and administrative dimensions of religious institutions. Informants additionally emphasized that legal intervention became particularly significant when monks' actions generated broader social consequences, including criminal offenses, financial irregularities, and disputes involving temple assets.

Discussion: These findings suggest that Sangha governance in Thailand operates through the interaction of two interconnected normative systems: Religious discipline and legal regulation. This supports Doe's (2018) argument that religious law and state law frequently coexist as overlapping systems of governance, particularly in contexts where institutional legitimacy and public accountability intersect. Rather than functioning in opposition, the two systems appear to regulate different dimensions of institutional life, thereby contributing collectively to governance stability. The study contributes theoretically through the concept of "Dual Normative Governance," which explains how legal legitimacy and religious legitimacy coexist within Buddhist institutional administration. This framework extends previous scholarship that has often examined legal



regulation and monastic discipline separately. The findings demonstrate that Sangha governance depends not only on legal enforcement but also on the preservation of moral authority and religious legitimacy within the monastic community. The findings additionally challenge assumptions that state intervention necessarily undermines religious autonomy. Instead, the Thai case demonstrates a governance structure in which selective legal intervention strengthens public accountability without fully subordinating religious authority to state control. This pattern resembles Bhargava's notion of "Principled Distance," in which the state selectively engages with religious institutions to maintain social order while preserving religious legitimacy. The study, therefore, contributes to international discussions on governance in Buddhist-majority societies where ethical authority and legal authority operate simultaneously within institutional governance structures.

3. Impact of Social Change on Law Enforcement and the Preservation of Monastic Discipline: The findings revealed that rapid social and technological transformation significantly influenced the governance environment of the Thai Sangha. Participants consistently reported that digital communication technologies and social media platforms increased public scrutiny of temple administration and monastic conduct. Informants indicated that controversies involving monks and religious institutions became more visible through online communication channels, resulting in increased public demands for transparency, accountability, and institutional responsiveness. Government officials reported that digital communication intensified pressure on state agencies to respond more rapidly to allegations involving monks and temple administration. Ecclesiastical leaders similarly acknowledged that contemporary society increasingly expected higher standards of ethical conduct, administrative transparency, and institutional accountability from religious institutions. Civil society representatives further emphasized that online public participation functioned as an informal mechanism of accountability, shaping perceptions of institutional legitimacy and public trust.

Discussion: These findings suggest that digital transformation has substantially altered the relationship between religious institutions and society by expanding participatory forms of governance and public oversight. This supports Campbell's (2013) argument that religion in the digital era becomes increasingly exposed to public visibility and social scrutiny. However, the present study extends existing scholarship by demonstrating that digital media in Thailand functions not only as a communication platform but also as a decentralized governance mechanism influencing institutional accountability and legitimacy. The findings also challenge modernization theories, suggesting that social transformation necessarily weakens religion in contemporary society. Instead, the study indicates that modernization and digitalization increase societal expectations regarding ethical leadership, transparency, and accountability within religious institutions. This interpretation aligns with Subrahmanyam's (2019) argument that changing relationships between the Sangha and society reshape public understandings of religious legitimacy in modern Thailand. From a practical perspective, the findings imply that religious institutions can no longer rely solely on traditional hierarchical authority structures



to maintain legitimacy. Instead, Sangha governance increasingly depends on transparency practices, responsive communication, and effective engagement with public concerns in digital environments. Consequently, governance reforms involving digital communication management, transparent financial reporting, and public accountability mechanisms appear increasingly necessary for sustaining institutional trust in contemporary Thai society.

Integrated Discussion: The findings collectively demonstrate that Sangha governance in contemporary Thailand operates through the interaction of state law, monastic discipline, and evolving societal expectations. State law provides institutional structure, legal accountability, and administrative oversight, whereas monastic discipline preserves ethical legitimacy and religious integrity. This interaction contributes theoretically to the concept of "Dual Normative Governance," which explains how legal legitimacy and religious legitimacy coexist within Buddhist institutional administration. The study also demonstrates that social transformation and digital communication technologies increasingly shape public expectations toward religious institutions, thereby strengthening the importance of participatory governance, institutional transparency, and public accountability. Unlike conventional models of secular governance that emphasize institutional separation between religion and the state, the Thai case illustrates a cooperative governance structure in which religious and legal institutions remain institutionally interconnected. Overall, the study contributes to international scholarship on religious governance by demonstrating how Buddhist institutions adapt to rapid social and technological change while attempting to preserve moral authority and institutional legitimacy. The findings further suggest that sustainable Sangha governance depends not only on legal enforcement or monastic discipline individually, but also on the capacity of religious and state institutions to negotiate changing societal expectations within increasingly transparent and participatory social environments.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

This study has contributions to the literature on state-religion relations and religious governance in three interrelated dimensions: Conceptual, empirical, and contextual contributions. Conceptually, the study develops the idea of "Dual Normative Governance," which refers to the co-existence and interaction of state law and monastic discipline (Vinaya) in governing the Sangha. Theoretically, the concept is grounded in the state-religion governance theory and institutional legitimacy that shows how legal accountability and religious legitimacy work complementarily, not in conflict, in the context of Thai Buddhism. Moreover, the research theorizes "Participatory Governance" as the increasing involvement of citizens and civil society in the monitoring of religious institutions through digital communication, public discourse, and social accountability tools. The study also validates the use of the PESTEL framework by showing its applicability in analyzing the influence of political factors. The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Thai Sangha Governance Analysis

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study demonstrated that the governance of the Thai Sangha in the context of rapid social and technological transformation depends on the effective integration of state law, monastic discipline (Vinaya), and public expectations. The findings confirmed that state law functions as a formal mechanism for institutional accountability, administrative regulation, and public order, whereas monastic discipline remains the primary ethical framework governing the conduct, integrity, and religious legitimacy of monks. Rather than operating in conflict, these two systems were found to function in a complementary manner that reinforces both legal and moral legitimacy within Sangha governance. The study contributes theoretically by advancing the concept of "Dual Normative Governance," which explains how legal authority and religious authority coexist and interact within Buddhist institutional administration in Thailand. Practically, the findings highlight the increasing importance of transparency, digital accountability, and collaborative governance among state agencies, ecclesiastical authorities, and civil society in maintaining institutional credibility and public trust. The study further suggests that strengthening inter-agency coordination, improving transparent financial and administrative practices, and developing governance and digital communication competencies among religious and governmental actors are essential for sustainable Sangha governance in contemporary society. Future research should expand comparative investigations across Theravāda Buddhist countries



and employ quantitative or mixed-method approaches to further examine public perceptions of religious legitimacy, institutional accountability, and the influence of digital governance on religious administration. Overall, the study underscores that the long-term sustainability and legitimacy of Buddhism in Thai society depend not solely on legal enforcement or monastic discipline, but on the adaptive capacity of religious and state institutions to respond effectively to evolving societal expectations.

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ENHANCING BUDDHIST EDUCATION THROUGH THE SAN-DONTA TRADITION OF THAI-KHMER COMMUNITIES IN THAILAND

Phramaha Ekkapan Maduea¹, Phramaha Chatchai Tanbal²,
Chalermchai Kaewkanha², Suriya Klangrit^{3*}

¹Faculty of Education, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Surin Campus, Surin, Thailand

²Faculty of Education, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Thailand

³Master of Arts Program in Global Studies, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University,
Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Thailand

*Corresponding author E-mail: missuniverse5000@yahoo.com

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Amid rapid social change and cultural transformation in contemporary Thai society, increasing concerns have emerged regarding the weakening transmission of moral values and cultural identity among younger generations. Although Buddhist education remains part of the national curriculum, limited research has examined how local cultural heritage can function as an applied framework for enhancing the learning of Buddhist principles in schools. The San-Donta Tradition represents a significant cultural institution that integrates animistic ancestral belief with Theravāda Buddhist ethical teachings. This study aims to examine the cultural heritage of the San-Donta Tradition among the Thai-Khmer community in Thailand and analyze its embedded Buddhist principles to explore pathways for their integration into school-based moral and ethical education.

Methodology: This study adopted a qualitative documentary research design grounded in rigorous cultural and textual analysis, deliberately delimited to secondary data synthesis. Using a keyword-based purposive strategy focusing on "San-Donta Tradition" "Thai-Khmer Community," "Buddhist Principles" "Moral Education" and "School Instruction" a credible analytical corpus was gathered from academic literature and ethnographic records. Following Klaus Krippendorff's framework, data analysis was executed through a systematic three-stage qualitative content and thematic analysis procedure such as open coding, categorization, and thematic synthesis. This analytical process identified and categorized embedded Buddhist principles into individual-level virtues and social-level ethical reinforcement, ultimately transforming descriptive cultural knowledge into a validated pedagogical framework for formal school-based Buddhist education.

Main Results: The findings revealed that the San-Donta Tradition functioned as an active, culturally embedded moral system operating symbiotically across two operational levels. At the individual level, the ritual naturally cultivated personal virtues of gratitude (Katanyu-katavedi),



filial piety, compassion, and karmic moral accountability through practical ancestral remembrance and merit-making (Puñña). These ritualistic elements served as experiential learning mechanisms that effectively transformed abstract Theravāda Buddhist ethical doctrines into lived personal experiences. At the social level, collective participation across kinship networks reinforced communal harmony and social sympathy (Saṅgaha-vatthu), visibly manifesting as enhanced solidarity, mutual reciprocity, and intergenerational respect. By successfully synthesizing animistic ancestral reverence with Buddhist moral philosophy, the tradition established a holistic ethical framework that bridged spiritual continuity with reciprocal social responsibility. Ultimately, the results demonstrated that the San-Donta Tradition operated not merely as a passive ceremonial heritage, but as a functional informal moral curriculum capable of structurally enhancing Buddhist principle instruction within formal educational settings.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: This study demonstrates that the San-Donta Tradition reflects a form of applied Buddhism grounded in cultural practice and aligns with Applied Buddhism in the development of wisdom and morality. Core Buddhist values such as gratitude, compassion (Karūṇā), loving-kindness (Mettā), and ethical conduct (Sīla) are embedded within ritual actions and social norms. The practice of merit transfer reinforces understanding of karma and moral causation, while communal harmony reflects principles aligned with the Noble Eightfold Path, particularly right conduct and right intention. By integrating these culturally embodied teachings into educational contexts, schools can connect doctrinal Buddhist content with students lived cultural experiences. Such integration promotes moral reflection, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility grounded in local identity and spiritual heritage.

Conclusions: The study underscores the significant role of the San-Donta Tradition as a sustainable cultural framework for enhancing the learning of Buddhist principles in Thai-Khmer communities. Functioning as both an individual system of moral cultivation and a communal ethical structure, the tradition supports character development, intergenerational continuity, and social harmony. Integrating cultural heritage into school instruction offers a culturally responsive approach to Buddhist education that strengthens ethical awareness, communal solidarity, and long-term moral development.

Keywords: Buddhist Education, Thai-Khmer Community, San-Donta Tradition, Moral Education

Introduction

Thailand is widely recognized as a pluralistic society characterized by cultural diversity, in which multiple ethnic communities maintain distinctive identities through belief systems, ritual practices, languages, and forms of local knowledge. Among these communities, Thai-Khmer people represent a significant cultural group whose historical roots and worldview have been shaped by long-standing traditions and communal practices. Across provinces where Thai-Khmer populations reside, cultural identity has been sustained through inherited rituals, ancestral veneration, and everyday expressions of collective memory. These practices function not merely



as ceremonial events but as forms of living cultural heritage that connect past generations with present social life. One of the most important expressions of this heritage is the San-Donta Tradition, a ritual complex centered on ancestral remembrance and moral obligations toward forebears. The tradition reflects a historical synthesis of indigenous cosmology, Theravāda Buddhist ethical principles, and Brahmanical elements, forming a distinctive spiritual and cultural identity among Thai-Khmer communities. Through symbolic offerings, communal gatherings, and ritual performances, the San-Donta Tradition functions as a key mechanism for transmitting values, reinforcing kinship bonds, and sustaining intergenerational continuity (Mahamakut Buddhist University, 1984); (Visalo, 2025) As such, it represents an integral component of the cultural heritage of Thai-Khmer people in Thailand and continues to play a vital role in shaping community life.

Beyond its historical and ritual dimensions, the San-Donta Tradition embodies a rich system of moral and ethical teachings embedded within its beliefs and practices. The ritual emphasizes gratitude toward ancestors, filial piety, respect for elders, communal solidarity, compassion, and moral responsibility-values that are closely aligned with fundamental Buddhist doctrines concerning karma, merit-making, and moral discipline. These ethical dimensions operate at both individual and social levels. At the individual level, participants are encouraged to cultivate mindfulness, moral restraint, and a sense of indebtedness to parents and forebears. Socially, the tradition reinforces unity, mutual support, and harmonious coexistence within the community. Such moral foundations are highly relevant to contemporary educational contexts, where schools are entrusted not only with academic instruction but also with character formation and ethical development. Educational institutions have long been recognized as important spaces for transmitting cultural values and shaping moral consciousness among younger generations. Integrating the moral and ethical teachings reflected in the San-Donta Tradition into school-based instruction can therefore contribute to strengthening students' understanding of ethical principles, fostering moral reasoning, and cultivating respect for cultural heritage. In this sense, the tradition offers a culturally grounded resource for enhancing moral education while simultaneously supporting the preservation of local identity and wisdom.

However, in contemporary Thai society, the continuity of traditional rituals such as the San-Donta Tradition faces increasing challenges. Processes of modernization, globalization, migration, and shifting educational priorities have significantly transformed lifestyles and value orientations, particularly among younger generations. Although San-Donta rituals continue to be practiced in many communities, their deeper meanings and philosophical foundations are not always systematically conveyed to youth. As a result, these cultural practices risk becoming symbolic or ceremonial performances detached from their embedded ethical principles (Siriphaprapagon et al., 2023) Moreover, while previous studies have examined the San-Donta Tradition from anthropological, historical, or ritual perspectives, limited research has focused on translating its moral and ethical dimensions into structured educational frameworks. There remains a gap in the development of conceptual models that effectively



connect cultural heritage with formal moral instruction in schools. At the policy level, legal and educational frameworks in Thailand have acknowledged the importance of cultural preservation and the integration of local wisdom into education. (Office of the Council of State, 1999), Nevertheless, practical mechanisms for incorporating community-based cultural traditions into moral education remain underdeveloped and insufficiently explored. From a global perspective, the frameworks such as those proposed by UNESCO for safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) emphasize the importance of living transmission, community participation, and educational engagement in sustaining cultural practices (UNESCO, 2003); (UNESCO, 2018). Similarly, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlight inclusive and equitable quality education, as well as cultural sustainability as essential components of long-term social development (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2025). Despite these international frameworks, there is remains insufficient scholarly work that situates the San-Donta Tradition within school-based moral education aligned with principles of sustainability and cultural continuity.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to contribute both conceptually and educationally by examining how the cultural heritage of the San-Donta Tradition can enhance moral and ethical learning in schools among Thai-Khmer communities in Thailand. By analyzing the moral teachings embedded within the tradition and exploring their relevance to formal education, the study proposes a culturally grounded approach to character development that bridges community heritage and institutional learning. This approach not only supports the sustainable preservation of cultural identity but also promotes ethical awareness and social responsibility among students in a rapidly changing society. By situating the discussion within frameworks of UNESCO's ICH safeguarding principles and the SDGs, the study further underscores the broader significance of integrating cultural heritage into educational systems as part of sustainable development efforts (Pruksa et al., 2022); (Wulf, 2025); (Zabulis et al., 2025). Ultimately, the research contributes to expanding academic dialogue on culturally responsive moral education and offers practical implications for educators and schools seeking to strengthen both cultural continuity and students' moral development in contemporary Thai society.

Objectives

This study aims to examine the cultural heritage of the San-Donta Tradition among the Thai-Khmer community in Thailand and analyze its embedded Buddhist principles to explore pathways for their integration into school-based moral and ethical education.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative documentary research design, deliberately delimited to a theoretical and conceptual contribution. It aimed to propose a structured integration model by synthesizing existing knowledge rather than engaging in primary fieldwork (Creswell, 1998).



A qualitative approach was considered appropriate for interpreting culturally embedded meanings, symbolic expressions, and value systems conveyed through ritual practices and community traditions. By focusing on secondary data, this research maintained a high level of methodological transparency while specifically addressing the ethical dimensions of data collection.

1. Research design and ethical delimitation, to ensure strict ethical compliance, the study relied exclusively on publicly available and published secondary sources. Consequently, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was not required, as the research did not involve direct intervention, interviews, or observation of human subjects (Bailey, 2018); (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This strategic delimitation allowed for a rigorous synthesis of established cultural, historical, and pedagogical frameworks without infringing upon the privacy or ethical sensitivities of ethnic groups, thereby strengthening the objectivity and conceptual credibility of the study.

2. Data collection and search strategy, Data were collected through a systematic review of secondary sources using a purposive selection strategy to guarantee research rigor. The analytical corpus included academic journal articles, specialized books, theses, cultural studies, and policy documents from credible databases (e.g., ThaiJO and International Repositories). The selection of documents was guided by a keyword-based relevance strategy to ensure the inclusion of pertinent literature. The specific search terms utilized included: "San-Donta" "Thai-Khmer Community" "Buddhist Principles" "Moral Education" and "School Instruction" Sources were explicitly evaluated for their authenticity, relevance, academic rigor, and conceptual contribution to the research objectives, with an emphasis on both classical foundational works and recent studies (Bowen, 2009). Priority was given to texts addressing the relationship between cultural heritage and value transmission, as well as the integration of religious knowledge into school-based learning.

3. Data analysis and research rigor, to address the need for procedural detail and analytical rigor, data analysis was conducted using qualitative Content Analysis (CA) and thematic analysis following the principles proposed by Krippendorff (2019). The analytical process followed a systematic three-stage procedure; 1) Open Coding: This involved an initial careful reading and scanning of the textual data to identify recurring terms, concepts, and meaningful units related to cultural heritage, ritual practices, and moral teachings. 2) Categorization: Grouping the generated codes into broader thematic categories, focusing explicitly on. 2.1) Elements of cultural heritage embedded in the San-Donta Tradition, and 2.2) Buddhist principles and ethical values reflected in ritual beliefs, and 3) Thematic Synthesis: Summarizing and synthesizing these categories to establish a conceptual linkage between Thai-Khmer cultural heritage and moral-ethical learning in school contexts.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework illustrates in Figure 1, presents the relationship between the Thai-Khmer community, the cultural heritage of the San-Donta Tradition, and the integration of Buddhist principles and moral teachings into schools' education to enhance moral and ethical

learning. The framework is grounded in the perspective that cultural heritage function as foundational source of value formation moral development within formal educational systems. Within this framework the Thai-Khmer community represents the sociocultural context in which the San-Donta Tradition has been historically practiced and transmitted across generations. Embedded within this context, the cultural heritage of the San-Donta Tradition encompasses two primary dimensions; 1) The historical background of the Thai-Khmer people and 2) Cultural identity expressed through beliefs systems, symbolic practices, and doctrinal foundations embedded in ritual practices. These elements collectively reflect shared memory, spiritual worldview, and community norms that sustain cultural continuity. Furthermore, the framework identifies that the San-Donta Tradition embodies moral and ethical teachings operating at both individual and social levels. At the individual level, the tradition promotes the virtues such as gratitude, filial piety, moral responsibility, and ethical discipline. At the social level, it reinforces values including unity, mutual support, compassion, and respect for communal harmony. These value dimensions are closely aligned with core Buddhist principles and moral teachings, thereby providing a culturally grounded ethical system. The framework posits that systematic analysis of cultural heritage and its embedded moral teachings can serve as a foundation for integrating Buddhist principles into formal school instruction. This integration is expected to enhance moral reasoning, ethical awareness, and character development among students, while simultaneously supporting the preservation of cultural identity and local wisdom within educational contexts.



Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Results and Discussion

1. The cultural heritage of the San-Donta Tradition among Thai-Khmer community

1.1 Background of the Thai-Khmer ethnic group

The Thai-Khmer ethnic group represented one of the long-established indigenous communities in Thailand, whose cultural identity was historically shaped through centuries of



interaction among ethnicity, belief systems, geography, and socio-political transformations. Classified within the Austroasiatic language family, specifically the Mon-Khmer linguistic branch, the Thai-Khmer people were regarded by researchers as descendants of the ancient Mon-Khmer civilization that once flourished across mainland Southeast Asia (Sornyai, 2019). Linguistically and anthropologically, this group maintained a distinct ethnic identity rooted in shared ancestry, collective memory, and cultural continuity. The Mon-Khmer language family was widely acknowledged as one of the most ancient linguistic traditions in the region, characterized by relatively simple phonological structures and vocabulary deeply embedded in everyday life (Sornyai, 2019). Language, therefore, served not merely as a means of communication but also as an anchor of ethnic consciousness and historical continuity.

In Thailand, the Thai-Khmer population was found to be concentrated primarily in the southern part of the Isan region, particularly in Surin province. In this area, community members frequently identified themselves as "Khmer Sa-ren" to distinguish their identity from that of present-day Cambodians. This distinction reflected not only political and geographic boundaries but also localized socio-cultural adaptations shaped by Thailand's historical and administrative development. Despite national integration, Thai-Khmer communities continued to maintain and express their ethnic distinctiveness through ritual practices, traditional attire, silk weaving, craftsmanship, and communal ceremonies. Historically, the Thai-Khmer ethnic group shared profound connections with the Khmer Empire, which once dominated large areas of Southeast Asia. Archaeological evidence and historical documentation, including accounts by the Chinese envoy Zhou Daguan and analyses by later scholars, described the Khmer civilization as highly sophisticated in terms of political organization, architectural achievement, religious institutions, and artistic expression (Schrock et al., 1970). These historical foundations effectively functioned as the baseline that shaped contemporary Thai-Khmer identity through symbolic expressions embedded in ritual practices, aesthetic forms, and sacred traditions.

From the perspective of cultural diffusion theory, the endurance of these Thai-Khmer cultural characteristics is understood as the transmission and adaptation of core civilizational traits through migration, trade, and interregional contact (Muenjanchoei, 1999). As the ancient Khmer civilization expanded and interacted with neighboring regions, its spiritual beliefs, ceremonial systems, and social structures gradually diffused into areas that are now part of northeastern Thailand. Over time, these elements are localized and adapted to suit the specific environmental and social contexts of Thai-Khmer communities, resulting in a distinctive yet historically rooted cultural system. At the center of this cultural system lies an animistic worldview a belief structure emphasizing the existence, power, and continuity of spiritual entities, particularly ancestral spirits (Schrock et al., 1970). In Thai-Khmer society, spiritual forces are perceived as active agents capable of influencing human fortune, health, prosperity, and social harmony.



This worldview shapes not only ritual practices but also moral behavior, social organization, and intergenerational relationships. Within this belief framework, the San-Donta Tradition emerges as one of the most significant and enduring sacred rituals of the Thai-Khmer community. San-Donta is fundamentally an ancestral worship ceremony that expresses reverence, gratitude, and moral obligation toward deceased forebears. It represents a ritualized form of communication between the living and the spiritual realm, reinforcing the reciprocal relationship between generations. Although Thai-Khmer communities experience modernization, migration, and social transformation, the San-Donta remains a highly respected and sacred cultural institution. It is not merely a ceremonial event but also a distinctive cultural identity marker that differentiates Thai-Khmer people from other ethnic groups in Thailand. Thus, within the broader context of the Thai-Khmer ethnic group, the San-Donta Tradition stands as a prominent and inherited cultural expression. It embodies the sacred dimension of belief, spiritual continuity, and ancestral reverence that is transmitted across generations. Its persistence demonstrates the resilience of belief-based cultural systems and the central role of ritual in maintaining ethnic identity.

1.2 Cultural identity of San-Donta Tradition

The San-Donta Tradition represented a significant dimension of Thai-Khmer cultural heritage, deeply embedded in animistic belief systems and ancestral veneration. As an inherited ritual practice, it was transmitted across generations, functioning as both a sacred ceremony and a moral institution within the community, while symbolizing continuity, identity, and spiritual interconnectedness between the past and the present (Muenjanchoei, 1999). At its core, the San-Donta tradition reflected the animistic worldview that ancestral spirits continued to exist beyond physical death and maintained influence over the living. This belief emphasized that ancestors possessed spiritual power capable of granting blessings or misfortune depending on the conduct of their descendants; Consequently, ritual practices during San-Donta involved offerings of food, symbolic items, prayers, and communal gatherings designed to honor and appease ancestral spirits (Schrock et al., 1970). Beyond its ritual structure, the San-Donta tradition embodied philosophical teachings that functioned as moral guidance for younger generations, embedding values such as gratitude, filial piety, humility, reciprocity, and moral accountability.

By participating in ancestral rites, children and youth internalized respect for parents and elders, the preservation of family lineage, and the maintenance of moral discipline, operating as an informal educational system through which ethical teachings were transmitted without formal instruction. Moreover, the San-Donta tradition promoted social cohesion by bringing extended families and community members together in collective worship, which strengthened intergenerational relationships and enforced social bonds through shared participation in ritual activities, food preparation, and sacred offerings. Closely related practices, such as Jol Mamot a shamanistic ceremony involving communication with spirits further highlighted the broader spiritual framework within which the San-Donta Tradition operated (Chunhabunyatip et al., 2018);



(Lertpiboon, 2025). These rituals reflected the Thai-Khmer integration of animism, sacred power, mysticism, and spiritual mediation into everyday life, forming a cohesive cultural identity grounded in reverence for the unseen realm. Importantly, the San-Donta Tradition remained a living tradition that adapted to contemporary contexts, serving as a meaningful cultural symbol preserved in both rural and semi-urban communities, demonstrating the adaptive resilience of indigenous cultural heritage. From an anthropological perspective, the San-Donta Tradition encoded philosophical reflections on life, death, continuity, and moral responsibility, teaching that human existence was relational and individual identity was inseparable from ancestral lineage within a cosmological order encompassing both the living and the spiritual worlds.

Building upon these findings, the San-Donta Tradition functions as a powerful social norm within Thai-Khmer society, operating as an informal system of moral education embedded in animistic beliefs and Buddhist ethical values. Through ancestral worship, it cultivates gratitude, filial piety, and communal responsibility, while active participation in the ritual reinforces ethical behavior and intergenerational respect. As a belief-based institution, it shapes moral values through symbolic practice and embodies an enduring worldview centered on spiritual continuity and reciprocity. Therefore, the discussion suggests that the San-Donta Tradition functions as a deeply rooted social norm within Thai-Khmer society, operating as an informal system of moral education embedded in ancestral belief and Buddhist ethics.

It cultivates gratitude, filial piety, and moral responsibility through symbolic acts of ancestral veneration and merit-making. According to Phra Nat Caruvanno (Yiram) et al. (2021), the tradition reinforces ethical consciousness by sustaining values grounded in local cosmology and communal practice. Phra Somphong Janseeda (2021) further explains that beliefs concerning pretas (Hungry Ghosts) strengthen moral awareness by emphasizing gratitude and warning against ingratitude, thereby shaping intergenerational respect and connecting directly with Buddhist principles of karmic accountability. Participation in the ritual thus becomes a sacred symbolic practice that forms character and reinforces communal responsibility. Moreover, Sripattanet (2019) demonstrates that structured engagement with the San-Donta tradition in educational settings enhances student's cultural identity and ethical understanding. Collectively, these perspectives affirm that the San-Donta tradition represents an enduring worldview centered on spiritual continuity and reciprocity, sustaining virtue and Thai-Khmer identity across generations.

2. The Buddhist principles and teachings reflected in the San-Donta Tradition for integration into schools' instruction

The San-Donta Tradition of the Thai-Khmer community in southern Isan, particularly in Surin province, represented more than a ritual of ancestral veneration; It embodied a complex system of beliefs integrating animism and Theravāda Buddhist teachings, functioning as a repository of moral instruction and ethical cultivation (Siriphaprapagon, 2018). While



San-Donta was widely recognized as an intangible cultural heritage rooted in ancestral worship, its deeper significance lay in the Buddhist principles embedded within its ritual structure and symbolic meanings. These principles operated at both the individual and social levels, offering valuable moral foundations that could be integrated into formal educational instruction.



Figure 2 San-Donta as a school learning activity (Siripaphapagon, 2018)



Figure 3 San-Donta as a local community learning curriculum (Siripaphapagon, 2018)



Figure 4 Students participate in San-Donta ritual training (Siripaphapagon, 2018)



Figure 5 Students Learning on the history, significance, and values of the San-Donta ritual (Siripaphapagon, 2018)

As illustrated in **Figures 2 and 3**, San-Donta was integrated into educational practice both as a participatory learning activity involving community scholars and ritual practitioners and as a local curriculum for Thai-Khmer students. Contemporary pedagogical innovations demonstrated how San-Donta functioned as an effective learning base that connected classroom knowledge with real-world contexts; In **Figures 4 and 5**, students engaged in hands-on activities such as preparing traditional desserts used in the San-Donta ritual and learned from teachers and local scholars about its history, significance, and values.

2.1 Individual level

The San-Donta Tradition reflected core Buddhist virtues that guided personal conduct and moral consciousness. The ritual centered on the belief that ancestral spirits continued



to exist and maintained a relationship with their descendants (Chaiyachartkittyos et al., 2025). This belief cultivated a heightened awareness of intergenerational connectedness, encouraging individuals to act with responsibility, gratitude, and mindfulness toward those who nurtured and supported them in life. One of the most prominent virtues embedded in San-Donta was *katanyu-katavedi* (Gratitude and Reciprocity), recognized in Buddhist teachings as a defining characteristic of virtuous individuals. During the ritual, descendants prepared offerings, dedicated merit, and performed acts of reverence to honor deceased parents and ancestors. This ritualized remembrance reinforced the moral obligation to acknowledge the sacrifices, care, and compassion of one's parents, nurturing filial piety, which was deeply aligned with Buddhist moral philosophy emphasizing gratitude toward benefactors, particularly mother and father (Siriphaprapagon et al., 2023).

Furthermore, San-Donta ceremonies often included merit-making activities such as inviting monks to chant, offering alms, and transferring merit to the deceased, reflecting the Theravāda Buddhist belief that wholesome deeds (*Puñña*) alleviated suffering in the afterlife and generated spiritual benefit. Through participation in merit-making, individuals internalized the law of karma and the principle of moral causation that intentional actions yielded consequences, which fostered moral restraint, ethical awareness, and personal responsibility. In addition to gratitude, the tradition encouraged *mettā* (Loving-kindness) and compassion; The symbolic act of preparing food for ancestral spirits expressed concern for the well-being of others beyond oneself, extending empathy even to the spiritual realm. This outward-directed concern cultivated a generous mindset and reduced self-centeredness, allowing individuals to develop qualities consistent with the Buddhist *Brahmavihāra* (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity). Furthermore, the preparation of ritual offerings such as *Bay ben* (Rice Balls Derived from The Pāli Word *Pinḍa*) symbolized nourishment and care for departed spirits (Phumiphol Bhikkhu Foundation, 1988); (Rattanapanawong, 2006).

This symbolic dimension reinforced mindfulness of life's impermanence (*Anicca*) and the continuity between existence and death, encouraging moral diligence and purposeful living. The animistic dimension of San-Donta, especially the belief in protective ancestral spirits capable of blessing or admonishing descendants, also reinforced ethical conduct (Worachat, 1987). The understanding that moral behavior influenced spiritual harmony strengthened self-regulation and respect for ethical norms, where fear of causing harm or dishonor to ancestors became a cultural reinforcement mechanism encouraging virtuous behavior. Therefore, at the individual level, San-Donta functioned as an informal moral curriculum, teaching gratitude toward parents, remembrance of benefactors, compassion, generosity, and moral accountability through lived ritual participation, experiential learning, and emotional engagement. For educational integration, the San-Donta Tradition provided culturally grounded examples through which Buddhist moral principles were taught in ways that resonated with students' community heritage and lived experiences.



From an analytical perspective, the individual dimensions of the San-Donta Tradition function as an active framework for applied Buddhist ethics, showing that abstract theological concepts can be translated into concrete pedagogical practices. The ritual acts of preparing Bay ben and transferring puñña operate as experiential learning mechanisms that anchor the psychological development of youth in the core virtues of katanyu-katavedi and anicca. This aligns with Theravāda Buddhist moral philosophy, which posits that ethical self-regulation is most effective when driven by an internal realization of interconnectedness and moral causation (Karma). By transforming ancestral reverence into a vehicle for classroom instruction, schools utilize local ethnic heritage to fulfill macro-level educational goals, establishing that cultural practices are vital resources for nurturing personal virtue, civic accountability, and spiritual resilience in contemporary society.

2.2 Social level

Beyond personal ethics, San-Donta reflected Buddhist principles that operated collectively at the social and communal levels. The ritual was conducted across household, kinship, and community settings, bringing together extended families and village members in shared participation (Siriphaprapagon, 2018). This collective dimension embodied the Buddhist emphasis on harmonious coexistence, unity, and mutual interdependence. The annual performance of San-Donta, typically during the tenth lunar month when ancestral spirits were believed to return (Ngo & Nguyen, 2021); (Office of Cultural Affairs, Buriram Province, 2010), acted as a communal gathering point. Family members who migrated for work frequently returned home, which strengthened kinship networks and renewed social bonds, thereby reinforcing solidarity and unity while creating a sense of shared belonging among members of the same ethnic and spiritual community. Buddhist teachings emphasized social harmony (Saṅgaha-vatthu) through generosity (Dāna), kind speech (Piya-vācā), beneficial conduct (Attha-cariyā), and equality (Samānattatā), and these principles were visibly enacted during San-Donta ceremonies. Community members shared resources, prepared communal meals, and cooperated in organizing rituals, where hospitality extended to relatives and guests reflected generosity and inclusiveness (Siriphaprapagon et al., 2023); (Meethaisong, 2021).

Through these practices, Buddhist social ethics were not merely taught but were enacted collectively. San-Donta also strengthened communal identity by reinforcing a shared worldview grounded in an animistic-Buddhist synthesis; Recognition of village guardian spirits (Ta-Sa-Rok), household spirits (Phra Phum), and ancestral spirits (Worachat, 1987) established a collective cosmology uniting community member under common symbolic structures, which promoted a sense of cultural coherence and reinforced commitment to communal norms. Moreover, the ritual's reliance on locally sourced agricultural products demonstrated interdependence between social life and ecological knowledge, where the use of seasonal foods and locally produced items for offerings reflected sustainable living practices and shared economic cooperation (Siriphaprapagon et al., 2023). Participation in ritual exchange networks



strengthened extended kinship relations, even across distant relatives, enhancing ethnic cohesion. The festive and communal atmosphere of San-Donta, characterized by mutual assistance, joyful interaction, and collective remembrance, created positive social reinforcement for ethical behavior. By publicly affirming shared values such as gratitude, unity, and respect for elders, the tradition became a moral performance that reaffirmed communal expectations, allowing youth observing and participating in these ceremonies to absorb social norms regarding cooperation and respectful coexistence. Thus, at the social level, San-Donta functioned as a community-based ethical system that fostered solidarity, strengthened networks of reciprocity, and maintained ethnic cohesion through shared belief and ritual practice. These dimensions aligned closely with Buddhist social teachings emphasizing harmony, interdependence, and compassion within the Sangha-like community structure, suggesting that integrating these communal virtues into school instruction could promote civic responsibility, multicultural respect, and social unity grounded in local cultural heritage.

Building upon these social observations, the San-Donta Tradition functions as a powerful social norm and structural mechanism within Thai-Khmer society, strengthening solidarity, unity, and communal harmony through collective ritual participation. As an intangible cultural heritage, it serves not merely as a ceremonial practice but as a living system for transmitting ethical values across generations within families and communities (Siriphaprapagon, 2018). The ritual process grounded in ancestral veneration cultivates gratitude, filial piety, and moral responsibility, thereby strengthening communal bonds and a shared moral consciousness. This directly embodies the practical application of *saṅgha-vatthu* (The Bases of Social Sympathy), where communal cooking, resource sharing, and inclusive hospitality translate doctrinal Buddhism into everyday social ethics. Phra Nat Caruvanno (Yiram) et al. (2021) emphasize that preservation efforts must reinforce these ethical dimensions embedded in San-Donta in accordance with Buddhist teachings, highlighting its role in sustaining moral discipline at multiple social levels. Furthermore, Sri Pattanet (2019) demonstrates that when systematically integrated into educational contexts, San-Donta enhances cultural literacy, community engagement, and ethical awareness among youth, confirming that the tradition successfully synthesizes animistic belief and Buddhist ethical philosophy in lived practice. Consequently, San-Donta remains an enduring, contextually grounded cultural framework for nurturing virtue at societal levels within the Thai-Khmer community in Thailand.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

This study contributes distinct empirical and theoretical insights to Buddhist education by demonstrating how the San-Donta Tradition of the Thai-Khmer community in Thailand functions as an active, culturally embedded framework for enhancing ethical learning in formal education. While previous literature predominantly restricts San-Donta to anthropological descriptions or passive cultural preservation, this research offers a critical paradigm shift, reinterpreting the

tradition as an applied moral and pedagogical curriculum by uncovering two primary dimensions of new knowledge that extend existing models of Buddhist education. First, regarding conceptual redefinition through a dual-level moral cultivation framework, the study moves beyond abstract doctrinal teaching by grounding Theravāda Buddhist moral philosophy in dynamic ethnic ritual practices, explicitly differentiating moral cultivation into an individual level of personal virtue where experiential learning mechanisms like ancestral remembrance and merit transfer actively cultivate internal wisdom, gratitude (Katanyu-katavedi), filial piety, compassion, and karmic moral accountability and a social level of communal harmony, which conceptualizes the collective participation of kinship groups as a structural social norm that fosters external social virtues, including solidarity, communal unity, mutual reciprocity, and unified ethical visions. Second, in terms of pedagogical innovation, the study establishes a validated pathway for institutionalizing culturally responsive integration, demonstrating that animistic ancestral reverence and Buddhist ethical instruction form a symbiotic, lived ethical system. By framing the San-Donta tradition as an informal moral curriculum, this research provides educational institutions in multicultural and ethnic settings with a concrete strategy to align formal classroom settings with community ritual practices, an educational management approach that transforms students from passive learners into active cultural and moral bearers. Ultimately, this study expands the body of knowledge in Buddhist education, cultural studies, and educational management by positioning the San-Donta tradition of the Thai-Khmer people in Thailand not merely as a spiritual relic of the past, but as a sustainable pedagogical resource and a contextually grounded framework for nurturing holistic ethical development in contemporary society.



Figure 1 Pathway of Integration of Buddhist Principles Based on the San-Don-Ta Tradition for Students at School



Conclusions and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that the San-Donta Tradition functions as a culturally embedded framework for supporting Buddhist principle learning in Thai-Khmer school contexts in Thailand. The findings show that San-Donta is not only an ancestral ritual but also a lived moral system embedded in everyday community life. At the individual level, the tradition nurtures Buddhist values such as gratitude (Katanyu-katavedi), compassion, filial responsibility, and moral awareness through participation in remembrance and merit-making practices. At the social level, it strengthens community solidarity, intergenerational respect, and collective identity through shared participation among families, temples, and local networks. These two dimensions illustrate how Buddhist ethics are not merely taught as abstract concepts but are expressed through lived cultural practice. In classroom practice, this integration becomes visible when students learn the meaning of San-Donta through storytelling by elders, take part in community remembrance events, and reflect on lessons of gratitude and responsibility after participation. Such activities allow students to connect Buddhist principles directly with their own cultural experiences, making learning more meaningful and relatable. This study conceptualizes San-Donta as an informal moral curriculum that bridges cultural heritage and Buddhist education. It contributes to culturally responsive pedagogy by showing that local traditions can function as active learning resources rather than being viewed only as ceremonial heritage. Several limitations should be acknowledged. The study is limited to Thai-Khmer communities in southern Isan, which may restrict its applicability to other cultural or regional contexts. In addition, the analysis is primarily conceptual and ethnographic, with limited direct classroom-based or experimental evaluation of learning outcomes. Future research should examine the pedagogical effectiveness of integrating San-Donta into structured teaching environments. For recommendations, schools in culturally diverse regions should consider incorporating local traditions such as San-Donta into Buddhist education through participatory and community-based approaches. This may include guided discussions with community elders, reflective learning after ritual participation, and project-based activities linking cultural practice with Buddhist ethical values such as gratitude and responsibility. Effective implementation requires collaboration among schools, families, temples, and community leaders. Rather than treating San-Donta as a religious obligation, it should be understood as a cultural resource that supports universal ethical values such as compassion, respect, and social harmony. This approach helps make Buddhist education more contextualized, meaningful, and connected to student's lived experiences.

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A BUDDHIST-APPROACH TRAINING PROGRAM FOR EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING IN TECHNOLOGY-OVERUSED WORKPLACE

Pham Cam Chi^{1*}, Phramaha Nantakorn Ket-in¹, Phophichit Nadnapang²

¹Buddhist Studies Programme (IBSC), Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University,
Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Thailand

²Certificate in Mindfulness Master Programme (IBSC), Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University,
Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Thailand

*Corresponding author E-mail: chiphm205@gmail.com

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Nowadays, technology-overused workplaces place employees under constant pressure through continuous notifications, digital tasks, and expectations of constant availability. Although many organizations have tried to improve external working conditions, sustainable relief may also require inward forms of mental cultivation. While mindfulness has become increasingly popular in workplace wellness programs, many existing approaches focus mainly on stress reduction techniques without addressing the deeper mental habits and emotional attachments that cause suffering in employees' daily lives. Therefore, the research objectives were to examine the impacts of technology overuse on employee well-being in the workplace, to explore the role of Buddhadhamma and meditation practices in promoting employee well-being, and to develop a training program integrating Buddhadhamma and meditation practices for technology-overused work environments.

Methodology: This qualitative study used data triangulation to gather insights from 33 key informants, involving 22 employees facing technology-induced strain, 9 Buddhist scholars or meditation masters, and 2 organizational experts. Data were collected across three stages of a training program (Pre-training, During-training, and Post-training) through online open-ended questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus discussions, followed by thematic analysis. A pilot training program was then delivered to 3 selected case studies through eight individual online sessions conducted over one month via Zoom. Each participant followed the same core structure and themes while receiving individualized guidance and reflection throughout the process. The sessions combined discussions of Buddhadhamma, meditation practices, and practical reflection on every workday experience.

Main Results: Findings indicated that the excessive reliance on digital technologies significantly deteriorated employee well-being. Buddhadhamma provided a profound understanding of these experiences not only as workplace problems but also as reflections of craving, attachment, restlessness, and habitual mental reactivity. Besides, meditation practices helped practitioners



become more aware of their thoughts, emotions, and deep-seated behaviors in daily situations involving technology use. After completing the pilot training program, participants reported positive changes in their awareness, emotional regulation, and mental and physical well-being. They also described the program as a meaningful way to reconnect with balance and purpose in life and expressed a strong desire to continue practicing.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: The research applied Buddhist principles to the modern context of information technology in a globalized world. The core Buddhadhamma involved the Four Noble Truths, the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination, the Three Marks of Existence, the Four Divine Abidings, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, and the Mindfulness of Breathing, both as theoretical foundations and practical methods. These teachings were deliberately organized into different well-being dimensions and paired with meditation techniques to support a deeper understanding of the causes of distress and the mind's habitual tendency to react, accumulate, and intensify experiences. This integrated approach was designed not only to help participants alleviate workplace stress and dissatisfaction but also to cultivate a broader and clearer perspective on the relationship between work, life, and spiritual fulfillment.

Conclusions: The pilot program represented a practical application of Buddhadhamma-informed mindfulness in the modern workplace. It introduced Buddhadhamma to modern organizational contexts as a right way of living rather than a religious form and positioned meditation grounded in such wisdom as a foundation for longer-term mental and behavioral change. This approach facilitated the cultivation of spiritual well-being while also contributing to other dimensions of employee well-being. Although the findings were exploratory, they suggested that the program may be relevant not only in technology-intensive settings but also in other high-pressure work environments.

Keywords: Employee Well-being, Buddhist Teachings, Meditation, Technology Overuse, Workplace

Introduction

Well-being encompasses quality of life and the ability of individuals and societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose (World Health Organization, 2021). Although modern organizations increasingly recognize the importance of employee well-being to their success and have improved many external working conditions (Alzain et al., 2023); (Sharpe & Fard, 2022); (Dim & Sheahan, 2022), these efforts are challenged by increasing reliance on technology (Burgess & Connell, 2020). The rapid evolution of technology has created a "24/7 Work Culture" (Yeung & Johnston, 2016) that blurs the boundaries between professional and personal life (Alruwayyeh, 2018). This issue extends beyond the convenience of remote work; It reflects the daily struggle of employees who feel compelled to remain constantly connected. Driven by information overload and The Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), many employees are unable to truly log off, which depletes emotional resources. Consequently, despite technology's contribution to flexibility, its overuse has also contributed to poorer employee health (Mental



Health Europe, 2022), manifesting as severe sleep deprivation, burnout (Raković et al., 2022), chronic anxiety, and decreased job satisfaction (Thakur & Kumari, 2024).

Under Buddhist views, the prevailing crisis seen in workplace ill-being is not simply a byproduct of technological advancement; Rather, it arises from the mind's unskillful reactions to external conditions (Mahatthanadull, 2020). Technology itself does not cause one's suffering, but craving (*Taṇhā*) does (Bhikkhu P. A. Payutto (Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya), 2021). In workplace contexts, the relentless pursuit of promotion, recognition, and material success can intensify attachment and mental obscurance. These cravings pull employees toward constant connectivity and productivity at the expense of health. Without moral grounding (*Sīla*) and mindful awareness (*Sati*) in how one uses digital tools, the three poisons of greed, distraction, and delusion can easily shape one's daily routines. Therefore, genuine well-being requires more than just external boundary-setting; It also requires mental cultivation (*Bhāvanā*). When employees learn to observe urges and pressures without reacting automatically, work itself may become a site of reflective practice for spiritual development (Ulluwishewa et al., 2020) where "Supreme Happiness" - a state of peace and balance can arise (Mahatthanadull et al., 2020)

Currently, many corporations offer mindfulness or meditation as a quick stress-relief method, a temporary resolution for a chronic issue (The Mindfulness Initiative Private Sector Working Group, 2016). However, sustainable well-being requires more than a set of techniques; It requires a foundation of wisdom (*Paññā*). Before practicing mindfulness in a meaningful way, employees may need a practical framework for understanding how the mind responds to work, pressure, and digital simulation. By integrating core Buddhist teachings such as the Four Noble Truths, the Three Marks of Existence (*Tilakkhana*), the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*), and the Four Divine Abidings (*Brahmavihārās*), this study shifts the goal of meditation from temporary stress management toward a more fundamental cultivation of the mind. When these principles are combined with the Mindfulness of Breathing (*Ānāpānasati Sutta*) and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), practice becomes a sustained and transformative discipline. This research consolidates the Buddhist psychology of physical, moral, mental, and intellectual well-being (Mahatthanadull & Mahatthanadull, 2019) with the contemporary PROWELL organizational model of social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions (Lee, 2019), and expands toward self-actualization and self-transcendence (Maslow, 1943) design an integral framework of employee well-being, manifesting a multidimensional state from physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual elements, as shown in Figure 1.

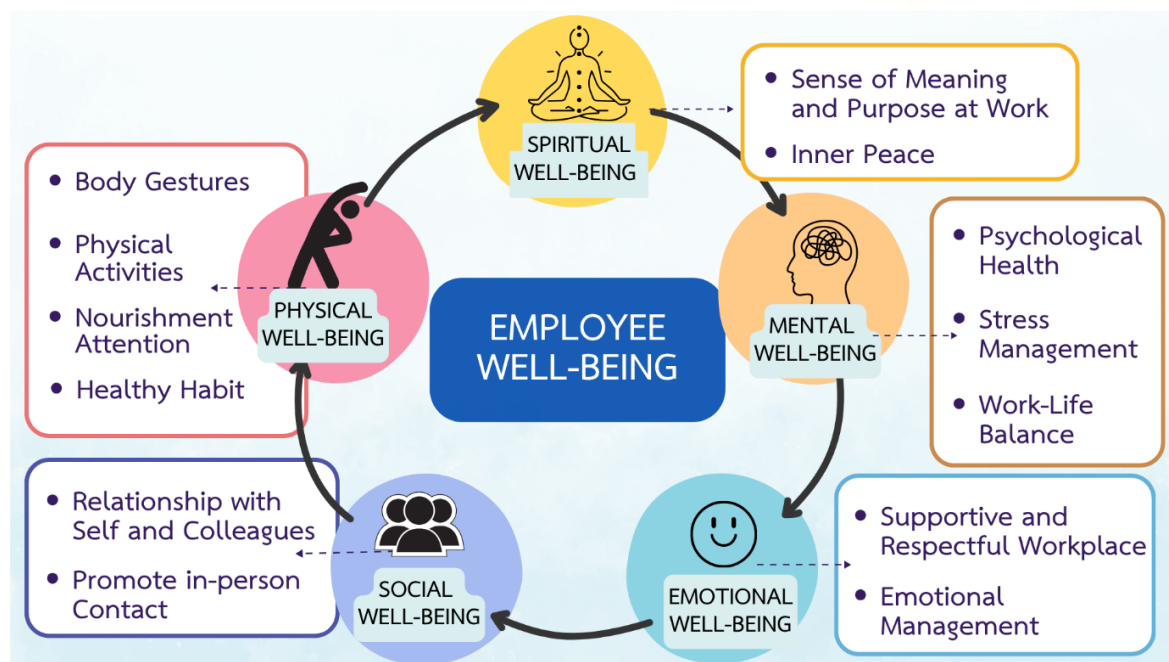


Figure 1 Well-being in a Technology-Driven Workplace

Despite the growing interest in corporate mindfulness, a critical gap remains. Workplace practices are rarely grounded in the ethical and philosophical depth of Buddhadhamma required for long-term behavioral change. Therefore, this research was designed to develop and evaluate a targeted training program that practically bridges profound Buddhist insights with the actual, everyday digital challenges employees face. To capture this process in depth, this study adopted a focused qualitative pilot design. Rather than surveying a large sample superficially, the pilot program concentrated on three carefully selected employees experiencing severe tech-related distress. This small sample allowed close observation, individualized guidance, and rich qualitative insight over a one-month period, demonstrating exactly how these teachings can systematically reshape a weary, tech-driven mind into one that is balanced, compassionate, and conscious.

Objectives

The research objectives were to examine the impacts of technology overuse on employee well-being in the workplace, to explore the role of Buddhadhamma and meditation practices in promoting employee well-being, and to develop a training program integrating Buddhadhamma and meditation practices for technology-overused work environments.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design combining documentary study and field research with source triangulation. In total, 33 key informants participated across the study: 22 employees experiencing technology-induced strain, 9 Buddhist scholars or meditation masters, and 2 organizational experts. Data were collected across three stages of the study (Pre-training, During training, and Post-training) to support the development and pilot evaluation of a

Buddhist-approach training program for employee well-being. The triangulated data sources and their contributions to program development are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Data Triangulation

Data Source	Research Instrument	Purpose	Program Development Contribution
1. Buddhist Principles and Application Frameworks	Documentary Study	Problem, causes, solutions	Define core theories and practices that are possible for application
2. Company Employees (n = 22)	Open-ended qualitative questionnaire	Broad mapping of employee well-being issues	Identification of common stressors and baseline needs
	In-depth Interviews and Case Study	Deep insights from selected case participants	Case-based grounding for program structure
3. Buddhist Scholars / Meditation masters (n = 9); Organizational experts (n = 2).	In-depth interviews; Focus Group Discussion	Suggestions on the application of Buddhist teachings and meditation practices in secular working places.	Drafting content, structure, delivery format, and pedagogical teaching methods

The study was conducted in three phases corresponding to the three research objectives:

Phase 1: To address the first objective, a comprehensive literature review of secondary sources, including journal articles, books, reports, and related research, was conducted to establish theoretical foundations and identify gaps in existing research on the application of mindfulness to improve employee well-being in tech-driven companies. This phase also informed the design of the employee questionnaire and the initial conceptual direction of the training program.

Based on the documentary review, the researcher developed an open-ended qualitative questionnaire using Google Forms. The questionnaire consisted of fourteen questions and was reviewed in accordance with relevant research ethics requirements. It was designed to explore the current situation, perceived causes, impacts, and coping needs related to technology overuse in the workplace. Responses were collected in narrative form and served as the first layer of empirical data for identifying common stressors and participant needs.

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants who met the inclusion criteria and had experience working in technology-overused environments. The questionnaire was distributed through professional and entrepreneurial networks, and 22 employees from several countries completed it, as shown in Table 2. The responses were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. First, the responses were read repeatedly to achieve familiarity with the data. Second, meaningful statements were coded according to recurring issues related to technology overuse, stress,



and well-being. Third, the codes were grouped into broader themes that informed both the interpretation of the problem and the preliminary design of the training program.

From the questionnaire respondents, employees who expressed interest in a Buddhist-based application were invited to participate in semi-structured online interviews. Five employees were interviewed to deepen understanding of their lived experiences with technology overload. From this group, three participants were selected for the pilot program because they reflected different forms and intensities of technology-related distress and were able to commit to the full one-month intervention. The small number of cases was appropriate for this exploratory pilot because it allowed close observation, individualized guidance, and in-depth analysis of change across the eight-session program. Each participant completed the same core sequence of sessions while receiving one-to-one instruction, reflection, and follow-up.

Phase 2: To address the second objective, the researcher examined primary Buddhist sources, including the Tipitaka, its commentaries, and related texts, to identify teachings and practices relevant to employee well-being in technology-intensive settings.

In parallel, five in-depth interviews were conducted with Buddhist scholars and meditation masters from Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana traditions. These interviews explored appropriate meditation practices, relevant doctrinal content, and practical ways to adapt Buddhadhamma to secular workplace contexts. The interviews were conducted online, recorded with consent, and analyzed thematically. Their main contribution was to refine the content, structure, language, and pedagogical approach of the proposed training program.

Phase 3: To address the third objective, a focus group discussion was conducted with six key informants who fulfilled the inclusion criteria. This group included Buddhist monastics, Buddhist scholars, and organizational experts with experience in technology-overused workplaces. Their role was to review and validate the content, sequence, and feasibility of the proposed training program.

The focus group was conducted online or, where possible, through individual in-person consultation. The researcher facilitated the discussion using guiding questions about content relevance, clarity, practicality, and implementation. The discussions were recorded, transcribed, and reviewed to identify recommendations for revising the curriculum. This phase strengthened the feasibility of the intervention before it was applied in the pilot training program.

Trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation, comparison across participant groups, and iterative interpretation of documentary and field data. Findings from employees, Buddhist experts, and organizational experts were compared and synthesized to identify convergent themes and to reduce overreliance on a single source of evidence. This analytic process supported a more credible interpretation of the causes of employee ill-being, the relevance of Buddhadhamma and meditation practices, and the design of the training program.



Results and Discussion

The findings for the first objective showed that employees in technology-overused workplaces experienced multiple forms of stress that affected their well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction. Through the lens of the Five Aggregates (Pañcakkhandhā), these adverse impacts of technology overuse reflected a disruption in harmony between mind and body across multiple dimensions of well-being. Results from both documentary analysis and responses to the qualitative questionnaires showed five major areas in which technology overuse negatively affected employees' lives.

Physical Well-being (Rūpa - Body/Form): Technology overuse was associated with direct physical discomfort, especially sleep disruption and fatigue reported by 31.8% of respondents from the survey. Physical well-being was compromised, where the senses were exposed continuously to technology without mindful awareness. **Body:** Extended use of mobile devices and computers contributed to poor posture, musculoskeletal strain, and excessive pressure on the neck and spine (Johnson et al., 2020). Repetitive motion also led to pain, tingling, numbness, and weakness in the hands and forearms (Jha et al., 2023). **Eyes:** Symptoms of digital eyestrain included blurred vision and dry eyes, and in more extreme cases, even nausea. **Ears:** Prolonged use of earphones or headphones at high volume contributed to noise-induced hearing loss (Jha et al., 2023). The **nose and tongue** were also indirectly affected by stress-related eating habits, such as frequent consumption of fast food or sweets, which undermined physical health (Joshi et al., 2021). Therefore, excessive screen time and sedentary behavior have been linked to various health problems, including obesity, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and mental health issues (Jha et al., 2023).

Emotional and Mental Well-being (Vedanā, Saññā, Saṅkhāra - Feeling, Perception, and Mental Formations): Questionnaire responses indicated that stress and anxiety were among the most prominent effects of technology overuse, reported by 50% of respondents. These experiences were often linked to the pressure to remain constantly available, which left participants feeling mentally drained, tired, and less focused. Some respondents also described guilt about spending excessive time on smartphones instead of resting, as well as reduced self-confidence, suggesting the formation of unskillful mental states (Akuśala-dhammā). Extended screen exposure and unmindful use of digital devices for both work and leisure were also associated with physical discomfort, increased stress, depressed mood, and general mental fatigue (Chan, 2025).

Social Well-being (Saṅkhāra - Mental Formations Related to Connection):

Technology overuse also affected employees' social well-being by contributing to isolation, weakened interpersonal harmony, emotional detachment, and hierarchical barriers (Rasool et al., 2022); (Johnson et al., 2020). The results obtained from research questionnaires showed that 77% of respondents struggled with disconnection and the erosion of personal time due to the inability to switch off digital devices. This boundary blurring hindered one's mind from sufficient rest (Sammā-samādhī) and reduced the capacity to engage fully in non-work relationships and activities that support well-being.



Spiritual Well-being and Mental Clarity (Viññāṇa - Consciousness): Respondents also reported difficulties with attention and mental clarity, particularly when moving repeatedly between apps, notifications, and competing tasks. These interruptions broke concentration and required extra effort to regain focus. From a Buddhist perspective, this pattern corresponded to the Five hindrances, especially restlessness and worry (Uddhacca-kukkucca), which obstructed clear and insightful awareness. Some respondents also described feeling lost in life and work, suggesting a weakened sense of direction, purpose, and value (Sammā-saṅkappa).

As shown in Table 2, the respondent group comprises primarily employees with substantial exposure to technology-intensive work, long daily screen time, and frequent use of work-related technology outside regular working hours. These characteristics provide important context for interpreting the well-being issues reported by participants.

Table 2 Participants' Overview of Background and Technology Exposure

Characteristics		(n = 22)	Percentage (%)
1. Years of experience working in the tech-driven sector (Roles such as IT Engineering, Banking and Finance, etc.)	More than 10 years	4	18.2%
	7 - 10 years	7	31.8%
	4 - 6 years	7	31.8%
	1 - 3 years	2	9.1%
2. Working Country	China, Japan, Philippines	3	13.6%
	Argentina	1	4.5%
	Germany	16	72.9%
	United States	1	4.5%
	Netherlands	1	4.5%
3. Average hours per day spent on digital devices for work purposes	More than 9 hours	13	59.1%
	7 - 9 hours	8	36.4%
	4 - 6 hours	1	4.5%
	Less than 4 hours	0	0%
4. Impulse to use work-related technology out of regular working hours for work purposes	Frequently	9	40.9%
	Occasionally	6	27.3%
	Rarely	5	22.7%
	No	2	9.1%

Prior studies identify common techno-stressors such as techno-invasion, techno-complexity, techno-insecurity, techno-uncertainty, and techno-overload (Dingermans, 2020). The longer an individual is exposed to a technological stressor, the more their stress levels tend to increase and negatively affect human attitudes, thoughts, behaviors, and psychology, directly or indirectly resulting from technology (Bhatt & Kothari, 2022); (Morgan & Gore, 2019). Consistent with this literature, the present study confirms that prolonged exposure to technological stressors is associated with distress in physical, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions of well-being. The results also indicate that, from a Buddhist perspective, unskillful engagement with technology functions as a condition for attachment (Upāḍāna) and craving (Taṇhā), which intensifies experiences



of suffering (Dukkha) (Chan, 2025). These findings address Objective 1 by identifying the main forms, causes, and impacts of technology overuse in the workplace.

The current strategies reported by respondents reflect a hybrid approach that combines conventional self-care with genuine contemplative practice. Several respondents mention physical exercise, such as meditation, yoga, taking breaks, engaging in social activities such as small chats with colleagues, and other hobbies like cooking and music, to manage stress. Interestingly, a significant majority of respondents demonstrate a foundational awareness of mindfulness and meditation's benefits, even if they do not formally practice, and some specifically mention listening to Dhamma talk, reciting mantras, or meditating with a group. These responses suggest an openness to contemplative approaches within the workplace population.

Many respondents express interest in participating in a Buddhist-approached training program, indicating demand for a practical tool to help them respond more skillfully to technology-related stress. They identify several desired areas of improvement, including physical health, focus, attention, time management, emotional resilience, communication, and decision-making. At the same time, participants also identify barriers such as limited time, skepticism about effectiveness, procrastination, lack of skillful methods, and limited social support. These findings suggest that a feasible pilot intervention should include clear instructions, manageable practices, support for time management, and accessible secular language rather than heavily religious terminology.

The findings for the second objective indicated a direct relationship between Buddhist teachings and the promotion of employee well-being in workplace settings. Based on qualitative data from interviews with meditation masters and Dhamma teachers across Theravada, Vajrayana, and Mahayana traditions, the study identified several approaches that extended workplace mindfulness beyond generic stress reduction in the digital age. This synthesis of interview data and literature review informed the design of program content intended to cultivate multiple dimensions of employee well-being, as outlined below.

Physical Well-Being: Physical meditation practice was important for healthy living. Mindfulness of the body (*Kāyānupassanā*) through breath awareness, posture awareness, and observation of bodily sensations helped prevent physical strain and promoted good ergonomics. When the mind was fully present with the body, energy remained concentrated rather than dispersed. It was essential for those who sat for long periods in front of computers to balance physical postures: Sitting, walking, standing, and lying down, and to manage time properly in order to switch between those postures in a healthy way. These habits were encouraged to be integrated mindfully into practitioners' daily life (Pannasara, 2024); (Nhat Hanh & Cheung, 2010).

In addition, to foster healthy technology habits, it was crucial to set boundaries for screen time and take regular breaks, being purposeful rather than habitual, and being aware of how and why one used technology (Nhat Hanh & Cheung, 2010). Some useful micro-habits were implemented to blend the practice into existing work routines, such as using notifications not as distractions, but as mindfulness bells, and viewing waiting times (e.g., Downloads, Loading Screens)



as opportunities for breath awareness, as well as taking "Phone-free Lunch Breaks" to eat mindfully. Such an approach transformed work obstacles into objects of meditation and ensured that the practice was not a "Burden" added to the workday, but a "Natural" reclamation of presence amidst the digital noise (Phra Dhammanan Parisuddhajayo, 2025).

Social Well-being: Loving-kindness meditation (*Mettā Bhāvanā*) promoted interpersonal synergy and mitigated conflict between individuals (Bhikkhu, 2016). The applications of this concept were categorized into two areas: 1) Practicing *Mettā* meditation reduced hostility while simultaneously optimizing team collaboration, and 2) It facilitated conflict resolution by promoting empathy and mutual understanding among colleagues. Besides, four ways to maintain good relationships were also mentioned in Buddhaddhamma through generosity, kind speech, helpful conduct, and impartiality (Bodhi, 2012). These emphasized speaking truthfully, being trustworthy, and maintaining reliability to avoid deceiving others, not relying on what you had heard in one place to create division among people, nor sharing information that could separate groups, and avoiding offensive language. It was important in mindful communication to use language that was courteous, resonated well, and was beneficial to others. Finally, relinquishing gossip and the spread of rumors involved choosing to speak at appropriate times and only about facts.

Emotional Well-Being: Mindfulness of Breathing was a useful skill for anyone seeking to improve emotional regulation, clarity, and overall mental well-being (*Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995*). The first step began with a simple noticing of one's breathing, which brought the mind to the present moment and created a sense of calm and grounding. In real situations at work, employees could practice deep breathing exercises before stressful circumstances, such as meetings or challenging conversations. This technique enabled them to take a necessary pause to observe emotions. Hence, instead of acting on impulse or frustration, they responded in a more thoughtful and compassionate manner.

In a tech-driven workplace, distractions came from numerous sources: Emails, notifications, multitasking, and even social media, which irritated one's emotions easily. When individuals learned to observe their own emotions and became more attuned to those of others, they were able to respond with empathy and patience. This mindset significantly improved communication and led to more effective teamwork, contributing to a positive overall workplace culture. Besides, self-compassion was also shown to enhance emotional well-being, increase motivation for personal growth, and reduce health-related problematic behaviors. Additionally, people with higher levels of self-compassion tended to spend less time on social networking sites and generally had a more positive attitude towards online interactions (Mitropoulou et al., 2022).

Mental Well-being: The importance of training oneself to embrace simplicity, release desires for status, material possessions, and external validation, and focus on what truly mattered was emphasized. The training involved fortitude in the face of discomfort and adversity at work, embracing challenges with grace through awareness of changes, challenging situations, and difficulties as part of human experience. In doing so, one cultivated a resilient spirit and deepened appreciation for the present moment, living a life more fully and authentically.



Following the Buddha's teaching about the Three Bases of Merit that were Moral discipline, giving, and the development of meditation (Bodhi, 2005), one could significantly enhance mental well-being at work by fostering positive mental states, developing mental discipline, gaining mental clarity, and maintaining inner stability. To let go of negative thoughts and distractions, one drew attention to other subjects that promoted skillful thoughts while examining the drawbacks of unskillful thoughts in order to forget and ignore them. In addition, the program also emphasized the importance of cultivating the understanding of impermanence (Aniccānupassī) and letting go (Paṭinissaggānupassī) of all feeling experiences, whether they were pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

Spiritual Well-being: Spiritual well-being in the context of the workplace could empower one to find meaning and purpose in work. Workplace spirituality was characterized by three key dimensions: Meaningful work, a sense of community, and an individual's inner life (Shresth et al., 2023). By viewing work as a path of skillful practice rather than simply a means of survival or ambition, individuals cultivated contentment and long-term well-being. Additionally, the two essential Buddhist virtues, compassion and mindfulness, once embraced, helped one attain happiness and a mind state of wakefulness and focus that was free from competing thoughts and feelings (Shresth et al., 2023).

A crucial keyword that sparks the journey of this research is employee modern "Suffering," which arises from the mind's tendency to react in ways that repeat, accumulate, and intensify over time because of uncontrollable technology overreliance and one's attitude towards technology (Chan, 2025). From a Buddhist perspective, technology affects employees through the senses and may disrupt balance across mind, body, life, and environment. This imbalance, however, can be restored through mastering the mind by a right understanding of Buddhadhamma (Bodhi, 2005); (Metteyya, 2018). These findings address Objective 2 by showing how Buddhist teachings and meditation practices support employee well-being in technology-overused work contexts.

Mindfulness practices can benefit anyone without regard to one's background or belief system (Jiwattanasuk et al., 2024). Contemporary research shows growing scientific evidence supporting the effectiveness of meditation in health care, such as boosting the immune system, controlling pain associated with chronic diseases, reducing stress, promoting positive attitudes, alleviating symptoms, and improving the quality of life for individuals with life-threatening illnesses (Khetjoi et al., 2021); (Coventry, 2015). Various claims are also made about the benefits of Buddhist concepts and practices for organizations, such as transformational leadership, collaborative governance, employee well-being, business ethics, and overall organizational effectiveness (Coventry, 2015).

In this research, meditation practices are no longer treated as isolated techniques to address ill-being but are well integrated with a broader framework of Buddhadhamma that positions practice as a means for employees to navigate the path back to their inner peace and toward positive mental transformation. The value of such integration lies in its ability to restructure one's worldview through personal realization, fostering an enduring state of clarity, compassion, and energy (Viriya) that remains stable regardless of technological acceleration.



Practitioners can therefore learn what is genuinely happening to themselves, around them, and within them. Mind training becomes a real gradual process supporting well-being by cultivating wholesome habits and abandoning unwholesome habits (Gyatso, 2000). This journey turns into a true self-discovery, involving a participatory investigation in which participants observe their own experience more carefully while remaining engaged with workplace realities. Over time, this process allows them to understand the true nature of life and to grasp its deepest qualities (Gyatso, 2000); (Gunaratana, 2011). Once the mind is trained and developed, it does not get easily affected by feelings but can stay calm (Metteyya, 2018).

To conclude, the integration of principle-based Buddhist teachings helps participants understand the roots of their exhaustion in terms of internal attachment and craving. This wisdom (Paññā) allows participants to recognize and cultivate spiritual well-being rather than repeatedly managing its symptoms. They also understand "Why" and "How" their habitual reactions form a karmic loop of stress, shifting toward a desire for improvement. When grounded in right view, meditation practices become more viable, practical, and attainable, and genuine motivation is nourished on a daily basis. The practice no longer acts as a palliative treatment that temporarily soothes the symptoms of digital fatigue and anxiety or as another task on employees' to-do lists, but as an essential, logical requirement for personal liberation. Because the program is also grounded in ethical conduct and relational responsibility, it frames individual mental cultivation as inseparable from the well-being of others.

The findings for the third objective suggested that a Buddhist-based application for digitally saturated work environments could help employees cultivate well-being when it was designed with accessibility, practicality, cultural inclusivity, and doctrinal coherence in mind. Interviewed masters and Dhamma teachers consistently emphasized the importance of adapting the program from a "Religious Ritual" form to "Skillful Means" (Upāya) that would be accessible to contemporary workplace participants. The data revealed four distinctive pillars of a successful intervention: A doctrinal diagnosis of tech-related stress, an "In-between" strategy of daily practice, secularized language, and the use of scientific and creative bridges. To be clear, the Buddhist-approach training program was able to represent clinical evidence and neuroscience findings about the benefits of meditation practices (e.g., Mindfulness) as a scientific bridge to increase faith (Saddhā) and affirm effectiveness for skeptical practitioners (Thinley, 2025). In addition, the linguistic bridge emphasized neutral and humanistic vocabulary over Pali/Sanskrit terms to impart the Buddhist teachings in a way that ensures psychological safety and inclusivity (Chan, 2025). Some suggestions for creative bridges were implemented, including "Soft Entries" such as mindful songs with wholesome lyrics or simple internal chanting (e.g., Om Mani Padme Hum) to release stress and soften the mind, making the practice approachable for beginners who found silence difficult (Phra Sukeesom Siratechaputtiyo, 2025). These findings addressed Objective 3 by informing the design of a workplace training program that was both practical and grounded in Buddhaddhamma.



Insights from employees, Buddhist meditation masters, and organizational experts were triangulated to design the curriculum framework of the Buddhist-approached training program. The 8-session program functioned as a progressive, secularized application of Buddhaddhamma and contemplative practices into actionable protocols for modern knowledge workers. It structurally guided participants from baseline mental calmness (Session 1 - 2), through the harmonization of the body, mind, and emotions (Session 3 - 5), extending outward to social integration (Session 6), and culminating in sustainable, continuous mindful living practice (Session 7 - 8).

Session 1: Topic "Buddhist Foundations for Workplace Well-Being"

10 - 15 mins: Guided sitting meditation: Mindful Breathing

25 - 30 mins: Dhamma sharing on the application of the Four Noble Truths; The Noble Eightfold Path; And the Middle Way in the modern workplace, together with mindful breathing practice (Part 1).

20 - 40 mins: Q&A, Reflection, and Feedback

5 mins: Silence meditation

Rationale and Goal: This initial session was designed to help participants transition from a state of digital fragmentation to foundational self-awareness through mindful breathing. In other words, it aimed to establish baseline tranquility (Samatha) needed to safely investigate habitual work behaviors by observing the breath and the mind.

Session 2: Topic "Spiritual Well-Being: Finding Inner Balance and Life Purpose Beyond Work"

10 - 15 mins: Guided meditation Buddhānussati (Appreciation/Gratitude) using Dhamma music

25 - 30 mins: Dhamma sharing on the Three Marks of Existence (Tilakkhana), wise reflection (Yonisomanasikāra), the cultivation of contentment (Santutthi), Right Livelihood, and Right View, together with mindful breathing practice (Part 2).

20 - 40 mins: Q&A, Reflection, and Feedback

5 mins: Silence meditation

Rationale and Goal: Session 2 introduced the analytical framework of insight (Vipassanā) to address the root causes of spiritual burnout in tech-driven environments. It facilitated practitioners in observing impermanence, appreciating the present moment, and cultivating a deeper sense of unconditional happiness.

Session 3: Topic "Physical Well-Being: Caring for the Body in a Tech-Saturated Life"

10 - 15 mins: Guided Body Scan Meditation (Kāyagatāṣati)

25 - 30 mins: Dhamma sharing on the Six Sense Doors (Saḷāyatana), Right Action, and Right Mindfulness, practice of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness focused on the Body (Kāyānupassanā), and the introduction of mindful technology micro-habits such as mindful eating, mindful breaks, and mindful technology use.



20 - 40 mins: Q&A, Reflection, and Feedback

5 mins: Silence meditation

Rationale and Goal: This session enabled participants to realize the vital link between the abstract activity of the mind and the concrete reality of the physical body, using the body as a reflective anchor for awareness.

Session 4: Topic "Mental Well-Being: Cultivating Focus and Clarity"

10 - 15 mins: Guided Walking Meditation

25 - 30 mins: Dhamma sharing on the Five Hindrances (Pañca Nīvaraṇāni), Right Effort, Right Concentration, and the Three Bases of Merit, the practice of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness focused on the Mind (Cittānupassanā), and practical applications at the workplace such as single-pointed attention, deep work, concentration meditation, mindful consumption, and simplicity.

20 - 40 mins: Q&A, Reflection, and Feedback

5 mins: Silence meditation

Rationale and Goal: This session served as the cognitive core of the training program, providing practitioners with a clearer understanding of the anatomy of distraction, common mental obstacles, and their antidotes. It also supported a more attentive return to the present moment, the cultivation of inner calm, and clarity amid digital overloads.

Session 5: Topic "Emotional Well-being: Master your Emotions, Master your Life"

10 - 15 mins: Singing Meditation

25 - 30 mins: Dhamma sharing on Right Action, the Four Divine Abidings, mindful training, emotional intelligence, and self-compassion, the practice of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness focused on the Feelings (Vedanānupassanā), the application of pause and observation techniques, breath awareness, and non-reactivity.

20 - 40 mins: Q&A, Reflection, and Feedback

5 mins: Silence meditation

Rationale and Goal: This session used Vedanānupassanā to support the transition from autonomic emotional reactivity to conscious and compassionate responsiveness. In particular, singing meditation was introduced as an accessible alternative to silent meditation, using meaningful Dhamma-based lyrics to foster immediate physiological relaxation and cultivate a sense of joy.

Session 6: Topic "Social Well-Being: Building Healthy Relationships"

10 - 15 mins: Guided Loving Kindness Meditation

25 - 30 mins: Dhamma sharing on the Dependent Origination, non-self and interbeing, Right Speech, Right Intention, the Five Mindfulness Trainings, the practice of The Four Establishments of Mindfulness focused on the Dhamma (Dhammānupassanā), and mindful communication through deep listening and loving speech.

20 - 40 mins: Q&A, Reflection, and Feedback

5 mins: Silence meditation



Rationale and Goal: Session 6 served as the social culmination of the training program by shifting the focus from individual practice to collective well-being. In addition, the practice of deep listening and loving speech was presented as a way to reduce relational tension and resolve systematic corporate conflicts, while the practice of Mettā meditation dissolved ego-defenses and interpersonal friction, generating the affective foundation necessary for genuine engagement in collaborative relationships.

Session 7: Topic "Well-being at Work and Life: Living Meditation"

10 - 15 mins: Guided Deep Relaxation Meditation

25 - 30 mins: Dhamma sharing on living meditation, full presence and awareness, gratitude, the Four Immeasurable Minds (Brahmavihārās), and contemplation practices through mindful living, including reflection on one's deeper purpose in life.

20 - 40 mins: Q&A, Reflection, and Feedback

5 mins: Silence meditation

Rationale and Goal: Session 7 elevated the training from stress reduction to deep spiritual alignment by encouraging participants to regard the workplace as an ideal practicing environment for their ongoing spiritual and professional development, rather than merely a source of pressure.

Session 8: Topic "Cross-Discussion and Wrap-Up: Sustaining Well-being through Mindful Living"

10 - 15 mins: Guided Reflection Meditation

25 - 30 mins: Review of key teachings, including the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, the Five Hindrances, Karma, and habitual tendencies, followed by communal reflection on participants' experiences of application and transformation.

20 - 40 mins: Q&A, Reflection, and Feedback

5 mins: Silence meditation

Rationale and Goal: The final session focused on helping practitioners mindfully review their current state of awareness, build internal validation and self-efficacy, and prepare for the transition from a formal program to a self-sustained lifelong practice.

Post-Training Program Feedback from Case Studies

The research applies the previously described Buddhist-approached pilot training program to examine three case studies featuring varying levels of meditative experience, from beginners struggling with severe digital fatigue and performance anxiety, to an experienced mindfulness facilitator driven by leadership-related ego. Post-training feedback suggests that the program is feasible and accessible. The intervention appears to reduce barriers commonly associated with religious dogma and complex Pāli terminology by utilizing secular, humanistic language and the direct guidance of a meditation instructor (Kalyāṇa-mitta). In this way, the curriculum presents Dhamma not as a belief system but as a practical and accessible framework for workplace life.



The program's perceived effectiveness is closely linked to its integration of Buddhist theory (Dhamma) and meditation practice (Bhāvanā). Participants find profound refuge in frameworks that explain how their stress is caused, specifically the Six Sense Doors (Saḷāyatana) and the Five Hindrances (Nīvaraṇa). Among the most useful practical applications are the Pause Technique, which functions as a momentary interruption of reactivity, and Mindful Communication, which translates ethical intention into daily social interaction. These practices appear to help participants interrupt habitual reactions and express their moral commitments (Sīla) more skillfully in workplace relationships.

Across all three cases, the intervention shows a profound shift from an external focus on workload, external evaluations, or interpersonal tension toward greater self-awareness. Significant improvements are consistently reported across multiple dimensions of well-being. **Physical and Mental Well-being:** Participants effectively mitigate insomnia, physical tension, and scattered attention by establishing healthier digital boundaries and employing somatic grounding techniques like walking meditation and body scan meditation. **Emotional Well-being:** Individuals who experience difficulties with "The Fear of Judgment" (Case Study 2) learn to label their feelings when they arise and not identify themselves with these emotions, which makes the strong emotions less powerful, and the observer can hence deal with performance anxiety effectively. **Social Well-being:** Interpersonal conflicts are resolved through the practice of "Deep Looking." Participants learn to view workplace aggression not as a personal attack, but as a manifestation of the aggressor's own suffering, transforming personal hurt into deep compassion (Karuṇā). **Spiritual Well-being:** Advanced practitioner (Case Study 3) shifts from ego-driven leadership to embodied tranquility by realizing the "Observer" Self ("I am not this Pain"). Beginners (Case Study 1) improve from feeling like victims of life to profound self-empowerment by reflecting on the teachings of impermanence (Anicca) and non-self (Anattā) to separate their self-worth from external validations.

Although all three participants report a highly positive overall impact and a strong likelihood of continuing to practice mindfulness, the post-program feedback highlights a critical need for long-term structural support such as peer mindfulness groups, follow-up sessions, and, most importantly, continued access to a mentor. Participants describe compassionate human guidance as essential for translating complex doctrines into experiential wisdom, particularly for those experiencing emotional instability. This need for ongoing support may be important both for beginners developing new habits and for experienced practitioners seeking to avoid subtle forms of ego attachment.

As shown in Table 3, the three case studies reflect different pre-program challenges and different forms of post-program improvement, but all indicate movement toward greater balance, awareness, and adaptive coping.



Table 3 A Summary of Case Study Well-being Transformations

Key Informants	Pre-program Background	Post-Program Improvement	Supported Buddhadhamma
1. Case Study 1 Banker (Female, 4 - 6 Years In the Technology- intensive Sector, 7 - 9 Hours of Daily Digital Exposure), based in Germany	1. Physical strain, fatigue, and concentration erosion 2. Instability and sensitivity, emotional stress 3. Relationship stress, fear of judgment 4. Too introverted, communication issues 5. Self-doubt and a search for meaning, purpose, and long- term direction	1. Alleviating physical tension and establishing "Healthier Digital Boundaries." 2. Transitioning from chronic stress to an overall sense of peace, joy, and balance 3. More harmonious, empathetic relationships 4. Loving herself more and regulating emotions effectively under pressure 5. Experiencing a sacred milestone in spiritual development, wisdom is opened, recognize the nature and meaning of life	1 - 2. Mindful Breathing, Walking Meditation, and Pause Technique 3. Mindful Communication (Deep Listening and Loving Speech), reflecting on Gratitude 4 - 5. The Four Noble Truths and The Three Marks of Existence
2. Case Study 2, IT Specialist (Female, 4 - 6 Years in Technology- Intensive Sector, 7 - 9 Hours of Daily Digital Exposure), based in Germany	1. Physical strain in the eyes, insomnia, and reduced concentration 2. Mental and emotional instability, fears of judgment, performance anxiety, overthinking, panic 3. Relationship stress, fear of judgment 4. Lacking understanding of the self, emotions, and relationships 5. Feeling as if she has not truly lived and interpreted phenomena only through her own habitual way of thinking	1. Improving physical energy and sleep quality 2. Emotional stability, insecurity 3. Greater empathy and less anxiety, with more harmonious relationships and social interactions, experienced less performance pressure and more opportunities for connection 4. Realization of internal causality: Transforming anger from victimhood to empowerment and learning to see things more clearly 5. A stronger sense of being fully alive, emotionally present, and more capable of understanding experience	1. Pause technique and walking meditation 2. Labelling emotion, being in the awareness to observe rather than an immediate habitual reaction 3. Deep listening and loving speech 4. The Five Hindrances, Right View, and the Dependent Origination 5. Meditation practice through being aware of the Six Sense Doors



Table 3 A Summary of Case Study Well-being Transformations (Continued)

Key Informants	Pre-program Background	Post-Program Improvement	Supported Buddhadhamma
3. Case Study 3, Senior Technical Translator (Female, 10+ Years in Technology-intensive Sector, 7 - 9 Hours of Daily Digital Exposure), based in Japan	1. Reporting ongoing challenges with sleep quality, overexposure to technology, and maintaining depth in meditative awareness 2. Inner conflict, self-focus, and attachment to achievement 3. Seeking deeper integration of Buddhist wisdom into practical self-discovery and experiencing frustration in leadership when guiding others	1. Transformative insights in terms of self-view deconstruction, be able to disidentify from the aggregate of Feeling and Mental Formations 2. Transitioning from a calm state in meditation toward insight cultivation 3. Shifting from "Doing" to "Being" to find deep peace, overcome subtle attachment, and cultivate greater loving-kindness and compassion toward others through wisdom	1. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Five Aggregates, observer technique 2. Right View and Right Effort 3. The Four Divine Abidings, deep looking and compassion, non-self

Overall, Table 3 highlights that the pilot training program is associated with meaningful improvements across the three case studies despite their different backgrounds and initial challenges. The most consistent gains are seen in emotional regulation, mental clarity, healthier digital boundaries, and more compassionate interpersonal relationships, while deeper shifts in self-understanding and spiritual orientation also emerge for some participants. These results suggest that integrating Buddhadhamma with practical meditation techniques may offer a coherent and adaptable pathway for strengthening employee well-being in technology-overused workplaces, thereby preparing the ground for the broader conceptual contribution discussed in the next section.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

The original contribution of this research lies in building a practical bridge between Buddhist wisdom and the contemporary problem of technology overuse in the workplace. As shown in Figure 2, the study proposes a conceptual framework that maps the Four Foundations of Mindfulness onto the core dimensions of contemporary employee well-being. Rather than treating meditation as a generic relaxation tool, the framework offers a more targeted approach to managing sensory overload and mental reactivity associated with continuous digital exposure.



Figure 2 Conceptual Guideline for a Buddhist-Approached Application Enhancing Employee Well-being in a Tech-Overused Workplace

The Theoretical Foundation

To understand why technology overuse compromises well-being, this framework is grounded in core teachings from the Pāli Canon, including the Four Noble Truths, the Three Marks of Existence (Impermanence, Suffering, and Non-self), and the Dependent Origination. These principles reveal that digital devices are not the inherent cause of workplace suffering; Rather, suffering emerges through craving, attachment, self-construction, and habitual reactivity triggered by constant connectivity. The framework also integrates the Four Divine Abidings (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity) as relational guidelines in the mindful training of thinking, speaking, and interacting with others in a secular workplace. This can be seen as a kind of precept or moral foundation supporting practitioners in the development of their professional and spiritual path.

The Practical Application: The Conceptual Model

The practical value of the model in Figure 2 focuses on the continuous interaction between our six sense bases (Eyes, Ears, Nose, Tongue, Body, and Mind) and technological stimuli, such as software platforms and digital devices. When employees engage with these digital stimuli without mindfulness, they may develop restlessness, distraction, and tech-induced exhaustion. The model, therefore, shows how daily digital experiences can become sites for disciplined attention and reflective practice.



By actively applying the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (The Four Foundations of Mindfulness) to these daily digital interactions, the framework demonstrates a clear, structured path to multidimensional health:

1. Kāyānupassanā (Mindfulness of the Body) directly supports Physical Well-being by helping employees recognize and release the bodily tension associated with excessive screen time.
2. Vedanānupassanā (Mindfulness of Feelings) stabilizes Emotional Well-being by allowing employees to observe, rather than react to, the anxiety of being constantly "Online."
3. Cittānupassanā (Mindfulness of the Mind) strengthens Mental Well-being by calming the restless urge to multitask and over-consume information.
4. Dhammānupassanā (Mindfulness of Dhamma Mental Phenomena) cultivates Social and Spiritual Well-being by fostering a deeper, more conscious connection with oneself and colleagues.

Ultimately, the framework shows how Buddhist mindfulness teachings can give workplace meditation a clearer direction. Instead of remaining a short-term stress-management technique, meditation becomes part of a structured path toward greater physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual well-being in technology-intensive work environments.

Conclusions and Recommendations

At its core, this research indicated that technology overuse contributed to multidimensional distress in the workplace and that unmindful attachment to digital validation, continuous connectivity, and productivity was a core driver of modern workplace distress, causing a distinct contemporary manifestation of modern Suffering (Dukkha). In addition, Buddhist meditation was demonstrated not as an escape from these workplace realities; Rather, it offered practical tools for engaging with them wisely. The pilot findings suggested improvements in emotional regulation, focus, interpersonal harmony, and perceived life balance among the three case participants by integrating practices such as mindful breathing, ethical communication, and intentional digital pauses. The research ultimately suggested that when Buddhist wisdom is adapted to the daily realities of the modern office through non-religious language, it can provide a meaningful and potentially transformative resource for those struggling with digital burnout. These findings may be useful for ongoing discussions in the fields of Engaged Buddhism and Occupational Health, where digital exhaustion can be interpreted through Buddhist psychology and where tech-related overattachment may be understood through the concept of clinging (Upādāna). However, these findings should be interpreted cautiously because the study was based on a small pilot sample, a short intervention period, and qualitative self-reported outcomes. The results, therefore, only suggested exploratory promise rather than broad generalizability. While this study establishes the effectiveness of a Buddhist-approached intervention, bridging the gap between this pilot program and widespread corporate use requires further grounded investigation. The recommendations below respond directly to concerns about clarity, methodological transparency, and practical applicability. Firstly, future studies should employ longitudinal tracking



(e.g., 6 to 12 Months) to see if these newly cultivated digital boundaries actually hold up against the daily realities of work crisis. Next, to enhance the empirical robustness of contemplative workplace interventions, researchers should transcend self-reporting by incorporating objective biometric measurements and tracking physiological indicators to verify how these mindful practices actively reduce exhaustion in the work routine. Lastly, experimental research can be undertaken to investigate the distinct influence and effectiveness of Dhamma-based mental training in promoting sustained mental transformation compared to a solely secular, meditation-focused program initiative or a standard, quick-fix secular meditation app currently popular in corporate wellness programs. This will explicitly demonstrate the lasting value of true behavioral transformation over temporary, shallow relaxation.

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THE INTEGRATION OF ARIYASACCA PRINCIPLES-BASED LEARNING MANAGEMENT FOR STUDENTS OF INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST STUDIES COLLEGE

Phramaha Nantakorn Ket-in¹, Sanu Mahatthanadull¹, Phra Rurngvit Phetkrai²,
Ven. Tran Huynh Hoang Long^{1*}

¹International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University,
Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Thailand

²Language Institute, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Thailand

*Corresponding author E-mail: tranhuynhhoanglong@ibsc.mcu.ac.th

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: At the International Buddhist Studies College (IBSC), students reported that they faced concrete daily challenges related to academic requirements and language barriers, as well as limited integration between contemplative practice and learning processes. Although the principles of Ariyasacca have long been regarded as an effective approach to problem-solving, their application in learning management in international Buddhist higher education has received limited attention. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the learning management challenges faced by students at IBSC, to examine how Ariyasacca principles illuminate their causes and provide a framework for their transformation within an educational context, and to develop an Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model (APBLM) that integrates doctrinal wisdom with evidence-based institutional practice.

Methodology: A multiphase mixed-methods design was used. Specifically, Phase 1 integrated data from surveys of 48 students and in-depth interviews with 30 students and 11 lecturers to identify learning management challenges and needs; Phase 2 combined documentary analysis with in-depth interviews to examine how the principles of Ariyasacca manifested in educational environment and guided pedagogical improvements; And Phase 3 synthesized the findings of the first two phases to develop and validate the APBLM through four forms of validation: Empirical, pedagogical, theoretical, and comparative.

Main Results: This study revealed that five challenge clusters at IBSC, manifesting with moderate intensity (Overall Dukkha Weighted Mean = 3.09), collectively formed a self-reinforcing feedback system. The causes of these challenges emerged from the interaction of external conditions and internal dispositions (Samudaya = 2.82). In particular, students maintained high aspirations (Nirodha = 3.97) and strong receptivity to Buddhist-based solutions (Magga = 4.02), even though they encountered moderate challenges. Documentary and interview analyses further established



that the principles of Ariyasacca could be mapped onto an educational context. Based on these findings, the Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model (APBLM), a cyclical learning management framework validated through four forms of validation, was proposed to address curriculum design, contemplative pedagogy, language support, experiential learning, community building, and institutional reform.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: This study falls within the field of Applied Buddhism, which relates particularly to Buddhist innovations in method development and to Buddhism and the development of wisdom and morality by applying the principles of Ariyasacca to develop a systematic learning management model for international Buddhist higher education. The principles of Ariyasacca, while being ancient teachings, retain relevance in terms of identifying suffering and proposing paths for its resolution when applied in the context of institutions. By applying doctrinal wisdom to educational practice without diminishing the core values of the principles, this study positions the APBLM as an embodiment of Buddhist skillful means (Upāya-kosalla) in education, thereby showing how classical Buddhist teachings can contribute to institutional transformation and also support the development of wisdom and morality in contemporary multicultural academic settings.

Conclusions: This study provided the APBLM, a cyclical framework that can guide institutional reform over time while preserving its internal consistency with Buddhist principles. The APBLM also showed that instead of being opposites, academic rigor and spiritual depth could support each other when institutions in Buddhist higher education apply their foundational wisdom to address the challenges that students encounter in the environment of multicultural learning.

Keywords: Ariyasacca Principles, Buddhist Higher Education, Learning Management, Applied Buddhism, Buddhism and the Development of Wisdom and Morality

Introduction

First articulated in the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta to the group of five ascetics (Bodhi, 2000), the Ariyasacca, or Four Noble Truths, have since served as the doctrinal and practical bedrock of Buddhism for over two millennia. Although their original purpose was to guide practitioners toward nibbāna, the principles have been recognized as a problem-solving structure that involves identifying the arisen problem, analyzing its origin and cause, envisioning appropriate solutions and conditions for change, and implementing systematic pathways for actions (Phramaha Duriya Kittisaro (Sungyoka), 2026). In this sense, the principles of Ariyasacca not only extend beyond their original purpose for the spiritual path but also provide a structure for analysis and solution proposal, thereby showing their relevance to understand and address challenges within Buddhist higher education contexts.

The International Buddhist Studies College (IBSC), as a higher education institution within Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, provides international programs for both monastics and laypeople from different countries to support the vision of MCU in developing an international center for Buddhist studies (Mahatthanadull, 2020). Accordingly, IBSC represents the integration of Buddhist wisdom into modern education. However, the real daily context of its students reflects



more varied and complex aspects. Students from diverse linguistic, cultural, and contemplative backgrounds must adapt to an English-language learning environment while also trying to balance academic pressure and their spiritual aspirations. Moreover, they often find limited formal opportunities to connect contemplative practice with academic activities. These conditions lead to persistent challenges in learning management that affect their daily learning experiences and therefore call for a more systematic approach based on the institution's own Buddhist foundation. However, these issues have received limited attention in existing studies.

Although there is a growing body of research on Buddhist-inspired educational models, much of the existing literature has largely focused on primary (Phrakhupalad Sak Mahāwīro (Kosolsuphawatt) et al., 2021) or secondary education (Phraprayad Abhinanto (Muan Si Phrom) et al., 2021) within Thai contexts. This narrow focus has given rise to a critical research gap in understanding how the principles of Ariyasacca act as both a diagnostic tool and a transformative pedagogy in multicultural and technology-enriched international Buddhist higher education institutions like IBSC, which face context-specific challenges such as linguistic barriers, the rapid integration of technology reshaping learning, and the need to balance academic rigor with contemplative practice.

In response to this research gap, this study proposes the development of an Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model, designed specifically for the context of multicultural Buddhist higher education at IBSC, thereby seeking to provide a coherent framework that supports comprehensive student development while maintaining the distinctive philosophical foundations of Buddhist higher education and meeting modern expectations for academic quality and rigor. It is important to note in this study that learning management is conceptualized as an integrated system comprising curriculum design, pedagogical delivery, student support, and institutional policy that together shape the educational environment. The effectiveness of this system is assessed through students' lived experiences. Therefore, educational dukkha functions as the empirical indicator through which learning management conditions are analyzed using the Ariyasacca framework.

Objectives

This study aimed to investigate the learning management challenges faced by students at IBSC, to examine how Ariyasacca principles illuminate their causes and provide a framework for their transformation within an educational context, and to develop an Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model (APBLM) that integrates doctrinal wisdom with evidence-based institutional practice.

Methodology

This research employed a multiphase mixed-methods design integrating documentary research, qualitative interviews, and quantitative surveys. This design was selected because the complexity of integrating the principles of Ariyasacca into modern higher education cannot be adequately addressed by a single method.

The study was structured in three phases:

Phase 1 employed questionnaires and interviews to diagnose existing problems and needs.



Phase 2 combined documentary analysis with in-depth interviews to examine how the principles of Ariyasacca manifested in the educational environment and guided pedagogical improvements.

Phase 3 synthesized findings from Phases 1 and 2 to develop the Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model (APBLM), which was then validated through four forms of validation: Empirical validation to verify that the model was grounded in documented realities; Pedagogical validation to confirm that the model was pedagogically sound; Theoretical validation to ensure that the model maintained philosophical coherence; And comparative validation to examine the potential of the model to be applied beyond the context of IBSC.

Population and Sample

In the quantitative phase, 95 students in the English program were included, consisting of 18 fourth-year B.A. students, 40 second-year M.A. students, and 37 second-year Ph.D. students. Complete enumeration was used because the target population was small enough to include all members. However, responses were collected from 48 students, achieving a 50.5% response rate. The other 47 students did not complete the questionnaire within the data collection period. Although these 47 students did not participate in this study, the 50.5% response rate still provided a meaningful snapshot of the challenges at IBSC for analysis.

In the qualitative phase, thirty students were selected for in-depth interviews by using purposive maximum variation sampling, thereby aiming to capture diverse experiences of students across degree level, gender, nationality, and knowledge background so that educational challenges could be understood comprehensively. A purposive sample of 11 lecturers (4 Internal and 7 External) providing pedagogical expertise was also chosen based on disciplinary diversity, pedagogical approach variation, and demonstrated engagement with Buddhist pedagogy or educational innovation. Student participants were anonymized using codes based on degree level (B for B.A., M for M.A., and P for Ph.D.) with sequential identifiers; Lecturer interviews were conducted with named consent and full attribution.

Research Instrument

Quantitative surveys were developed in two forms based on the framework of Ariyasacca: For B.A. students (42 Items) and for M.A./Ph.D. students (54 Items) by using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The M.A./Ph.D. version was further developed to address research skills, thesis/dissertation challenges, and the application of Ariyasacca at the graduate level. Before real data collection, content validity was established through an iterative process of reviewing and revising the questionnaire items by the research team to ensure systematic alignment with the Ariyasacca framework, clarity of language, and appropriateness to the IBSC context. All subscales showed excellent internal consistency for both groups (α Ranged From .909 to .986), which indicated excellent reliability.

Based on Ariyasacca principles, semi-structured interview guides were developed and validated by three experts using Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), in which all items achieved IOC values of ≥ 0.50 . Documentary instruments were divided into primary and secondary sources.



Primary sources were the Pali Canon and its commentaries, both of which were based on the editions of the Pali Text Society and reliable English translations. Secondary sources comprised Buddhist textbooks, research works, dissertations, journals, scholarly books, and studies on contemplative pedagogy.

Data Collection

In Phase 1, structured questionnaires were distributed online to the 95 students, with 48 respondents (Response Rate = 50.50%). In-depth interviews were conducted with 30 students and 11 lecturers, both in person and online. For Phase 2, documentary analysis examined primary and secondary sources, while in-depth interviews with the same 30 students and 11 lecturers complemented the documentary findings by providing contemporary perspectives on how the principles of Ariyasacca manifested in the educational environment and guided pedagogical improvements. The last phase did not collect primary data but synthesized the first two phases. Additionally, this study was ethically approved by the Buddhist Research Institute.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to calculate means and standard deviations for quantitative data, and the results were interpreted according to the following scale: 1.00 - 1.80 (Very Low), 1.81 - 2.60 (Low), 2.61 - 3.40 (Moderate), 3.41 - 4.20 (High), and 4.21 - 5.00 (Very High). The formula $[(n_1 \times M_1 + n_2 \times M_2) / (n_1 + n_2)]$ was used to calculate the weighted means for combined B.A. and M.A./Ph.D. groups. For qualitative data, thematic analysis was used, with the data organized based on Ariyasacca categories. Transcripts of the interview were reviewed systematically to identify patterns and then organized according to the four principles of Ariyasacca as the primary analysis. All emerging themes were cross-referenced with the original data to ensure the interpretation correctly reflected the language and experiences of participants. Finally, documentary data were analyzed through direct content analysis based on the Ariyasacca structure. The findings were triangulated at the levels of methodology, data source, and theory to increase the credibility of interpretations.

Results and Discussion

Systemic Educational Suffering at IBSC

As summarized in Table 1, there were five primary areas where educational dukkha at IBSC manifested, which revealed gaps in the current learning management system.

Table 1 Five Challenge Clusters of Educational Dukkha at IBSC

Cluster	Representative Indicators (Weighted Mean)	Interpretation
1. Workload Pressure and Curriculum-Assessment Imbalance	Deadline stress (3.34); Difficulty finishing assignments (3.12); Insufficient research time (3.12); Academic overload (M.A./Ph.D. Only) (3.2)	Moderate-High
2. Self-Regulation, Motivation, and Emotional Resilience Deficits	Procrastination (3.08); Motivation loss (3.24); Focus difficulties (2.9); Lack of right effort (2.82)	Moderate



Table 1 Five Challenge Clusters of Educational Dukkha at IBSC (Continued)

Cluster	Representative Indicators (Weighted Mean)	Interpretation
3. Language Proficiency and Research-Skill Constraints	Academic English difficulty (3.22); Research skills (3); Graduate research expectations (M.A./Ph.D. only) (3.1)	Moderate
4. Structural and Institutional Limitations	Limited learning resources (2.66); Unclear advisor guidance (2.76); Insufficient teacher/classmate support (2.48)	Moderate-Low
5. Insufficient Integration of Theory, Practice, and Ariyasacca-Based Experiential Learning	High receptivity to integration (4.02) contrasted with limited implementation (3.02)	Moderate-High discrepancy
Overall Dukkha	3.09	Moderate

1. Workload Pressure and Curriculum-Assessment Imbalance

As shown in Table 1, this cluster served as a central structural condition that contributed to the challenge in learning management, in which deadline and examination pressure (3.34) were rated highest. The accounts from students highlighted the accumulation of numerous assignments, shortened deadlines, and the rigidity of assessment structures (B01, 2025); (M06, 2025). According to lecturers, the density of the curriculum, excessive reliance on lecture-based methods, and the assessment mechanism heavily focused on theory led students to mental overload, which limited their chances for developing emotional and spiritual aspects considered crucial parts of Buddhist education (Phramaha Anon Anando, 2025); (Phramaha Weerasak Abhinandavedi, 2025); (Watana, 2025). This imbalance, from the lens of learning management, hindered in-depth learning because it prioritized coverage rather than integration, which constituted a structural root cause requiring systemic rather than isolated intervention.

2. Self-Regulation, Motivation, and Emotional Resilience Deficits

As presented in Table 1, this cluster encompassed multiple self-regulation facets at moderate levels, with loss of motivation rated highest (3.24). Emotional struggles, from student descriptions, such as feelings of being drained, uncertain, and overwhelmed, extended beyond quantitative observations. As one student reflected, "I understand Dukkha not only as General Suffering but also as Everyday Struggles Such as Stress, Self-Doubt, or Academic Pressure. I have Also Learned to Identify the Causes of These Difficulties, Like Attachment to Results or Negative Thinking" (M06, 2025). Lecturers traced these patterns to limited metacognitive skills, emotional imbalance, poor university support, and extrinsic motivations (Jiwattanasuk, 2025); (Phramaha Songwit Variddhiṭhāyī, 2025); (Phramaha Weerasak Abhinandavedi, 2025). From a Buddhist perspective, these patterns could be interpreted as the manifestation of sloth and torpor (Thīna-middha), restlessness (Uddacca), and lack of right effort. In the context of learning management, these inner states revealed a lack of cultivated self-regulation and thus emphasized the need to integrate contemplative and motivational support within the curriculum rather than as additional support.



3. Language Proficiency and Research-Skill Constraints

Survey results in Table 1 showed moderate levels of language and research constraints across all dimensions, with academic English proficiency constituting the primary barrier. Student interviews further clarified this issue: While they understood Buddhist doctrines thoroughly in their own language, communicating that understanding academically in English posed difficulties, as one noted, "One Personal Challenge I Face at IBSC is Adapting to the Full English Academic Environment, Which Sometimes Requires Extra Effort to Follow Readings and Discussions" (M12, 2025). A lecturer also observed, "Many Students Possess Deep Doctrinal Knowledge in Their Own Languages, but The Gap Between Internal Understanding and External Expression Limits Their Academic Performance" (Sidee, 2025). This gap was compounded by the absence of systematic institutional language-support programs; Only peer support or volunteer lecturers were available for students (Phramaha Anon Anando, 2025). These deficits could be seen as the manifestation of *avijjā*, involving not only a lack of knowledge but also approaching and expressing it. This gap also showed a structural flaw in the current system when viewed in terms of learning management because when support for language skills and research capabilities had not been effectively integrated into curriculum design and student support services, students were largely left responsible for bridging this gap themselves.

4. Structural and Institutional Limitations

Although insufficient support from teachers or classmates was rated low (2.48), institutional challenges were rated at moderate levels (Table 1). This rating indicated that support was adequate, but structural barriers remained. Various issues concerning institutional challenges were also reported by students, such as complex visa procedures and overcrowded accommodation, which lacked research space, as well as uncertainties of scheduling and bureaucratic processes (M01, 2025); (P10, 2025). At a systemic level, deeper issues were identified by lecturers, such as an imbalance of the curriculum towards a preponderance of Theravada teachings; A lack of qualified faculty in other Buddhist traditions; Limited research facilities; And administrative reluctance to approve essential learning resources like meditation retreats (Phramaha Anon Anando, 2025); (Phramaha Weerasak Abhinandavedi, 2025). These structural constraints shaped students' learning environments beyond individual control, thereby reinforcing and perpetuating challenges in clusters 1 - 3. In the view of learning management, this implied that effective reforms required concurrent changes at the institutional and policy levels rather than focusing only on curriculum or pedagogy.

5. Insufficient Integration of Theory, Practice, and Ariyasacca-Based Experiential Learning

As indicated in Table 1, although there was a high degree of openness to integration (4.02), students' perceptions reflected limited opportunity to apply Buddhist teachings in meaningful ways in daily life and academic challenges. Students who practiced meditation on their own reported significant benefits: "Meditation Retreats and Asking Questions Help My Ability to Overcome Challenges in My Learning Experience" (B01, 2025). However, this integration relied primarily on individual effort, and the integration with coursework in a formal design was only "Rarely" encountered by students. Lecturers confirmed that meditation retreats and experiential learning



activities were not systematically integrated into courses (Jiwattanasuk, 2025); (Phramaha Anon Anando, 2025); (Phramaha Sompong Khunakaro, 2025) and depended largely on individual rather than institutional systems (Phra Suthep Suddhiyano, 2025). As a result, this revealed a structural gap in learning management design, limiting students' access to contemplative practices that improve self-regulation, reduce work-related stress, and support metacognitive skill development, capacities that could interrupt the reinforcing cycle described in the following section.

The Reinforcing Feedback Loop

These five clusters created a self-reinforcing feedback process representing the principle of *paṭiccasamuppāda* at the institutional level. Heavy workload and assessment density (Cluster 1) created stress and time scarcity, resulting in students' self-regulatory capacity being undermined (Cluster 2) and increased procrastination tendencies, loss of motivation, and difficulty in maintaining focus. Impaired self-regulation and motivation further contributed to language and research skills problems (Cluster 3), leading to slower academic progress, increased time requirements, intensifying workload pressure, creating deadline compression, and restarting the reinforcing cycle. Structural and institutional limits (Cluster 4) created the environmental conditions for this cycle to emerge and persist. At the same time, a weak theory-practice connection (Cluster 5) hindered engagement with contemplative practices that could interrupt the cycle. This pattern explained why isolated interventions tended to fall short. Therefore, breaking it required comprehensive, multi-level interventions, which provided the structural rationale for the APBLM's design. This self-reinforcing cycle is illustrated in Figure 1.

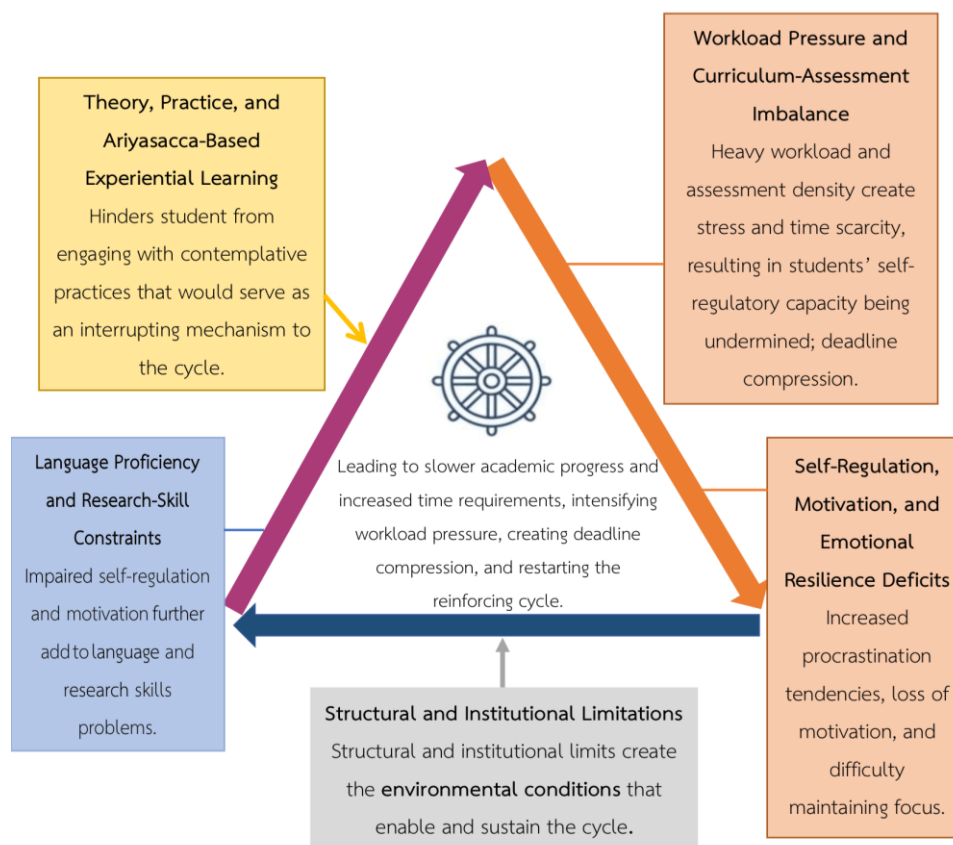


Figure 1 Self-Reinforcing Learning Management Cycle

Root Causes of Educational Dukkha at IBSC

The fundamental causes of educational dukkha at IBSC could be traced to the initial three challenge clusters. The overall samudaya weighted mean was at the moderate level (2.82), which indicated that although the factors were present, they were not overwhelming.

Table 2 Key Dimensions of the Causes of Educational Dukkha at IBSC

Causal Domain	Representative Manifestations (Weighted Mean)	Interpretation
Internal Factors	Procrastination (3.08); Greed (Wanting Quick Success) (2.62); Hatred (Frustration) (2.72); Delusion (Unclear Purpose) (2.76); Fear of failure (2.98)	Moderate
External Factors	Stress from deadlines/exams (3.34); Academic overload (M.A./Ph.D. 3.2); Limited resources (2.66)	Moderate
Overall Samudaya	2.82	Moderate

As shown in Table 2, educational suffering arose from the interplay between external conditions and internal factors. This understanding implied that changing conditions arising from the interaction between inner and outer factors could help identify appropriate and effective intervention. Clusters 4 and 5 did not cause suffering directly; Rather, they created the environmental and pedagogical conditions in which the root causes of suffering could arise, persist, and intensify. This distinction between direct causes and supporting conditions was important because interventions targeting only Clusters 4 and 5 could reduce environmental and pedagogical pressures but would not address core causal mechanisms if intrinsic psychological tendencies remained unresolved.

Aspirations for Transformation through Nirodha

Although they faced challenges and causes at a moderate level, students had high aspirations for comprehensive change, with a high overall nirodha-weighted mean of 3.97.

Table 3 Key Dimensions of Student Aspirations (Nirodha) at IBSC

Aspiration Dimension	Representative Goals (Weighted Mean)	Interpretation
Internal Psychological	Becoming a Buddhist scholar/expert (4.08); Developing as an independent researcher (M.A./Ph.D. 4)	High
Ethical/Service Orientation	Improving skills to help self/others (3.98, B.A. 4.3 Highest); Building confidence to serve society (4.02); Securing a meaningful career (M.A./Ph.D. 3.9)	High
Sociocultural	Reduced stress, increased self-awareness, and peace of mind (3.82); Developing emotional resilience	High
Academic Achievement	Completing coursework/thesis/exams successfully (4); Satisfying curriculum requirements (M.A./Ph.D. 3.9)	High
Overall Nirodha	3.97	High



As shown in Table 3, becoming a Buddhist scholar or expert was rated highest (4.08), reflecting a shift from external motivation to internal drive and genuine interest in learning. Similarly, undergraduate students rated improving skills to help themselves and others in the future highest (4.3), demonstrating their strong, compassionate service orientation. Qualitative data further supported the accessibility of *nirodha*. Students reported that "The Meditation Retreat Greatly Helped Me Understand and Deal with Suffering" (B01, 2025) and "I Realized that Everything is Impermanent; I Learned to Embrace the Process Instead of Trying to Control External Circumstances" (P11, 2025). For learning management, although facing moderate challenges (3.09), students showed high aspirations (3.97), suggesting that *Nirodha* represented a feasible transformation in education. The foundation for this process was already present in their orientations, allowing learning management design to harness existing motivation into sustainable engagement rather than create it from the beginning.

Receptivity to Path-Based Solutions through Magga

As shown in Table 4, data revealed that students responded positively to Ariyasacca principles-based interventions, as shown by an overall magga receptivity weighted mean of 4.02.

Table 4 Key Components of Receptivity to Path-Based Solutions (Magga) at IBSC

Path Component	Representative Practices (Weighted Mean)	Interpretation
Ethical Conduct (Sīla)	Cultivating respect for teachers, peers, Dhamma (4.12); Seeking guidance from mentors (4.02)	High
Mental Discipline (Samādhī)	Right mindfulness: Present awareness in learning (4); Right concentration: Meditation to calm and focus (4); Right effort: Consistent study and ethics (4)	High
Wisdom (Paññā)	Right View: Pursuing a degree as a wholesome goal (3.98); Right Intention: Setting wholesome study intentions (3.98)	High
Holistic Balance	Balancing study, rest, and spiritual practice (4.1); Overcoming unwholesome habits (3.98)	High
Overall Magga Receptivity	4.02	High

Among the items, cultivating respect for teachers, peers, and the Dhamma had the highest score (4.12), showing that students recognized the roles of ethical conduct and harmonious relationships for study and practice in academic and spiritual development. Students also understood that true development requires addressing multiple interrelated dimensions, revealed by their emphasis on balancing study, rest, and practice (4.1). Such openness was significant because it addressed self-regulation deficits (Cluster 2). In addition, seeking guidance from mentors was also rated highly (4.02), thus demonstrating openness to structured support. Strong endorsement regarding the components of magga, consisting of right view (3.98), right intention (3.98), right effort (4), right mindfulness (4), and right concentration (4), showed that students recognized the relevance of all three trainings, namely *sīla*, *samādhī*, and *paññā*, to their educational experience. One student



demonstrated a spontaneous application of Ariyasacca principles: "Whatever Problem I have, I Think About What the Problem is, What Causes it, What the Solution is, and The Way to Solve it. In this Way, I apply Ariyasacca in My Life" (P04, 2025), suggesting that magga could serve as a practical method for learning management and personal development.

The difference between receptiveness (4.02) and challenges (3.09) showed that students' readiness for change exceeded their perception of difficulties, creating favorable conditions for deploying APBLM. However, it was necessary to examine how the principles of Ariyasacca applied to the specific educational challenges identified at IBSC so that the readiness of students could be translated into action.

Ariyasacca Principles as a Diagnostic-Transformative Framework

Dukkha-Sacca Principle in Educational Contexts

In the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the Buddha described the principle of dukkha-sacca as a complex phenomenon that goes beyond mere physical suffering to encompass mental and existential insecurity, as well as the unstable nature of all conditioned experiences (Bodhi, 2000). The important thing was that the Buddha summarized suffering as the five aggregates subject to clinging (Bodhi, 2000), and this indicated that suffering ultimately lies in the clinging to the five aggregates.

According to Paṭisambhidāmagga, dukkha sacca possesses four characteristics: Piṭṭha (Oppression), saṅkhata (Causal Formation), santāpa (Burning or Agitation), and vipariṇāma (Changeability) (Sayadaw, 2004). In the context of contemporary education, piṭṭha could be seen in the weight of academic requirements, and saṅkhata was exemplified in the conditioned nature of educational suffering, a product of causes and conditions arising from standard curricula, assessment systems, and hierarchical evaluations. Santāpa could be seen in the "Burning" aspect of learning as anxieties, restlessness, and fears in relation to evaluations. Finally, vipariṇāma was revealed in the instability of educational satisfaction, where educational achievements could not give lasting security.

The view that real suffering emerged from clinging implied a direct implication for learning management, namely that intervention without inner change would not lead to sustainable transformation. A student confirmed this: "These Challenges Slow My Academic Progress but Also Strengthen My Patience and Mindfulness Practice" (M12, 2025). In line with this, inner obstacles, such as emotional imbalance and difficulty maintaining mindfulness, as reinforced by lecturers, limited students' ability to transform knowledge into lived experience, and students were less able to engage deeply with the cognitive and contemplative components of the curriculum if they lacked emotional stability and self-awareness (Jiwattanasuk, 2025).

Samudaya-Sacca Principle and the Causes of Educational Suffering

Through the lens of the samudaya principle, the origin of suffering in education was identified by two inseparable mental factors (Sīlānandabhivamsa, 2014): Ignorance (Avijjā) and craving (Tanhā). According to the Abhidhamma, craving is grounded in an unwholesome mental factor, lobha, characterized by grasping objects, while ignorance is the deeper root that functions as the



"Concealment of the Real Nature of the Object" (Nārada, 2007). In educational contexts, ignorance caused students to think of progress in education as permanence, pleasure, and self, which in turn led to various desires, thereby creating suffering.

Samudaya-sacca was further described by its tendency to accumulate the causes of suffering (Āyūhana-mūho), to act as a continuous source of it (Nidāna-mūho), to bind beings to suffering (Samyoga-mūho), and to obstruct freedom from it (Palibodha-mūho) (Sayadaw, 2004). When applied as diagnostic principles, these characteristics provided a structural lens to interpret the self-reinforcing feedback cycle identified above. Specifically, causes accumulated and complicated the challenge clusters (Āyūhana-mūho); The conditions, structural and institutional, then sustained them (Nidāna-mūho), resulting in students being chained to inefficient learning patterns (Samyoga-mūho) and hindering their development of practices that could break this cycle (Palibodha-mūho).

Educational suffering was not only produced by internal and external factors but also by their interplay. Student interviews demonstrated this understanding: "From My Personal Perspective, the Challenges Emerge Through the interaction of Both Internal and External Factors" (M07, 2025). Lecturers also noted that limited intrinsic motivation to learn, passive engagement, along with a lack of academic preparation, created reinforcing cycles in which poor understanding reduced students' confidence and led to further disengagement, with the lack of self-regulation and unclear understanding of effective academic preparation further intensifying the cycle (Phramaha Sompong Khunakaro, 2025); (Phramaha Songwit Variddhi, 2025). These interplays suggested that learning management reform needed to be conducted systematically because of the interconnected causal structure of the challenges.

Nirodha-Sacca Principle and Educational Transformation

Nirodha was defined as "The Remainderless Fading Away and Cessation of that Same Craving, The Giving Up and Relinquishing of It, freedom from It, Non-reliance On It" (Bodhi, 2000). According to the Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta, craving arises where there are pleasant or agreeable experiences, especially those involving sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental objects (Walshe, 1995). These teachings suggested that by mindful and wise engagement with experience, craving could be understood and gradually removed. In education, this implied that learning management effectiveness depended not solely on removing external barriers but also on strengthening students' capacity for wise attention and mindfulness in learning and daily life.

Nirodha-sacca also possesses four characteristics, namely, nissaraṇattho (Escape from Suffering), pavivekattho (Freedom from Disturbance), amataṭṭho (Deathless State), and asaṅkhataṭṭho (Unconditioned Nature) (Sayadaw, 2004). These characteristics could manifest in education through escaping cycles of academic anxiety (Nissaraṇattho) or relative freedom from mental disturbance due to competition (Pavivekattho); Developing types of understanding that were not easily undermined by changing circumstances (Amataṭṭho); And the recognition of a capacity for learning that was not wholly dependent on external conditions (Asaṅkhataṭṭho). Interviews with students provided evidence of this as an accessible outcome: "By Applying Mindfulness, I continue to Cultivate Insight and Peace Even When Facing Difficulties. The Suffering does not disappear, but My



Relationship to It Changes" (M07, 2025). Lecturers likewise supported this approach, noting that when meditation and reflective exercises were combined, they helped connect academic learning with emotional regulation and personal growth (Phramaha Sompong Khunakaro, 2025). Therefore, *nirodha* in education did not mean not having learning challenges, but instead it was the cessation of unwise reactivity when encountering them.

Magga-Sacca Principles for Learning Management Practice

Magga (The Eightfold Path) provided the prescriptive dimension of learning management by providing a structured process for holistic learning and institutional practice. Specifically, when applied as principles-based learning management, right view could be understood as cultivating a correct understanding of the purpose of education as holistic development rather than just obtaining a degree, and right thought cultivated compassion, non-harm, and genuine inquiry. Right speech promoted respectful, constructive, and honest communication that strengthened learning communities. Right action and right livelihood ensured ethical institutional practices. Finally, right effort, mindfulness, and concentration cultivated academic and moral development, awareness, focus, and mental discipline to enhance learning outcomes. These principles were supported in the interviews with students, as reflected by a student: "The Path is not Just Theory; It's a Practical Method for Living and Learning" (M07, 2025). Moreover, lecturers proposed six implementation strategies that directly informed the APBLM: Applying Ariyasacca structure to academic challenges, contemplative integration, adaptive support, experiential connection, improving facilities, and developing a holistic institutional model grounded in *sīla*, *samādhī*, and *paññā* (Jiwattanasuk, 2025); (Phra Paladraphin Buddhiso, 2025); (Phramaha Songwit Variddhiṭṭhāyī, 2025).

The Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model (APBLM)

Drawing on canonical insights and empirical findings, the APBLM was proposed, as illustrated in Figure 2. In this model, learning management integration occurred simultaneously, gradually, and in close connection, thereby reflecting the principles of *anupubbasikkhā* (Gradual Training).

Core Cyclical Structure

The model started with the *dukkha* dimension, which functioned as a diagnostic lens. Five challenge clusters (Overall = 3.09, Moderate) served as issues requiring resolution and indicators of structural gaps in the current learning management system. The importance of this diagnostic function lies in its shift in intervention focus from surface expressions to systemic causes that generate them.

The *samudaya* dimension came as the analytical dimension; It traced the root causes through the interaction of internal tendencies and external conditions (Overall = 2.82, Moderate). The value of this analysis lies in the reconceptualization of apparent student deficits, such as lack of self-control, lack of motivation, or language difficulties, as not personal failures but as emerging from a combination of specific conditions and causes. This implied that deficits rooted in causes could be resolved by addressing those causes, whereas attributing them to individuals addressed only the symptoms.

The *nirodha* dimension articulated the transformative vision of the model based on student aspirations (Overall = 3.97, High) instead of external benchmarks such as graduate competency frameworks or institutional rankings. By doing so, the model aimed to ensure that its vision was



appropriate and meaningful for students while potentially offering internal evaluative criteria for its success, defined by students' achievement of their own goals rather than external indicators or standards.

The magga dimension proposed to complete the cycle by turning this transformative vision into six actionable strategies aligned with specific factors of the Noble Eightfold Path. Because each factor specifies a domain of practice (Morality, Concentration, Wisdom) and mode of practice, for example, right view as understanding the true nature of phenomena, this alignment helped define the content and the mode of engagement of each strategy, ensuring that interventions remained consistent with the core practical logic of the tradition.

The process was designed to repeat with new diagnosis cycles to ensure continuous improvement, thereby reflecting gradual training (Anupubbasikkhā) because sustainable transformation requires consistent and systematic effort. As the system evolved, each diagnostic cycle could yield an ever-deepening understanding of how problems, causes, and goals change. This allowed the model to adapt while maintaining consistency in its overall structure.

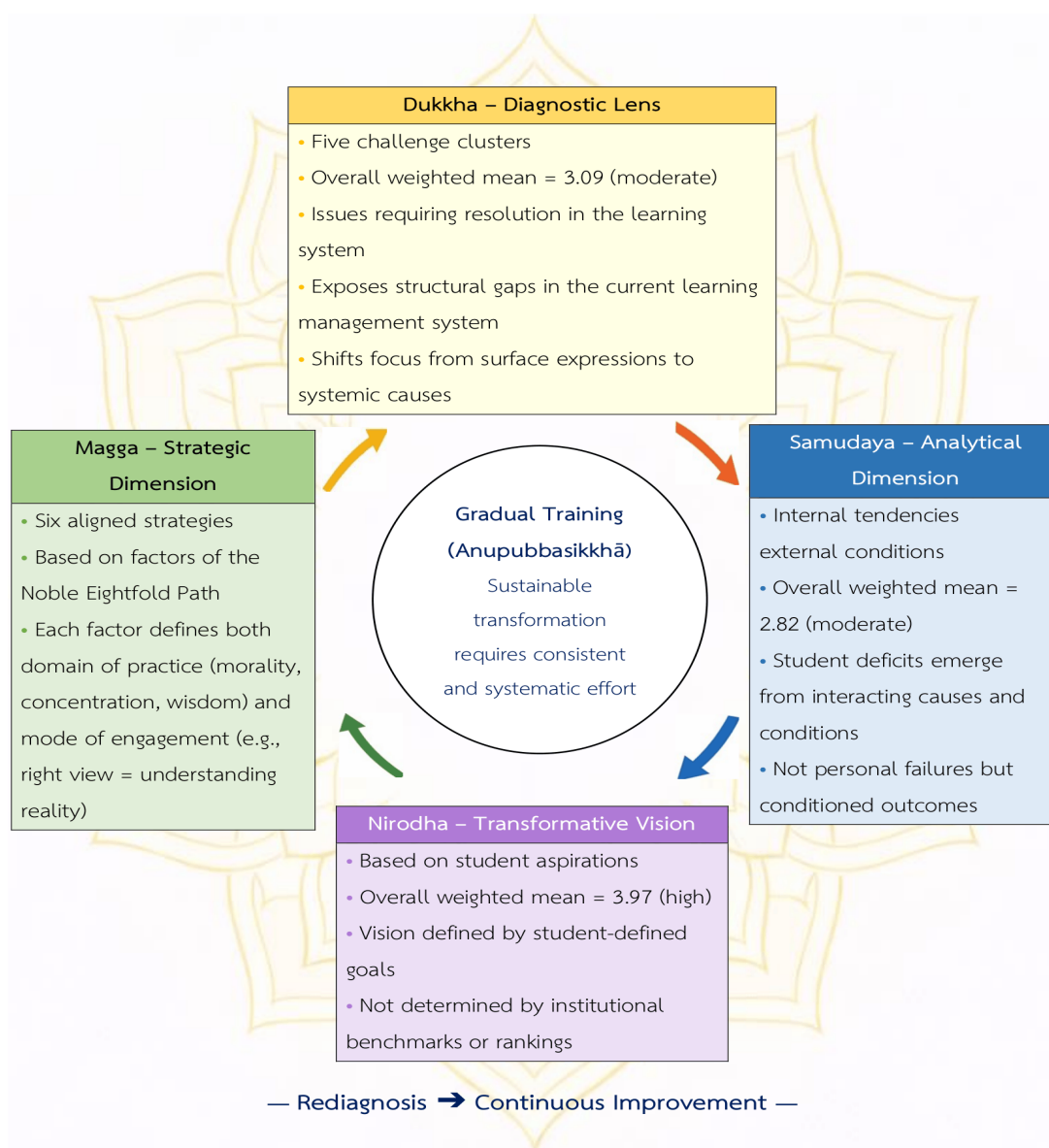


Figure 2 Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model (APBLM)



Six Actionable Strategies

Through the translation of the Eightfold Path into concrete managerial and pedagogical practices, these six actionable strategies constituted the integrated learning management proposal of this study. The details were presented below:

Strategy 1 involved curriculum and teaching design aligned with the right view and right intention to address Cluster 1. It involved defining clear learning outcomes linked to Buddhist concepts, reducing curriculum overload, incorporating Ariyasacca principles as a method of academic inquiry, and providing progressive scaffolding from basic to advanced levels. Accordingly, when curriculum design is informed by the right view, teachings do not lean toward breadth but rather emphasize depth, and assessment is directed toward the cultivation of thinking to promote deeper insights.

Strategy 2 concerns contemplative pedagogy that relates more to right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration to address Cluster 2. It focused on integrating meditation practice into learning routines, organizing retreats, integrating reflective practices, creating contemplative spaces, and providing faculty guidance in contemplative pedagogy. Especially, this strategy was designed to intervene in the feedback cycle's mechanism most directly. Dealing effectively with *thīna-middha* and *uddhacca* requires the cultivation of mindfulness and concentration to sustain mental balance. Without self-regulation, external interventions are unlikely to be effective.

Strategy 3 pertained to language and research support, drawing on the principles of right speech and right action to address Cluster 3. The approaches of this strategy included systematic language support, research mentoring, peer support systems, and timely feedback. Here, establishing systematic language support is a key instrument of the institution to address the *avijjā*-based gap between doctrinal understanding and academic outcomes.

Strategy 4, aligned with right action and right livelihood, focused on experiential and ethical learning to address Cluster 5. The approaches of this strategy included field-based learning, service learning, applied research opportunities, case-study pedagogy, and ethical reflection exercises. This strategy helps ensure that theory and practice are developed together so that academic study can lead to practical wisdom.

Strategy 5 focused on community building that is associated with right speech, right action, and right livelihood on the path to address social dimensions across clusters through designing mixed-group assignments, facilitating structured dialogue and cultural exchange, establishing mentorship across cultural backgrounds, creating affinity groups based on shared interests rather than ethnicity, and strengthening student-teacher relationships. In a multicultural environment like IBSC, this strategy is important because the benefits of other strategies may mainly rely on individuals, which makes sustainable impact difficult to achieve.

Finally, Strategy 6 concerned institutional reform aligned with all eight factors to address Cluster 4 through improving accommodation and study spaces, expanding resources and technology infrastructure, streamlining procedures, implementing transparent feedback mechanisms, supporting essential learning activities, offering professional development in effective pedagogies



for faculty, and promoting the right view at leadership levels. Due to the comprehensive impacts of structural conditions, the alignment with all eight factors is necessary in Strategy 6, as these structural conditions require guidance from all eight factors.

Additionally, these six strategies also aimed to disrupt the reinforcing feedback cycle outlined above to ensure that the model can intervene at root causes rather than symptoms: Strategy 1 reduces initial workload pressure, while Strategy 2 strengthens self-regulation to avert procrastination cycles. Strategy 3 addresses skill deficits so as to reduce the likelihood of performance anxiety, and Strategy 4 offers meaningful application so that motivation is maintained. Strategy 5 cultivates support networks to prevent isolation, and the final strategy removes structural barriers to avert the perpetuation of the cycle.

Four Forms of Validation

To ensure the credibility of the model in terms of scholarly contribution and as a practical guide, its validation was conducted through four complementary analytical lenses.

Empirical validation demonstrated that the model was anchored in documented evidence. Specifically, the *dukkha* dimension encompassed the five challenge clusters identified, and each actionable strategy was designed to correspond to each measured deficit. Similarly, the vision of the *nirodha* aligned with students' high aspirations (Overall = 3.97), and the structure of the *maggā* reflected their high receptivity (Overall = 4.02).

The pedagogical validation examined the extent to which the model addressed the pedagogical gaps identified by lecturers through the strategies they suggested. Six actionable strategies were identified as a deliberate design intervention targeting the pedagogical gaps and recommendations identified in interviews with lecturers. This expert-derived input informed how the model was built, which demonstrated alignment with expert-identified educational needs.

The theoretical validation process helped to ensure that the model upheld the standards of fidelity to the established doctrinal principles while being operationalized for educational contexts. Specifically, the model demonstrated rigorous coherence with the canonical *Ariyasacca* principles established during the documentary analysis, and each strategy also aligned with specific factors of the Noble Eightfold Path.

The comparative validation sought to determine whether challenges documented at IBSC were similar to those faced by other institutions. The thematic analysis of the interviews with the external lecturers revealed that they described the challenges that were thematically aligned with the challenges observed at IBSC. This suggested that the model's applicability extended to similar Buddhist higher education contexts beyond IBSC.

Discussion

This study first identified challenges in learning management at IBSC. Five challenge clusters, along with self-reinforcing feedback loops, revealed that learning management challenges at IBSC were at a moderate level but systematic. The study then examined how the principles of *Ariyasacca* illuminated the above issues, using its four principles as tools for diagnostic, analytical, aspirational, and prescriptive purposes, mapping directly onto the educational conditions. Finally, based on this



basis, the study developed an APBLM and validated it through four forms of validation.

Building on these findings, the APBLM extended previous studies that were inspired by Buddhism in educational research from changing the focus to systemic institutional reform instead of enhancing individual skills. Findings of Audmuangpiea et al. (2024) at Mahamakut Buddhist University showed that the Four Noble Truths brought positive results in promoting skills of creative problem-solving among undergraduate students and thereby improving confidence in academics as well as the ability to deal with everyday problems. Similar to the challenges at the moderate level found at IBSC (3.09), their study also reported a moderate initial state of learning management ($\bar{x} = 3.25$). However, their model mainly focused on student competencies within a single-campus setting.

Similarly, Jongchaloemchai et al. (2021) developed a five-step learning management model for creative problem-solving that conceptually parallels Ariyasacca, and models like those of Ounraun & Onthanee (2023) and Sangthong (2020) focused on the development of specific skills, but none focused on systemic institutional reform.

A key distinction of this research lies in its application in the environment of an international, multilingual, and multicultural Buddhist educational institution. Research by Phrakhupalad Sak Mahāvēro (Kosolsuphawatt) et al. (2021) and Phraprayad Abhinanto (Muan Si Phrom) et al. (2021) effectively applied the Four Noble Truths in the context of primary and secondary schools, but these studies were conducted in highly homogeneous environments. This contrast was especially prominent at IBSC, where students from diverse countries had to deal with academic pressure in the second language and at the same time pursued spiritual development, which thereby showed the need for intervention at the systematic level. In response to this need, the APBLM showed that these principles remained analytically robust in a much more complex environment, specifically an English-language higher education institution with multicultural and multi-traditional characteristics. By adding a cyclical and iterative structure based on anupubbasikkhā (Gradual Training), the APBLM was not limited to the models of learning packages or the development of single-unit skills like previous studies, but was designed for sustainable development at the institutional level. This was also reflected in the experiences of students. Accordingly, students' perspectives demonstrated that the structure of Ariyasacca functioned not only as a tool for supporting analysis in research but also as a practical application orientation based on life experience (P04, 2025); (M07, 2025). This, thereby, made the model grounded in student-lived reality and expert pedagogical insight derived from the study context.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

This research contributes new knowledge in three complementary aspects. First, it develops a new way of applying the principles of Ariyasacca at the institutional level, where the principles are used as both a diagnostic tool and a mechanism for guiding transformation in international Buddhist higher education. Next, it contributes methodologically by using Ariyasacca as the epistemological framework that reshapes the whole architecture and logic of research design.

Finally, it develops and validates the model, thereby showing how doctrinal authenticity and institutional effectiveness can go hand in hand in the multicultural Buddhist higher education contexts.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the explicit knowledge contribution of this study is the development of the Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model. Its knowledge base consists of three interrelated components:

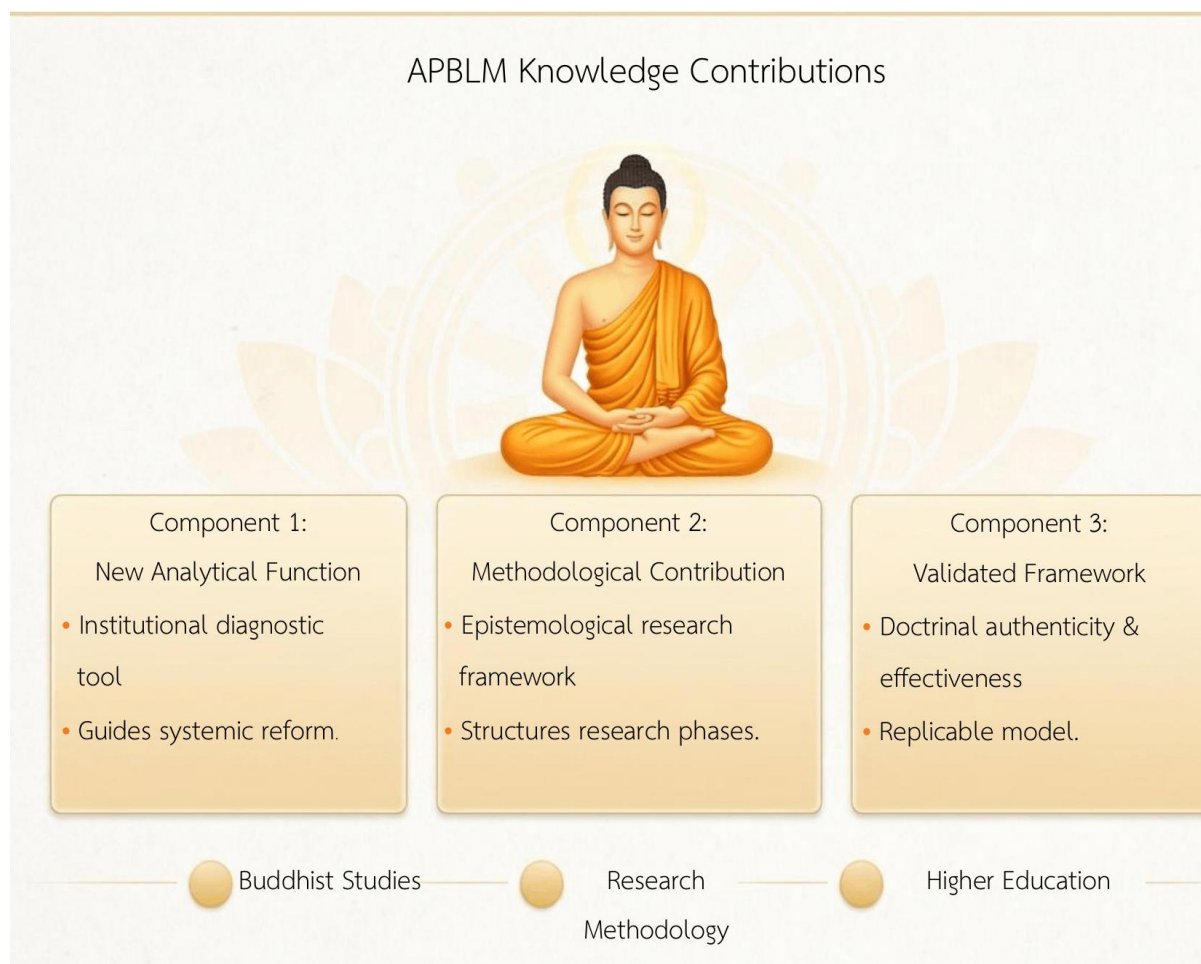


Figure 3 The Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model (APBLM) and Its Knowledge Contributions

Component 1: New Analytical Function for Ariyasacca Principles in the Context of the Institution: Although the principles of Ariyasacca have traditionally been used as teachings for liberation, this study extends these principles as a tool for diagnosing and addressing systemic issues in international Buddhist higher education. In practice, the principles were used to identify educational challenges, trace conditioned causes, establish desirable outcomes that aligned with students' aspirations, and inform the development of six institutional strategies within the APBLM. This illustrates how doctrinal principles interact with actual learning situations within the institution through the APBLM. The perspectives of lecturers also showed this analytical function by identifying not only structural problems but also proposing specific strategies that are in the



same diagnostic logic, as evidenced in the findings discussed in the preceding sections. This is important because it shows that the principles of Ariyasacca function as an institutional diagnostic tool without relying entirely on external management frameworks to address structural gaps.

Component 2: Methodological Contribution through the Operationalization of Ariyasacca as an Epistemological Framework: This study shows that the principles of Ariyasacca are not only a topic of research but can also serve as the organizing logic of the research design itself. The research process was guided by the internal structure of the Ariyasacca: Identifying educational dukkha, tracing its conditioned causes (Samudaya), conceptualizing the state of cessation (Nirodha), and delineating the path (Magga). This structure also guided the formulation of research questions, data collection, analytical synthesis, and the development of the model. This integrative logic also emerged naturally in the way participants interpreted their experiences, reflecting that the structure of Ariyasacca served not only as a research framework but also as a lived orientation for problem-solving within the study context. The contribution of this research does not lie in introducing Ariyasacca as a new framework but in showing how its internal logic can be systematically operationalized as a methodological framework applicable to Buddhist and contemplative education research.

Component 3: Validated Framework Illustrating the Compatibility of Doctrinal Authenticity and Institutional Effectiveness: This research demonstrates that Buddhist higher education institutions need not rely exclusively on secular governance models because the APBLM shows that Buddhist principles remain structurally capable of addressing the challenges of the global and multicultural environment within higher education. As evidenced in the findings of this study, the practice of mindfulness demonstrably changed students' relationship to suffering, showing that the transformation, according to Buddhist spirituality, is not only conceptual or theoretical but can also be experienced in an academic environment. This broadens the understanding of "Effectiveness" in Buddhist higher education that emphasizes intrinsic development aligned with the philosophical values of the institution rather than relying solely on external evaluation criteria. This, therefore, also demonstrates that academic quality and spiritual development can support each other in the long term.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study showed that at IBSC, educational suffering manifested through quantifiable patterns across five interconnected challenge clusters and arose from causal networks that collectively produced suffering. Although students faced moderate challenges, they still had high levels of aspiration for comprehensive development across emotional, ethical, scholarly, and contemplative dimensions. Their high levels of receptiveness towards solution methods based on magga lent empirical support to the view that nirodha was an attainable educational goal, and the magga provided a relevant, desired methodological framework. Documentary and interview analyses further established that the principles of Ariyasacca functioned as a systematic approach by first diagnosing educational suffering, then tracing its root causes, affirming the possibility of transformation,



and finally proposing paths of systematic change. The resulting Ariyasacca Principles-Based Learning Management Model represented diagnosis and prescription in a cyclical form, validated through four forms of validation, with six actionable strategies designed to address challenge clusters and interrupt feedback loops at multiple points. Ultimately, this study confirmed that essential Buddhist wisdom still had strong diagnostic and transformative power. In the context of contemporary challenges such as globalization, rapid changes in technology, and cultural diversity, the model enabled Buddhist institutions to maintain their traditions while at the same time promoting academic quality, development of ethics, and contemplative practice, thereby redefining the purpose of education, which is not only the transmission of information but also a transformative process of cultivating wisdom-in-action that can be used to alleviate suffering in an interconnected world. However, this research also has several limitations, which thereby outline the course for future research and institutional action. Because this research focused on one institution, future comparative studies among multiple Buddhist universities in different regions are needed. Also, future research could implement the six strategies of the APBLM by piloting interventions over one or two academic years using pre- and post-measures to evaluate their effectiveness in terms of students' well-being, academic performance, and ethical development. In terms of institutional practice, IBSC and other universities could take more systematic steps, such as using the model's strategies to establish processes for curriculum review, integrate contemplative activities into semester orientation, and make language support a formal part of course structures. Additionally, apart from traditional academic metrics, aspects of student well-being, ethical development, and contemplative engagement also need to be considered within quality assurance processes. Finally, because this study primarily captured the views of students and lecturers, future research should adopt a whole-institution approach that includes administrators and staff, because their decisions and institutional responsibilities also shape the reality students live with every day. For students like M06, who reflected that she had "Learned to Identify the Causes of Difficulties, Like Attachment to Results or Negative Thinking," the APBLM is not only an academic model but also an experiential framework through which students can become more aware of and navigate personal development in an environment of academic rigor, especially when studying in a foreign language, reconciling Buddhist ideals with institutional realities, and searching for meaning within academic life.

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BUDDHADHAMMA AND SME RESILIENCE: POST-FLOOD RECOVERY IN HAT YAI DISTRICT, THAILAND

Chetsada Noknoi

Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Thaksin University, Songkhla, Thailand

Corresponding author E-mail: chetsada@tsu.ac.th

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Natural disasters increasingly disrupt economic systems, particularly affecting SMEs, which are highly vulnerable due to limited resources and adaptive capacity. In Thailand, SMEs play a major role in employment and GDP, yet the 2025 flood in Hat Yai caused severe financial losses, business interruptions, and psychological distress among entrepreneurs. These challenges highlighted the need for recovery approaches that address not only economic reconstruction but also cultural and psychological resilience. In the Thai context, Buddhадhamma, including the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and Sangahavatthu IV (The Four Bases of Social Solidarity), provides practical guidance for coping with crises and strengthening community support. However, limited research has integrated Buddhist teachings into SME resilience frameworks. Therefore, this study aims to examine the multidimensional impacts of the 2025 flood on SMEs, analyze the application of Buddhist principles in post-disaster recovery, and develop a Buddhist Resilience Model for SMEs to explain sustainable recovery processes.

Methodology: This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach within an interpretivist paradigm. Twenty-five SME entrepreneurs affected by the 2025 flood in Hat Yai District were purposively selected. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation over a three-month period. Thematic analysis was used, and trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing.

Main Results: The findings revealed that the flood generated multidimensional impacts, including financial losses, operational disruption, supply chain breakdowns, and psychological stress. Participants described Buddhадhamma as an important resource for recovery. The Four Noble Truths supported acceptance and understanding of adversity, the Noble Eightfold Path guided ethical and strategic decision-making, and Sangahavatthu IV strengthened cooperation and mutual assistance within communities. Based on these findings, the study developed the "Integrated Buddhist Resilience Model for SMEs," consisting of three interconnected dimensions: Cognitive Dimension (Inner Resilience), Behavioral Dimension (Ethical and Strategic Action), and Social Dimension (Collective Resilience). These dimensions interacted dynamically to enhance personal adaptability, ethical conduct, and community cohesion, ultimately contributing to long-term sustainable recovery.



The findings suggested that SME resilience was a holistic process shaped by Buddhist principles and supported by both internal and external adaptive mechanisms.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: This study falls under Applied Buddhism, specifically the area of Buddhism and Sustainable Development. It applies core Buddhist principles, including the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and Sangahavatthu IV, as practical frameworks for SME recovery. These teachings support cognitive adaptation, ethical decision-making, and social cooperation among entrepreneurs facing post-disaster challenges. Buddhadhamma serves as both a psychological coping mechanism and a moral foundation for business practices, fostering compassion, mutual support, and community resilience. The findings demonstrate that Buddhist principles can be effectively integrated into economic recovery strategies, contributing to sustainable development, social cohesion, and long-term community resilience in disaster management contexts.

Conclusions: SME recovery following the 2025 flood cannot be explained solely by economic factors but also involves psychological and socio-cultural dimensions. Buddhadhamma played a significant role in helping entrepreneurs adapt to adversity, make ethical decisions, and strengthen community cooperation. Recovery was not merely a return to normal conditions but a process of transformation through which entrepreneurs rebuilt livelihoods, maintained hope, and developed resilience for future challenges. The findings demonstrate that Buddhist principles can provide meaning, collective strength, and practical guidance for sustainable recovery in disaster contexts.

Keywords: Post-flood Recovery, SMEs, Hat Yai, Resilience

Introduction

In recent decades, the frequency and severity of natural disasters have increased substantially worldwide, generating significant economic and social consequences. According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2025), more than 7,300 major disaster events were recorded globally between 2000 and 2019, representing a considerable increase compared with previous decades. Southeast Asia is among the regions most vulnerable to climate-related disasters, particularly floods, storms, and droughts, due to its geographical characteristics and high population density. In Thailand, floods are the most frequent natural disaster, accounting for a large proportion of disaster-related economic losses. Data from the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation (DDPM) indicate that flooding affects millions of people annually and causes substantial damage to infrastructure, businesses, and local livelihoods (Mungkalarungsi & Katsanook, 2025). These recurring disaster events have posed significant challenges to economic systems, particularly for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), which often possess limited financial reserves and adaptive capacity. Among the most affected sectors are Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), which are widely recognized as the backbone of national and regional economies. In Thailand, SMEs account for over 90 percent of all enterprises and contribute substantially to employment generation and gross domestic product (The Office of Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion, 2021). Despite their importance, SMEs are disproportionately vulnerable to external shocks due



to limited financial reserves, low adaptive capacity, and dependence on localized supply chains (Tierney, 2019); (Doern, 2016).

Hat Yai District, located in Songkhla Province, represents a critical economic hub in southern Thailand, characterized by its role in commerce, tourism, and cross-border trade. However, its geographical and hydrological conditions make it highly susceptible to recurrent flooding. The 2025 flood event was particularly severe, causing widespread disruption across economic, social, and infrastructural systems. SMEs in the region faced extensive financial losses, operational interruptions, and long-term uncertainty, reflecting patterns observed in global disaster studies (Wisner et al., 2004).

Beyond financial losses, many SME owners faced profound personal and emotional challenges. Floodwaters damaged inventories, machinery, and business premises that had often been built through years of personal investment and family effort. For many entrepreneurs, the disaster threatened not only their economic survival but also their sense of security, identity, and future livelihood. The uncertainty surrounding business continuity, debt obligations, employee retention, and household income generated significant psychological stress and emotional exhaustion. These experiences highlight that post-disaster recovery is not merely an economic process but also a human and social struggle involving hope, adaptation, and perseverance.

Following the 2025 flood, government agencies implemented various recovery measures, including emergency financial assistance, soft-loan programs, infrastructure rehabilitation, and community relief initiatives. However, previous studies have shown that financial and institutional support alone may be insufficient for long-term recovery, particularly when entrepreneurs continue to face psychological distress, social disruption, and uncertainty regarding future risks. This limitation highlights the importance of complementary recovery mechanisms that address both material and non-material dimensions of resilience.

Resilience is generally defined as the capacity of individuals, organizations, or communities to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adverse events while maintaining essential functions and structures (Holling, 1973); (Walker et al., 2004). In the context of SMEs, resilience refers not only to the ability to restore business operations after a disruption but also to the capacity to learn, adapt, and transform in response to changing environmental conditions (Doern, 2016). Therefore, resilience is increasingly viewed as a dynamic and multidimensional process encompassing economic, psychological, social, and cultural dimensions rather than merely a return to pre-disaster conditions.

Traditional disaster recovery frameworks have largely focused on economic reconstruction, infrastructure development, and institutional intervention. While these approaches are essential, they often fail to account for the human and cultural dimensions of resilience, particularly in societies where religious and philosophical systems play a central role in shaping behavior (Adger, 2000). Increasingly, scholars argue that resilience should be understood as a multidimensional construct that includes psychological adaptation, social cohesion, and cultural meaning-making (Folke et al., 2010).



In the Thai context, Buddhism serves as a foundational cultural system that influences not only personal beliefs but also economic practices and social relationships. Core Buddhist teachings such as the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and Sangahavatthu IV provide practical frameworks for understanding suffering, guiding ethical behavior, and fostering social harmony (Harvey, 2013). These teachings are not abstract doctrines but are actively integrated into daily life, shaping how individuals interpret and respond to crises.

In business contexts, these principles may influence practical decisions such as managing financial uncertainty, maintaining ethical relationships with customers and suppliers, avoiding opportunistic behavior during crises, and fostering cooperation within local communities. Consequently, Buddhadhamma may function not only as a spiritual resource but also as a practical guide for entrepreneurial decision-making and recovery strategies.

From the perspective of Buddhist Anthropology, religion is embedded in social practice and economic behavior, functioning as a system of meaning that guides human action (Keyes, 1983). This perspective challenges the separation between economic rationality and cultural values, suggesting that decision-making processes are deeply influenced by moral and philosophical frameworks. Unlike general cultural studies, which primarily examine culture as a system of symbols, meanings, identities, and social representations, Buddhist Anthropology specifically focuses on how Buddhist doctrines, rituals, moral values, and lived religious practices shape everyday behavior, social relationships, and economic activities. This perspective emphasizes the practical application of Buddhist teachings in real-life contexts, enabling a deeper understanding of how Buddhadhamma influences adaptive responses, decision-making processes, and community resilience during times of crisis.

Contemporary scholarship in Buddhist Anthropology has expanded beyond functionalist interpretations of religion to examine its complex and sometimes contradictory roles within society. While Buddhist teachings may foster resilience, social solidarity, and ethical conduct, scholars have also argued that religious beliefs and institutions can contribute to the reproduction of social hierarchies, power relations, and structural inequalities (McMahan, 2008); (Schober, 2011); (Borchert, 2017). From this perspective, religion should not be viewed solely as a source of social harmony but as a dynamic cultural system whose effects may vary across different social and economic contexts. Recognizing these critical perspectives allows for a more nuanced understanding of how Buddhadhamma functions in post-disaster recovery, where religious values may simultaneously empower adaptive responses while being shaped by broader social structures and institutional arrangements.

Despite the growing recognition of cultural factors in disaster recovery, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the integration of Buddhadhamma into SME resilience studies. Most existing research focuses either on economic or psychological dimensions, with limited attention to the role of religious teachings as adaptive mechanisms.

The study focuses on SME entrepreneurs operating in sectors such as retail trade, hospitality, food services, manufacturing, and local service businesses. These entrepreneurs represent individuals



and families whose livelihoods depend directly on the continuity of their enterprises and whose recovery experiences provide valuable insights into the human dimensions of resilience.

Objectives

This study aims to examine the multidimensional impacts of the 2025 flood on SMEs, analyze the application of Buddhist principles in post-disaster recovery, and develop a Buddhist Resilience Model for SMEs to explain sustainable recovery processes.

Methodology

Research Paradigm and Design

This study is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, which emphasizes understanding social phenomena through the meanings that individuals assign to their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Given the focus on lived experiences and cultural interpretations, a qualitative phenomenological approach was adopted. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of how SME entrepreneurs perceived and responded to disaster situations through the lens of Buddhist teachings.

Study Area Contextualization

Hat Yai District was selected as the study site due to its economic significance and vulnerability to flooding. The area represented a complex socio-economic system where traditional cultural values coexist with modern business practices, making it an ideal context for examining the interaction between religion and economic behavior.

Sampling Strategy and Participant Selection

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who possessed direct experience and relevant knowledge regarding SME recovery following the 2025 flood in Hat Yai District. The study focused on owners or managers of SMEs who had experienced significant impacts from the disaster and were actively involved in post-flood recovery processes. To ensure the relevance and richness of the data, participants were required to meet the following inclusion criteria: They had to be owners, co-owners, or managers of SMEs operating in Hat Yai District before the 2025 flood; Their businesses had to be directly affected by the flood through financial loss, operational disruption, property damage, or supply-chain interruption; And they had to have continued operating, rebuilding, or implementing recovery strategies after the disaster. Conversely, businesses that were permanently closed immediately after the flood, enterprises located outside Hat Yai District, and individuals without direct involvement in business decision-making were excluded from the study.

A total of 25 participants were selected, representing a range of business sectors, including retail trade, hospitality and tourism services, food and beverage enterprises, small-scale manufacturing, transportation services, and community-based businesses. The participants varied in terms of business size, years of operation, and recovery experiences, providing diverse perspectives on post-disaster adaptation. Most enterprises employed fewer than 50 workers and had been operating for more than five years prior to the flood. The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation, whereby additional interviews no longer generated new



themes or significant insights (Guest et al., 2006). This approach ensured sufficient depth and diversity of information to support the development of the proposed Buddhist Resilience Model for SMEs.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted over a period of three months using multiple qualitative methods to ensure depth and triangulation:

1. In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and recovery strategies. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and was audio-recorded with consent.

2. Focus Group Discussions

Two focus groups were organized to capture collective perspectives and community dynamics. These discussions facilitated the exploration of shared experiences and social interactions.

3. Participant Observation

Participant observation was conducted throughout the three-month fieldwork period in flood-affected communities in Hat Yai District, with particular attention given to activities organized in Buddhist temples that served as community recovery centers. The researcher attended community meetings, relief distribution activities, religious ceremonies, volunteer programs, and informal gatherings involving SME entrepreneurs, community leaders, monks, and local residents. During these observations, the researcher adopted the role of a participant-observer, engaging in selected community activities while simultaneously documenting social interactions, recovery practices, decision-making processes, and expressions of Buddhist values in everyday situations.

Field notes were recorded systematically after each observation session, focusing on patterns of cooperation, mutual assistance, resource sharing, ethical business conduct, and the role of Buddhist teachings in shaping recovery behaviors. Particular attention was paid to how entrepreneurs interacted with community members and religious institutions during the recovery process. Observational data were subsequently triangulated with interview and focus group findings to enhance the credibility and depth of the analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the approach proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). The analysis began with data familiarization, during which interview transcripts, focus group discussions, and field notes were repeatedly reviewed to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives. Subsequently, initial codes were generated to identify meaningful segments of data related to disaster impacts, recovery strategies, and the application of Buddhadharma in post-flood recovery. These codes were then systematically examined and grouped into broader categories to facilitate the identification and development of emerging themes. The resulting themes were refined and validated through continuous comparison across multiple data sources to ensure consistency and coherence. Finally, the themes were



interpreted in relation to the study's conceptual framework and relevant theoretical perspectives, particularly resilience theory and Buddhist Anthropology, in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of SME recovery processes following the 2025 flood in Hat Yai District.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed throughout the research process in accordance with established qualitative research standards (Creswell & Poth, 2017). First, data triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from three different sources: In-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observations. The researcher systematically examined the consistency of emerging themes across these data sources to strengthen the credibility of the findings and reduce the risk of relying on a single perspective. Second, member checking was undertaken by providing summaries of the preliminary findings and thematic interpretations to selected participants for review. Participants were invited to verify the accuracy of the interpretations and to clarify any statements that might have been misunderstood. Feedback received during this process was incorporated into the final analysis to enhance interpretive validity.

In addition, peer debriefing was employed to minimize potential researcher bias. The coding process, theme development, and interpretation of findings were periodically reviewed and discussed with two academic colleagues experienced in qualitative research and Buddhist studies. These discussions helped challenge assumptions, identify alternative interpretations, and improve analytical rigor. To further reduce subjective bias, the researcher maintained reflective field notes throughout the study, documenting personal assumptions, observations, and decision-making processes during data collection and analysis. This reflexive approach enabled continuous critical self-examination and enhanced the dependability and confirmability of the research findings. Collectively, these procedures strengthened the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study.

Results and Discussion

The presentation of findings is organized according to the three research objectives. The first objective examines the multidimensional impacts of the 2025 flood on SMEs. The second objective explores how Buddhaddharma was applied by entrepreneurs during the recovery process. The third objective focuses on the development of the Buddhist Resilience Model for SMEs based on the empirical findings. This structure facilitates a systematic understanding of how Buddhist principles contributed to post-disaster recovery and long-term resilience.

Results

1. Findings Related to Objective 1: Multidimensional Impacts of the Flood on SMEs

The flood had profound and multidimensional impacts on SMEs. Financial losses were significant, with many entrepreneurs reporting revenue declines exceeding 50%. Physical damage to inventory, equipment, and infrastructure disrupted business operations. Additionally, supply chain interruptions caused delays in production and service delivery, as shown in Table 1.



Table 1 Major Impacts of the 2025 Flood on SMEs

Impact Category	Description
Financial Loss	Revenue decline, asset damage
Operational Disruption	Temporary closure, reduced productivity
Supply Chain Breakdown	Logistics delays
Psychological Stress	Anxiety, uncertainty

One participant reflected on the emotional impact of the disaster:

"My Business had been Built Over More than Ten Years, and within a few days, The Flood Damaged almost Everything. I was not Only Worried About Money but also About Whether I would be Able to Support My Family and Employees." (Participant 5, 2026)

This statement illustrates that the consequences of the flood extended beyond economic losses and involved deep concerns regarding livelihood security, family responsibilities, and future uncertainty.

Psychologically, entrepreneurs experienced stress, anxiety, and uncertainty, which affected decision-making and motivation. These findings aligned with disaster vulnerability theory, which emphasized the interplay between economic, social, and psychological factors (Wisner et al., 2004).

2. Findings Related to Objective 2: Application of Buddhhadhamma in SME Recovery

2.1 The Four Noble Truths (Cognitive Adaptation)

Entrepreneurs applied the Four Noble Truths as a framework for understanding their situation. The recognition of suffering (Dukkha) allowed them to accept the reality of the disaster, while identifying causes (Samudaya) enabled them to analyze underlying vulnerabilities.

One participant explained:

"At First, I Felt Overwhelmed and Hopeless because Almost Everything in My Shop was Damaged. However, reflecting on the Buddha's Teaching that Suffering is Part of Life Helped Me Accept the Situation and focus on what could be Done Next Rather than dwelling on the Loss." (Participant 7, 2026)

This statement illustrated how the recognition of suffering (Dukkha) facilitated psychological acceptance and reduced emotional distress, enabling entrepreneurs to shift from emotional reactions toward constructive problem-solving.

2.2 The Noble Eightfold Path (Behavioral Adaptation)

The Noble Eightfold Path provided practical guidance for recovery. Right View (Samma Ditthi) helped entrepreneurs develop realistic perspectives, while Right Effort (Samma Vayama) encouraged persistence. Right Livelihood (Samma Ajiva) ensured ethical business practices, even under financial pressure.



As one entrepreneur noted:

"Many Businesses Increased Prices after the Flood because Supplies were Limited, but I chose not to Take Advantage of Customers. I believed that Maintaining Fairness would Help Sustain Trust in the Long Run." (Participant 14, 2026)

This quotation reflected the application of Right Livelihood (Samma Ajiva) and demonstrated how ethical considerations informed strategic business decisions during recovery.

2.3 Sangahavatthu IV (Social Adaptation)

The Four Bases of Social Solidarity played a crucial role in strengthening community networks. Entrepreneurs engaged in mutual aid through generosity, communication, and cooperation.

A participant described the role of community support as follows:

"People in the Community Shared Equipment, Offered Temporary Storage Space, and Helped Clean Damaged Shops. Without this Support, Recovery would have Taken Much Longer." (Participant 21, 2026)

This statement illustrated how generosity (Dana) and beneficial conduct (Atthacariya) were translated into practical forms of mutual assistance that strengthened collective resilience.

3. Findings Related to Objective 3: Development of the Buddhist Resilience Model for SMEs

3.1 Emergence of the Model

The findings from thematic analysis revealed that SME recovery in Hat Yai District is not a linear or purely economic process, but rather a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by cognitive, behavioral, and social factors. These dimensions were deeply embedded in Buddhadhamma, which functioned as adaptive mechanisms in post-disaster contexts. Through iterative coding and synthesis, the study identified a recurring pattern of interrelated processes, leading to the development of the "Integrated Buddhist Resilience Model for SMEs," as illustrated in Figure 1. The identification of the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and Sangahavatthu IV emerged through an iterative process of thematic analysis. Participants frequently described experiences related to acceptance of suffering, ethical decision-making, perseverance, mutual assistance, and community cooperation. These recurring themes were subsequently interpreted and synthesized in relation to relevant Buddhist concepts during the analytical stage. Therefore, the Buddhist dimensions presented in the model represent an integration of empirical findings and theoretical interpretation rather than concepts imposed a priori by the researcher. This model integrated personal adaptability, ethical conduct, and community cohesion into a unified framework for sustainable recovery.

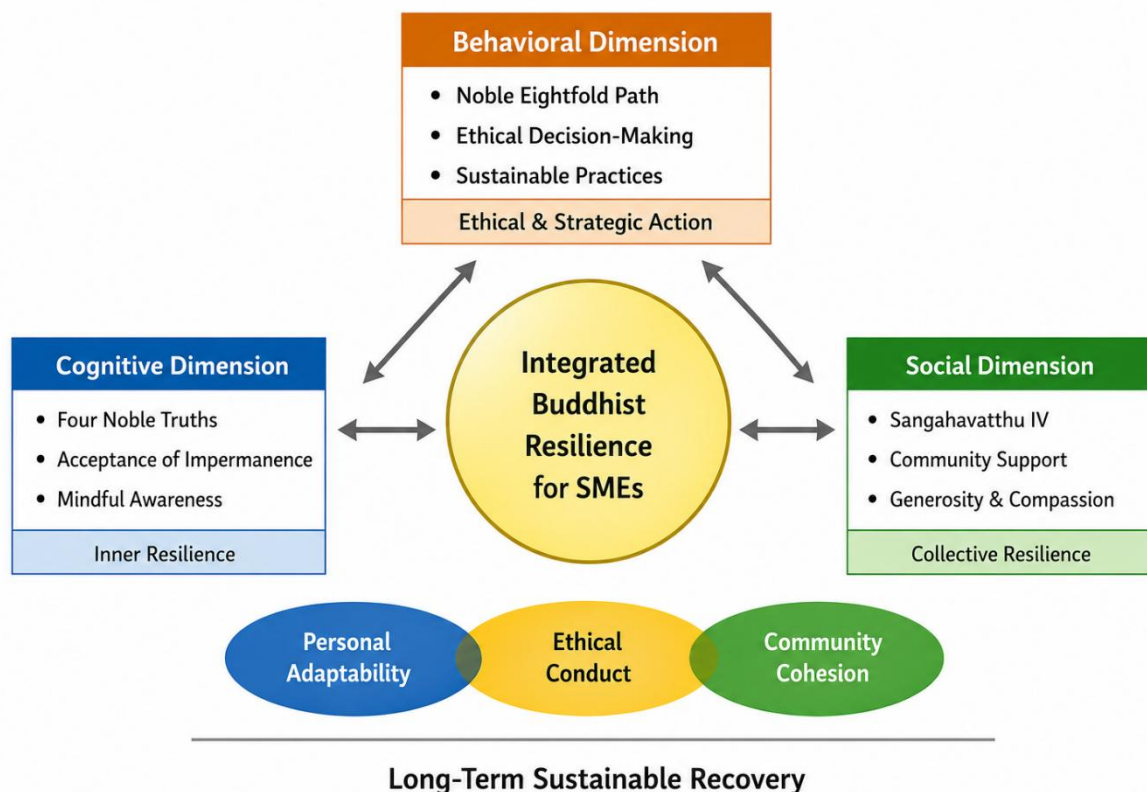


Figure 1 Integrated Buddhist Resilience Model for SMEs

3.2 Components of the Model

The Buddhist Resilience Model for SMEs demonstrates that post-disaster resilience was not solely an economic capacity but a multidimensional process emerging from the interaction of cognitive, behavioral, and social mechanisms. The model theoretically proposed that resilience was culturally embedded and shaped by Buddhist principles, which functioned as adaptive resources enabling entrepreneurs to cope with uncertainty, maintain ethical conduct, and mobilize collective support. Rather than viewing recovery as a simple return to pre-disaster conditions, the model conceptualized resilience as a dynamic process of transformation in which internal beliefs, practical actions, and social relationships continuously reinforce one another.

3.2.1 Cognitive Dimension (Inner Resilience)

The cognitive dimension represented the internal mechanism through which entrepreneurs interpreted adversity and constructed meaning from disaster experiences. The findings suggested that the Four Noble Truths, together with the concepts of impermanence (Anicca) and mindfulness (Sati), functioned as cognitive resources that facilitated psychological adaptation. Theoretically, this dimension demonstrated that resilience began with meaning-making processes, whereby individuals reinterpreted crisis situations in ways that reduced emotional distress and enhanced adaptive capacity. Thus, inner resilience served as the foundational mechanism that enabled entrepreneurs to respond constructively rather than reactively to disaster-related challenges.



3.2.2 Behavioral Dimension (Ethical and Strategic Action)

The behavioral dimension illustrated how cognitive adaptation is translated into practical action. The findings indicated that entrepreneurs applied principles of the Noble Eightfold Path to guide decision-making during recovery. Theoretically, this dimension demonstrated that resilience was sustained not only through strategic business responses but also through ethical conduct. The integration of economic rationality with moral responsibility enabled entrepreneurs to maintain legitimacy, stakeholder trust, and long-term sustainability. Therefore, the model suggested that ethical behavior was not merely a moral outcome but a strategic component of resilient recovery.

3.2.3 Social Dimension (Collective Resilience)

The social dimension highlighted the role of social relationships and community engagement in strengthening recovery processes. The findings revealed that Sangahavattthu IV encourages cooperation, mutual assistance, and resource sharing among affected entrepreneurs and community members. Theoretically, this dimension demonstrated that resilience extended beyond individual capacities and was embedded within collective social structures. Recovery was therefore facilitated through networks of trust, reciprocity, and shared responsibility. The model proposed that collective resilience emerged when Buddhist moral values were translated into social practices that enhanced community cohesion and support adaptive responses during times of crisis.

3.3 Interrelationships among Dimensions

The analysis further revealed that the three dimensions were not independent but were dynamically interconnected. The cognitive dimension influenced behavioral responses, as individuals who achieved acceptance and clarity were more likely to engage in ethical and strategic action. In turn, ethical behavior strengthened trust within the community, enhancing social cohesion. Conversely, strong social support systems contributed to psychological stability, reinforcing cognitive resilience. This bidirectional interaction formed a feedback loop, where each dimension continuously supported and enhanced the others.

3.4 Outcome of the Model

The findings indicated that the integration of the cognitive, behavioral, and social dimensions generated a set of interconnected outcomes that collectively strengthened SME resilience in post-disaster contexts. At the individual level, the cognitive dimension contributed to personal adaptability by enabling entrepreneurs to develop psychological flexibility, accept uncertainty, and respond constructively to adverse circumstances. At the behavioral level, the application of Buddhist principles promoted ethical conduct, encouraging responsible decision-making, long-term strategic thinking, and the maintenance of moral standards during recovery. At the social level, community cohesion emerged through mutual support, cooperation, and the development of trust-based relationships among entrepreneurs, local residents, and community institutions. The interaction of these outcomes contributed to the ultimate objective of long-term sustainable recovery. The model demonstrated that sustainable recovery extended beyond the restoration of business operations and financial performance, encompassing enhanced



adaptive capacity, ethical sustainability, stronger social networks, and improved preparedness for future crises. Consequently, resilience was conceptualized not as a static end state but as a continuous process of adaptation, learning, and transformation supported by Buddhist principles and community engagement.

3.5 Synthesis of Findings

The findings suggested that SME resilience was best understood as an integrated process combining internal cognition, ethical action, and social interaction, all of which were shaped by Buddhist principles. The proposed model provided a culturally grounded framework that explains how SMEs could not only recover from disaster but also develop long-term sustainability through the application of Buddhist principles.

Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce and extend contemporary resilience theory by demonstrating that SME recovery is not solely dependent on economic resources but is deeply embedded in socio-cultural and cognitive systems. While classical resilience frameworks conceptualize resilience as the capacity to absorb shocks and recover functionality (Adger, 2000), more recent scholarship emphasizes the importance of transformative resilience, which involves adaptation, learning, and systemic change (Folke et al., 2010); (Walker et al., 2004).

The narratives of participants further reveal that resilience is experienced as a deeply personal and emotional journey rather than merely a business recovery process. Entrepreneurs frequently describe feelings of fear, uncertainty, exhaustion, and responsibility toward family members and employees. These experiences suggest that post-disaster recovery involves not only rebuilding physical assets and restoring income but also reconstructing meaning, confidence, and hope. This human dimension of resilience is often underrepresented in conventional disaster recovery models that primarily focus on economic indicators.

In this context, the integration of Buddhadhamma observed among SME entrepreneurs in Hat Yai represents a form of culturally embedded transformative resilience. The application of the Four Noble Truths aligns closely with the concept of meaning-making in crisis adaptation, where individuals reconstruct their understanding of adverse events to maintain psychological stability (Park, 2010). Unlike Western psychological frameworks that often focus on individual cognition, the Buddhist approach incorporates existential and philosophical dimensions, enabling a deeper level of cognitive restructuring. While previous disaster resilience studies have highlighted the importance of psychological adaptation and meaning-making (Park, 2010); (Bonanno, 2004), most have focused on secular cognitive processes. In contrast, the present study demonstrates that entrepreneurs interpret adversity through Buddhist understandings of suffering (Dukkha), impermanence (Anicca), and mindfulness (Sati). This finding suggests that resilience in Buddhist societies may be rooted not only in psychological coping mechanisms but also in religiously informed worldviews that provide existential meaning during periods of crisis.

Furthermore, the Noble Eightfold Path can be interpreted through the lens of institutional and behavioral economics, particularly in relation to bounded rationality and ethical decision-making



(North, 1990); (Kahneman, 2011). In disaster contexts, decision-making is often constrained by uncertainty and emotional stress. However, the structured ethical guidance provided by Buddhist teachings appears to reduce cognitive bias and promote long-term thinking. This aligns with research suggesting that moral frameworks can enhance decision quality under uncertainty (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011).

The role of Sangahavatthu IV extends the discussion into the domain of social capital and collective action theory. While Aldrich (2012) emphasizes the importance of bonding and bridging social capital in disaster recovery, this study reveals that in Buddhist societies, social capital is not merely a network resource but a normatively regulated system of moral obligations. This observation resonates with the concept of relational sociology, which posits that social interactions are shaped by shared meanings and values rather than purely instrumental goals (Emirbayer, 1997). This finding differs from conventional social capital research, which often conceptualizes community support primarily in terms of networks, resources, and reciprocal exchanges (Aldrich, 2012). In the present study, social cooperation is strongly influenced by Buddhist moral obligations and shares religious values. Consequently, community support functions not only as a practical resource but also as an ethical commitment rooted in Buddhадhamma.

Moreover, the central role of temples can be interpreted through the framework of institutional resilience, where formal and informal institutions provide stability and coordination during crises (Scott, 2014). Temples function as hybrid institutions that combine spiritual authority, social legitimacy, and practical resource distribution. This multifaceted role enhances their effectiveness as recovery agents, particularly in contexts where state capacity may be limited.

Importantly, this study contributes to the growing literature on well-being economics and alternative development paradigms, which challenge the dominance of profit-maximization models. The emphasis on ethical livelihood and moderation observed among SMEs reflects principles of Buddhist Economics, which prioritize human well-being, sustainability, and moral development over material accumulation (Schumacher, 1973); (Intraprasert et al., 2023).

Importantly, the findings indicate that Buddhадhamma provided more than a philosophical framework; It serves as a practical source of emotional strength during periods of profound uncertainty. Many entrepreneurs describe Buddhist teachings as helping them maintain hope, persevere through adversity, and continue supporting their families, employees, and communities despite substantial losses. These experiences highlight the human dimension of resilience and demonstrate how cultural and religious resources can sustain recovery when economic resources alone are insufficient.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

The primary originality of this study lies in its integration of Buddhадhamma with SME disaster recovery frameworks, resulting in the development of the "Integrated Buddhist Resilience Model for SMEs: A Holistic Framework for Sustainability." While previous research has explored



economic resilience, social capital, and disaster management independently, this study synthesizes these domains through the lens of Buddhist Anthropology.

The proposed model consists of three interrelated dimensions as illustrated in Figure 2.

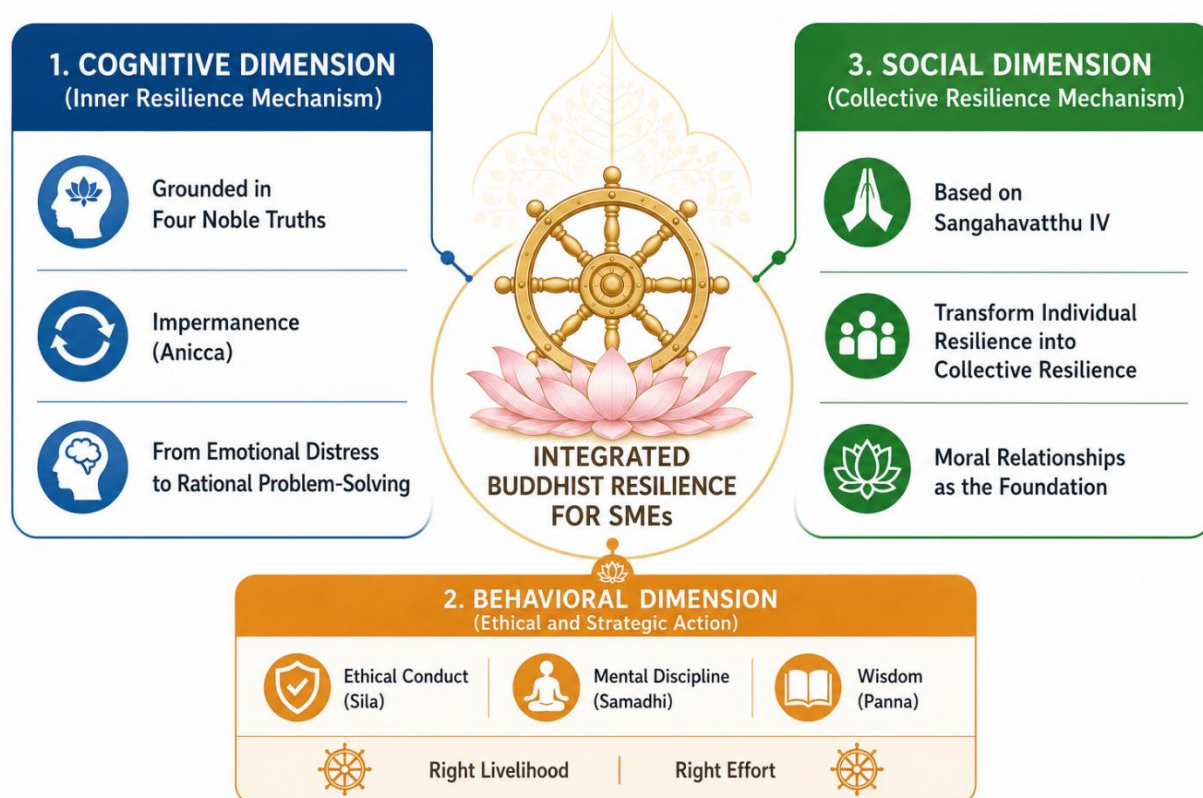


Figure 2 Integrated Buddhist Resilience Model for SMEs: A Holistic Framework for Sustainability

Unlike conventional disaster resilience frameworks, which primarily emphasize adaptive capacity, resource mobilization, institutional support, and business continuity, the Integrated Buddhist Resilience Model for SMEs conceptualizes resilience as a culturally embedded and morally guided process. Unlike many existing resilience frameworks that emphasize adaptive capacity, resource mobilization, institutional support, and business continuity, the Integrated Buddhist Resilience Model for SMEs conceptualizes resilience as a culturally embedded and morally guided process. The findings indicate that post-disaster recovery involves not only restoring business functions but also developing meaning, ethical action, and collective support through Buddhist principles. By integrating the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and Sangahavatthu IV into a unified framework, the model introduces a distinctly Buddhist perspective in which cognitive adaptation, ethical conduct, and social solidarity function as interconnected mechanisms of recovery. Consequently, the model extends existing resilience theory by incorporating spiritual and moral dimensions that are largely absent from mainstream disaster resilience frameworks.

Figure 2 illustrates that resilience among SME entrepreneurs emerges through the interaction of three mutually reinforcing dimensions rather than through any single factor. The Cognitive Dimension



enables entrepreneurs to reinterpret adversity and maintain psychological stability. This cognitive foundation subsequently influences the Behavioral Dimension by guiding ethical and strategic business decisions during recovery. Ethical actions, in turn, strengthen trust and cooperation within communities, contributing to the Social Dimension. The Social Dimension then provides emotional, informational, and material support that reinforces psychological resilience and adaptive capacity. Consequently, the model conceptualizes post-disaster recovery as a cyclical and transformative process in which inner resilience, ethical action, and collective resilience continuously interact to support long-term sustainable recovery.

1. Cognitive Dimension (Inner Resilience Mechanism)

This dimension is grounded in the Four Noble Truths, which provide a structured framework for understanding and responding to suffering. Unlike conventional cognitive models that primarily focus on stress reduction, the Buddhist approach emphasizes existential understanding, where suffering is recognized as a natural and inevitable part of life. Such understanding encourages acceptance and reduces psychological resistance to adversity. The concept of impermanence (Anicca) further strengthens adaptability by helping entrepreneurs recognize change as an inherent characteristic of reality. In addition, mindfulness (Sati) promotes awareness and emotional regulation, enabling entrepreneurs to observe challenges objectively and make thoughtful decisions under uncertainty. Together, these principles form an integrated mechanism of inner resilience that supports adaptive responses during post-disaster recovery.

2. Behavioral Dimension (Ethical and Strategic Action)

The behavioral dimension is based on the Noble Eightfold Path, which integrates ethical conduct (Sila), mental discipline (Samadhi), and wisdom (Panna). This dimension provides practical guidelines for decision-making, ensuring that recovery strategies are not only effective but also ethically sound. For example, Right Livelihood (Samma Ajiva) discourages exploitative practices, while Right Effort (Samma Vayama) promotes persistence and continuous improvement. This aligns with the concept of sustainable entrepreneurship, where long-term value creation is prioritized over short-term profit.

3. Social Dimension (Collective Resilience Mechanism)

The social dimension is derived from Sangahavattthu IV, which emphasizes social cohesion through generosity, communication, and equality. This dimension transforms individual resilience into collective resilience, where communities act as support systems. Unlike Western models of social capital, which often focus on networks and resources, this approach emphasizes moral relationships as the foundation of cooperation.

The principal knowledge contribution of this study lies in the development of a culturally grounded resilience framework that integrates Buddhist teachings into SME disaster recovery. Existing resilience frameworks generally emphasize adaptive capacity, resource availability, institutional support, and business continuity. In contrast, this study demonstrates that resilience can also emerge through meaning-making processes, ethical decision-making, and morally guided social relationships. The Integrated Buddhist Resilience Model for SMEs, therefore, introduces



three novel theoretical contributions. First, it identifies Buddhadhamma as a resilience resource rather than merely a religious belief system. Second, it explains how cognitive adaptation, ethical conduct, and collective resilience operate as interconnected mechanisms of recovery. Third, it extends disaster resilience theory by incorporating spiritual and moral dimensions that are largely absent from mainstream resilience literature. These contributions provide a new perspective for understanding post-disaster recovery in culturally embedded contexts.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study found that SME recovery after the 2025 flood was shaped by three interconnected dimensions: Cognitive adaptation, ethical action, and community support. The findings indicate that entrepreneurs relied not only on financial resources but also on Buddhadhamma to cope with uncertainty, guide business decisions, and strengthen social cooperation during the recovery process. At the individual level, Buddhist teachings served as cognitive tools that helped entrepreneurs interpret and manage crisis situations; The Four Noble Truths enabled them to accept and understand suffering, thereby reducing emotional distress and supporting rational decision-making. At the behavioral level, the Noble Eightfold Path guided ethical and strategic actions, ensuring that recovery efforts remained sustainable and socially responsible. At the community level, Sangahavatthu IV strengthened cooperation and mutual support, reinforcing social networks and accelerating recovery processes. The experiences of participants illustrate the human dimension of resilience. One entrepreneur described standing in a flooded shop and feeling uncertain whether the business could survive, while another explained that Buddhist teachings helped transform fear into determination. Several participants emphasized that support from family members, neighboring business owners, local temples, and community networks gave them the confidence to continue rebuilding despite significant financial losses. These experiences demonstrate that recovery was not solely an economic process but also an emotional and social journey shaped by hope, meaning, and collective support. Importantly, the study highlights that resilience is not merely a return to pre-disaster conditions but a process of transformative adaptation, in which individuals and communities develop new capacities and perspectives shaped by cultural and religious values. Based on these findings, government agencies should collaborate with Buddhist institutions and local communities to provide psychological support, community-based recovery activities, and ethical business development programs alongside financial assistance. SME entrepreneurs should strengthen mindfulness practices, maintain ethical business conduct, and actively participate in community networks to enhance resilience during future crises. Future research should extend the present study by quantitatively validating the Buddhist Resilience Model in diverse disaster settings, including floods, pandemics, and economic disruptions. Cross-cultural and comparative studies involving Buddhist and non-Buddhist communities in different countries are recommended to assess the model's transferability and contextual relevance. Such investigations would help determine whether the cognitive, behavioral, and social resilience mechanisms identified in this study are culturally specific or have broader applicability across



different socio-cultural environments. Further research may also explore additional Buddhist concepts, such as karma and dependent origination (*Paticcasamuppada*), to deepen understanding of the relationship between Buddhadhamma and long-term economic resilience.

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พุทธนวัตกรรม “โมเดล ส.น.6” ธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชนบูรณาการหลักสาราณียธรรม 6 ลุ่มน้ำแม่แคม จังหวัดแพร่

BUDDHIST INNOVATION THE "SW6 MODEL" FOR A COMMUNITY WATER MANAGEMENT CHARTER INTEGRATING THE SIX PRINCIPLES OF SARANIYADHAMMA IN THE MAE KHAM RIVER BASIN, PHRAE PROVINCE

เคมีกา บรรลิตกุล¹, พระณัฐพงษ์ ไกรเทพ^{2*}, พระธงชัย พิชัย³, นพรัตน์ รัตนประทุม⁴

Khemika Banlikitkul¹, Phra Nattapong Kraithep^{2*}, Phra Thongchai Pichai³, Noparat Rattanapratum⁴

¹คณะสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยมหาจุฬาลงกรณราชวิทยาลัย วิทยาลัยสงฆ์ชลบุรี ชลบุรี ประเทศไทย

¹Faculty of Social Sciences, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Chonburi Buddhist College,
Chonburi, Thailand

²คณะสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยมหาจุฬาลงกรณราชวิทยาลัย วิทยาเขตนครศรีธรรมราช นครศรีธรรมราช ประเทศไทย

²Faculty of Social Sciences, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University Nakhon Si Thammarat Campus,
Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand

³คณะสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยมหาจุฬาลงกรณราชวิทยาลัย วิทยาเขตแพร่ แพร่ ประเทศไทย

³Faculty of Social Sciences, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Phrae Campus, Phrae, Thailand

⁴คณะสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยนเรศวร พิษณุโลก ประเทศไทย

⁴Faculty of Social Sciences, Naresuan University, Phitsanulok, Thailand

*Corresponding author E-mail: nattapongsongsam@gmail.com

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บทคัดย่อ

ความเป็นมาและวัตถุประสงค์: การบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรน้ำระดับชุมชนในบริบทสังคมไทย จำเป็นต้องอาศัยกลไกการมีส่วนร่วมที่สอดคล้องกับบริบททางสังคม วัฒนธรรม และภูมิปัญญาท้องถิ่น โดยเฉพาะการประยุกต์หลักพุทธธรรม ในการส่งเสริมความร่วมมือของผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสีย การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อนำเสนอกระบวนการจัดทำธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชนที่บูรณาการหลักสาราณียธรรม 6 ในลุ่มน้ำแม่แคม อำเภอเมืองแพร่ จังหวัดแพร่ และเสนอพุทธนวัตกรรม “โมเดล ส.น.6 (SW6 Model)” ในฐานะกรอบการจัดการน้ำชุมชนเชิงพุทธที่พัฒนาได้จากผลการวิจัย

วิธีดำเนินการวิจัย: การวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ ดำเนินการในพื้นที่ 4 ตำบลของลุ่มน้ำแม่แคม ได้แก่ ตำบลสวนเขื่อน ตำบลป่าแดง ตำบลกาญจนา และตำบลนาจักร ผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญจำนวน 60 รูป/คน คัดกรองแบบเจาะลึก เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลโดยการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก การสนทนากลุ่มการสังเกตแบบมีส่วนร่วม และการประชุมเชิงปฏิบัติการ วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วยการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหาและการตีความแบบอุปนัย

ผลการวิจัย: ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ข้อค้นพบสำคัญ 2 ประการ ได้แก่ 1) การพัฒนาร่างธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชนลุ่มน้ำแม่แคมจำนวน 4 ฉบับ ตามบริบทของตำบลสวนเขื่อน ป่าแดง กาญจนา และนาจักร ซึ่งสะท้อนลักษณะการบริหารจัดการน้ำที่สอดคล้องกับสภาพพื้นที่ต้นน้ำ กลางน้ำ และปลายน้ำ และ 2) การพัฒนาพุทธนวัตกรรม “โมเดล ส.น.6 (SW6 Model)” ซึ่งประกอบด้วยองค์ประกอบสำคัญ 6 ด้าน ได้แก่ เมตตาการุณกรรมร่วมประสานงาน เมตตาวิจิตรกรรมสื่อสารสร้างสรรค์ เมตตาโมกขกรรมตั้งจิตกัลยาณมิตร สาธารณโภคีจัดสรรทรัพยากรอย่างเป็นธรรม



สืลสามัญญตาปฏิบัติตามกฎกติกาเสมอกัน และทิวัจญสามัญญตาสร้างวิสัยทัศน์ร่วมผืนน้ำ แบบจำลองนี้ถือเป็นกลไกเชิงพุทธที่มีศักยภาพสูง สามารถนำไปขยายผลและประยุกต์ใช้เพื่อการบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรน้ำอย่างยั่งยืนในพื้นที่ลุ่มน้ำอื่น ๆ ที่มีบริบทใกล้เคียง โดยเฉพาะชุมชนวิถีพุทธที่มีศาสนสถานเป็นศูนย์กลางทางสังคม โดยเป็นกรอบแนวทางส่งเสริมการมีส่วนร่วมและการจัดการทรัพยากรน้ำของชุมชนอย่างยั่งยืน

ความเกี่ยวข้องกับหลักธรรมคำสอนทางพระพุทธศาสนา: ผลการวิจัยสะท้อนการประยุกต์ใช้พุทธนวัตกรรมการหลักสารณียธรรม 6 ในการส่งเสริมความร่วมมือการสื่อสารที่สร้างสรรค์ การปฏิบัติตามกติกาชุมชน การแบ่งปันทรัพยากรอย่างเป็นธรรม และการสร้างเป้าหมายร่วมในการบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรน้ำของชุมชน

สรุป: การวิจัยครั้งนี้ แสดงให้เห็นว่าการบูรณาการหลักสารณียธรรม 6 เข้ากับกระบวนการจัดทำธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชนที่สามารถส่งเสริมการมีส่วนร่วมของประชาชน และพัฒนาแนวทางการบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรน้ำที่สอดคล้องกับบริบทของพื้นที่ได้อย่างเหมาะสม ทั้งนี้โมเดล ส.น.6 (SW6 Model) สามารถใช้เป็นกรอบแนวทางสำหรับการบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรน้ำในชุมชนวิถีพุทธ และพื้นที่ที่มีบริบทใกล้เคียงเพื่อให้เกิดความยั่งยืนต่อไป

คำสำคัญ: พุทธนวัตกรรมการ, โมเดล ส.น.6, ธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชน, หลักสารณียธรรม 6, ลุ่มน้ำแม่แคม

Abstract

Background and Objectives: Community-level water resource management in the Thai social context requires participatory mechanisms consistent with local social, cultural, and local wisdom, particularly the application of Buddhist principles to promote cooperation among stakeholders. This research aims to present a process for drafting a community water management charter that integrates the Six Saraniyadhamma (Principles of Harmony) in the Mae Kham River Basin, Mueang Phrae District, Phrae Province, and to propose the Buddhist innovation "SW6 Model" as a Buddhist-based community water management framework developed from the research findings.

Methodology: This research is a qualitative study conducted in four sub-districts of the Mae Kham watershed: Suan Khuean, Pa Daeng, Kanchana, and Na Chak. Sixty key informants, both monastics and laypeople, were selected through an in-depth screening method. Data were collected via in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, participatory observation, and workshops. Data were analyzed using content analysis and inductive interpretation.

Main Results: The research yielded two significant findings: 1) The development of four draft community water management charters for the Mae Kham watershed, tailored to the contexts of the Suan Khuean, Pa Daeng, Kanchana, and Na Chak sub-districts, reflecting water management approaches consistent with upstream, midstream, and downstream conditions; And 2) The development of the Buddhist innovation "SW6 Model," comprising six components: compassionate physical actions and collaborative coordination, compassionate verbal communication and constructive interaction, compassionate mental actions and benevolent spirit, equitable resource allocation, equal adherence to rules and regulations, and equal understanding and shared vision for the watershed. This model is considered as a highly promising Buddhist mechanism that can scale and be applied to suitable water management in other watershed areas with similar contexts. Specially Buddhist-style communities that the religions as center in society. This model serves as a framework for promoting community participation and sustainable water resource management.



Involvement to Buddhadhamma: The findings reflect the application of the Six Saraniyadhamma (Principles of Harmony) in promoting cooperation, constructive communication, adherence to community rules, fair resource sharing, and the formation of shared goals in community water resource management.

Conclusions: This research demonstrates that integrating the Six Saraniyadhamma (Principles of Harmony) into the community water management charter process can promote public participation and develop water resource management approaches appropriate to the local context. Furthermore, the SW6 Model can serve as a framework for water resource management in Buddhist communities and areas with similar contexts for sustainability.

Keywords: Buddhist Innovations, Model SW6, Community Water Management Charter, Six Principles of Harmony, Mae Kham River Basin

บทนำ

ทรัพยากรน้ำเป็นปัจจัยพื้นฐานที่สำคัญต่อการดำรงชีวิตของมนุษย์ และมีบทบาทสำคัญต่อการพัฒนาเศรษฐกิจ สังคม และสิ่งแวดล้อมของประเทศ โดยเฉพาะภาคเกษตรกรรมซึ่งต้องอาศัยน้ำในการเพาะปลูก และกรมปศุสัตว์ (Cheevapattananuwong & Khamnu, 2023) อย่างไรก็ตามปัจจุบันประเทศไทยยังประสบปัญหาความไม่สมดุลในการกระจายและการเข้าถึงทรัพยากรน้ำ ส่งผลกระทบต่อคุณภาพชีวิต ความมั่นคงทางอาหาร และระบบเศรษฐกิจของชุมชนในหลายพื้นที่ (Chirakitnimit, 2024) นอกจากนี้ ความผันผวนของสภาพภูมิอากาศยังส่งผลให้เกิดปัญหาภัยแล้ง และความขาดแคลนน้ำในหลายลุ่มน้ำของประเทศ ความมั่นคงทางอาหาร และเสถียรภาพทางเศรษฐกิจของชุมชนฐานราก (Office of the National Water Resources, 2000) ประกอบกับลักษณะทางกายภาพ และภูมิอากาศของประเทศไทยที่มีความผันผวนสูง ปัจจัยพื้นฐานอันทรงคุณค่า และเป็นแกนหลักในการขับเคลื่อนเสถียรภาพทางเศรษฐกิจ สังคม และสิ่งแวดล้อม (Rattanayotasakul & Sukmaitree, 2025) ดังเช่นกรณีของ ลุ่มน้ำแม่แคม จังหวัดแพร่เป็นแหล่งน้ำสำคัญที่หล่อเลี้ยงประชาชนในพื้นที่ตำบลสวนเขื่อนป่าแดง กาญจนนา และนาจักร โดยลำน้ำมีความยาวกว่า 60 กิโลเมตร และเป็นแหล่งน้ำหลักสำหรับการอุปโภค บริโภคและการเกษตรของชุมชน อย่างไรก็ตาม

ในช่วงฤดูแล้งมักเกิดปัญหาปริมาณน้ำไม่เพียงพอต่อความต้องการของประชาชน ส่งผลให้เกิดความขัดแย้งในการใช้น้ำระหว่างกลุ่มผู้ใช้น้ำในพื้นที่ และกลายเป็นความท้าทายสำคัญต่อการบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรน้ำในระดับชุมชน (Nuanmanee et al., 2024) ภายใต้บริบทดังกล่าวองค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นโดยเฉพาะองค์การบริหารส่วนตำบล มีบทบาทสำคัญในการบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรน้ำ ตามอำนาจหน้าที่ที่กำหนดไว้ในพระราชบัญญัติสภาตำบล และองค์การบริหารส่วนตำบล พ.ศ. 2537 (Thipchai & Onnamkham, 2024) รวมทั้งสอดคล้องกับรัฐธรรมนูญแห่งราชอาณาจักรไทย พ.ศ. 2560 มาตรา 43 ซึ่งรับรองสิทธิของชุมชนในการอนุรักษ์ ฟื้นฟู และใช้ประโยชน์จากทรัพยากรธรรมชาติอย่างสมดุล และยั่งยืน (Dulyapach, 2025) นอกจากนี้ พระราชบัญญัติทรัพยากรน้ำ พ.ศ. 2561 ยังได้กำหนดกลไกการบริหารจัดการน้ำในระดับต่าง ๆ และส่งเสริมให้ประชาชนรวมตัวกันจัดตั้งองค์กรผู้ใช้น้ำเพื่อร่วมกำหนดกฎกติกาในการบริหารจัดการน้ำของชุมชน (Dangrat et al., 2025) ตัวอย่างที่สะท้อนความสำเร็จของการบริหารจัดการน้ำโดยชุมชน คือ การจัดทำธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำของชุมชนบ้านวังฟอน ตำบลหัวเมือง อำเภอสอง จังหวัดแพร่ ซึ่งประกาศใช้เมื่อวันที่ 26 เมษายน 2564 โดยมีเป้าหมายเพื่อสร้างระบบการใช้น้ำที่เป็นธรรม ลดความขัดแย้ง และส่งเสริมการมีส่วนร่วมของประชาชนในการบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรน้ำในพื้นที่ประสบการณดังกล่าวชี้ให้เห็นว่าการแก้ไขปัญหาความขัดแย้งในลุ่มน้ำแม่แคมให้ได้ อย่างยั่งยืนนั้น ไม่อาจพึ่งพาเพียงมาตรการทางเทคนิคหรือข้อบังคับทางกฎหมายเท่านั้น หากแต่จำเป็นต้องอาศัย



การมีส่วนร่วมของชุมชน ควบคู่ไปกับการบูรณาการหลักสสารณียธรรม 6 เข้ากับธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชน เพื่อเปลี่ยนผ่านจากกฎเกณฑ์ที่มีลักษณะแข็งกระด้าง ไปสู่กรอบคุณธรรมที่สามารถยืดหยุ่นจิตใจ และสร้างความร่วมมือของคนในชุมชนได้อย่างแท้จริงกระบวนการดังกล่าว เริ่มต้นจากการขับเคลื่อนด้วยหลักเมตตาทายกรรมผ่านความร่วมมือในการปฏิบัติกิจกรรมทางกายร่วมกัน (Phramaha Suphachai Piyadhammajayo (Tivapee), 2024) เช่น การร่วมแรงร่วมใจขุดลอกคูคลอง การฟื้นฟูดูแลรักษาแหล่งน้ำสาธารณะ จากนั้นเสริมสร้างเมตตาจริกรรมด้วยการใช้ถ้อยคำที่สร้างสรรค์ และเคารพซึ่งกันและกันในการจัดเวทีประชาคมเพื่อร่วมกันแลกเปลี่ยนความคิดเห็น และแสวงหาทางออกของปัญหาโดยปราศจากความรุนแรงควบคู่กับการพัฒนาเมตตาโมกกรรม อันเป็นการปรับเปลี่ยนเจตคติภายในให้ตระหนักว่าสายน้ำแม่แคม เป็นทรัพยากรส่วนรวมที่ทุกฝ่ายต้องพึงพาอาศัยร่วมกัน นอกจากนี้ยังมีการประยุกต์ใช้หลักทานมัผ่านการแข่งขัน และจัดสรรทรัพยากรน้ำอย่างเกื้อกูล และเป็นธรรม ยึดมั่นในหลักศีลสามัญญตาโดยการเคารพกฎกติกาของชุมชน ไม่สูบน้ำเกินสัดส่วนที่กำหนด และไม่บุกรุกพื้นที่ป่าต้นน้ำตลอดจนส่งเสริมทิวทัศน์สามัญญตาเพื่อหลอมรวมวิสัยทัศน์ และความเข้าใจร่วมกันของประชาชนทั้ง 4 ตำบล ให้มุ่งสู่เป้าหมายเดียวกัน คือ การอนุรักษ์ และบริหารจัดการน้ำเพื่อประโยชน์ส่วนรวม การน้อมนำหลักสสารณียธรรม 6 มาสถาปนาเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของธรรมนูญการจัดการน้ำชุมชน จึงเปรียบเสมือนเป็นดั่งสะพานเชื่อมความไว้วางใจ และสร้างความสมานฉันท์ท่ามกลางความแตกต่าง ทั้งนี้ลุ่มน้ำแม่แคมเผชิญวิกฤตความเหลื่อมล้ำทางปริมาณน้ำอย่างหนัก โดยในฤดูแล้งมักเกิดข้อขัดแย้งแย่งชิงน้ำเพื่อทำเกษตรระหว่างชุมชนต้นน้ำ และปลายน้ำ ส่วนฤดูฝนกลับประสบภาวะน้ำหลากท่วมพื้นที่เนื่องจากขาดโครงสร้างกักเก็บที่เพียงพอ การเลือกใช้หลักสสารณียธรรม 6 จึงไม่ใช่เพียงการนำเสนอหลักธรรมทางศาสนาแบบกว้าง ๆ แต่เป็นการนำเครื่องมือทางสังคม มาใช้จัดการความขัดแย้งโดยตรงผ่านการสร้างกติกาแบ่งปันทรัพยากรน้ำอย่างยุติธรรม (สาธารณโภคี) หลักการนี้ช่วยให้ชุมชนปรับทัศนคติในการใช้น้ำร่วมกัน (ทิวทัศน์สามัญญตา) และเคารพกฎระเบียบการจัดสรรน้ำอย่างเคร่งครัด (ศีลสามัญญตา) ซึ่งเปลี่ยนการแย่งชิงให้เป็นระบบการบริหารจัดการน้ำที่เกิดจากความร่วมมืออย่างยั่งยืน

ทั้งนี้ กระบวนการบริหารจัดการน้ำมุ่งเน้นการจัดสรร และอนุรักษ์ทรัพยากรอย่างสมดุล ส่งผลให้ชุมชนมีน้ำใช้อย่างยั่งยืน และพร้อมรับมือกับภัยแล้งอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ การจัดทำร่างธรรมนูญเริ่มต้นจากการระดมความคิดเห็น และการมีส่วนร่วมของทุกภาคส่วน เพื่อสร้างข้อตกลงร่วมที่เป็นธรรม และสะท้อนความต้องการของส่วนรวม การพัฒนา SW6 Model เป็นการบูรณาการเทคโนโลยี และฐานข้อมูลเชิงพื้นที่ เพื่อสร้างแบบจำลองการบริหารจัดการน้ำที่มีความแม่นยำสูงและตอบโจทย์การพัฒนาพื้นที่ และจุดเด่นสำคัญของโมเดล ส.น.6 (SW6 Model) คือ การทลายข้อจำกัดแบบเดิมด้วยเทคโนโลยีวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลที่ครอบคลุม และลงลึกถึงระดับพื้นที่ได้อย่างไร้รอยต่อ ความใหม่ของโมเดลนี้อยู่ที่ระบบประมวลผลอัจฉริยะที่สามารถคาดการณ์สถานการณ์น้ำล่วงหน้าได้อย่างแม่นยำ ช่วยให้การตัดสินใจ และการจัดสรรทรัพยากรเป็นไปอย่างทันท่วงที โครงสร้างอันยืดหยุ่นเปิดโอกาสให้ชุมชนและหน่วยงานทุกระดับเข้ามาร่วมออกแบบ และขับเคลื่อนนโยบายร่วมกันได้อย่างเป็นรูปธรรมเพื่อความยั่งยืนที่แท้จริง

จากความสำคัญของปัญหาดังกล่าว ผู้วิจัยจึงสนใจศึกษากระบวนการ และผลลัพธ์ของการบริหารจัดการน้ำ โดยผู้นำท้องถิ่นภายใต้ธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชนที่บูรณาการหลักสสารณียธรรม 6 เพื่อแก้ไขปัญหาคความขัดแย้งด้านการใช้น้ำในชุมชนลุ่มน้ำแม่แคม อำเภอเมืองแพร่ จังหวัดแพร่ อันจะนำไปสู่การพัฒนาองค์ความรู้และแนวทางการจัดการน้ำชุมชนที่สามารถประยุกต์ใช้ในพื้นที่อื่นที่ประสบปัญหาลักษณะเดียวกันได้อย่างเหมาะสมและยั่งยืน

วัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัย

การวิจัยเรื่องนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อนำเสนอกระบวนการจัดทำร่างธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชนบูรณาการหลักสสารณียธรรม 6 ในลุ่มน้ำแม่แคม อำเภอเมืองแพร่ จังหวัดแพร่ และเสนอพุทธทศวรรตกรรม “โมเดล ส.น.6 (SW6 Model)” ซึ่งเป็นกรอบการจัดการน้ำชุมชนเชิงพุทธที่ได้จากการวิจัย

วิธีดำเนินการวิจัย

การวิจัยเรื่องนี้มีวิธีดำเนินการวิจัยตามลำดับขั้นตอน ดังนี้

รูปแบบการวิจัย การวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพที่มุ่งเน้นกระบวนการมีส่วนร่วมอย่างเหนียวแน่นของภาคประชาชนในฐานะผู้ร่วมสร้างสรรค์สร้าง ตลอดทั้งกระบวนการมุ่งเน้นการมีส่วนร่วมของชุมชนในทุกขั้นตอนของกระบวนการวิจัยที่เปลี่ยนบทบาทชุมชนจากผู้ให้ข้อมูลสู่การเป็นผู้ร่วมคิด ร่วมปฏิบัติ และร่วมแก้ไขปัญหาอย่างเป็นรูปธรรม โดยใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงปฏิบัติการแบบมีส่วนร่วมที่ขับเคลื่อนผ่านวงจรการเรียนรู้เชิงประสบการณ์ และการสะท้อนคิดอย่างต่อเนื่องเป็นพลวัตอันประกอบด้วย การวางแผน การลงมือปฏิบัติ การสังเกตการณ์ และการสะท้อนผลลัพธ์เพื่อนำมาปรับปรุง และวางแผนใหม่ซ้ำเป็นวัฏจักรเชิงลึกจนกระทั่งสามารถตกผลึกเป็นธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชนลุ่มน้ำแม่แคว ผสานการยอมรับและฉันทามติร่วมกันของคนในท้องถิ่น ผู้วิจัยได้บูรณาการหลักสราณียธรรม 6 ซึ่งเป็นหลักธรรมแห่งความเกื้อกูลและระลึกถึงกัน เข้าไปในทุกมิติของขั้นตอนการทำงานเพื่อเป็นกรอบแนวคิดในการส่งเสริมความร่วมมือ การสื่อสาร และการมีส่วนร่วมของผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียในชุมชนควบคู่กันไปส่งผลให้ธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชนมีทั้งมิติด้านการบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรและมิติด้านการมีส่วนร่วมของชุมชนแต่เป็นกลไกที่พัฒนาขึ้นจากกระบวนการมีส่วนร่วมและฉันทามติของชุมชน (Wongrat, 1998)

ผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญ ผู้วิจัยกำหนดไว้เบื้องต้นมีจำนวนทั้งสิ้น 60 คน แบ่งเป็น 5 กลุ่ม ดังนี้ 1) ผู้นำท้องถิ่นจำนวน 10 คน ได้แก่ กำนัน ผู้ใหญ่บ้าน นายก และอบต. ทำหน้าที่เป็นผู้ร่วมวิจัยหลัก ขับเคลื่อนกระบวนการตลอด 12 เดือน ทุกวงจร PAR 2) พระสงฆ์และผู้นำศาสนา จำนวน 5 รูป ได้แก่ เจ้าอาวาสและพระสงฆ์ผู้มีบทบาทในชุมชน 3) เกษตรกรผู้ใช้น้ำ จำนวน 30 คน แบ่งเป็น ต้นน้ำ 10 คน กลางน้ำ 10 คน และปลายน้ำ 10 คน 4) คณะกรรมการลุ่มน้ำ จำนวน 10 คน และ 5) เจ้าหน้าที่หน่วยงานที่เกี่ยวข้อง จำนวน 5 คน ได้แก่ ผู้เชี่ยวชาญด้านชลประทาน ทรัพยากรน้ำ และศูนย์ประสานงานลุ่มน้ำยม การคัดเลือกใช้วิธีเลือกแบบเจาะจง (Purposive Sampling) โดยพิจารณาจาก 1) การมีประสบการณ์เกี่ยวกับปัญหาน้ำโดยตรง 2) การเป็นตัวแทนของกลุ่มต่าง ๆ อย่างครบถ้วน และ 3) ความเต็มใจและพร้อมเข้าร่วมตลอดโครงการ

เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัย ได้แก่ แบบสัมภาษณ์ ที่มีคำถามหลักเป็นแนวทางแต่ยืดหยุ่นให้ผู้วิจัยสามารถถามเพิ่มเติมหรือขยายความตามบริบทของการสนทนา ผู้วิจัยพัฒนาแบบสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกจำนวน 3 ชุด สำหรับกลุ่มผู้ให้ข้อมูลที่แตกต่างกัน ดังนี้ ส่วนที่ 1 แบบสัมภาษณ์สำหรับผู้นำท้องถิ่น จำนวน 15 ข้อ มุ่งเน้นการเก็บข้อมูลจากมุมมองของผู้บริหารและผู้มีอำนาจตัดสินใจในพื้นที่ เช่น แนวทางการบริหารจัดการนโยบาย โครงสร้างอำนาจหน้าที่ การมีส่วนร่วมของชุมชน และวิสัยทัศน์ในการพัฒนาแหล่งน้ำของท้องถิ่น ส่วนที่ 2 บริบทและปัญหาจำนวน 5 ข้อ มุ่งเจาะลึกถึงสภาพความเป็นจริงของพื้นที่รวมถึงสภาพปัญหาการจัดการน้ำที่เกิดขึ้นจริงในปัจจุบัน เช่น ปัญหาภัยแล้ง น้ำท่วม ความขัดแย้งในการจัดสรรน้ำ หรือข้อจำกัดด้านโครงสร้างพื้นฐาน และส่วนที่ 3 การประเมินและข้อเสนอแนะ จำนวน 7 ข้อ มุ่งเน้นการรวบรวมความคิดเห็นเพื่อการพัฒนาและสะท้อนผลโดยเปิดโอกาสให้ผู้ให้ข้อมูลประเมินกลไกการจัดการน้ำในปัจจุบัน พร้อมทั้งเสนอแนะแนวทาง วิธีการ หรือข้อบัญญัติที่ควรมีในร่างธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชน โดยผู้วิจัยมีแบบสัมภาษณ์กึ่งโครงสร้าง ที่มีคำถามหลักเป็นแนวทาง แต่ยืดหยุ่นให้ผู้วิจัยสามารถถามเพิ่มเติมหรือขยายความตามบริบทของการสนทนาได้เป็นเครื่องมือในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลโดยมีขั้นตอนตามการสร้างเครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัย

การตรวจสอบคุณภาพเครื่องมือ กระบวนการ PAR จำนวน 1 วงรอบ ดำเนินการผ่านระยะวางแผน สัมภาษณ์และยกร่างธรรมนูญน้ำ ระยะปฏิบัติ ทดลองใช้ข้อบัญญัติ และพัฒนาแหล่งน้ำ ระยะสังเกต ติดตามพฤติกรรมพร้อมจดบันทึกภาคสนามสามมิติ และระยะสะท้อนคิด ถอดบทเรียนเพื่อทำธรรมนูญฉบับสมบูรณ์ เครื่องมือหลัก คือ แบบสัมภาษณ์กึ่งโครงสร้างที่ยืดหยุ่นต่อการขยายความตามบริบท ซึ่งผ่านขั้นตอนการสร้างและตรวจสอบคุณภาพเครื่องมือตามระเบียบวิธีวิจัยอย่างเป็นระบบ เพื่อให้พร้อมต่อการเก็บข้อมูลจริง ข้อมูลที่ได้



จะผ่านการตรวจสอบความน่าเชื่อถือของข้อมูลด้วยวิธีสามเส้า ก่อนนำมาวิเคราะห์รหัสข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพ และสังเคราะห์ประเด็นสำคัญเพื่อทบทวนมติร่วมกับคณะทำงานต่อไป

การเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล

ผู้วิจัยใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยเชิงปฏิบัติการแบบมีส่วนร่วม (PAR) ในปีงบประมาณ 2569 ดำเนินการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลผ่านกิจกรรมในระยะต่าง ๆ ดังนี้

การสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกและการศึกษาบริบทเชิงพื้นที่ ร่วมกับผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียในระยะวางแผน (PLAN) เพื่อนำข้อมูลไปยกร่างธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชน

การจัดบันทึกภาคสนามสามมิติ ทำอย่างต่อเนื่องตลอดกระบวนการวิจัย

การติดตามและประเมินผล การสังเกตการณ์พฤติกรรมการจัดสรรน้ำและประเมินผลกระทบซ้ำในระยะสังเกตการณ์

การจัดเวทีและประชุมกลุ่ม เก็บข้อมูลจากการถอดบทเรียนในเวทีประชาคมขนาดใหญ่ และการประชุมร่วมกับคณะทำงานในระยะสะท้อนคิด

การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล

ผู้วิจัยนำข้อมูลที่ได้มาเข้าสู่กระบวนการคิดวิเคราะห์เพื่อหาข้อสรุปในระยะสะท้อนคิดด้วยวิธีการ ดังนี้

การวิเคราะห์รหัสข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพ นำข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพที่บันทึกไว้มาทำการลงรหัสเพื่อจัดกลุ่ม และหาความเชื่อมโยง

การถอดบทเรียนและทบทวนมติ นำผลลัพธ์มาทบทวนร่วมกับคณะทำงานและเวทีประชาคม เพื่อตรวจสอบความถูกต้องและพัฒนาไปสู่ข้อตกลงธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชนฉบับสมบูรณ์

ผลการวิจัยและอภิปรายผล

ผลการวิจัยค้นพบกระบวนการจัดทำร่างธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำลุ่มน้ำแม่แคมตามภูมิสถาปัตยกรรมและนิเวศวัฒนธรรมร่วมกับการพัฒนาพุทธนวัตกรรมโมเดล ส.น.6 (SW6 Model) ที่บูรณาการหลักสารานิยธรรม 6 ประการเพื่อจัดสรร แบ่งปัน และฟื้นฟูทรัพยากรน้ำตั้งแต่ต้นน้ำจรดปลายน้ำอย่างเป็นธรรม ซึ่งความสำเร็จในการจัดทำข้อตกลงผ่านกระบวนการมีส่วนร่วมและลดความขัดแย้งเชิงสถาบัน มีความสอดคล้องกับงานวิจัยของ Laeni (2024) และ Kaewnim (2025) ที่มุ่งเน้นการวิเคราะห์บทบาท หน้าที่ เพื่อลดความขัดแย้งและการเปิดพื้นที่ให้ชุมชนแสดงความต้องการร่วมกันผ่านเวทีประชาคม อีกทั้ง การขับเคลื่อนโมเดลเชิงพุทธนี้ยังไปในทิศทางเดียวกับงานของ Phrakhrusuwanthammapirom et al. (2022) และ Rattanarat et al. (2024) ที่ยืนยันว่า การนำหลักสารานิยธรรม 6 มาประยุกต์ใช้ในท้องถิ่นสามารถสร้างความปรองดอง การยอมรับกฎเกณฑ์ร่วมกัน และการส่งเสริมเกื้อกูลเพื่อความสงบสุขของหมู่คณะได้อย่างยั่งยืน ทั้งนี้ ผลการวิจัยปรากฏผลลัพธ์สำคัญ 2 ประการ ได้แก่

1. กระบวนการจัดทำร่างธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชนเริ่มต้นด้วยการสำรวจบริบทเชิงพื้นที่ และสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก ร่วมกับผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียในพื้นที่ลุ่มน้ำแม่แคมเพื่อสืบค้นปัญหาการจัดสรรทรัพยากร จากนั้น จึงขับเคลื่อนด้วยกระบวนการสร้างความสามัคคีตามหลักสารานิยธรรม 6 โดยจัดเวทีประชาคมกลุ่มย่อยเพื่อเปิดโอกาสให้เกษตรกร ต้นน้ำและปลายน้ำ ได้แลกเปลี่ยนความคิดเห็นและร่วมกำหนดสิทธิหน้าที่อย่างเท่าเทียม บนพื้นฐานของการแบ่งปันผลประโยชน์และการยอมรับในกฎเกณฑ์ร่วมกัน ข้อมูลทั้งหมดจะถูกนำมาสังเคราะห์โดยคณะทำงาน เพื่อยกร่างข้อตกลงและกฎกติกาการใช้น้ำท้องถิ่นฉบับแรก ก่อนจะนำร่างข้อบัญญัติดังกล่าวกลับไปทดลองใช้จริงในเครือข่ายองค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่น เพื่อทดสอบการสร้างความเป็นธรรมและการมีส่วนร่วมตามวิถีวัฒนธรรม ชุมชนอย่างเป็นรูปธรรม ทั้งนี้ การพัฒนาร่างธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชนลุ่มน้ำแม่แคมจำแนกตามกฎข้อบังคับรายตำบล จำนวน 4 ชุด ได้แก่ ตำบลสวนเขื่อน ป่าแดง กาญจนนา และนาจักร ทั้งนี้ ร่างธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำของ

ลุ่มน้ำแม่แคมถูกออกแบบให้สอดคล้องกับภูมิโนเวศ โดยตำบลสวนเขื่อนมิกติกาเด่นเรื่องการปกป้องป่าต้นน้ำและพื้นที่ซับน้ำ ขณะที่ตำบลป่าแดงมุ่งเน้นข้อกำหนด การดูแลรักษาผืนน้ำและการจัดสรรน้ำตามรอบอย่างยุติธรรม ในส่วนของพื้นที่ตอนล่าง ตำบลกาญจนนาได้กำหนดโครงการใช้น้ำภาคการเกษตรช่วงฤดูแล้งอย่างชัดเจน เพื่อลดความขัดแย้ง ส่วนตำบลนาจักรมีข้อบัญญัติเฉพาะในการรับมือปัญหาน้ำหลาก ท่วมซัง และการควบคุมคุณภาพน้ำเสียก่อนปล่อยลงสู่แหล่งน้ำ กติกาที่แตกต่างและเฉพาะเจาะจงของทั้ง 4 ตำบลนี้ ได้ถูกนำมาบูรณาการร่วมกันเป็นธรรมนูญลุ่มน้ำแม่แคมฉบับรวม เพื่อประสานความร่วมมือในการกักเก็บ แบ่งปัน และฟื้นฟูทรัพยากรน้ำตั้งแต่ต้นน้ำจรดปลายน้ำอย่างสมดุลและยั่งยืน ซึ่งสะท้อนบริบทเฉพาะของพื้นที่ต้นน้ำ กลางน้ำ และปลายน้ำ โดยมีโครงสร้างเชิงพื้นที่ของลุ่มน้ำแม่แคมที่แบ่งออกเป็น 3 ส่วน คือ พื้นที่ต้นน้ำ คือ ตำบลสวนเขื่อนและตำบลป่าแดง พื้นที่กลางน้ำ คือ ตำบลกาญจนนา และพื้นที่ปลายน้ำ คือ ตำบลนาจักร โดยแต่ละพื้นที่มีรูปแบบการเพาะปลูกและความต้องการใช้น้ำที่แตกต่างกันตลอดปี กล่าวคือ พื้นที่ต้นน้ำเน้นการปลูกไม้ผล เช่น ลำไย ลำไย ลำไย ลำไย และนาขั้นบันได โดยตำบลป่าแดงเป็นพื้นที่เดียวที่สามารถทำนาปรังได้เต็มรูปแบบ เนื่องจากมีน้ำจากอ่างชลประทานตลอดปี พื้นที่กลางน้ำมีการปลูกพืชหลากหลาย เช่น ข้าว ทุเรียน และข้าวโพด เพื่อกระจายความเสี่ยงในการใช้น้ำ ส่วนพื้นที่ปลายน้ำ โดยเฉพาะหมู่ที่ 3 และหมู่ที่ 6 ของตำบลนาจักร เป็นพื้นที่ที่เปราะบางที่สุดเนื่องจากประสบปัญหาขาดแคลนน้ำจนไม่สามารถปลูกพืชได้ในฤดูแล้ง จึงต้องได้รับการช่วยเหลือเป็นพิเศษในด้านแหล่งน้ำสำรอง นอกจากนี้ ช่วงฤดูแล้งจัด คือ เดือนกุมภาพันธ์ถึงเดือนเมษายน เป็นช่วงวิกฤตของลุ่มน้ำที่ต้องอาศัยการแบ่งปันน้ำจากต้นน้ำสู่ปลายน้ำ เพื่อให้ไม่ผลที่ตำบลสวนเขื่อนอยู่รอด และเกษตรกรที่ตำบลนาจักรยังคงมีน้ำอุปโภคบริโภคเพียงพอ ตามปฏิทินการเพาะปลูกและลักษณะการใช้น้ำของ 4 ตำบลในลุ่มน้ำแม่แคม สอดคล้องกับ Laeni ศึกษาเรื่อง ภูมิสถาบันการจัดการน้ำของประเทศไทยการวิเคราะห์ภาพรวมเชิงระบบโครงสร้างเชิงสถาบันด้านหน่วยงานที่เกี่ยวข้อง ผลการศึกษาพบว่า หน่วยงานที่เกี่ยวข้องอาจไม่เข้าซึ่หรือทับซ้อนหากวิเคราะห์ในมุม institutional review ด้วยเหตุที่หน่วยงานนั้นทำงานตามบทบาทเชิงหน้าที่เฉพาะเป็นหลักและมีระเบียบกฎเกณฑ์กำกับที่ค่อนข้างชัดเจน กรอบการวิเคราะห์ที่นำเสนอในงานวิจัยนี้อาจช่วยลดความซับซ้อนและเพิ่มความเข้าใจภาพรวมของหน่วยที่เกี่ยวข้อง (Laeni, 2024) และสอดคล้องกับ Kaewnim ได้ศึกษาเรื่อง การจัดการน้ำท้องถิ่นแบบมีส่วนร่วมขององค์กรผู้ใช้น้ำรอบบึงบอระเพ็ดจังหวัดนครสวรรค์ ตามหลักอุปปรานิยธรรม ผลการศึกษาพบว่า แนวทางในการจัดการน้ำท้องถิ่นแบบมีส่วนร่วมขององค์กรผู้ใช้น้ำรอบบึงบอระเพ็ดจังหวัดนครสวรรค์ตามหลักอุปปรานิยธรรม การจัดการประชุมขององค์กรผู้ใช้น้ำ หรือการจัดเวทีประชาคม สมาชิกองค์กร ผู้ใช้น้ำควรเพิ่มบทบาทของตนในการแสดงความคิดเห็น เพื่อให้ภาครัฐได้ตระหนักถึงความต้องการขององค์กรผู้ใช้น้ำอย่างแท้จริง และพร้อมเพรียงกันประชุม พร้อมเพรียงกันเลิกประชุม พร้อมเพรียงกันทำกิจที่พึงทำ เมื่อมีการจัดประชุมหรือการขอความร่วมมือจากหน่วยงานที่เกี่ยวข้องสมาชิกองค์กรผู้ใช้น้ำควรเพิ่มการมีบทบาทของตนอยู่รับฟังข้อเสนอแนะ หรือแนวทางที่หน่วยงานภาครัฐจะมอบให้ รวมถึง ข้อเสนอใดที่ไม่ตอบสนองความต้องการของสมาชิก สมาชิกสามารถแสดงความคิดเห็นของตนเพื่อที่จะหาแนวทางในการแก้ไขปัญหาาร่วมกัน (Kaewnim, 2025)

2. พุทธนวัตกรรม “โมเดล ส.น.6 (SW6 Model)” ซึ่งเป็นกรอบการจัดการน้ำชุมชนเชิงพุทธที่ได้จากการวิจัยพบว่า การขับเคลื่อนพุทธนวัตกรรม “โมเดล ส.น.6 (SW6 Model)” อันประกอบด้วย 6 มิติเชิงบูรณาการ ได้แก่ เมตตาการุณยธรรมร่วมประสานงาน เมตตาจริยธรรมสื่อสารสร้างสรรค์ เมตตาโมรธรรมตั้งจิตกัลยาณมิตร สาธารณโภคีจัดสรรทรัพยากรอย่างเป็นธรรม สีสสามัญญาตาปฏิบัติตามกฎกติกาเสมอกัน และทิวฐีสสามัญญาตาสร้างวิสัยทัศน์ร่วมผืนน้ำ แบบจำลองนี้ถือเป็นกลไกเชิงพุทธที่มีศักยภาพสูง สามารถนำไปขยายผลและประยุกต์ใช้เพื่อการบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรน้ำอย่างยั่งยืนในพื้นที่ลุ่มน้ำอื่น ๆ ที่มีบริบทใกล้เคียง โดยเฉพาะชุมชนวิถีพุทธที่มีศาสนสถานเป็นศูนย์กลางทางสังคม โดย 1) เมตตาการุณยธรรม การแสดงเมตตาทางกาย มีการช่วยเหลือเกื้อกูลกัน การบูรณาการในธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำ การร่วมแรงลงแขกขุดลอกคลอง ซ่อมแซมฝาย และทำความสะอาดแหล่งน้ำสาธารณะของสมาชิกทุกตำบลโดยไม่เลือกปฏิบัติ การสนับสนุนแรงงานและอุปกรณ์ให้แก่พื้นที่



ขาดแคลนน้ำ 2) เมตตาวจีกรรม การพูดด้วยความเมตตา วาจาที่สร้างความสามัคคี มีการสื่อสารระหว่างตำบล ด้วยวาจาสุภาพ ไม่ใส่ร้ายป้ายสีกันในเวทีประชุม การใช้ภาษาที่ไม่กล่าวโทษหน่วยงานหรือเกษตรกรคู่ขัดแย้ง และการเปิดเวทีรับฟังความเห็นอย่างอดทน 3) เมตตามโนกรรม การคิดดีต่อกัน ไม่อิจฉาริษยา ไม่อคติ มีการปลูก จิตสำนึกร่วมว่าลุ่มน้ำแม่แคมเป็นของทุกคน ทุกตำบลเป็นพี่น้องกัน ไม่แก่งแย่งน้ำหรือกักเก็บน้ำเกินความจำเป็น การคิดถึงเพื่อนบ้านปลายน้ำที่อาจกำลังขาดแคลน 4) สาธารณโภคี การแบ่งปันผลประโยชน์อย่างเป็นธรรม มีการจัดสรรน้ำอย่างเป็นธรรมตามปริมาณน้ำในอ่างและความจำเป็นของแต่ละพื้นที่ กำหนดโควตาน้ำอุปโภค บริโภคเป็นลำดับแรก น้ำเกษตรเป็นลำดับถัดมา โดยให้ปลายน้ำมีสิทธิรับน้ำในสัดส่วนที่เหมาะสม 5) สีสสามัญญตา การมีศีลเสมอกัน ปฏิบัติตามกฎหมายร่วมกัน มีการกำหนดกติกาการใช้น้ำที่ทุกตำบลและทุกกลุ่มผู้ใช้น้ำยึดถือเสมอกัน ไม่มีการอ้างสิทธิพิเศษหรืออภิสิทธิ์ การมีบทลงโทษที่ทุกคนต้องรับผิดชอบเท่าเทียม และ 6) ธิฏฐีสามัญญตา การมีความเห็นลงรอยกัน มุมมองที่ตรงกัน มีการจัดเวทีปรับความคิดเห็นจนเกิดฉันทามติร่วมกัน ไม่ใช่เสียงข้างมาก บังคับเสียงข้างน้อย การยอมรับความแตกต่างของแต่ละพื้นที่ (ต้นน้ำ กลางน้ำ ปลายน้ำ) และการแสวงหาจุดร่วม เพื่อประโยชน์ของกลุ่มน้ำโดยรวม สอดคล้องกับ Phrakhrusuwanthammapi-mon (Somchai Charoenpha) et al. ศึกษาเรื่อง การประยุกต์ใช้หลักสาราณียธรรมเพื่อส่งเสริมความสามัคคีในการบริหารองค์การปกครอง ส่วนท้องถิ่น อำเภอเมือง จังหวัดสุพรรณบุรี ผลการศึกษาพบว่า แนวทางการประยุกต์ใช้หลักสาราณียธรรม 6 เพื่อการส่งเสริมความสามัคคีในการบริหารองค์การปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่น อำเภอเมือง จังหวัดสุพรรณบุรี แนวทาง ที่เหมาะสม คือ 1) แนวการบริหารแบบมีส่วนร่วมและยอมรับร่วมกัน แนวทางในการส่งเสริมมีการสร้างความรู้ ความเข้าใจในท้องถิ่น จัดกิจกรรมเพื่อสร้างบรรยากาศความปรองดองส่งเสริมความสามัคคีสามัคคีในพื้นที่ ผ่านกลไกระดับจังหวัด อำเภอ ท้องถิ่น ส่งเสริมวิถีชีวิตแบบประชาธิปไตย เพื่อเสริมสร้างความปรองดองสามัคคี (Phrakhrusuwanthammapi-mon (Somchai Charoenpha) et al., 2022) และยังสอดคล้องกับ Rattana-rat et al. ได้ศึกษาเรื่อง การมีส่วนร่วมของชุมชนในการป้องกันความรุนแรง ในครอบครัวตามหลักพระพุทธศาสนา ผลการศึกษาพบว่า จากการศึกษาวิจัยได้พบหลักธรรมที่สำคัญเพื่อให้ชุมชนได้อยู่ร่วมกันอย่างสงบสุข ซึ่งได้แก่ สังคหวัตถุ 4 และสาราณียธรรม 6 ซึ่งผู้วิจัยได้นำหลักธรรมทั้ง 2 เรื่องดังกล่าว มาใช้ในการวิเคราะห์การมีส่วนร่วม ของชุมชนในการป้องกันปัญหาความรุนแรงในครอบครัวตามหลักพระพุทธศาสนา เป็นหลักธรรมที่ส่งเสริม การสังเคราะห์ซึ่งกันและกัน เพื่อยึดเหนี่ยวทางจิตใจและให้ชุมชนให้ตั้งอยู่ในความสามัคคี ซึ่งประกอบด้วย คุณธรรม 6 ประการได้แก่ 1) เมตตาทายกรรม ช่วยเหลือกิจธุระของผู้ร่วมหมู่คณะด้วยความเต็มใจ แสดงกิริยา อากาสุภาพเคารพนับถือกัน 2) เมตตาวจีกรรม ช่วยบอกแจ้งสิ่งที่เป็นประโยชน์ สั่งสอน แนะนำ ตักเตือน ด้วยความหวังดี กล่าววาจาสุภาพ 3) เมตตามโนกรรม ตั้งจิตปรารถนาดี คิดทำสิ่งที่เป็นประโยชน์แก่กัน มองกันในด้านดี มีหน้าตายิ้มแย้มแจ่มใสต่อกัน 4) สาธารณโภคี ได้สิ่งของใดมาก็แบ่งปัน คือ เมื่อได้สิ่งใดมา แม้เป็นของเล็กน้อย ก็ไม่หวงไว้ผู้เดียว นำมาแบ่งปันเฉลี่ยแจกจ่ายให้ได้มีส่วนร่วมใช้สอยบริโภคทั่วกัน 5) สีสสามัญญตา มีความ ประพฤติสุจริตดีงาม ถูกต้องตามระเบียบวินัยไม่ทำตนให้เป็นที่ยกย่องของหมู่คณะ และ 6) ธิฏฐีสามัญญตา เห็นชอบร่วมกันในข้อที่เป็นหลักการอันจะนำไปสู่ความหลุดพ้น ล้นทุกข์ ขจัดปัญหา (Rattana-rat et al., 2024)

องค์ความรู้ใหม่

การวิจัยเรื่อง พุทธนวัตกรรม “โมเดล ส.น.6 (SW6 Model)” ธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชนบูรณาการ หลักสาราณียธรรม 6 ลุ่มน้ำแม่แคม จังหวัดแพร่ สามารถสังเคราะห์เป็นองค์ความรู้จากการวิจัย คือ โมเดล “ส.น.6 (SW6 Model)” เป็นกรอบแนวคิดเชิงพรรณนาในการบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรน้ำโดยชุมชนอย่างยั่งยืน ด้วยการบูรณาการหลักสาราณียธรรม 6 สู่โครงสร้างการดำเนินงาน 6 มิติ ที่สัมพันธ์เชื่อมโยงกันอย่างเป็นระบบ เริ่มต้นจากการผสมผสานพลังขับเคลื่อนผ่านการลงแรงร่วมใจด้วยความเกื้อกูล (เมตตาทายกรรม) ควบคู่กับ การสถาปนาวัฒนธรรมการสื่อสารที่เน้นการสร้างสามัคคีและความไว้วางใจ (เมตตาวจีกรรม) บนพื้นฐานของ

การปลูกฝังจิตสำนึกกลุ่มน้ำร่วม ที่ตระหนักถึงความเชื่อมโยงเชิงนิเวศตั้งแต่ต้นน้ำจนถึงปลายน้ำ (เมตตามโนกรรม) อีกทั้งยังขับเคลื่อนกลไกการจัดสรรและแบ่งปันทรัพยากรน้ำอย่างเท่าเทียม โปร่งใส และเป็นธรรม (สาธารณโภคี) โดยมีหลักประกันความมั่นคงเป็นระบบกฎกติกาชุมชนที่ทุกคนพึงยึดถือปฏิบัติอย่างเสมอภาคโดยปราศจากอภิสิทธิ์ใด ๆ (ศีลสามัญญตา) ก่อนจะหลอมรวมสู่วิถีการตัดสินใจร่วมกันผ่านกระบวนการแสวงหาฉันทามติที่เคารพความแตกต่างหลากหลายอย่างแท้จริง (ทิวฐิสามัญญตา) แสดงใน Figure 1 ดังนี้



Figure 1 SW6 Model

องค์ความรู้จากการวิจัยเรื่อง พุทธนวัตกรรม “โมเดล ส.น.6 (SW6 Model)” ธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชน บูรณาการหลักสาราณียธรรม 6 กลุ่มน้ำแม่แคม จังหวัดแพร่ ประสบความสำเร็จในการบูรณาการศาสตร์การบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรธรรมชาติเข้ากับพุทธธรรมประยุกต์ โดยสามารถสังเคราะห์องค์ความรู้เชิงประจักษ์ออกมาเป็นแบบจำลองการพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน กระบวนการขับเคลื่อนโครงสร้างเชิงระบบทั้ง 6 มิติ มีความสัมพันธ์เชื่อมโยงกันอย่างมีเอกภาพ โดยมีรายละเอียดการดำเนินงานทางวิชาการและมิติด้านสังคมเชิงพรรณนา ดังนี้

มิติที่ 1 เมตตากายกรรม สะท้อนถึงการรวมตัวทางสังคม ผ่านการลงแรงและอุทิศกำลังกาย ร่วมกันบริหารจัดการน้ำอย่างเกื้อกูล

มิติที่ 2 เมตตาวจีกรรม คือ การสถาปนาวัฒนธรรมการสื่อสารที่เน้นสันติวิธีและการสร้างพื้นที่ปลอดภัยเพื่อสร้างสมานฉันท์และความไว้วางใจในชุมชน

มิติที่ 3 เมตตามโนกรรม มุ่งเน้นการสร้างจิตสำนึกเชิงนิเวศร่วม ตั้งแต่พื้นที่ต้นน้ำ กลางน้ำ จนถึงปลายน้ำ

มิติที่ 4 สาธารณโภคี ปรากฏในรูปของกลไกการจัดสรรผลประโยชน์และแบ่งปันทรัพยากรน้ำอย่างทั่วถึง มีความโปร่งใส และเป็นธรรมตามหลักธรรมาภิบาล

มิติที่ 5 ศีลสามัญญตา เป็นการตรากฎกติกาและธรรมนูญชุมชนที่บังคับใช้กับสมาชิกทุกคนอย่างเสมอภาค เท่าเทียม และปราศจากอภิสิทธิ์ชน



มิติที่ 6 ทัศนวิสัยญาณูตา คือ กระบวนการสร้างความเห็นพ้องและการแสวงหาฉันทามติ ที่เคารพในความแตกต่างหลากหลายของบริบทบุคคล

ดังนั้น “โมเดล ส.น.6 (SW6 Model)” จึงมิใช่เพียงกรอบแนวคิดในนามธรรม แต่เป็นพุทธนวัตกรรมเชิงสังคมที่สามารถแปรเปลี่ยนหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนาให้กลายเป็นเครื่องมือเชิงประจักษ์ เครื่องมือนี้ทำหน้าที่ขับเคลื่อนระบบยุติธรรมเชิงสิ่งแวดล้อม และยกระดับขีดความสามารถของชุมชนในการจัดการตนเอง ได้อย่างยั่งยืน สอดคล้องกับแนวคิดการพัฒนาที่สมดุลทั้งในมิติทางกายภาพ สังคม เศรษฐกิจ และระบบนิเวศลุ่มน้ำอย่างแท้จริง

สรุปและข้อเสนอแนะ

การวิจัยเรื่องนี้สรุปได้ว่า ธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชนบูรณาการหลักสารานุกรม 6 ลุ่มน้ำแม่แคม จังหวัดแพร่ ถือเป็นพุทธนวัตกรรมเชิงสังคมที่บรรลุเป้าหมายในการผสมผสานศาสตร์การบริหารจัดการทรัพยากรธรรมชาติเข้ากับพุทธธรรมประยุกต์อย่างเป็นระบบ โดยสามารถขับเคลื่อนโครงสร้างเชิงระบบผ่านมิติทั้ง 6 ที่มีความสัมพันธ์เชื่อมโยงกันอย่างสมบูรณ์ เริ่มจากการผสมผสานพลังทางสังคมด้วยการขับเคลื่อนผ่านเมตตาทายกรรม ที่สมาชิกในชุมชนร่วมแรงร่วมใจบริหารจัดการน้ำอย่างเกื้อกูล ควบคู่ไปกับการสถาปนาวัฒนธรรมการสื่อสารเชิงบวกด้วยเมตตาวาจกรรม อันเป็นการสร้างพื้นที่ปลอดภัยทางความคิดเพื่อก่อให้เกิดความสมานฉันท์และความไว้วางใจ ตลอดจนการปลูกฝัง เมตตามโนกรรม เพื่อสร้างจิตสำนึกเชิงนิเวศร่วมกันอย่างเป็นองค์รวมตั้งแต่พื้นที่ต้นน้ำ กลางน้ำ จนถึงปลายน้ำ ในส่วนของกลไกเชิงโครงสร้างและธรรมาภิบาลนั้น ระบบดังกล่าวได้ขับเคลื่อนผ่าน สาธารณโภคี ซึ่งเป็นแนวทางในการจัดสรรผลประโยชน์และแบ่งปันทรัพยากรน้ำอย่างทั่วถึง เท่าเทียม และโปร่งใส เสริมความมั่นคงด้วยการตรากฎกติกาผ่าน สีสามัญญตา เพื่อบังคับใช้ธรรมนูญชุมชนแก่สมาชิกทุกคนอย่างเสมอภาค ปราศจากอภิสิทธิ์ชน พร้อมทั้งใช้ ทัศนวิสัยญาณูตา ในการแสวงหาฉันทามติและสร้างความเห็นพ้อง โดยเคารพในความแตกต่างหลากหลายของบริบทบุคคลส่งผลให้เกิดแนวคิดเชิงประจักษ์ภายใต้ โมเดล ส.น.6 ซึ่งทำหน้าที่เป็นเครื่องมือสำคัญในการขับเคลื่อนระบบยุติธรรมเชิงสิ่งแวดล้อมยกระดับขีดความสามารถของชุมชนในการจัดการตนเอง และนำไปสู่การพัฒนาที่ยั่งยืน สอดคล้องกับระบบนิเวศลุ่มน้ำอย่างแท้จริง อีกทั้งข้อเสนอแนะที่สำคัญ คือ 1) ข้อเสนอแนะเชิงนโยบายและการบังคับใช้กฎหมายระดับท้องถิ่น องค์การบริหารส่วนตำบลทั้ง 4 ตำบล ได้แก่ ตำบลสวนเขื่อน ป่าแดง กาญจนา และนาจักร ควรเร่งบรรจุวาระและจัดประชุมสภา อบต. เพื่อพิจารณารับทราบ และให้การรับรองร่างธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำชุมชนที่ได้จากงานวิจัยขึ้นนี้อย่างเป็นทางการ พร้อมทั้งดำเนินการตราเป็นข้อบังคับท้องถิ่นหรือเทศบัญญัติของ อบต. แต่ละแห่ง เพื่อสร้างฐานอำนาจทางกฎหมายที่รองรับการบังคับใช้ กลไกธรรมนูญจัดการน้ำร่วมกันอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ และมีผลผูกพันในทางปฏิบัติอย่างแท้จริง 2) ข้อเสนอแนะด้านการจัดสรรงบประมาณและการสนับสนุนเชิงพื้นที่ องค์การปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่นในเครือข่ายลุ่มน้ำแม่แคม ควรนำกรอบข้อตกลงในธรรมนูญมาเป็นฐานในการจัดทำแผนพัฒนาท้องถิ่น โดยเฉพาะการจัดสรรงบประมาณประจำปีเพื่อสนับสนุนกิจกรรมของกลุ่มผู้ใช้น้ำ เช่น โครงการขุดลอกคูคลอง การซ่อมแซมบำรุงรักษาฝาย รวมถึงการจัดสรรทรัพยากรสำหรับจัดเวทีสาธารณะประจำปี เพื่อเปิดพื้นที่ให้ประชาชนร่วมกันตรวจสอบ ติดตาม พฤติกรรมการใช้น้ำ และทบทวนกติกาให้สอดคล้องกับสถานการณ์น้ำที่เปลี่ยนแปลงไปในแต่ละปี 3) ข้อเสนอแนะสำหรับการวิจัยครั้งต่อไป เพื่อการขยายผลองค์ความรู้สำหรับการศึกษาในระยะต่อไป ควรมีการวิจัยเชิงติดตามผล เพื่อประเมินความสำเร็จและความท้าทายหลังจากที่ อบต. ทั้ง 4 แห่ง นำร่างธรรมนูญไปตราเป็นข้อบังคับท้องถิ่นแล้ว รวมถึงการวิจัยเชิงปฏิบัติการเพื่อขยายผลการประยุกต์ใช้ โมเดล ส.น.6 (SW6 Model) ไปสู่การจัดการทรัพยากรธรรมชาติประเภทอื่น หรือทดลองนำแบบจำลองเชิงพุทธนี้ไปปรับใช้ในบริบทของลุ่มน้ำอื่น ๆ ที่มีคุณลักษณะทางภูมิสถานและวัฒนธรรมชุมชนที่ใกล้เคียงกัน เพื่อทดสอบความคงทนและสร้างมาตรฐานใหม่ในการจัดการทรัพยากรแบบมีส่วนร่วม และ 4) ข้อเสนอแนะสำหรับการวิจัยครั้งต่อไปเพื่อต่อยอดและขยายผล



องค์ความรู้ การศึกษาในระยะต่อไป ควรยกระดับสู่การวิจัยเชิงทดลองและปฏิบัติการเพื่อทดสอบประสิทธิผลของโมเดล ส.น.6 (SW6 Model) ในการนำไปปรับใช้จริงกับพื้นที่ลุ่มน้ำอื่น ๆ ที่มีบริบททางภูมิศาสตร์และวัฒนธรรมที่แตกต่างกันออกไป เพื่อพิสูจน์ความยืดหยุ่นและการยอมรับกฎเกณฑ์ในวงกว้าง ควบคู่ไปกับการวิจัยเชิงลึกเพื่อวิเคราะห์ปัจจัยความสำเร็จและข้อจำกัดในกระบวนการขับเคลื่อนธรรมาภิบาลน้ำชุมชน นับตั้งแต่ขั้นตอนการตราเป็นข้อบังคับท้องถิ่นของ อบต. ทั้ง 4 แห่ง ไปจนถึงกลไกการบังคับใช้จริงในระยะยาว ซึ่งจะช่วยให้ได้ตัวแบบการจัดการทรัพยากรน้ำเชิงพุทธที่มีความคงทน แม่นยำ และสามารถนำไปใช้เป็นมาตรฐานสากลสำหรับชุมชนวิถีพุทธทั่วประเทศได้อย่างแท้จริง

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A DIGITAL PLATFORM FOR BUDDHIST INNOVATIONS OF THE SAPPĀYAS 7 FOR TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN KOH LAD E-THEAN

Yota Chaiworamankul^{1*}, Phramaha Maghavin Amatmontree², Supat Chaiwan³,
Manatsawee Monpannawatthana⁴

¹Buddhapanya Sri Thawarawadee Buddhist College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University,
Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

²Graduate School of Vajiranyanavarorasa, Mahamakut Buddhist University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

³Faculty of Social Studies, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Thailand

⁴Institute For Innovative Learning, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand

*Corresponding author E-mail: yota.chai.1339@gmail.com

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Amidst rural economic stagnation and urban migration, local communities increasingly face labor shortages and fragile social structures. To alleviate sustainable poverty, digital platform activities have applied the Buddhist Sappayas 7 Innovations in Koh Lad E-Thean tourist attractions. This study explores the application of contemporary Buddhism to revitalize these communities, integrating traditional Buddhist knowledge with modern practices to foster wisdom, morality, and sustainable economic growth. This study aimed to investigate community and tourism-related data, develop a digital platform based on the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations, utilize, and evaluate the developed platform, and disseminate the innovation to promote sustainable poverty alleviation in Koh Lad E-Thean.

Methodology: Utilizing Participatory Action Research (PAR), this study engaged community leaders, villagers, universities, and religious organizations. A mixed-methods approach was employed, including platform development, community workshops, and a pre-post activity intervention with 30 key participants to measure economic and behavioral shifts.

Main Results: Digital innovation platform was a technological infrastructure that integrated tools, data, and systems (Such as IoT, AI, and Cloud) to help organizations develop new products, services, or work processes (Digital Transformation), increasing efficiency, reducing costs, and creating a competitive advantage through a collaborative ecosystem, and organizations that can properly utilize the potential of the platform while enabling to access and leverage data to possibly create the greatest business advantage. The findings are organized into four progressive phases: The BSTR Model: Initial data revealed that traditional agriculture generated insufficient income, leaving temples uniquely positioned to act as spiritual and economic anchors.



The Buddhist Spiritual Tourism and Resilience (BSTR) Model was created to establish a "Buddhist Digital Community" that harmonizes learning, spirituality, and local economies to achieve long-term poverty alleviation. The Avas Sappāyas Platform: A digital ecosystem was developed, integrating the remaining Sappāyas components: Gōcara (Eco-tourism Connectivity), Phassa (Cultural-intellectual Tourism Collaborations), Pukkhalā (Fostering Mindful, Hospitable Community Members), Bhōchana (Reviving Mindful Local Culinary Heritage), Utu (Zero-pollution Eco-tourism), and Iriyāpatha (Converting Daily Physical Movement into Spiritual and Economic Value). Intervention Outcomes: Evaluation of 20 community activities among the 30 participants demonstrated statistically significant pre-to-post improvements. These activities directly generated new tourism-driven economic opportunities aligned with poverty reduction metrics. Dissemination & Training: The framework was scaled through YouTube training and hands-on workshops. Community leaders and villagers successfully designed localized tourist routes, demonstrated mindful food preparation, and implemented the "Move Freely, Travel Fun, and Cultivate Sustainable Lifestyles" campaign to ensure physical safety and tourist engagement.

Involvement to Buddhaddhamma: This manuscript applies Buddhist principles, specifically the Sappāyas 7, to the development of wisdom and morality in contemporary tourism. By translating the Sappāyas 7 into digital and experiential formats, the project enables tourists and practitioners to engage with and understand Buddhist wisdom and morality from a practical, modern perspective.

Conclusions: This study offers significant academic and practical contributions by pioneering the concept of "Smart Buddhist Cultural Tourism." Methodologically, it demonstrates how PAR can bridge traditional spiritual practices with technological innovations. In practice, the Avas Sappāyas platform serves as a replicable template to standardize local temples and communities into "Smart Buddhist Tourist Sites," effectively integrating environmental, social, and economic facets to achieve sustainable, long-term poverty alleviation.

Keywords: Digital Platform (Design), Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovation (Framework), Koh Lad E-Thean, Poverty Alleviation (Sustainable)

Introduction

There were considerable debates about what poverty truly was and who belonged to the poor. The poverty definition could be interpreted from many perspectives. Simply, poverty was a lack of essential living necessities or the "Entrenched Poor, The Opportunity Poor, and The Almost or Near-poor," such as access to education and good public health services, which led to better employment and future income generation (Khansud & Wongthanavas, 2020). Based on Buddhist sustainable development, the Sappāyas 7 (Well-being) principles enhanced community livelihoods, effectively reducing poverty through environmental improvements, better living conditions, and social harmony. By fostering a clean, green, and organized environment (Āvāsa Sappāya, Puggala Sappāya), communities created sustainable physical and mental balance (Phra Phromkunabhorn (P.A. Payutto), 2014). Key aspects of these innovations included environmental



and social development, sustainability, and holistic well-being. These initiatives, such as those applied in local Thai communities, created a supportive, stable, and healthy environment, strengthening community resilience against poverty while generating economies and incomes, environmental, low-carbon and friendly, creation of SME and entrepreneurship, and the Sappāyas 7 more innovations.

Koh Lad E-Thaen is a unique "Island" in Sam Phran District of Nakhon Pathom Province, distinguished by its agricultural geography formed by a canal shortcut from the Tha Chin River. It has been designated as an agritourism destination known for fertile land, historical canals (Since King Rama V), and premium pomelo orchards. While other areas in Nakhon Pathom are urbanizing or focused on different industries, Koh Lad E-Thaen has been targeted for its unique blend of riverine ecosystem and community-based sustainable tourism. Key reasons to select Koh Lad E-Thaen were 1) Geographic Uniqueness, known as a "Pig's Stomach" shape, making it an ecological "Island" (Koh), separating it from the mainland, surrounded by water and lush fruit orchards. 2) Agricultural Abundance covered three subdistricts (Rai Khing, Bang Toeï, and Song Khanong) and boasted highly fertile soil, making it ideal for famous local pomelo varieties like Khao Phong and Khao Nam Phueng. 3) Agritourism Potential to develop and promote as a sustainable agritourism community, offering a mix of agricultural gardens, fruit orchards, and cultural experiences, rather than industrial or high-density development found elsewhere, and 4) Historical Significance, where its historical records showed the canal was a key transportation route for villagers in the era of King Rama V, creating a distinct local culture and landscape that differed from neighboring districts (Deeprasert & Yimprasert, 2023).

Research on Koh Lad E-Thaen in Sam Phran District, Nakhon Pathom Province, focused on transforming a historically agricultural area into a sustainable, community-led tourism destination. The primary research issues center on optimizing tourism marketing, integrating eco-friendly practices, and managing the community's transition while preserving its unique character. Key Research Problems 1) Need for Targeted Sustainable Tourism Marketing: While Koh Lad E-Thaen is becoming popular, current media usage is low-impact, often utilizing outdated or poor-quality content, and struggling to reach specific audiences (e.g., Millennials) effectively. 2) Balancing Development and Preservation: A central challenge was developing tourism infrastructure without causing environmental degradation or altering the traditional, peaceful agricultural way of life. 3) Flood Vulnerability and Agricultural Resilience: Following a major flood in 2011 that damaged pomelo orchards, research focuses on how communities rebuild using eco-friendly and organic farming methods, and 4) Sustainability of Community-Based Tourism (CBT): Research explores how to maintain visitor interest beyond the initial novelty phase and how to properly train community members to operate and manage tourism activities. The rationale for selecting specific respondents in research was to ensure the data collected were valid, reliable, and directly addressed the research objectives. Respondents were chosen



based on their ability to provide information-rich insights that represented the target population's behaviors, attitudes, or characteristics.

In academic significance, firstly, it was to develop Sustainable Community-Based Tourism (CBT) to integrate marketing communication strategies, such as social media marketing on TikTok and Facebook, into rural tourism development. Secondly, it academically exemplified Eco-Tourism and Sustainable Agriculture to transition conventional agricultural practices toward eco-friendly farming, income generation, and environmental protection. Thirdly, it was to analyze Disaster Risk Management and Adaptation to environmental challenges, and the ways to manage flood-prone areas along the Tha Chin River. Fourthly, it highlighted the application of Participatory Research to collaborative approaches between local communities, private sector representatives (e.g., TEATA), and academic institutions in creating sustainable tourism models. The Koh Lad E-Thaen studies would contribute to the broader literature on sustainable community-based tourism, rural development, and adaptation to climate-related hazards, particularly in Thai suburban areas (Ibid)

Chanyam et al. (2023) believed there were supports and strengthening grassroots' national economic development, which promoted community business-focused learning and strengthened community capacity founded for simultaneous problem-solving and development in all economic aspects, society, culture, natural resources, and the environment. Arpornpisal et al. (2019) believed all national agencies would join to address the national problems and sustainable development. The Koh Lad E-Thean tourism development has been underpinned by the sustainable poverty alleviation strategy, guided by the 20-year national strategies. The NESDB has established the 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023 - 2027) to enable the country to overcome challenges and to achieve "A Stable, Prosperous, and Sustainable Thailand, A Developed Country." The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, in line with the spirit of strategies in the National Constitution, was based on four principles and concepts, i.e., 1) The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy; 2) The ability to "Rise Quickly After a Fall"; 3) The UN-SDG, with the concept of "Leaving No One Behind"; And 4) The Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) model application. With the 29th APEC Meeting hosted by Thailand during 18 - 19 November 2022, Thailand has achieved economic cooperation, trade, and investment. At the APEC 29/2022 Meeting, there was also an exchange of views with VIP guests, e.g., Emmanuel Macron and Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud. There was also a parallel forum for the APEC CEO Summit 29/2022, and discussions between APEC leaders and the APEC Business Advisory Council. PM Prayuth Chan-o-cha also listened to the views of APEC youth representatives from APEC Voices of the Future 2022 (Thekingkiat & Chomchaiya, 2023).

A digital platform to create the Buddhist Sappāya 7 Innovations for Koh Lad E-Thean tourism destinations, aiming at addressing poverty, was an appropriate approach to utilizing the Buddhist Sappāya 7 Innovations to drive Thai tourism forward. The country would continue to drive tourism missions to achieve its goals amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which



has had a global impact, including an economic downturn affecting the tourism industry, which was under economic support and the Green Economy (BCG) initiative (Chatchakul, 2011). This initiative aimed to become a pilot community and/or model for future Buddhist innovations to sustainably eradicate poverty. Rai Khing Municipality has established a development strategy and guidelines to outline its vision, mission, and future development goals.

Objectives

This study aimed to investigate community and tourism-related data, develop a digital platform based on the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations, utilize, and evaluate the developed platform, and disseminate the innovation to promote sustainable poverty alleviation in Koh Lad E-Thean.

Methodology

Research Design: This study employed the following methodological procedures:

The study of a Digital Platform for Buddhist Innovations of the Sappāyas 7 (Suitability of Abode, Resort, Speech, Person, Food, Climate and Posture) for tourism and sustainable poverty alleviation in Koh Lad E-Thean combined an experimental (Randomization, Control Groups, Pre-Posttest, Blinding/Double-blinding), qualitative (Interviews, Non-PAR or PAR Observations, Document Analysis and Focus Group) and action research (Plan, Act, Observe, Reflect) design.

This research and development (R&D) model comprises experimental research with a sample of 30 volunteers to describe data on activities before and after the implementation; Qualitative research through in-depth interviews and observation of activities with 18 stakeholders; And focus group discussions with 15 stakeholders. Action research was also employed to describe the steps in developing the "Sappāyas 7 Buddhist Innovation Platform" for the Koh Lad E-Thean tourist destination, aimed at addressing poverty.

Population/Sample and Key Informants: Pre-post data collections were conducted with 30 volunteers. Observation was conducted with 18 stakeholders. Focus group meetings were conducted with 15 stakeholders, validated by IOC, and triangulated. This research was focused on studying the data, developing a digital platform, and utilizing and disseminating the development of the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations.

In studying data, it involved studying poverty situations, the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations, and the Line BCG digital platform. The data collection method employed an in-depth interview conducted with 30 volunteers by 10 interviewees each from 3 sub-Districts, i.e., Rai Khing, Hom Kred, and Song Khanong. The focus group discussions were conducted with 15 stakeholders. Data were validated by triangulation. Content analyses, analytic induction, systematic organization, and data classifications were applied to this stage with ethical consideration.

Development of the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations Platform involved in-depth interviews conducted with 30 volunteers and focus group discussions conducted with 15 stakeholders, validated by IOC, and triangulation. Content analyses were systematically organized



and classified, then interpreted, linked, and conclusions were drawn from the collected data with ethical consideration.

Utilizing the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations, 30 volunteers were willing to participate in the 4 activities, 10 each from the Sub-districts of Rai Khing, Hom Kret, and Song Khanong. Experimental research employed the paired sample t-test to compare the pre-test and post-test means.

The Instruments and Questionnaires: Likert scales for attitude measurement. The four activities included 1) Providing knowledge about the key tourist attractions, 2) Presenting tourist attractions, 3) Using the Line BCG digital platform to drive the creation of the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations, and 4) Sharing the results of activities from items 1 - 3 above to discuss the topic of "Tourism Management to Reduce Poverty for a Healthy Economy." Data were validated by IOC and Triangulation. The data analysis method was pre-test and post-test validated by IOC and triangulation with ethical consideration.

Data Collection Method and Analysis: In disseminating the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations, data collection method and analysis were conducted. First, the focus group discussions conducted with 15 members were aimed at perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs. Second, the collaborative learning exchanges allowed individuals or groups to work together to achieve learning goals, share knowledge, and solve problems. Third, in-depth interviews conducted with 30 volunteers were to explore individual perspectives, motivations, and emotions in detail. And forth, behavioral observations conducted with 18 stakeholders were a systematic, objective method for recording, analyzing, and interpreting an individual's actions, interactions, and physical reactions in natural or controlled environments. The data collected were validated by IOC and triangulation. Content analyses, analytic induction, systematic organization, and data classifications were applied to all stages with ethical considerations.

Results and Discussion

This study aimed to examine:

1. Studying data of the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations to seek tourist attractions in Koh Lad E-Thean to promote sustainable poverty alleviation

Findings on the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations and Tourism Potential: The investigation into the baseline poverty situation in Koh Lad E-Thean revealed that traditional agriculture did not generate sufficient income for the community. The primary socioeconomic challenges identified were the migration of young people to urban areas, an increasing reliance on isolated elderly populations, localized labor shortages, and financial barriers preventing some families from continuing their children's education.

Regarding the potential for Buddhist tourism, the data indicated that developing Koh Lad E-Thean required establishing local temples as spiritual and economic nodes. The findings showed opportunities for creating dedicated spaces for housewives to produce self-sufficient



products for direct sale to tourists and Dhamma practitioners. Proposed activities included sermon-boat trips, water-based community life tours, and short Dhamma courses. Despite the identified complexity of the local tourism supply chain, the data indicated that local community networks possessed the capacity to manage these interconnected services.

Data regarding the integration of the Line BCG digital platform disclosed that digital technology, when combined with the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) model, offered a framework for sustainability. The findings highlighted a demand for spiritual tourism activities, such as meditation, walking meditation, and Dharma workshops. Consequently, the researchers developed the B-STaR platform to structure the Sappāyas 7 tourism experience, defined by four operational components:

B = (Buddhist): Applying Dharma for spiritual rejuvenation and vocational training.

S = (Sappāya): Utilizing temples as centers for spiritual well-being and local product sales.

T = (Tourism): Establishing a central Line group to distribute schedules, maps, and activity details.

R = (Research & Digital): Leveraging user-friendly Line-based platforms for online product promotion and sales.

2. Developing a digital platform of the Buddhist Sappayas 7 Innovation for Koh Lad E-Thean tourism attractions to promote sustainable poverty alleviation

Findings on the Development of the Digital Platform categorized by Sappāyas 7: **Āvāsa Sappāya** (Suitable Environment/Abode): Data analysis revealed that integrating Dhamma with spiritual tourism and economic activities offered a mechanism to revitalize temples as community centers. The baseline data confirmed that Koh Lad E-Thean possessed rich spiritual capital, including ancient temples, agricultural practices, and local rituals.

Gōcara Sappāya (Suitable Roaming Place/Food Sourcing): The findings indicated that the development of this platform component was essential for promoting Buddhism, connecting with the local economy, and preserving local identity through online product sales and activity coordination.

Phassa Sappāya (Suitable Senses/Atmosphere): Data analysis revealed that the platform successfully promoted cultural tourism by prioritizing peaceful, natural landscape designs, such as waterside pavilions, wooden bridges, and herbal gardens, driven by collaborations between temples, universities, and Buddhist organizations.

Pukkhalā Sappāya (Suitable Persons): The data showed that human resource development focused on cultivating good manners, humility, and hospitality among community members, alongside forming local cooperatives to manage benefit-sharing.

Bhōchana Sappāya (Suitable Food): The findings revealed that local culture could be effectively promoted by reviving traditional recipes, mindful cooking, using organic ingredients, and organizing mindful eating trails and kitchen meditation activities.



Utu Sappāya (Suitable Climate/Weather): The data indicated that incorporating open, quiet spaces and eco-spiritual walking tours generated tourism revenue, while utilizing local youth as environmental guides facilitated fair local income circulation.

Iriyāpatha Sappāya (Suitable Postures/Movements): The analysis revealed that utilizing daily bodily movements and structured physical activities created spiritual value while generating income through service works and direct product sales.

The findings of this study demonstrate that sustainable poverty alleviation in Koh Lad E-Thean cannot rely solely on traditional agricultural practices, which currently yield insufficient income. Instead, the integration of the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 framework offers a holistic model that transforms spiritual capital into sustainable economic value.

Discussion: By establishing temples as both spiritual and economic centers, the community addresses critical vulnerabilities, such as youth migration and the isolation of the elderly. This shift implies that religious spaces in modern rural contexts can function as economic buffers. Providing dedicated commercial spaces for housewives and local artisans directly targets poverty alleviation by eliminating exploitative middlemen. Furthermore, organizing niche activities like sermon-boat trips and Dhamma courses diversifies the local tourism supply chain, proving that complex, interconnected hospitality networks can be managed successfully at a grassroots level. The implementation of the B-STaR platform demonstrates the necessity of digital technology in modernizing cultural tourism. Utilizing Line as the primary digital gateway bridges the gap between rural suppliers and urban consumers. This approach creates a "Buddhist Digital Community" where online merit-making, Dharma calendars, and creative eco-activities (Such as Online Chanting and Tree-Planting Merit Systems) coexist with e-commerce.

When analyzing the individual Sappāyas dimensions, the results suggest the following strategic implications:

Āvāsa and Phassa Sappāyas emphasize that physical environment preservation and natural landscape design (e.g., Waterside Pavilions and Herbal Gardens) are vital to attracting high-value spiritual tourists who seek psychological relief.

Gōcara and Bhōchana Sappāyas illustrate that local gastronomy and traditional crafts serve as powerful vectors for identity preservation and economic gain when marketed mindfully.

Pukkha, Utu, and Iriyāpatha Sappāyas highlight the importance of human capital. Training the community in hospitality and employing local youth as eco-spiritual guides ensures that the economic benefits are distributed fairly. Ultimately, this study confirms that combining Buddhist philosophy, digital platforms, and the BCG concept allows rural communities to achieve self-reliance without sacrificing their cultural or environmental heritage.

3. Utilizing the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations to Develop Koh Lad E-Thean as a Tourism Destination to Promote Sustainable Poverty Alleviation

Table 1 displays the objective statistical results of the paired t-test used to evaluate the 20 activities among the 30 participants (n = 30). The analysis revealed a statistically

significant increase from the pre-test mean score of [Insert Pre-test $\bar{x}$] (S.D. = [Insert Pre-test S.D.]) to the post-test mean score of [Insert Post-test $\bar{x}$] (S.D. = [Insert Post-test S.D.]), resulting in a mean paired difference of -2.20 (S.D. = 0.449). This difference was statistically significant, $t(29) = -26.859$, $p < .001$, indicating that evaluation scores were significantly higher following participation in the activities.

Table 1 Pre-post activity analysis using a paired t-test measured by activity outcomes (n = 30)

Paired Differences	Average Score ($\bar{x}$)	S.D.	df	t	p
Before and after activities	-2.20	0.449	29	-26.859*	< .001

*(Note: $p < .001$)

4. Disseminating the development of the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations in the Koh Lad E-Thean tourist attractions, to promote sustainable poverty alleviation.

The YouTube video, created to disseminate the developed Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations in Koh Lad E-Thean tourist attractions for poverty alleviation in the following details: 1) Enabling community leaders to effectively understand the principles of Sappāyas Abodes and Buddhist services; 2) Training villagers to understand the principles of Sappāyas Circulation and how to care for the area, thereby increasing community income; 3) Focusing on organizing workshops for villagers to brainstorm and design tourist routes; 4) Developing Koh Lad E-Thean tourist attractions for poverty alleviation, with the concept of "Good People, Comfortable Travel, Cultivating Sustainable Lifestyles"; 5) Participating in demonstrations of food preparation activities to cultivate mindfulness and moral awareness; 6) Encouraging collaborative thinking and action to create a suitable and safe environment, generating income for the community; And 7) To participate in the "Move Freely, Travel Fun, Cultivate Sustainable Lifestyles" activity, ensuring tourists and the community are physically strong, safe, and entertained.

5. Study of the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations to be tourist attractions in Koh Lad E-Thean for sustainable poverty alleviation

Developing Koh Lad E-Thean as a Buddhist tourist destination using the Sappāyas 7 (Comfort/Suitability) principles can create sustainable poverty alleviation through community-based cultural tourism. This approach integrates spiritual, physical, and environmental harmony, fostering local income while preserving traditional livelihoods. Their syntheses on Sappāyas 7 Innovations for Tourist Destination are suitability of location, food, people, dhamma (Knowledge), housing, speech, and habits adapted to enhance the visitor experience and community welfare (Somnuxpong & Chiarasumran, 2024). Advantages are 1) Sustainable Income through cultivating local entrepreneurship (e.g., Selling Local Products, Homestays); 2) Cultural Preservation



through protecting traditional Thai lifestyles and religious sites; 3) Environmental Improvement through enhancing the locality's infrastructure and cleanliness; And 4) Community Cohesion through fostering collaboration between government, private, and public sectors. However, Disadvantages still are 1) Resource Strain, because high visitor numbers can lead to increased waste, water, and energy consumption, requiring strong management. 2) Environmental Risk, because of inadequate planning, might lead to ecological damage to the natural area. 3) Dependence on Tourism because of high dependency might create instability if tourist numbers drop. 4) Disruption of Peace because the essence of Sappāyas is a quiet, conducive environment for mindfulness. Increased tourism can violate this, causing conflict between visitors and locals seeking tranquility. 5) Infrastructure Deficits because specific areas often lack sufficient facilities, such as clean toilets and well-maintained access roads, which could hinder tourist experience and safety. 6) Cultural Erosion: Over-commercialization of Buddhist-based practices (e.g., Meditation, Living, Community Interaction) can lead to the "Staged Authenticity" of local traditions, reducing their spiritual value. 7) Income Inequality & Dependency because sustainable poverty alleviation may not materialize if economic benefits only reach a few, or if the local economy becomes too reliant on volatile tourist numbers, and 8) Physical Safety/Accessibility Risks because, depending on the often-remote nature of such areas, accessibility may be difficult, and managing safety for tourists in nature-based, water-centric locations like mud-sledding or canoeing poses challenges.

6. Development of the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovation Platform for Koh Lad E-Thean tourism attractions to address sustainable poverty alleviation

The Avasa Sappāyas (Suitable Abode) development aligns with the study by Phrasamran Thitawinyo (Chuechan) et al. (2024), which found that 1) The overall management of cultural tourism attractions of temples was at a high level ($\bar{x} = 3.67$, S.D. = 0.43) and 2) The overall principle of Sappāyas 7 had a positive relationship with the management of cultural tourism attractions of temples at a very high level ($R = 0.774^{**}$). Therefore, the research hypothesis was accepted. 3) The management of cultural tourism attractions of temples found that the principle of Sappāyas promoted better management of cultural tourism attractions of temples in all 5 aspects as follows: 1) Clean, orderly, and attractive location aspect; 2) Knowledge-edge and service-minded personnel aspect; 3) Internal tourist activity aspect; 4) Tourism program aspect to educate local traditions, arts, and cultures; And 5) Public relations aspect: Aiming to raise awareness and understanding of the temple's culture and traditions (Phrompanyo, 2013). The development of the Buddhist "Gōcara Sappāya (Suitable Resort)" Innovation Platform is crucial for promoting Buddhism and generating tourism, as well as connecting with the local economy to generate income and preserve local identity. This aligns with the research of Phra Natthapon Khemmakuno (2023). 1) The SWOT analysis found that the strengths of temples in Saraburi Province are their practices that focus on Dhamma practice, peacefulness, and being free from disturbances. The atmosphere in the temple is clean, peaceful, shady, and airy, with a cool breeze around Phrabuddhabat Temple. The weaknesses are the arrangement of the



environment, which is not conducive to happiness, and the community around the temple. However, there are fears of change and the destruction of the temple's ancient monuments; 2) Creating a development model for happy temples with Sappāya according to Buddhist psychology in Saraburi Province consists of 2.1) The environment within the temple, namely, arranging a pleasant corner in the temple, having public relations signs, a corner for taking souvenir photos, talking trees, and signs of Dhamma riddles leading to life; And 2.2) Merit-making activities that create happiness include receiving alms in the pavilion, chanting, listening to sermons, and organizing morality camps. Life can be developed if the heart is moral and 3) Community activities that create happiness include giving alms to the poor around the temple, volunteering to develop the temple and life skills ("The Game of Life Conquers Everything") and developing lives by turning crises into opportunities. An assessment of the satisfaction levels among individuals making merit at the temple revealed a high degree of contentment with the temple development model, which aims to create happiness by providing essential resources based on Buddhist psychology. This confirms that temple development based on the ACCG Wat Model is an effective model for developing temples that create happiness, enabling those making merit at the temple to achieve happiness within the framework of the four dimensions of well-being: Physical, emotional, social, and intellectual. Data analysis on the development of the Buddhist "Bhassa Sappāya" Innovation Platform for the Koh Lad E-Thean tourist destination, aimed at solving poverty issues sustainably, revealed that promoting cultural tourism using this platform aims to create peaceful and comfortable spaces and atmospheres conducive to learning and cultural tourism. This strategy emphasizes simple, clean landscaping that blends with nature, such as waterside pavilions, wooden bridges, and herbal gardens. This promotes intellectual tourism that connects with community lifestyles, local food, and local handicrafts. Collaboration has been undertaken between temples, universities, and Buddhist organizations to develop diverse content and activities, while utilizing digital platforms for public relations, communication, and information management. From the overall implementation of the digital platform activity to create the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations for Koh Lad E-Thean tourist attractions for sustainable poverty alleviation, measurements of the pre- and post-results revealed significant differences. This indicates that the activity can create economic opportunities derived from tourism development and foster a sense that the Sappāyas principles of the activities used in both pre-post-event development are aligned with sustainable poverty alleviation.

7. Utilizing the Buddhist Sappayas 7 Innovations to Develop Koh Lad E-Thean as a Tourism Destination to Address Sustainable Poverty Alleviation.

Developing Koh Lad E-Thean through the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 (Suitable Environment/Factors) creates a sustainable, community-based tourism model that alleviates poverty by fostering eco-friendly, culturally authentic experiences. By integrating suitable abodes (Infrastructure), supportive communities, proper food or resources, and knowledgeable leadership, the area can



boost local economies while preserving tradition. (Mahatthanadull et al., 2026); (Phra Natthapon Khemmakuno, 2023) Advantages of the Approach are: 1) Sustainable Income by boosting local income through eco-tourism and cultural, rather than mass tourism addressing sustainable poverty alleviation; 2) Cultural Preservation through safeguarding local traditions, culture, and natural resources; 3) Holistic Growth through balancing economic gains with mental/spiritual well-being for both locals and tourists; 4) Community Cohesion through strengthening community participation and pride; And 5) The reason the post-test scores increased significantly is that the digital platform helped bridge the gap in accessing Dharma information, making it easier for the younger generation to connect with the temple. However, Disadvantages of the approach are: 1) Slow Development because of sustainable tourism develops slower than commercialized and mass tourism; 2) Resource Dependence is highly reliant on maintaining a pristine natural and, for the area, "Untouched" environment; 3) Knowledge/Skill Gaps requires intensive training for locals to manage services effectively; And 4) Cultural Sensitivity needs careful management to prevent, during development, the commercialization of local sacred, traditional rituals. This model focuses on creating a "Living Community" where tourists visit to learn and share in a serene, purposeful, and, for many, and spiritual experience, rather than merely treating the area as a consumption, for them, space.

8. Dissemination of the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations in Koh Lad E-Thean Tourist Attractions to address sustainable Poverty Alleviation.

Disseminating the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 (Suitable Abode, Accessible Area, Supportive Community, Approachable People, Appropriate Food/Medicine, Suitable Climate, and Intellectual Surroundings) at Koh Lad E-Thean promotes sustainable poverty alleviation by fostering community-based tourism, enhancing local skills, and preserving culture. This approach ensures local empowerment and environmental balance (Phra Natthapon Khemmakuno, 2023). Promoting sustainable poverty alleviation requires: 1) Direct Job Creation to engage locals in hospitality, tour guiding, and small-scale services; 2) Community-Based Tourism (CBT) in promoting local ownership, cultural preservation, and equitable income distribution; And 3) Enhanced Local Skills in training residents in service management and marketing. Advantage Analysis shows that 1) Sustainable Development encourages long-term, low-impact tourism that respects local culture. 2) Community empowerment increases local participation and decision-making power, and 3) Economic Stability provides alternative income sources, reducing dependence on agriculture or volatile industries. However, Disadvantage Analysis shows that 1) Infrastructure Strain with rapid, uncontrolled development can overload local infrastructure. 2) It is risky for Cultural Erosion (Culture for Tourists), and 3) Inequality Risk Benefits may not be distributed evenly, potentially increasing local inequality. To be successful, Key Strategies are: 1) High Community Engagement to ensure local voices drive development; 2) Strong Governance through managing tourism growth to secure environmental resources; And 3) Capacity Building through training locals to meet tourism industry standards.



Based on the Sappāya 7 (Suitable Environments for Well-being, i.e., Abode, Location, Community, People, Food, Climate, and Posture), limitations for innovation in tourism at Koh Lad E-Thean likely include environmental constraints in maintaining a "Suitable Abode" (Āvāsa) and "Climate" (Utu), potential issues with infrastructure for accessibility (Gōcara), and balancing authentic, peaceful meditation spaces with modern, high-tech, or high-volume tourist activities (Puggala & Bhōjana). Key limitations in implementing these innovations include 1) Physical & Environmental Constraints, which are to ensure the "Utu" (Climate/Environment) remains conducive to peaceful, sustainable, and eco-friendly tourism without overdevelopment. 2) Infrastructure & Accessibility is to develop "Gōcara" (Accessible Areas) without destroying the natural, quiet character of the area. 3) Cultural Preservation is to maintain authentic, quiet, and spiritual surroundings (Puggala, Iriyāpatha) while innovating with technology, and 4) Resource Management is to balance local, sustainable "Bhōjana" (Food/Resources) with the needs of incoming tourists. These limitations suggest a need for a delicate balance between, as mentioned in developing Buddhist tourism identity, while managing the physical and social environment to support, rather than disrupt, the spiritual and natural atmosphere.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

A study of "A Digital Platform for Buddhist Innovations of the Sappāyas 7 for Tourism and Sustainable Poverty Alleviation in Koh Lad E-Thean" generates Originality and Body of Knowledge which contributes:

Research 1 (R1): Basic data analyses of the poverty problem in the Koh Lad E Thaen community include a lack of regular income and a lack of opportunities to escape poverty, despite the potential for tourism. It has yet to generate real income through 1) Focusing on establishing temples as centers, 2) Opening spaces for housewives to gather to produce self-sufficient products for sales to tourists, 3) Organizing Buddhist tourism activities, and 4) The B-STaR Model.

Development 1 (D1): Platform development emphasizes the centrality of the temples as tourist attractions, "Utu Sappāya" and Koh Lad E Thaen tourist sites, involving organizing a platform meeting with experts, presenting activity proposals prior to participant selection, and conducting fieldwork with participants.

Research 2 (R2): In the experimental use of the activity format, 30 participants from the sub-districts of Rai Khing, Hom Kret, and Songkhanong were involved. The results of implementing the Buddhist Innovations of Sappāyas 7 enable the creation of economic opportunities derived from tourism development. Participants felt that the Sappāya 7 principles of the activities used in both pre- and post-development activities were consistent with poverty alleviation, as shown in Figure 1 below.

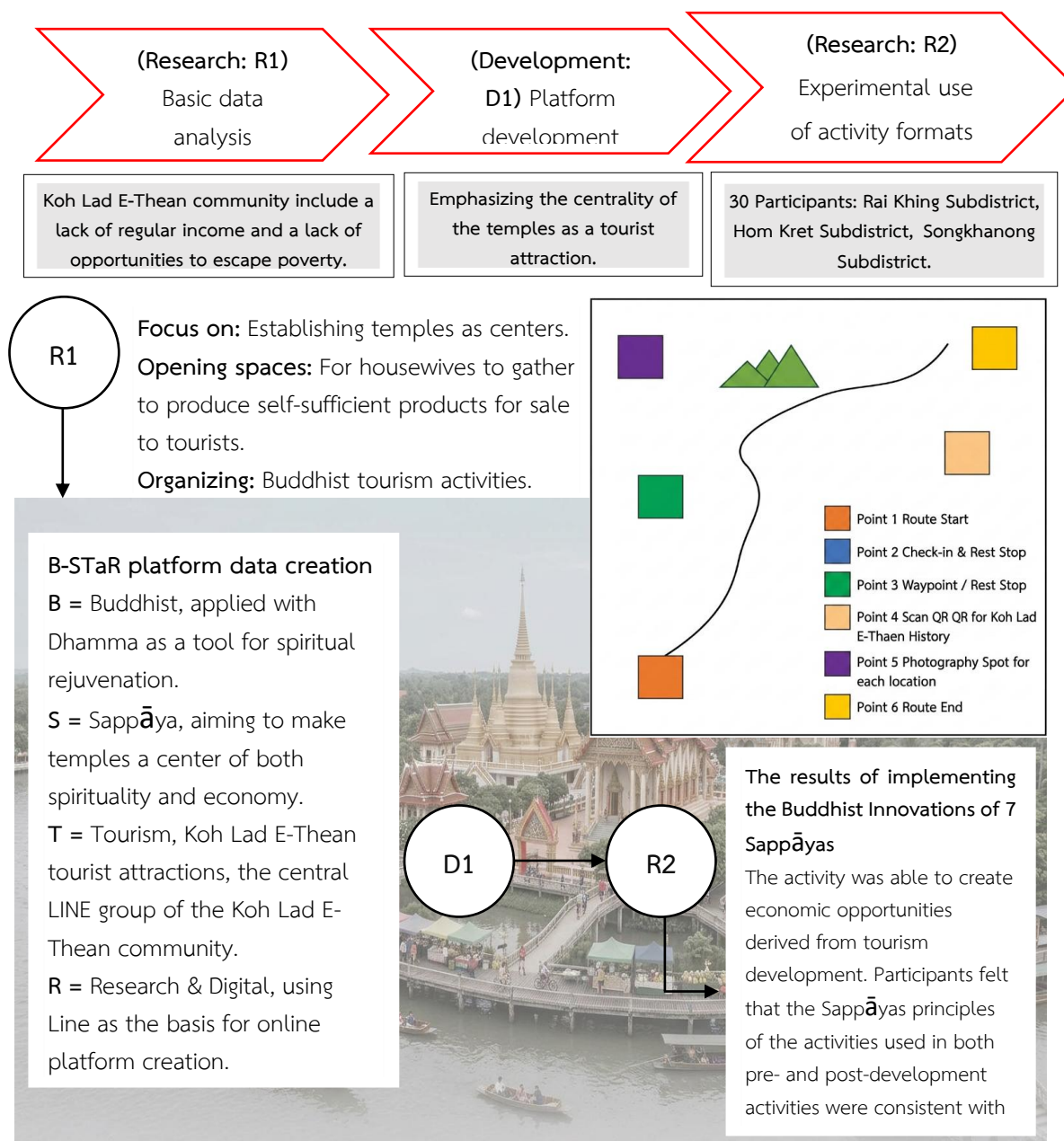


Figure 1 R-D-R Model of Koh Lad E-Thean in Sampran, Nakhon Pathom

Conclusions and Recommendations

The overall implementation of the digital platform activity to create the Buddhist Sappāyas 7 Innovations in Koh Lad E-Thean tourist attractions for sustainable poverty alleviation, the pre-post measurements reveal the average score after participating in the activity is significantly higher than before participating at .001. As such, spiritual and economic activities could offer opportunities to sustainably alleviate poverty. All temples in the municipalities of Rai Khing, Hom Kret, and Songkhanong should officially integrate the B-STaR platform innovated by the Sappayas 7 into their annual tourism development plan to ensure the continuous maintenance and management of the digital system (Line BCG). In this research, the platform



provides a template for standardizing temples and local societies into "Smart Buddhist Tourist Sites" through integrating environmental, social, and economic facets for sustainable and long-term poverty alleviation. **Actionable Recommendations:** 1) Potential abbots in the municipalities of Rai Khing, Hom Kret, and Songkhanong could renovate their temples into spiritual and economic centers to be the sources of income where spiritual activities could be organized, and household products could be placed for selling. 2) Research informants, organization CEOs, agencies, local leaders, spiritual and economic activity trainers and practitioners could utilize the knowledge and innovations of digital platforms offered by the Sappāyas 7 to turn Koh Lad E Thaen into a spiritual, cultural, locally rich tradition and horticultural destination for tourists. These would bring sufficient income to help alleviate destitution sustainably. 3) This research has struggled with the limitations of its respondents and methodology. In further research, samples should be larger, and the follow-up of the study of "A Digital Platform for Buddhist Innovations of the Sappāyas 7 for Tourism and Sustainable Poverty Alleviation in Koh Lad E-Thean" should be conducted, and 4) Future research should focus on sustainability (Ethics, Environment, and Social, Etc.); AI integration (Embedded Functionality, Key Applications, Data-driven, and Improved Efficiency, etc.), and economic impacts, especially induced impact, the broader effects caused by households' spending and their income, which are earned through direct and indirect impacts, on local goods and services in tourism activities.

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วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องและการประกอบสร้างความหมาย
ในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์
DISCOURSE AND MEANING CONSTRUCTION OF AMULET NARRATIVES
IN ONLINE AMULET MAGAZINES

สุภาวดี ยาดิ

Supawadi Yadi

คณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏลำปาง ลำปาง ประเทศไทย

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Lampang Rajabhat University, Lampang, Thailand

Corresponding author E-mail: supawadiyadi2@gmail.com

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บทคัดย่อ

ความเป็นมาและวัตถุประสงค์: ในบริบทสังคมร่วมสมัยคนรุ่นใหม่มีแนวโน้มที่จะมีประสบการณ์ตรงกับศาสนา ลดลงอันเป็นผลจากการเปลี่ยนแปลงทางสังคมและบทบาทของสถาบันศาสนาที่ห่างออกจากชีวิตประจำวัน ขณะเดียวกันการรับรู้เกี่ยวกับศาสนายังคงถูกถ่ายทอดผ่านสื่อมวลชนซึ่งทำหน้าที่ผลิตและเผยแพร่ความหมายทางสังคม นิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์จึงเป็นพื้นที่ทางวาทกรรมที่สำคัญในการนำเสนอเรื่องเล่าเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่อง ซึ่งผสมผสานความเชื่อ ความศรัทธา คุณค่าทางประวัติศาสตร์ และมูลค่าทางเศรษฐกิจเข้าด้วยกัน การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาลักษณะวาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องที่ปรากฏในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ และวิเคราะห์กระบวนการประกอบสร้างความหมายผ่านเรื่องเล่าดังกล่าว

วิธีดำเนินการวิจัย: การวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพโดยใช้การวิจัยเอกสาร (Documentary Research) ศึกษาตัวบท เรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องที่เผยแพร่ในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ระหว่างปี พ.ศ. 2563 - 2568 จำนวน 110 ฉบับ ซึ่งคัดเลือกด้วยวิธีเลือกแบบเจาะจง (Purposive Sampling) เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัย ได้แก่ แบบบันทึกข้อมูลและแบบวิเคราะห์ตัวบทโดยใช้แนวคิดการวิเคราะห์วาทกรรม (Discourse Analysis) ร่วมกับแนวคิดเรื่องเล่า (Narrative) เป็นกรอบในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้านภาษา โครงสร้างการเล่าเรื่อง และบริบททางสังคมวัฒนธรรม ก่อนนำเสนอผลการศึกษาในรูปแบบการพรรณนาวิเคราะห์

ผลการวิจัย: ผลการศึกษาพบว่า วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์สามารถจำแนกได้ 9 ลักษณะ ได้แก่ 1) วาทกรรมความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ 2) วาทกรรมการอ้างอิงบุคคลสำคัญ 3) วาทกรรมคุณค่าทางประวัติศาสตร์ 4) วาทกรรมคุณค่าทางเศรษฐกิจและการลงทุน 5) วาทกรรมการสร้างความน่าเชื่อถือ 6) วาทกรรมประสบการณ์และความเชื่อ 7) วาทกรรมความหายากและการสะสม 8) วาทกรรมตำนานและความเชื่อทางศาสนา และ 9) วาทกรรมที่เชื่อมโยงกับสถาบันของรัฐ วาทกรรมเหล่านี้ทำงานร่วมกันในการกำหนดกรอบการรับรู้และการตีความของผู้รับสาร ส่งผลให้พระเครื่องถูกประกอบสร้างความหมายใน 6 มิติ ได้แก่ 1) วัตถุประสงค์ดีสิทธิ์ 2) สัญลักษณ์ทางศาสนาและวัฒนธรรม 3) มรดกทางประวัติศาสตร์ 4) วัตถุประสงค์และสินทรัพย์ทางเศรษฐกิจ 5) ผลผลิตของอำนาจเชิงสัญลักษณ์ของบุคคลและสถาบัน และ 6) สัญลักษณ์ของโชคลาภและความสำเร็จในชีวิต ผลการศึกษาสะท้อนให้เห็นบทบาทของภาษาและเรื่องเล่าในการผลิตต่อย้ำ และผลิตซ้ำความจริงทางสังคมเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่องในสังคมไทย



ความเกี่ยวข้องกับหลักธรรมคำสอนทางพระพุทธศาสนา: ผลการศึกษาสามารถอธิบายผ่านกรอบแนวคิดกาลามสูตร ซึ่งเน้นการใช้ปัญญาและการพิจารณาไตร่ตรองก่อนเชื่อ เนื่องจากวาทกรรมที่เน้นความศักดิ์สิทธิ์และปาฏิหาริย์อาจส่งผลต่อการยอมรับความเชื่อโดยขาดการตรวจสอบอย่างมีเหตุผล ขณะเดียวกันการให้คุณค่าแก่พระเครื่องในมิติของการครอบครองและมูลค่าทางเศรษฐกิจยังสะท้อนแนวคิดเรื่องความยึดมั่นถือมั่น ซึ่งสัมพันธ์กับการพัฒนาปัญญาตามหลักศีล สมาธิ และปัญญาในพระพุทธศาสนา

สรุป: การวิจัยครั้งนี้ชี้ให้เห็นว่า นิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์เป็นพื้นที่ทางวาทกรรมที่มีบทบาทสำคัญในการประกอบสร้างความหมายเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่องผ่านการใช้ภาษาและการเล่าเรื่อง โดยมีอิทธิพลต่อการรับรู้ความเชื่อและการให้คุณค่าของผู้รับสารในมิติทางศาสนา วัฒนธรรม และเศรษฐกิจ อันนำไปสู่ความเข้าใจความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างสื่อ วาทกรรม และกระบวนการสร้างความจริงทางสังคมในบริบทสังคมไทยร่วมสมัย

คำสำคัญ: วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่า, พระเครื่อง, การประกอบสร้างความหมาย, นิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์, ความจริงทางสังคม

Abstract

Background and Objectives: In contemporary society, younger generations tend to have fewer direct experiences with religion due to social changes and the diminishing role of religious institutions in everyday life. Nevertheless, perceptions of religion continue to be mediated through mass media, which play a significant role in producing and disseminating social meanings. In this context, online amulet magazines have emerged as important discursive spaces for presenting narratives about Buddhist amulets that integrate beliefs, faith, historical value, and economic value. This study aimed to: 1) Examine the characteristics of amulet narrative discourses presented in online amulet magazines, and 2) Analyze the processes through which meanings are constructed through such narratives.

Methodology: This qualitative study employed documentary research to investigate amulet narratives published in online amulet magazines between 2020 and 2025. A total of 110 issues were purposively selected for analysis. Research instruments included data-recording forms and textual analysis forms. The study adopted Discourse Analysis in conjunction with Narrative Theory as analytical frameworks to examine language use, narrative structures, and socio-cultural contexts. The findings were presented through an analytical description.

Main Results: The findings revealed that amulet narrative discourses could be classified into nine categories: 1) Sacredness discourse, 2) Discourse of referencing influential figures, 3) Historical value discourse, 4) Economic and investment value discourse, 5) Credibility-building discourse, 6) Experiential and belief discourse, 7) Rarity and collectability discourse, 8) Religious legend and belief discourse, and 9) State-institution-related discourse. These discourses collectively shaped audiences' perceptions and interpretations of amulets, constructing meanings in six dimensions: 1) Sacred objects, 2) Religious and cultural symbols, 3) Historical and cultural heritage, 4) Collectible objects and economic assets, 5) Products of symbolic power associated with individuals and institutions, and 6) Symbols of fortune and success. The findings demonstrate the role of language and narrative in producing, reinforcing, and reproducing social reality regarding Buddhist amulets within Thai society.



Involvement to Buddhaddhamma: The findings can be interpreted through the framework of the Kalama Sutta, which emphasizes critical reflection and rational inquiry before accepting beliefs. Discourses that emphasize sacredness and miracles may encourage uncritical acceptance of certain beliefs. At the same time, the valuation of amulets in terms of ownership and economic worth reflects the Buddhist concept of upādāna (Attachment or Clinging), which is closely related to the cultivation of wisdom through the principles of morality (Sīla), concentration (Samādhi), and wisdom (Paññā)

Conclusions: This study demonstrates that online amulet magazines function as significant discursive spaces in constructing meanings of Buddhist amulets through language and storytelling. These discursive practices influence audiences' perceptions, beliefs, and value judgments regarding amulets across religious, cultural, and economic dimensions. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship among media, discourse, and the construction of social reality in contemporary Thai society.

Keywords: Narrative Discourse, Buddhist Amulets, Meaning Construction, Online Amulet Magazines, Social Reality

บทนำ

ในสังคมร่วมสมัย คนรุ่นใหม่มีแนวโน้มที่จะมีประสบการณ์ตรงกับศาสนาลดลง อันเป็นผลมาจากการเปลี่ยนแปลงทางสังคม วัฒนธรรม และวิถีชีวิตที่ทำให้สถาบันศาสนาอยู่ห่างออกจากพื้นที่ของชีวิตประจำวัน อย่างไรก็ตาม การรับรู้เกี่ยวกับศาสนาและความเชื่อมิได้เลือนหายไป แต่ยังคงดำรงอยู่ผ่านกระบวนการสื่อสารและการผลิตความหมายของสื่อมวลชนในรูปแบบต่าง ๆ โดยเฉพาะในบริบทที่ผู้คนมีโอกาสนับถือประสบการณ์ทางศาสนาโดยตรงลดลง สื่อจึงเข้ามามีบทบาทสำคัญในฐานะ “ตัวกลาง” ที่ทำหน้าที่คัดเลือก จัดวาง และถ่ายทอดภาพแทนของศาสนาไปสู่สาธารณะ ส่งผลให้การรับรู้ ความเข้าใจ และทัศนคติของผู้รับสารที่มีต่อศาสนาถูกกำหนดผ่านกระบวนการนำเสนอของสื่อมากยิ่งขึ้น (Kaewthep, 2006) ภายใต้บริบทดังกล่าว เรื่องราวเกี่ยวกับศาสนาไม่ได้จำกัดอยู่เพียงในพื้นที่ของสถาบันศาสนาเท่านั้นแต่ได้ขยายเข้าพื้นที่สื่อที่หลากหลายในฐานะกลไกการผลิตและเผยแพร่ความหมายทางสังคม หนึ่งในพื้นที่ที่มีบทบาทสำคัญ คือ “วงการพระเครื่อง” ซึ่งเป็นพื้นที่ทางวาทกรรมมิติของความเชื่อ ความศรัทธา พุทธคุณ คุณค่าทางประวัติศาสตร์ และมูลค่าทางเศรษฐกิจเข้าไว้ด้วยกัน ความนิยมในการครอบครองพระเครื่องมิได้สะท้อนเพียงความเชื่อทางศาสนาเท่านั้น แต่ยังสะท้อนการก่อตัวของชุมชนทางสังคมของกลุ่มคนเล่นพระ ผู้สะสม และผู้ค้า ที่มีการแลกเปลี่ยนองค์ความรู้ ประสบการณ์ และมูลค่าของพระเครื่องผ่านทั้งพื้นที่ทางกายภาพ เช่น ตลาดพระเครื่องและศูนย์พระเครื่อง รวมถึงพื้นที่สื่อสังคมออนไลน์ เช่น เว็บไซต์ สื่อสังคมออนไลน์ และสื่อสิ่งพิมพ์ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับพระเครื่อง (Sawangboonsatic, 2020) ในบรรดาสื่อ ดังกล่าว “นิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์” นับเป็นพื้นที่สื่อที่มีบทบาทสำคัญในการเผยแพร่ข้อมูลข่าวสาร และเรื่องเล่าเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่อง โดยทำหน้าที่มากกว่าการนำเสนอรายละเอียดเกี่ยวกับวัตถุมงคล แต่ยังเป็นพื้นที่ที่ใช้ภาษาและการเล่าเรื่องในการประกอบสร้างความหมายให้แก่พระเครื่องในฐานะสัญลักษณ์ทางศาสนา วัฒนธรรม และเศรษฐกิจ เรื่องเล่าที่ปรากฏในสื่อประเภทนี้มักเชื่อมโยงประวัติความเป็นมา ตำนาน ความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ พุทธคุณ ประสบการณ์ของผู้ศรัทธา ตลอดจนคุณค่า และมูลค่าของพระเครื่องในตลาดการสะสม อันสะท้อนให้เห็นกระบวนการสร้างและถ่ายทอดความหมายผ่านวาทกรรมทางสังคมที่ส่งผลต่อการรับรู้และการตีความของผู้รับสาร

จากการทบทวนวรรณกรรมและงานวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้อง พบว่า การศึกษาพระเครื่องที่ผ่านมาให้ความสำคัญกับประเด็นด้านเศรษฐกิจ วัฒนธรรม และปรากฏการณ์พุทธพาณิชย์ โดยเฉพาะการอธิบายการขยายตัวของตลาด



พระเครื่องและการสร้างมูลค่าที่สัมพันธ์กับความเชื่อเรื่องความศักดิ์สิทธิ์และปาฏิหาริย์ (Chantane, 2016) ขณะเดียวกันการศึกษาทางด้านสังคมและวัฒนธรรมยังชี้ให้เห็นว่าองค์ความรู้เกี่ยวกับพระเครื่องมีได้ดำรงอยู่อย่างเป็นกลาง แต่ถูกผลิตต่อรองและรับรองผ่านเครือข่ายของนักเล่นพระ ผู้ค้า และกลุ่มผู้เชี่ยวชาญในการพระเครื่องซึ่งมีบทบาทในการสถาปนาความน่าเชื่อถือและมาตรฐานความรู้ (Sawangboonsatic, 2020) อย่างไรก็ตามแม้งานวิจัยในระยะหลังจะให้ความสำคัญกับบทบาทของสื่อมากขึ้น แต่ยังไม่พบช่องว่างทางองค์ความรู้เกี่ยวกับการศึกษา “กลไกทางภาษาและเรื่องเล่า” ซึ่งเป็นองค์ประกอบสำคัญที่ใช้ประกอบสร้างความศรัทธา ความน่าเชื่อถือและมูลค่าของพระเครื่องในสื่อออนไลน์ ผ่านการใช้ภาษาและเรื่องเล่าที่สื่อถึงความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ ความหายากและคุณค่า ตลอดจนการเชื่อมโยงพระเครื่องเข้ากับความหมายทางศาสนาและสังคม โดยสื่อดิจิทัลช่วยให้เรื่องเล่าเหล่านี้แพร่กระจายอย่างรวดเร็วและกว้างขวาง (Jenkins, 2006) จึงนำไปสู่คำถามสำคัญว่าภาษาและเรื่องเล่ามีบทบาทในการกำหนดการรับรู้ ความเชื่อ และการให้คุณค่าแก่พระเครื่องของผู้คนในสังคมอย่างไร

เมื่อพิจารณาในบริบทของนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ พบว่าสื่อประเภทนี้ทำหน้าที่เป็นกลไกสำคัญในการเผยแพร่เนื้อหาเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่องและวัตถุมงคลผ่านรูปแบบของเรื่องเล่า ซึ่งครอบคลุมทั้งประวัติ ตำนาน และประสบการณ์เกี่ยวกับอำนาจความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ และรายละเอียดเกี่ยวกับการเช่าบูชาหรือการสะสมวัตถุมงคล นิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ดำเนินการโดยบริษัทสำนักพิมพ์พระเครื่องออนไลน์ จำกัด ซึ่งก่อตั้งขึ้นเมื่อวันที่ 5 เมษายน พ.ศ. 2547 และได้พัฒนารูปแบบจากสิ่งพิมพ์สู่แพลตฟอร์มดิจิทัลที่หลากหลาย เช่น หนังสืออิเล็กทรอนิกส์ (E-book) เว็บไซต์ และร้านค้าพระเครื่องออนไลน์ เนื้อหาของนิตยสารนำเสนอทั้งข้อมูลด้านประวัติ ลักษณะทางกายภาพ และรายละเอียดการเช่าบูชา ซึ่งสะท้อนความเชื่อมโยงระหว่างการสื่อสารเชิงวัฒนธรรมกับกลไกทางเศรษฐกิจในตลาดพระเครื่อง ด้วยลักษณะดังกล่าว นิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์จึงเป็นพื้นที่ทางวาทกรรมที่มีบทบาทสำคัญในการประกอบสร้างความหมายผ่านภาษาและการเล่าเรื่องเรื่องเล่าที่ปรากฏไม่ได้ทำหน้าที่เพียงถ่ายทอดข้อมูล แต่มีส่วนในการจัดระเบียบความคิดและกำหนดกรอบการตีความของผู้รับสาร โดยการนำเสนอความเชื่อ ความศรัทธา และมูลค่าทางเศรษฐกิจ ส่งผลให้ผู้รับสารมีแนวโน้มยึดโยงการรับรู้และการให้คุณค่าไปตามกรอบที่สื่อกำหนด ทั้งนี้ ลักษณะของสื่อออนไลน์ที่เอื้อต่อการผลิตซ้ำและการเผยแพร่อย่างต่อเนื่อง ยังมีส่วนทำให้นิเวศที่เน้นความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ ปาฏิหาริย์ หรือมูลค่าทางเศรษฐกิจได้รับการยอมรับและกลายเป็น “ความจริงทางสังคม” (Social Reality) ที่ถูกยอมรับอย่างกว้างขวาง (Foucault, 1972)

ด้วยเหตุนี้ แม้งานวิจัยเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่องจะครอบคลุมหลายมิติ แต่ยังคงมีข้อจำกัดสำคัญในด้านการวิเคราะห์ภาษาและวาทกรรม โดยเฉพาะการทำความเข้าใจ “เรื่องเล่า” ในฐานะกลไกของอำนาจที่ใช้ในการประกอบสร้างและทำให้ความหมายดำรงอยู่ในสังคม ดังนั้น การวิจัยครั้งนี้ จึงมุ่งเติมเต็มช่องว่างดังกล่าว โดยศึกษาลักษณะวาทกรรมของเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องที่ปรากฏในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ ควบคู่กับการวิเคราะห์กระบวนการประกอบสร้างความหมายผ่านการใช้ภาษาและกลวิธีการเล่าเรื่อง อันจะนำไปสู่การอธิบายบทบาทของสื่อในฐานะผู้กำหนดกรอบความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่องและศาสนาในบริบทสังคมได้อย่างเป็นลุ่มลึกยิ่งขึ้น

วัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัย

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาลักษณะวาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องที่ปรากฏในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ และวิเคราะห์กระบวนการประกอบสร้างความหมายผ่านเรื่องเล่าที่ปรากฏในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์

วิธีดำเนินการวิจัย

1. **รูปแบบการวิจัย** เป็นการศึกษาเชิงคุณภาพ (Qualitative Research) ใช้วิธีการศึกษาจากเอกสาร (Documentary Research) เป็นเครื่องมือในการเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล ผู้วิจัยรวบรวมข้อมูลจากตัวบทที่ปรากฏในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ แล้วนำข้อมูลที่ได้มาวิเคราะห์และนำเสนอผลการศึกษาในรูปแบบการพรรณนาเชิงวิเคราะห์ (Analytical Description) ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล ผู้วิจัยใช้แนวคิดการวิเคราะห์วาทกรรม (Discourse Analysis)

ร่วมกับแนวคิดเรื่องเล่า (Narrative) เป็นกรอบแนวคิดในการศึกษา โดยมุ่งศึกษาตัวบท (Text) ที่ปรากฏในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ เพื่อทำความเข้าใจลักษณะของวาทกรรมและกระบวนการประกอบสร้างความหมายผ่านเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่อง ตลอดจนพิจารณากระบวนการทางภาษาและวัฒนธรรมที่มีส่วนในการผลิตและถ่ายทอดความหมาย การวิเคราะห์นี้มุ่งให้เห็นถึงกระบวนการประกอบสร้างความหมายและการผลิตซ้ำของความเชื่อ ค่านิยม และความหมายทางสังคมที่ปรากฏผ่านเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องในสื่อออนไลน์

2. **ขอบเขตข้อมูล** ได้แก่ ตัวบทเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องที่ปรากฏในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ ซึ่งนำเสนอเนื้อหาเกี่ยวกับประวัติ ความเป็นมา ตำนาน ความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ ตลอดจนเรื่องเล่าที่เกี่ยวข้องกับพระเครื่องในมิติต่าง ๆ โดยผู้วิจัยได้คัดเลือกตัวบทที่ใช้ในการศึกษาโดยวิธีการคัดเลือกแบบเจาะจง (Purposive Sampling) จากเนื้อหาที่เผยแพร่ในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ ซึ่งมีลักษณะเป็นเรื่องเล่าเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่อง และมีข้อมูลที่สะท้อนลักษณะของวาทกรรม รวมทั้งกระบวนการประกอบสร้างความหมายอย่างชัดเจน เพื่อนำมาวิเคราะห์ตามวัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัย ทั้งนี้ ผู้วิจัยกำหนดขอบเขตของตัวบทที่ใช้ศึกษาเป็นนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ ปี พ.ศ. 2563 ถึงปี พ.ศ. 2568 ฉบับที่ 240 - 350 จำนวน 110 ฉบับ เนื่องจากเป็นช่วงเวลาที่มีการเผยแพร่เนื้อหาอย่างต่อเนื่อง และสะท้อนบริบทการสื่อสารเรื่องพระเครื่องในสื่อออนไลน์ได้อย่างชัดเจน อีกทั้งข้อมูลที่ได้มีความเพียงพอและปรากฏลักษณะซ้ำอย่างต่อเนื่องจนเกิดภาวะอิมิตัวของข้อมูลจึงถือเป็นขอบเขตข้อมูลที่เหมาะสมและสอดคล้องกับวัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัย

3. **เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัย** ผู้วิจัยพัฒนาแบบบันทึกและแบบวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลจากกรอบแนวคิดการวิเคราะห์วาทกรรมเชิงวิพากษ์ของ Fairclough (2010) ร่วมกับแนวคิดการวิเคราะห์เรื่องเล่า เพื่อใช้รวบรวมจัดหมวดหมู่ และตีความข้อมูลที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการประกอบสร้างความหมาย ความศรัทธา ความน่าเชื่อถือ และคุณค่าของพระเครื่องที่ปรากฏในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ ดังตัวอย่างต่อไปนี้

Instrument Component	Data Recording / Analysis Items	Analytical Framework Used
Basic Information	- Issue number, publication year, and title of the story - Type of amulet and content characteristics	Data Recording Form
Language Use	- Keywords, abbreviations, and honorific expressions - Expressions of sacredness and rhetorical strategies	Fairclough: Text Level
Credibility Construction	- References to monks, experts, or authoritative figures - Experiences or events used to support belief	Fairclough: Discursive Practice
Faith Construction	- Narratives of miracles and supernatural phenomena - Protection, blessings, and enhancement of faith	Fairclough: Narrative Analysis
Narrative Structure	- Characters, significant events, and point of origin - Climax and conclusion of the story	Narrative Analysis
Value Construction	- Religious value and social value - Economic value of amulets	Fairclough: Social Practice
Socio-Cultural Context	- Beliefs, social trends, and religious worship - Commercialization of Buddhism	Fairclough: Social Practice
Interpretive Findings	- Construction of meaning and faith - Credibility and value of amulets	Synthesis of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Narrative Analysis

Figure 1 Example of a Data Recording and Analysis Form



4. การเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูล จากเอกสารโดยศึกษาตัวบทเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องที่ปรากฏในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ ซึ่งนำเสนอเนื้อหาเกี่ยวกับประวัติ ความเป็นมา ตำนาน และความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ของพระเครื่อง ผู้วิจัยได้คัดเลือกตัวบทที่ใช้ในการศึกษาโดยวิธีการคัดเลือกแบบเจาะจงจากเนื้อหาที่มีลักษณะเป็นเรื่องเล่าเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่อง และมีข้อมูลที่สะท้อนลักษณะของวาทกรรมและการประกอบสร้างความหมายอย่างชัดเจน จากนั้นจึงรวบรวมและบันทึกข้อมูลที่เกี่ยวข้องเพื่อนำไปใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ตามวัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัย

5. การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล ผู้วิจัยศึกษาตัวบทเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ โดยใช้แนวคิดการวิเคราะห์วาทกรรมเชิงวิพากษ์ (CDA) ของ Fairclough (2010) ร่วมกับการวิเคราะห์เรื่องเล่า (Narrative Analysis) ผ่านการอ่าน ทบทวน บันทึก และจัดหมวดหมู่ข้อมูล โดยวิเคราะห์ใน 3 ระดับ ได้แก่ ระดับตัวบท ระดับวิถีปฏิบัติทางวาทกรรม และระดับวิถีปฏิบัติทางสังคมวัฒนธรรม จากนั้นนำผลการวิเคราะห์มาสังเคราะห์เพื่อค้นหารูปแบบความหมายและลักษณะการประกอบสร้างความจริงที่ปรากฏซ้ำ ก่อนจัดกลุ่มเป็นวาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่อง 9 ลักษณะ และนำมาตีความเพื่ออธิบายการประกอบสร้างความหมาย ความศรัทธา ความน่าเชื่อถือ และคุณค่าของพระเครื่อง โดยนำเสนอผลการศึกษารูปแบบการพรรณนาวิเคราะห์

ผลการวิจัยและอภิปรายผล

1. จากการศึกษาลักษณะวาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องที่ปรากฏในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ พบว่าเรื่องเล่ามีพื้นฐานอยู่บนรูปแบบการสื่อสารและถูกถ่ายทอดผ่านผลผลิตทางวัฒนธรรม นิตยสารมีการประยุกต์ใช้ภาษาการเล่าเรื่องควบคู่กับสัญลักษณ์ทางวัฒนธรรม (Cultural Symbols) ส่งผลให้สื่อดังกล่าวทำหน้าที่เป็นพื้นที่ทางวัฒนธรรมที่เอื้อให้เกิดการถ่ายทอด แบ่งปัน และสืบทอดวัฒนธรรมจากรุ่นสู่รุ่น (Jirabovornwisut, 2023) เรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องสื่อความหมายเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่อง ส่งผลต่อการรับรู้ ความเชื่อ และค่านิยมในสังคม ผ่านกระบวนการเล่าเรื่องที่ตัวบทมักเริ่มจากการกล่าวถึงประวัติหรือที่มาของวัตถุมงคล เชื่อมโยงกับพระเกจิอาจารย์หรือบุคคลสำคัญทางศาสนา จากนั้นจึงอธิบายพุทธคุณ ความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ หรือประสบการณ์ความเชื่อ ก่อนเชื่อมโยงไปสู่การกล่าวถึงคุณค่าและมูลค่าของพระเครื่องในฐานะวัตถุมงคลหรือการลงทุนในตลาดพระเครื่อง จากการวิเคราะห์สามารถจำแนกลักษณะวาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องที่ปรากฏในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ได้ 9 ลักษณะ ดังนี้

1.1 วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ของพระเครื่อง มุ่งเน้นการนำเสนอความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ผ่านการเชื่อมโยงกับพุทธคุณ พลังเหนือธรรมชาติ และพิธีกรรมทางศาสนา โดยใช้กลวิธีทางภาษาเล่าถึงพิธีปลุกเสก คาถาอาคม มวลสารศักดิ์สิทธิ์ รวมถึงเหตุการณ์อัศจรรย์หรือปาฏิหาริย์ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการสร้างวัตถุมงคล ตัวอย่างที่ 1 ตอน เรื่องเล่ารูปหล่อท้าวเวสสุวรรณ หลวงพ่อเพี้ยน วัดเกริ่นกฐิน จ.ลพบุรี กล่าวถึง

“ท้าวเวสสุวรรณเป็นผู้ปกครองเหล่ายักษ์และกุมภัณฑ์ในทิศอุดร เป็นพระอริยบุคคลชั้นโสดาบัน ในวันอุโบสถท่านจะลงมาตรวจตราโลกมนุษย์ หากผู้ใดทำความดีจะจดชื่อบนแผ่นทองคำเพื่อนำไปทูลต่อเทพยดา แต่ผู้ที่กระทำความชั่วจะถูกส่งชื่อให้พญามาราชเพื่อลงโทษ ผู้ที่บูชาท้าวเวสสุวรรณเชื่อว่าจะได้รับการปกป้องจากภูติผีปีศาจและมีโชคลาภบริบูรณ์ เพราะท่านเป็นธนบดีหรือเจ้าแห่งทรัพย์...” (Amulet Online Magazine, 2021c)

จากตัวอย่าง พบว่ามีการนำเสนอเรื่องราวของท้าวเวสสุวรรณในฐานะเทพผู้ปกครองเหล่ายักษ์และกุมภัณฑ์ และถูกอธิบายว่าเป็นพระอริยบุคคลชั้นโสดาบัน โดยเชื่อมโยงบทบาทการตรวจตราพฤติกรรมของมนุษย์ในวันอุโบสถเข้ากับผลลัพธ์ทางศีลธรรม กล่าวคือ ผู้ที่ทำความดีจะได้รับการบันทึกชื่อเพื่อถวายต่อเทพยดา ขณะที่ผู้ทำความชั่วจะถูกส่งชื่อให้พญามาราชลงโทษ นอกจากนี้ ยังมีการกล่าวถึงความเชื่อด้านการคุ้มครองจากภูติผีปีศาจและการให้โชคลาภแก่ผู้บูชาในฐานะธนบดีหรือเจ้าแห่งทรัพย์



1.2 วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าที่อ้างอิงบุคคลสำคัญเพื่อสร้างความน่าเชื่อถือของพระเครื่อง มีการอ้างอิงบุคคลสำคัญ เช่น พระเกจิอาจารย์ บุคคลสำคัญทางศาสนา บุคคลทางประวัติศาสตร์ หรือผู้มีบทบาทในวงการพระเครื่อง เพื่อเสริมความน่าเชื่อถือและคุณค่าของวัตถุมงคล ตัวบทมักกล่าวถึงชื่อเสียง ประวัติ ความรู้ด้านพุทธาคม และบทบาทของบุคคลในฐานะผู้สร้างหรือผู้ปลุกเสก การเชื่อมโยงพระเครื่องกับบุคคลที่ได้รับการยอมรับในสังคมพระเครื่องทำให้วัตถุมงคลได้รับความเชื่อถือมากขึ้น ตัวบทยังกล่าวถึงความสัมพันธ์ของสายวิชาครูบาอาจารย์ และการสืบทอดองค์ความรู้ทางพุทธาคมเพื่อยืนยันในบารมีและความรู้ทางจิตวิญญาณ การอ้างอิงบุคคลสำคัญจึงทำหน้าที่เป็นอำนาจเชิงสัญลักษณ์ที่ช่วยรับรองคุณค่า ความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ และความน่าเชื่อถือของพระเครื่อง ในบางกรณีมีการกล่าวถึงบุคคลสำคัญในสถาบันต่าง ๆ หรือผู้เชี่ยวชาญด้านศิลปกรรม ซึ่งช่วยเพิ่มความชอบธรรมให้กับการสร้างวัตถุมงคล ตัวอย่าง ตอน พระสมเด็จ วัดเกาะลอย จ.ระยอง ปี พ.ศ. 2514 พระดีที่ยังหาได้ หลวงปู่ทิม อิสริโก กล่าวถึง

“ยอดพระเกจิอาจารย์แห่งบูรพา ท่านเป็นพระที่ปฏิบัติดีปฏิบัติชอบ ยึดมั่นในพระธรรมและพระวินัยขององค์ สัมมาสัมพุทธเจ้า เป็นผู้มักน้อย สันโดษ ไม่ยินดีในร้ายในโลกธรรม ท่านมีปกติฉันอาหารมังสวิรัต และฉันเพียงมือเดียว... ท่านถือปฏิบัติอย่างนี้เป็นเวลาถึง 50 ปี ร่างกายของท่านยังแข็งแรงสมบูรณ์ดีทุกประการ ท่านเป็นพระที่เคร่งครัดและบริสุทธิ์ในพระธรรมวินัย พระเครื่องของท่านมีราคาเรือนแสนเรือนล้าน ...” (Amulet Online Magazine, 2021a)

จากตัวอย่างเรื่องเล่า กล่าวถึงวัตรปฏิบัติของพระเกจิอาจารย์ เช่น การถือมังสวิรัต การฉันอาหารเพียงมือเดียว และการดำรงชีวิตอย่างมักน้อยสันโดษ เพื่อสร้างภาพลักษณ์ของความเคร่งครัดและความบริสุทธิ์ทางศีลธรรม ก่อนเชื่อมโยงไปยังพระเครื่องของท่าน ทั้งในด้านความนิยมและมูลค่า ตลอดจนการกล่าวถึงพิธีพุทธาภิเษกและการอธิษฐานจิต ซึ่งช่วยทำให้พระเครื่องมีสถานะที่ได้รับการยอมรับในหมู่นักสะสม

1.3 วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าคุณค่าทางประวัติศาสตร์ของพระเครื่อง นำเสนอข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับประวัติความเป็นมา ช่วงเวลาการจัดสร้าง รุ่นของพระเครื่อง และบริบททางศาสนาและสังคม ตัวบทมักระบุปีที่สร้าง เหตุการณ์สำคัญ หรือบุคคลและสถานที่ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการจัดสร้าง การนำเสนอข้อมูลลักษณะนี้ทำให้พระเครื่องถูกเชื่อมโยงกับบริบททางประวัติศาสตร์ ส่งผลให้ถูกพิจารณาว่าเป็นวัตถุที่มีที่มา มีความเก่าแก่ และมีความสำคัญทางวัฒนธรรม ตัวบทยังเชื่อมโยงพระเครื่องกับประวัติศาสตร์ท้องถิ่น ตำนานพื้นถิ่น และบริบทของพระพุทธศาสนา เช่น การกล่าวถึงแหล่งโบราณคดี ศาสนสถานสำคัญ หรืออาณาจักรในอดีต ทำให้พระเครื่องถูกนำเสนอในฐานะมรดกทางวัฒนธรรมที่สะท้อนความเชื่อ ศาสนา และภูมิปัญญาของสังคมไทย ตัวอย่างตอน พระกริ่งเชียงแสน วัดอุทยาน นนทบุรี ท่านเจ้าคุณนรฯ อธิษฐานจิตปลุกเสก ปี 2511 กล่าวว่า

“ย้อนหลังไปครั้งกรุงศรีอยุธยาเป็นราชธานีตอนต้น สมัยนั้นเกิดโรคระบาดใหญ่ทำให้สมเด็จพระเจ้าอยู่ทองทรงโปรดฯ ให้สร้างอุทยานเพื่อหนีปัญหาโรคระบาด ต่อมาก็ได้สร้างวัดชื่อ “วัดอุทยาน” วัดอุทยานมีพระเกจิอาจารย์ยุคเก่านามว่า “หลวงปู่เพิ่ม” ท่านถือกำเนิดร่วมยุคกับหลวงปู่ศุข หลวงพ่อกลั่น หลวงปู่เพิ่มท่านเป็นพระที่มีศีลาจารวัตรน่าเลื่อมใสและมีความเชี่ยวชาญในวิทยาคม มีลูกศิษย์ลูกหามากมาย ยังมีพระเกจิอาจารย์มาแลกเปลี่ยนวิชาของท่านอยู่เป็นประจำ...” (Amulet Online Magazine, 2021e)

จากตัวอย่างเรื่องเล่า มีการกล่าวถึงเหตุการณ์ในสมัยกรุงศรีอยุธยา การสร้างวัดอุทยาน และประวัติของหลวงปู่เพิ่ม วัดอุทยาน ควบคู่กับการกล่าวถึงความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างพระเกจิอาจารย์ในสายวิชาเดียวกัน นอกจากนี้ ตัวบทยังเชื่อมโยงพระเครื่องกับสถานที่ บุคคล และเหตุการณ์ทางประวัติศาสตร์ รวมถึงบริบท



ทางพระพุทธศาสนา ทำให้การนำเสนอพระเครื่องมีลักษณะสัมพันธ์กับภูมิหลังทางประวัติศาสตร์และการจัดสร้างของวัดอุ้มงคล

1.4 วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าคุณค่าทางเศรษฐกิจและการลงทุนของพระเครื่อง เรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องมักนำเสนอพระเครื่องในฐานะวัตถุสะสมที่มีมูลค่าทางเศรษฐกิจและสามารถใช้เป็นทางเลือกในการลงทุน โดยตัวบทให้ข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับราคาประเมิน ราคาจำหน่าย จำนวนการจัดสร้าง ระดับความนิยมในอดีตและปัจจุบัน ตลอดจนแนวโน้มมูลค่าในอนาคต ส่งผลให้พระเครื่องถูกมองในฐานะสินทรัพย์ที่สามารถซื้อขายและเพิ่มมูลค่าได้ในตลาดพระเครื่อง นอกจากนี้ ตัวบทยังนำเสนอข้อมูลในลักษณะการรายงานหรือการประเมินมูลค่า โดยใช้การวิเคราะห์ปัจจัยพื้นฐาน ตัวอย่างเช่น การใช้คำว่า ผู้สร้างผู้ปลุกเสก พิธีกรรม มวลสารที่ใช้สร้าง อายุการสร้าง ความเก่า และแนวโน้มในอนาคต พร้อมทั้งจัดลำดับความสำคัญผ่านการให้คะแนน เปอร์เซ็นต์ความน่าลงทุน หรือสัญลักษณ์ดาว รวมถึงการใช้ถ้อยคำ เช่น ราคาประเมิน ความนิยม และกระแสความนิยมในอนาคต ซึ่งสะท้อนกรอบภาษาที่เน้นเรื่องมูลค่าและการซื้อขาย

1.5 วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าที่สร้างความน่าเชื่อถือของพระเครื่อง ใช้การนำเสนอข้อมูลเชิงระบบเพื่อสร้างความน่าเชื่อถือให้กับเนื้อหา เช่น การจัดข้อมูลในรูปแบบตาราง การประเมินปัจจัยพื้นฐาน ระดับความนิยม แนวโน้มมูลค่าในอดีต ปัจจุบัน และอนาคต ตลอดจนการประเมินความน่าลงทุน การนำเสนอข้อมูลลักษณะนี้ทำให้เนื้อหาที่มีลักษณะคล้ายการวิเคราะห์เชิงวิชาการหรือการประเมินทางด้านเศรษฐกิจ ส่งผลให้เรื่องเล่าดูมีเหตุผลและสร้างความเชื่อมั่น นอกจากนี้ ยังให้รายละเอียดเชิงเทคนิคเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่อง เช่น พิมพ์พระ เนื้อวัสดุ มวลสาร ลักษณะศิลปกรรม ขนาด ปีที่จัดสร้าง และจำนวนการผลิต ซึ่งเป็นข้อมูลเฉพาะทางในวงการพระเครื่อง การนำเสนอข้อมูลรายละเอียดดังกล่าวทำให้เนื้อหาที่มีลักษณะเป็นองค์ความรู้เฉพาะด้าน และเสริมภาพลักษณ์ของข้อมูลที่มีหลักฐานรองรับ กล่าวคือ

“เหรียญพระพุทธทักษิณมิ่งมงคลนี้จัดสร้างโดยนำขนวนมวลสารจากเกจิอาจารย์ดังสายใต้มากมาย อาทิเช่น หลวงปู่าค วัดระฆัง อาจารย์นอง วัดทรายขาว...และยังได้ปลุกเสกอีกหลายวาระ...” (Amulet Online Magazine, 2021f)

จากตัวบทดังกล่าว พบว่ามีการระบุขนวนมวลสารที่ใช้ในการจัดสร้างพระเครื่อง โดยอ้างอิงมวลสารจากพระเกจิอาจารย์หลายรูป พร้อมทั้งกล่าวถึงการปลุกเสกหลายวาระ นอกจากนี้ ตัวบทยังนำเสนอรายละเอียดเกี่ยวกับกระบวนการจัดสร้างและองค์ประกอบของพระเครื่อง ซึ่งเป็นข้อมูลเฉพาะที่ใช้ประกอบการอธิบายลักษณะและที่มาของวัดอุ้มงคล การนำเสนอในลักษณะดังกล่าวแสดงให้เห็นว่าตัวบทให้ความสำคัญกับข้อมูลเชิงเทคนิคและรายละเอียดการจัดสร้างพระเครื่องในการเล่าเรื่อง

1.6 วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าประสบการณ์และความเชื่อในสังคมพระเครื่อง นำเสนอประสบการณ์ของผู้บูชาหรือผู้ครอบครองวัดอุ้มงคลควบคู่กับการกล่าวถึงพุทธคุณของพระเครื่อง เช่น ความเชื่อด้านเมตตามหานิยม ความคงกระพันชาตรี การคุ้มครองป้องกันภัย หรือการเสริมสิริมงคลแก่ผู้ครอบครอง การเล่าเรื่องมักปรากฏในรูปแบบของประสบการณ์เหนือธรรมชาติหรือเรื่องราวของผู้ศรัทธาที่ได้รับผลดีจากการบูชาพระเครื่อง ซึ่งทำหน้าที่ยืนยันความศักดิ์สิทธิ์และพลังอำนาจของวัดอุ้มงคล นอกจากนี้ ตัวบทยังเชื่อมโยงพระเครื่องกับความเชื่อทางศาสนา ความเชื่อพื้นบ้าน และองค์ความรู้ทางไสยศาสตร์ เช่น ยันต์ พิธีกรรม หรือสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการสร้างและการบูชา ทำให้พระเครื่องถูกมองว่าเป็นวัตถุที่มีพลังทางจิตวิญญาณและสามารถเชื่อมโยงผู้บูชากับอำนาจเหนือธรรมชาติได้ ตัวอย่างตอน เหรียญพระพุทธปางลีลาฉลองยี่สิบห้าพุทธศตวรรษ กล่าวคือ



“พระสารีบุตรเป็นพระอัครสาวกที่เกิดด้วยปัญญา ทว่ายังเป็นผู้เลิศในความกตัญญูด้วย ท่านได้ฟังพุทธธรรมเป็นครั้งแรกจากพระอัสสชิหนึ่งในพระปัญจวัคคีย์ ส่งผลให้ท่านเกิดดวงตาเห็นธรรม และบรรลุโสดาปัตติผล โดยท่านได้สดับ... คาถา เย อัมมาฯ ต่อมาถือเป็นหัวใจของพระพุทธศาสนา นับแต่อดีตกาลชาวพุทธมักจารึกคาถานี้ไว้ยังพระสถูปเจดีย์ตลอดจนพระพิมพ์เพื่อสืบทอดพระพุทธศาสนา มีเหรียญพระพุทธรูปสำคัญรุ่นหนึ่งที่จารึกพระคาถา... ปรากฏว่ามีประสบการณ์มากมาย ทั้งแคล้วคลาด คงกระพันชาตรี...” (Amulet Online Magazine, 2021d)

จากตัวบทดังกล่าว พบว่ามีการเชื่อมโยงพุทธประวัติของพระสารีบุตรกับการกล่าวถึงคาถา เย อัมมาฯ ซึ่งเป็นหลักธรรมสำคัญในพระพุทธศาสนา ก่อนเชื่อมโยงมายังพระเครื่องที่มีการจารึกคาถาดังกล่าวไว้ นอกจากนี้ ตัวบทยังกล่าวถึงประสบการณ์ของผู้บูชาที่เกี่ยวข้องกับความแคล้วคลาดและความคงกระพันชาตรีควบคู่กับการอ้างอิงหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา การนำเสนอในลักษณะดังกล่าวแสดงให้เห็นว่าตัวบทเชื่อมโยงประสบการณ์ของผู้บูชากับพุทธคุณของพระเครื่องผ่านการอ้างอิงหลักธรรมและความเชื่อทางพระพุทธศาสนา

1.7 วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าความหายากและคุณค่าในการสะสม นำเสนอรายละเอียดเกี่ยวกับลักษณะ รูปแบบ การจัดสร้าง วัสดุ และจำนวนการผลิตของวัตถุมงคล เช่น ลักษณะพิมพ์ของเหรียญ รูปแบบเนื้อพระ ขนาด หรือเอกลักษณ์เฉพาะของพระเครื่องแต่ละรุ่น การนำเสนอข้อมูลดังกล่าวเป็นกลวิธีที่ช่วยเน้นย้ำเอกลักษณ์ ความพิเศษ และความหายากของพระเครื่อง การเน้นย้ำความหายากและเอกลักษณ์เฉพาะของพระเครื่องจึงเป็นกลวิธีทางวาทกรรมที่ช่วยสร้างภาพลักษณ์ของพระเครื่องในฐานะวัตถุสะสมที่มีคุณค่าและเป็นที่ต้องการในวงการพระเครื่องตัวอย่างตอน ตะกรุดไม้ไผ่ หลวงพ่อทวย ชุตินธโร กล่าวว่า

“ตะกรุดไม้ไผ่หรือตะกรุดไม้ครุทำจากเป็นไม้ไผ่หรือไม้รวกที่มีอาถรรพ์ เช่น ไม้ไผ่ต้นตลอดลำเรียกว่า ไม้ไผ่มหาอุด หรือบางครั้งเป็นไม้ไผ่ยอดดวนขึ้นกลางกอ หรือเป็นไม้ไผ่ที่ถูกฟ้าผ่า นำมาลงอักขระเลขยันต์หรือคาถาหัวใจ ธาตุบั้ง แก้วบั้งมาลงไว้ หรือ “นะวิเศษ” ต่าง ๆ ใน จำนวนนะ 108 นี้ อานุภาพทางคุ้มครองป้องกันภัยต่าง ๆ ตะกรุดไม้ไผ่ของหลวงพ่อกวยต้องสังเกตที่ลายมือของหลวงพ่อกวย ลักษณะการเขียนที่เป็นเอกลักษณ์ ที่สำคัญอายุต้องได้ไม้ต้องมีความแห้งตามธรรมชาติ...” (Amulet Online Magazine, 2020a)

จากตัวบทดังกล่าว พบว่ามีการนำเสนอรายละเอียดเกี่ยวกับวัสดุที่ใช้สร้างตะกรุด โดยระบุลักษณะของไม้ไผ่หรือไม้รวกที่มีคุณสมบัติเฉพาะ เช่น ไม้ไผ่ต้น ไม้ไผ่ยอดดวน และไม้ไผ่ที่ถูกฟ้าผ่า นอกจากนี้ ยังกล่าวถึงการจารอักขระ เลขยันต์ และคาถา รวมทั้งระบุเกณฑ์การพิจารณาเฉพาะ ได้แก่ ลักษณะลายมือการจารของหลวงพ่อกวย สภาพของวัสดุ และอายุของไม้ การนำเสนอในลักษณะดังกล่าวแสดงให้เห็นว่าตัวบทให้ความสำคัญกับรายละเอียดและเอกลักษณ์เฉพาะของวัตถุมงคล รวมถึงเกณฑ์ที่ใช้พิจารณาลักษณะของพระเครื่องแต่ละชิ้น

1.8 วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าตำนานและความเชื่อทางศาสนา มีการเชื่อมโยงวัตถุมงคลกับตำนานเรื่องเล่าทางศาสนา พุทธประวัติ และวรรณคดีไทย เช่น เหตุการณ์สำคัญในพุทธประวัติ ตำนานพญานาค เรื่องราวของท้าวเวสสุวรรณ หรือการอ้างอิงวรรณคดี การนำเสนอเรื่องเล่าลักษณะนี้ช่วยสร้างความศักดิ์สิทธิ์และความลึกลับให้กับพระเครื่อง ทำให้รับรู้ว่ามีวัตถุมงคลมีความสัมพันธ์กับโลกของความเชื่อทางศาสนา นอกจากนี้ ตัวบทยังเชื่อมโยงพระเครื่องกับหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา พิธีกรรม และเหตุการณ์สำคัญทางศาสนา เช่น การอธิบายความหมายเชิงสัญลักษณ์ของพระเครื่องการกล่าวถึงพิธีปลุกเสก หรือการจัดสร้างเนื่องในโอกาสสำคัญทางพระพุทธศาสนา ทำให้พระเครื่องถูกวางอยู่ในบริบทของศาสนาและวัฒนธรรมของสังคมไทย ตัวอย่างตอนดอกธาดู ทิพยบุปผา อันนำมาซึ่งความรุ่งโรจน์ กรูวัดพระคง จ.ลำพูน กล่าวว่า



“...นับแต่ครั้งบรรพกาล บรรพชนของพวกเราชาวสยามก่อสร้างบ้านเมืองภายใต้ร่มโพธิ์แห่งบรรพพุทธศาสนา การดำเนินชีวิตของผู้คนดำเนินไปในครรลองครองธรรม มีความผูกพันแน่นแฟ้นกับศาสนา รวมไปถึงความเชื่อ และวิถีชีวิตเป็นสังคมวิถีพุทธ พระพิมพ์ต่าง ๆ ถือเป็นผลิตผลทางความเชื่อและความศรัทธา แม้ว่าปัจจุบันจะมี ผู้กล่าวว่า พระพิมพ์เหล่านี้ไม่ใช่แก่นแท้ของศาสนา แต่ควรมองให้ลึกลงไป หากขาดเปลือกและกระพี้ก็ยากที่ต้นไม้ จะดำรงอยู่ได้ เช่นเดียวกับศาสนาหากขาดความเชื่อความศรัทธาของศาสนิกชน ก็ยากที่ศาสนาจะอยู่รอด อีกทั้ง ในบรรดาเปลือกกระพี้เหล่านั้นก็อาจสามารถเป็นเครื่องมือให้หยั่งถึงแก่นธรรม” (Amulet Online Magazine, 2020b)

จากตัวบทดังกล่าว พบว่ามีการกล่าวถึงความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างพระพุทธศาสนา ความเชื่อ และวิถีชีวิต ของผู้คนตั้งแต่อดีต โดยเริ่มจากการอ้างถึงการดำรงอยู่ของสังคมภายใต้พระพุทธศาสนา และอธิบายการดำเนินชีวิต ในลักษณะของสังคมวิถีพุทธ นอกจากนี้ ยังนำเสนอพระพิมพ์ในฐานะผลผลิตของความเชื่อและความศรัทธา พร้อมทั้ง ใช้การเปรียบเทียบศาสนากับต้นไม้ที่ต้องอาศัยเปลือกและกระพี้เพื่อแสดงความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความเชื่อ กับการดำรงอยู่ของพระพุทธศาสนา การนำเสนอในลักษณะดังกล่าวแสดงให้เห็นการเชื่อมโยงพระเครื่องกับตำนาน ความเชื่อ และบริบททางพระพุทธศาสนาผ่านการเล่าเรื่อง

1.9 วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าที่สร้างความชอบธรรมผ่านสถาบันของรัฐ มีการเชื่อมโยงวัตถุมงคล กับหน่วยงานหรือสถาบันของรัฐ เช่น การกล่าวถึงการจัดสร้างเหรียญ โดยเชื่อมโยงกับสถาบันของรัฐเป็นกลวิธี ทางวาทกรรมที่ช่วยสร้างความชอบธรรมและความน่าเชื่อถือให้กับพระเครื่อง เนื่องจากทำให้วัตถุมงคลถูกมองว่า ได้รับการรับรองจากองค์กรที่มีสถานะเป็นทางการในสังคม นอกจากนี้ การกล่าวถึงบทบาทของหน่วยงานรัฐ ในการจัดสร้างหรือเผยแพร่วัตถุมงคลยังทำให้พระเครื่องถูกนำเสนอในฐานะสัญลักษณ์ที่เชื่อมโยงกับความมั่นคง ความเจริญรุ่งเรือง และความมั่งคั่งของชาติ ตัวอย่างตอน เหรียญพระคลังมหาสมบัติ กรมธนารักษ์ ครบ 88 ปี กล่าวว่า

“เหรียญพระคลังมหาสมบัติ กรมธนารักษ์ ครบ 88 ปี การนับถือเทวดาและสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ประจำสถานที่ต่าง ๆ เป็นคติความเชื่อของชาวสยามมาแต่โบราณกาล ความเชื่อดังกล่าวแสดงออกในแบบรูปธรรมโดยการสร้างรูปเคารพ ในราชสำนักไทยสมัยรัตนโกสินทร์ยังคงสืบทอดแนวคิดเช่นกัน เทวรูปพระคลัง ในพระคลังมหาสมบัติ เชื่อว่าสร้างขึ้น เพื่อเป็นตัวแทนของเทพเจ้าผู้รักษาศักดิ์สมบัติของแผ่นดิน ตลอดจนเป็นที่เคารพนับถือและเป็นที่ยึดเหนี่ยวจิตใจ ให้กับผู้ปฏิบัติงานในพระคลังมหาสมบัติ อีกนัยหนึ่งเสมือนเป็นตัวแทนของความซื่อสัตย์สุจริตและความถูกต้อง” (Amulet Online Magazine, 2021b)

จากตัวบทดังกล่าว พบว่ามีการอ้างอิง กรมธนารักษ์ ในฐานะหน่วยงานของรัฐที่เกี่ยวข้องกับ การจัดสร้างเหรียญพระคลังมหาสมบัติ พร้อมทั้งเชื่อมโยงวัตถุมงคลเข้ากับคติความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับเทวดาผู้รักษา ทรัพย์สินของแผ่นดินและการสืบทอดแนวคิดจากราชสำนักไทยสมัยรัตนโกสินทร์ นอกจากนี้ ตัวบทยังอธิบาย บทบาทของเทวรูปพระคลังในฐานะตัวแทนของเทพผู้รักษาพระคลังมหาสมบัติ และเชื่อมโยงกับคุณค่าด้าน ความซื่อสัตย์สุจริตและความถูกต้อง การนำเสนอในลักษณะดังกล่าวแสดงให้เห็นการเชื่อมโยงพระเครื่อง กับหน่วยงานของรัฐ ความเชื่อทางศาสนา และคุณค่าทางสถาบันผ่านการเล่าเรื่อง

2. จากการวิเคราะห์การประกอบสร้างความหมายผ่านเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ พบว่า เป็นกระบวนการใช้ภาษาและการเล่าเรื่องในการนำเสนอข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่องครอบคลุมทั้ง ประวัติความเป็นมา ตำนาน ความเชื่อ พุทธคุณ คุณค่าทางเศรษฐกิจ และตลอดจนบริบททางสังคมและวัฒนธรรม เพื่อกำหนดและสื่อความหมายให้แก่พระเครื่อง อันส่งผลให้ผู้อ่านรับรู้และทำความเข้าใจพระเครื่อง เช่น ในฐานะ วัตถุศักดิ์สิทธิ์ มรดกทางวัฒนธรรม สิ่งสะสม หรือสินทรัพย์ทางเศรษฐกิจ ความหมายดังกล่าวเป็นผลจาก การคัดเลือก เรียบเรียง และนำเสนอเนื้อหาในรูปแบบเรื่องเล่าที่มีแบบแผนเฉพาะของนิตยสารออนไลน์



ผลการศึกษาชี้ให้เห็นว่า ตัวบทมีบทบาทสำคัญในการสร้างและกำหนดความหมายของพระเครื่องผ่านกระบวนการทางวาทกรรม โดยการเล่าเรื่องทำหน้าที่กำหนดกรอบการรับรู้ของผู้อ่านให้มองพระเครื่อง ทั้งในฐานะวัตถุศักดิ์สิทธิ์ สัญลักษณ์ทางศาสนาและวัฒนธรรม และวัตถุสะสมที่มีมูลค่าทางเศรษฐกิจในตลาดพระเครื่อง กระบวนการประกอบสร้างความหมายดังกล่าวสะท้อนบทบาทของภาษาและการเล่าเรื่องในสื่อออนไลน์ที่มีอิทธิพลต่อการสร้างความเชื่อ ค่านิยม และการรับรู้เกี่ยวกับพระเครื่องในสังคมไทย โดยสามารถจำแนกการประกอบสร้างความหมายได้ดังนี้

2.1 การประกอบสร้างความหมายของพระเครื่องในฐานะวัตถุศักดิ์สิทธิ์ ตัวบทใช้การเล่าเรื่องเกี่ยวกับพุทธคุณพลังเหนือธรรมชาติ พิธีกรรมปลุกเสก และประสบการณ์ปาฏิหาริย์ของผู้ครอบครอง เพื่อสร้างภาพลักษณ์ของพระเครื่องว่าเป็นวัตถุที่มีพลังอำนาจทางจิตวิญญาณ การนำเสนอในลักษณะนี้ทำให้พระเครื่องถูกตีความว่าเป็นสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ที่สามารถคุ้มครอง ปกป้อง หรือเสริมสิริมงคลแก่ผู้บูชา ส่งผลให้เกิดการรับรู้เกี่ยวกับพระเครื่องในฐานะสื่อกลางที่เชื่อมโยงมนุษย์กับอำนาจเหนือธรรมชาติ

2.2 การประกอบสร้างความหมายของพระเครื่องในฐานะสัญลักษณ์ของศาสนาและวัฒนธรรม เรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องมักเชื่อมโยงวัตถุมงคลกับพระพุทธศาสนา ตำนาน เรื่องเล่าทางศาสนา และภูมิปัญญาทางวัฒนธรรม เช่น การอธิบายความหมายของยันต์ พิธีกรรม หรือสัญลักษณ์ทางศาสนา การนำเสนอในลักษณะดังกล่าวทำให้พระเครื่องถูกมองว่าเป็นสัญลักษณ์ทางวัฒนธรรมที่สะท้อนความเชื่อ คติ และภูมิปัญญาของสังคมไทย

2.3 การประกอบสร้างความหมายของพระเครื่องในฐานะมรดกทางประวัติศาสตร์และวัฒนธรรม ตัวบทมักนำเสนอข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับประวัติการจัดสร้าง เหตุการณ์สำคัญ บุคคลหรือสถานที่ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับวัตถุมงคล ซึ่งช่วยเชื่อมโยงพระเครื่องกับบริบททางประวัติศาสตร์และสังคม การเล่าเรื่องในลักษณะนี้ทำให้พระเครื่องถูกนำเสนอว่าเป็นวัตถุที่มีคุณค่าเชิงประวัติศาสตร์และเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของมรดกทางวัฒนธรรมของสังคมไทย

2.4 การประกอบสร้างความหมายของพระเครื่องในฐานะวัตถุสะสมและสินทรัพย์ทางเศรษฐกิจ ตัวบทนำเสนอข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับราคาประเมิน จำนวนการสร้าง ความนิยม และแนวโน้มมูลค่าในตลาดพระเครื่อง การให้คะแนนความน่าลงทุนหรือการวิเคราะห์มูลค่าในลักษณะคล้ายการประเมินสินทรัพย์ ส่งผลให้พระเครื่องถูกมองว่าเป็นวัตถุสะสมที่มีศักยภาพในการเพิ่มมูลค่าและสามารถใช้เป็นทางเลือกในการลงทุน

2.5 การประกอบสร้างความหมายของพระเครื่องผ่านอำนาจเชิงสัญลักษณ์ของบุคคลและสถาบัน เรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องมีการอ้างอิงพระเกจิอาจารย์ บุคคลสำคัญทางศาสนา รวมถึงสถาบันหรือหน่วยงานของรัฐ เพื่อเสริมสร้างความน่าเชื่อถือและความชอบธรรมให้กับวัตถุมงคล การเชื่อมโยงกับบุคคลและสถาบันที่มีสถานะทางสังคมสูงทำให้พระเครื่องได้รับการยอมรับและถูกมองว่ามีคุณค่าและความศักดิ์สิทธิ์มากยิ่งขึ้น

2.6 การประกอบสร้างความหมายของพระเครื่องผ่านระบบสัญลักษณ์และความเชื่อเกี่ยวกับโชคลาภ ตัวบทใช้สัญลักษณ์ ความเชื่อ และการอธิบายความหมายของเครื่องรางหรือยันต์ เพื่อเชื่อมโยงพระเครื่องกับความมั่งคั่ง โชคลาภ และความสำเร็จในชีวิต การนำเสนอในลักษณะนี้ทำให้พระเครื่องถูกมองว่าเป็นสัญลักษณ์ของความอุดมสมบูรณ์ ความเจริญรุ่งเรือง และความหวังของผู้ครอบครอง

ผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่า วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์เป็นพื้นที่สำคัญของการใช้ภาษาเพื่อสร้างและกำหนดความหมายเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่อง ผลการศึกษิตามวัตถุประสงค์ข้อที่ 1 พบว่า ตัวบทใช้รูปแบบการเล่าเรื่องและกลวิธีทางภาษาในการนำเสนอพระเครื่องผ่านวาทกรรมเรื่องเล่า 9 ลักษณะ เช่น การเล่าเรื่องความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ การอ้างอิงบุคคลสำคัญ การเชื่อมโยงกับประวัติศาสตร์และตำนาน การนำเสนอความหายาก ตลอดจนการกล่าวถึงมูลค่าทางเศรษฐกิจและการลงทุน เป็นต้น ลักษณะดังกล่าวแสดงให้เห็นว่า เนื้อหาเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่องในสื่อออนไลน์มีการผสมผสานองค์ประกอบด้านศาสนา วัฒนธรรม และเศรษฐกิจ ซึ่งสะท้อนลักษณะเฉพาะของสังคมพระเครื่องที่เชื่อมโยงความเชื่อและระบบตลาด และเมื่อพิจารณาร่วมกับผลการวิเคราะห์ตามวัตถุประสงค์ข้อที่ 2 พบว่า วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าดังกล่าวมีบทบาทสำคัญในการประกอบ



สร้างความหมายของพระเครื่อง กล่าวคือ ตัวบทมีส่วนในการสร้างภาพลักษณ์ของพระเครื่องในฐานะวัตถุศักดิ์สิทธิ์ที่มีพลังเหนือธรรมชาติ เป็นสัญลักษณ์ของศาสนาและวัฒนธรรม เป็นมรดกทางประวัติศาสตร์ของสังคมไทย ตลอดจนเป็นวัตถุสะสมและสินทรัพย์ทางเศรษฐกิจในตลาดพระเครื่อง นอกจากนี้ การอ้างอิงบุคคลสำคัญทางศาสนา ผู้เชี่ยวชาญในวงการพระเครื่อง หรือหน่วยงานของรัฐ ยังเป็นกลวิธีที่ช่วยสร้างความชอบธรรมและความน่าเชื่อถือให้กับวัตถุมงคล ขณะเดียวกันการใช้สัญลักษณ์ ความเชื่อ และตำนานต่าง ๆ ก็มีส่วนทำให้พระเครื่องถูกเชื่อมโยงกับความหมายเกี่ยวกับโชคลาภ ความมั่งคั่ง และความสำเร็จในชีวิต ผลการศึกษาในสื่อดนตรีคล้องกับแนวคิดวาทกรรมของ Fairclough (2010) ซึ่งมองว่าภาษาไม่ได้ทำหน้าที่เพียงสะท้อนความจริงทางสังคม แต่มีบทบาทในการประกอบสร้างและกำหนดความหมายของปรากฏการณ์ผ่านกระบวนการทางวาทกรรม การนำเสนอเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องผ่านรูปแบบภาษาและโครงสร้างการเล่าเรื่องในสื่อออนไลน์จึงเป็นกลไกสำคัญในการกำหนดกรอบการรับรู้ของผู้รับสาร ทำให้พระเครื่องถูกทำความเข้าใจในหลากหลายมิติ ทั้งในฐานะวัตถุศักดิ์สิทธิ์ สัญลักษณ์ทางวัฒนธรรม และสินทรัพย์ทางเศรษฐกิจ ขณะเดียวกันผลการวิจัยยังสะท้อนแนวคิดเรื่องวาทกรรมและอำนาจของ Foucault (1980) ซึ่งเสนอว่าวาทกรรมเป็นกลไกในการผลิตองค์ความรู้และกำหนดความจริงทางสังคมผ่านความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความรู้และอำนาจ ดังนั้น เรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องในสื่อจึงไม่ได้เป็นเพียงการถ่ายทอดข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับวัตถุมงคล แต่เป็นกระบวนการผลิตและทำให้ความเชื่อ เช่น ความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ อำนาจเหนือธรรมชาติ และมูลค่าทางเศรษฐกิจกลายเป็นสิ่งที่ถูกทำให้เป็นปกติ และได้รับการยอมรับในสังคม นอกจากนี้ การนำเสนอพระเครื่องในฐานะวัตถุที่มีทั้งความศักดิ์สิทธิ์และมูลค่าทางเศรษฐกิจ ยังสะท้อนความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างศาสนา วัฒนธรรม และระบบตลาดในสังคมไทย กล่าวคือ พระเครื่องไม่ได้ดำรงอยู่เพียงในฐานะวัตถุทางศาสนาเท่านั้น หากยังถูกประกอบสร้างให้เป็นสินทรัพย์ในตลาดการสะสม ซึ่งสะท้อนการผสมผสานระหว่างระบบความเชื่อกับกลไกทางเศรษฐกิจ (Appadurai, 1986) ดังนั้น ผลการศึกษานี้ชี้ให้เห็นว่าวาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์มีบทบาทสำคัญในการสร้างและกำหนดความหมายเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่องผ่านการใช้ภาษาและการเล่าเรื่อง ซึ่งไม่ได้เพียงสะท้อนความเป็นจริงแต่เป็นการประกอบสร้างความจริงทางสังคมผ่านระบบความหมายที่ถูกผลิตและผลิตซ้ำในบริบททางสังคม (Van Hulst et al., 2025) อันเชื่อมโยงกับการผลิตองค์ความรู้ อำนาจเชิงสัญลักษณ์ และมูลค่าทางเศรษฐกิจในสังคม

องค์ความรู้ใหม่

จากการวิจัยเรื่อง “วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องและการประกอบสร้างความหมายในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์” นำไปสู่การพัฒนากรอบการสังเคราะห์การประกอบสร้างความหมายพระเครื่องผ่านวาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์ ซึ่งอธิบายกระบวนการที่สื่อใช้ภาษาและการเล่าเรื่องในการผลิต สื่อสาร และกำหนดความหมายเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่อง ในสังคมไทย โดยกรอบการสังเคราะห์ดังกล่าวประกอบด้วย 4 องค์ประกอบที่เชื่อมโยงกัน ได้แก่ 1) ปัจจัยนำเข้า (Input Layer) ประกอบด้วย ตัวบท (Text) และบริบท (Context) ทางสังคม วัฒนธรรม และเศรษฐกิจ ซึ่งเป็นเงื่อนไขพื้นฐานที่กำหนดเนื้อหาและทิศทางการสื่อสาร 2) ชั้นกลไกวาทกรรม (Discursive Mechanisms Layer) ซึ่งครอบคลุมทั้งกลไกทางภาษา (Linguistic Mechanisms) เช่น การเลือกใช้ถ้อยคำ (Word Choice) การสร้างความน่าเชื่อถือ (Credibility Construction) และการอ้างอิงบุคคลศักดิ์สิทธิ์ (Reference to Sacred Figures) ตลอดจนกลไกเรื่องเล่า (Narrative Mechanisms) เช่น โครงสร้างเรื่องเล่า (Narrative Structure) การสร้างตัวละคร (Character Construction) และการเล่าประสบการณ์ (Experiential Narratives) เป็นกระบวนการสำคัญที่ก่อให้เกิดวาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่อง 9 ลักษณะ ที่กำหนดกรอบการตีความของผู้รับสาร 3) ชั้นผลผลิตความหมาย (Output Layer) ที่ทำให้พระเครื่องถูกประกอบสร้างความหมายใน 6 มิติ ได้แก่ วัตถุศักดิ์สิทธิ์ (Sacred Object) สัญลักษณ์ทางศาสนา (Religious Symbol) มรดกทางประวัติศาสตร์ (Historical Heritage) สินทรัพย์ทางเศรษฐกิจ (Economic Asset) อำนาจเชิงสัญลักษณ์ (Symbolic Power)

และสัญลักษณ์แห่งโชคลาภ และความสำเร็จ (Symbol of Fortune and Success) และ 4) ชั้นการเชื่อมโยงเชิงพุทธปรัชญา (Buddhist Reflection Layer) ที่เน้นการใช้ปัญญาในการพิจารณาความเชื่อ รวมถึงแนวคิดเรื่อง อุปาทาน ที่สะท้อนการยึดมั่นถือมั่นในวัตถุและมูลค่าทางเศรษฐกิจ องค์ความรู้ใหม่นี้จึงช่วยขยายมิติการศึกษาวาทกรรมจากการวิเคราะห์ลักษณะ ทางภาษาไปสู่การอธิบายกระบวนการผลิตความหมาย อำนาจเชิงสัญลักษณ์ และการสร้างความจริงทางสังคม ของพระเครื่องในบริบทสื่อออนไลน์ร่วมสมัยได้อย่างเป็นระบบและเป็นองค์รวมมากยิ่งขึ้น ดังปรากฏใน Figure 2

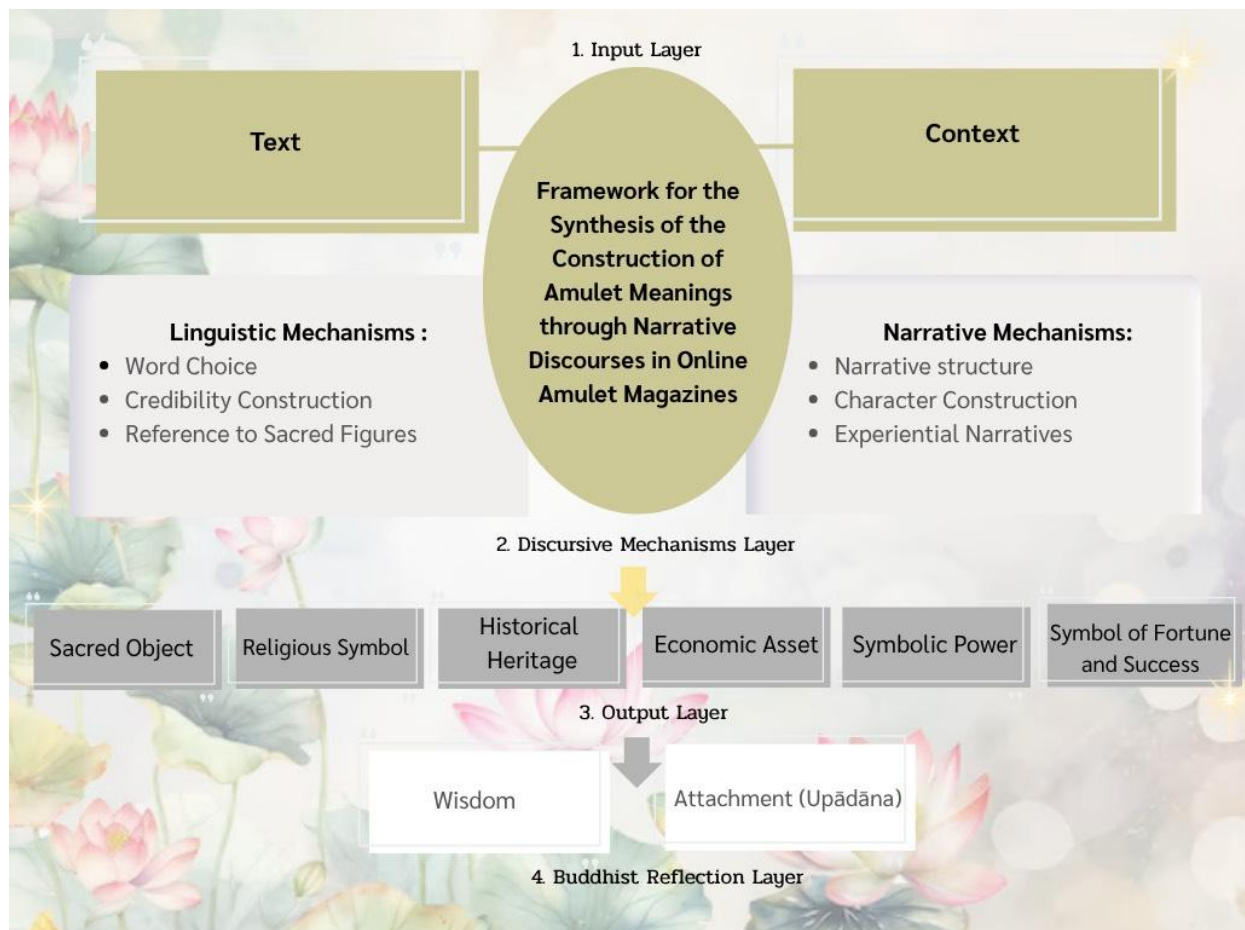


Figure 2 Framework for the Synthesis of the Construction of Amulet Meanings through Narrative Discourses in Online Amulet Magazines

สรุปและข้อเสนอแนะ

การวิจัยเรื่อง “วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องและการประกอบสร้างความหมายในนิตยสารพระเครื่องออนไลน์” แสดงให้เห็นว่า สื่อออนไลน์ทำหน้าที่เป็นพื้นที่ทางวาทกรรมที่มีบทบาทสำคัญในการประกอบสร้างความหมายเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่องผ่านการใช้ภาษา กลวิธีการเล่าเรื่อง และการเลือกนำเสนอเนื้อหา ผลการศึกษาพบว่า วาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องสามารถจำแนกได้ 9 ลักษณะ ซึ่งทำงานร่วมกันในการกำหนดกรอบการรับรู้และการตีความของผู้รับสาร ส่งผลให้พระเครื่องถูกประกอบสร้างความหมายใน 6 มิติ ได้แก่ การเป็นวัตถุศักดิ์สิทธิ์ สัญลักษณ์ทางศาสนาและวัฒนธรรม มรดกทางประวัติศาสตร์ สินทรัพย์ทางเศรษฐกิจ ผลผลิตของอำนาจเชิงสัญลักษณ์ และสัญลักษณ์แห่งโชคลาภและความสำเร็จ กระบวนการดังกล่าวสะท้อนให้เห็นว่าภาษาและเรื่องเล่าไม่ได้ทำหน้าที่เพียงถ่ายทอดข้อมูล แต่ยังมีบทบาทในการผลิต ตอกย้ำ และทำให้ความหมายบางประการกลายเป็น



“ความจริงทางสังคม” ที่ได้รับการยอมรับในวงกว้าง โดยเฉพาะในบริบทสื่อออนไลน์ที่เอื้อต่อการเผยแพร่ การผลิตซ้ำ และการขยายอิทธิพลของวาทกรรมอย่างต่อเนื่อง นอกจากนี้ ผลการศึกษายังสะท้อนให้เห็นความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างวาทกรรมเรื่องเล่าพระเครื่องกับหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา คือ หลักกาลามสูตรที่เน้นการใช้ปัญญาและการพิจารณาอย่างรอบคอบก่อนเชื่อ รวมทั้งแนวคิดเรื่องอุปาทานที่เกี่ยวข้องกับความยึดมั่นถือมั่นในวัตถุและมูลค่าภายนอก ซึ่งชี้ให้เห็นถึงความตึงเครียดระหว่างการสร้างความศรัทธาผ่านเรื่องเล่าปาฏิหาริย์กับหลักการพัฒนาปัญญาตามแนวพุทธศาสนา ผลการวิจัยจึงช่วยทำความเข้าใจบทบาทของสื่อในการกำหนดทิศทางการรับรู้เกี่ยวกับศาสนา ความเชื่อ และคุณค่าทางสังคมในบริบทสังคมได้อย่างลึกซึ้งยิ่งขึ้น สำหรับข้อเสนอแนะในการวิจัยครั้งต่อไป ควรมีการศึกษาวาทกรรมพระเครื่องในสื่อประเภทอื่นเพิ่มเติม เช่น สื่อสังคมออนไลน์ ชุมชนออนไลน์ หรือสื่อดิจิทัลรูปแบบใหม่ เพื่อทำความเข้าใจพลวัตของวาทกรรมพระเครื่องในบริบทที่หลากหลาย รวมทั้งใช้ระเบียบวิธีวิจัยแบบผสมผสาน (Mixed Methods Research) เพื่อศึกษาวิเคราะห์หัตถบาทและพฤติกรรมการรับรู้ ของผู้รับสารควบคู่กัน จะช่วยให้เข้าใจอิทธิพลของวาทกรรมที่มีต่อความเชื่อและการตัดสินใจของผู้คนมากขึ้น โดยผู้ผลิตสื่อควรนำเสนอข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับพระเครื่องอย่างรอบด้านและสมดุล อันเชื่อมโยงกับหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา ขณะที่ผู้รับสารควรพัฒนาทักษะการรู้เท่าทันสื่อและการคิดเชิงวิพากษ์ตามหลักกาลามสูตร นอกจากนี้ หน่วยงานทางการศึกษาและสถาบันทางศาสนาควรร่วมส่งเสริมการผลิตสื่อทางศาสนาที่มีคุณภาพ เพื่อสร้างความเข้าใจทางศาสนาที่ถูกต้องและเสริมสร้างภูมิคุ้มกันทางปัญญาให้แก่สังคมในระยะยาว

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แนวทางการประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมในการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์
ของพระสังฆาธิการจังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราช

GUIDELINES FOR THE APPLICATION OF THE TEN ROYAL VIRTUES
DASAVIDHA-RĀJADHAMMA PRINCIPLES IN SANGHA ADMINISTRATION
AMONG ECCLESIASTICAL ADMINISTRATORS
IN NAKHON SI THAMMARAT PROVINCE

พระเมธีวชิราภิรต ธรรมรัต ยศขุน, พระวัชรินทร์ ชุมจิน*, พระครูบวรชัยวัฒน์ วันชัย เลือดไทย,
ปิ่นณพงศ์ วงศ์ณาศรี, ทิพมาศ เสวตวรโชติ, เดชชาติ ตรีทรัพย์

Phra Metheevachirapirat Thammarat Yodkhun, Phra Wacharin Chumjeen*,
Phrakhru Bowonchaiwat Wanchai Lueatthai, Punnapong Wongnasri,
Tippamas Sawetworachot, Detchat Treesap

คณะศาสนาและปรัชญา, มหาวิทยาลัยมหามกุฏราชวิทยาลัย วิทยาเขตศรีธรรมมาโคกราช นครศรีธรรมราช ประเทศไทย
Faculty of Religion and Philosophy, Mahamakut Buddhist University, Srithammasokkaraj Campus,
Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand

*Corresponding author E-mail: wacharin.cho@student.mbu.ac.th

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บทคัดย่อ

ความเป็นมาและวัตถุประสงค์: การบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ในสังคมไทยปัจจุบันต้องเผชิญกับความเปลี่ยนแปลงทั้งด้านสังคม เทคโนโลยี เศรษฐกิจ และความคาดหวังของประชาชน ส่งผลให้พระสังฆาธิการจำเป็นต้องมีทั้งความรู้ความสามารถด้านการบริหาร ภาวะผู้นำ และคุณธรรมในการปกครอง เพื่อให้สามารถดำเนินงานได้อย่างเหมาะสมกับบริบทของสังคมร่วมสมัย หลักทศพิธราชธรรมเป็นหลักธรรมสำหรับผู้นำที่ส่งเสริมความสุจริต ความเสียสละ ความอดทน ความเมตตา และความเที่ยงธรรม อันเป็นคุณลักษณะสำคัญของการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ที่มีประสิทธิภาพ โปร่งใส และได้รับความเชื่อมั่นจากพระภิกษุ สามเณร และประชาชน เพื่อให้ได้แนวทางที่สามารถนำไปใช้ในการวางแผน การตัดสินใจ การแก้ไขปัญหา การบริหารความขัดแย้ง และการพัฒนาองค์กรสงฆ์ให้มีความมั่นคง เป็นระบบ และสอดคล้องกับพระธรรมวินัย งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อเสนอแนวทางเชิงปฏิบัติในการประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมในการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ของพระสังฆาธิการจังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราช โดยสังเคราะห์จากผลการวิจัยเดิมและข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพจากผู้ทรงคุณวุฒิ

วิธีดำเนินการวิจัย: การวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นการวิจัยแบบผสมวิธี โดยนำผลการศึกษาหลักทศพิธราชธรรมกับการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์มาวิเคราะห์ร่วมกับข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพจากการสัมภาษณ์ผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญจำนวน 9 รูป/คน ประกอบด้วยพระสังฆาธิการและนักวิชาการทางพระพุทธศาสนา จากนั้นจึงสังเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วยการวิเคราะห์เนื้อหาและการพรรณนาความเพื่อพัฒนาแนวทางการส่งเสริมหลักทศพิธราชธรรมในการบริหารกิจการ คณะสงฆ์ 6 ด้าน ได้แก่ การปกครอง การศาสนศึกษา การศึกษาสงเคราะห์ การเผยแผ่พระพุทธศาสนา การสาธารณูปการ และการสาธารณสงเคราะห์



ผลการวิจัย: ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญส่วนใหญ่มีความเห็นสอดคล้องกันว่า การประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมในการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ของพระสังฆาธิการจังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราช ควรดำเนินการอย่างเป็นระบบใน 5 มิติสำคัญ ได้แก่ 1) การบูรณาการหลักธรรมเข้าสู่นโยบาย แผนงาน และกระบวนการบริหารของคณะสงฆ์ 2) การพัฒนาพระสังฆาธิการให้มีภาวะผู้นำเชิงคุณธรรมควบคู่กับสมรรถนะด้านการบริหาร 3) การสร้างวัฒนธรรมองค์กรที่ยึดหลักความโปร่งใส ความรับผิดชอบ และความเมตตา 4) การสร้างเครือข่ายความร่วมมือระหว่างคณะสงฆ์ ชุมชน หน่วยงานภาครัฐ และสถาบันการศึกษา และ 5) การพัฒนาระบบติดตามและประเมินผลที่คำนึงถึงทั้งประสิทธิภาพการบริหารและคุณธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา

ความเกี่ยวข้องกับหลักธรรมคำสอนทางพระพุทธศาสนา: ผลการศึกษาชี้ให้เห็นว่า หลักทศพิธราชธรรมสามารถประยุกต์ใช้เป็นกรอบคุณธรรมในการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ได้อย่างเป็นรูปธรรม ทั้งในระดับนโยบาย ระดับปฏิบัติ และระดับความสัมพันธ์กับชุมชน โดยเฉพาะในบริบทที่คณะสงฆ์ต้องเผชิญความคาดหวังด้านความโปร่งใส การมีส่วนร่วม และการปรับตัวต่อสังคมยุคดิจิทัล ซึ่งจะช่วยเสริมสร้างความเชื่อมั่น ศรัทธา และความร่วมมือระหว่างพระสงฆ์ ประชาชน และหน่วยงานที่เกี่ยวข้อง ให้เกิดการบริหารงานอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ

สรุป: การประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมในการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ควรดำเนินการอย่างบูรณาการผ่านการพัฒนาผู้นำ ระบบงาน และเครือข่ายความร่วมมือ โดยมีคุณธรรมเป็นฐานสำคัญของการบริหาร อันจะช่วยเสริมสร้างประสิทธิภาพ เอกภาพ และความน่าเชื่อถือของคณะสงฆ์ในสังคมร่วมสมัย พร้อมทั้งส่งเสริมการมีส่วนร่วมของพระสังฆาธิการ พระภิกษุ สามเณร และประชาชนในการพัฒนางานพระพุทธศาสนาให้มั่นคง โปร่งใส เป็นธรรม อย่างเป็นระบบและต่อเนื่อง

คำสำคัญ: การประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรม, การบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์, พระสังฆาธิการจังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราช

Abstract

Background and Objective: The administration of Sangha affairs in contemporary Thai society is confronted with changes in social conditions, technology, the economy, and public expectations. Consequently, ecclesiastical administrative monks are required to possess administrative knowledge and competence, leadership, and moral integrity in governance in order to perform their duties appropriately within the context of contemporary society. The Ten Royal Virtues constitute a set of ethical principles for leaders that promote honesty, self-sacrifice, patience, compassion, and impartiality. These qualities are essential for the effective and transparent administration of Sangha affairs and for gaining the confidence of monks, novices, and the general public. Such principles can provide practical guidelines for planning, decision-making, problem-solving, conflict management, and the systematic and stable development of Sangha organizations in accordance with the Dhamma and Vinaya. This research aims to propose practical guidelines for applying the Ten Royal Virtues to the administration of Sangha affairs by ecclesiastical administrative monks in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province through a synthesis of previous research findings and qualitative data obtained from experts.

Methodology: This study employed a mixed-methods research design. The findings on the application of the Ten Royal Virtues (Dasavidha-Rājadharmma) in Sangha affairs administration were integrated with qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews with nine key informants, consisting of ecclesiastical administrators and Buddhist scholars. The collected data were then synthesized using content analysis and descriptive interpretation to develop guidelines for promoting the application



of the Ten Royal Virtues in the six major areas of Sangha affairs administration: Governance, religious education, educational welfare, Buddhist propagation, public utilities management, and public welfare services.

Main Results: Most key informants shared a common view that the application of the Ten Royal Virtues (Dasavidha-Rajadhamma) in the administration of Sangha affairs by ecclesiastical administrators in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province should be implemented systematically through five key dimensions: 1) Integrating Buddhist moral principles into Sangha policies, strategic plans, and administrative processes; 2) Developing ecclesiastical administrators to possess ethical leadership alongside managerial competencies; 3) Fostering an organizational culture grounded in transparency, accountability, and compassion; 4) Establishing collaborative networks among the Sangha, local communities, government agencies, and educational institutions; And 5) Developing monitoring and evaluation systems that take into account both administrative effectiveness and Buddhist moral values.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: The findings indicate that the Ten Royal Virtues can be practically applied as an ethical framework for Sangha administration at the policy level, the operational level, and the level of community relationships. This is particularly relevant in a context where the Sangha must respond to growing expectations concerning transparency, participation, and adaptation to the digital society. Such an application can strengthen public confidence, faith, and cooperation among Buddhist monks, members of the public, and relevant organizations, thereby contributing to efficient and effective administration.

Conclusions: The application of the Ten Royal Virtues in Sangha administration should be carried out in an integrated manner through the development of leadership, administrative systems, and collaborative networks, with morality serving as the fundamental basis of administration. This approach will help enhance the efficiency, unity, and credibility of the Sangha in contemporary society, while also encouraging the participation of ecclesiastical administrative monks, Buddhist monks, novices, and the general public in developing Buddhist affairs in a stable, transparent, fair, systematic, and continuous manner.

Keywords: Application of the Ten Royal Virtues Dasavidha-Rajadhamma, Sangha Administration, Ecclesiastical Administrators in Nakhon Si Thammarat Province

บทนำ

การบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์เป็นภารกิจสำคัญที่เกี่ยวข้องโดยตรงกับความมั่นคงและการดำรงอยู่ของพระพุทธศาสนาในสังคมไทย โดยพระสังฆาธิการมิได้มีหน้าที่เพียงการปกครองคณะสงฆ์เท่านั้น แต่ยังรับผิดชอบการดำเนินงานตามภารกิจหลัก 6 ด้าน ได้แก่ การปกครอง การศาสนศึกษา การศึกษาสงเคราะห์ การเผยแผ่พระพุทธศาสนา การสาธารณูปการ และการสาธารณสงเคราะห์ (National Office of Buddhism, 2021) ซึ่งอยู่ภายใต้กรอบการบริหารตามพระราชบัญญัติคณะสงฆ์ พ.ศ. 2505 และที่แก้ไขเพิ่มเติม อันเป็นกลไกสำคัญในการกำกับดูแลการบริหารงานคณะสงฆ์ให้เป็นไปอย่างมีระบบและมีเอกภาพ อย่างไรก็ตาม ในบริบทของสังคมร่วมสมัยที่มีการเปลี่ยนแปลงอย่างรวดเร็วทั้งด้านสังคม เศรษฐกิจ เทคโนโลยีดิจิทัล และโครงสร้างประชากร พระสังฆาธิการจำเป็นต้องปรับรูปแบบการบริหารให้สอดคล้องกับความคาดหวังของสาธารณชนที่เพิ่มสูงขึ้น



โดยเฉพาะด้านความโปร่งใส การตรวจสอบได้ การสื่อสารสาธารณะ และการบริหารจัดการองค์กรอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ (Prasrivajiravati (Chatchai Moonsarn), 2024) ทั้งนี้ สำนักงานพระพุทธศาสนาแห่งชาติรายงานว่าประเทศไทยมีวัดมากกว่า 43,000 แห่ง และพระภิกษุสามเณรกว่า 250,000 รูป ซึ่งสะท้อนถึงภาระการบริหารจัดการที่มีความซับซ้อนและครอบคลุมพื้นที่ทั่วประเทศ ขณะเดียวกัน งานวิจัยจำนวนมากยังสะท้อนปัญหาด้านการวางแผนเชิงยุทธศาสตร์ การพัฒนาศักยภาพผู้นำคณะสงฆ์ การบริหารจัดการทรัพยากร และการประสานความร่วมมือกับภาคส่วนต่าง ๆ ซึ่งส่งผลต่อประสิทธิภาพการดำเนินงานของคณะสงฆ์ในระดับพื้นที่ ดังนั้น การพัฒนารูปแบบการบริหารที่ยึดหลักคุณธรรมควบคู่กับหลักการบริหารสมัยใหม่จึงเป็นประเด็นสำคัญที่ควรได้รับการศึกษาและพัฒนาอย่างเป็นระบบ ทั้งนี้ แนวคิดธรรมาภิบาลและภาวะผู้นำเชิงจริยธรรมได้ถูกนำมาใช้เป็นกรอบสำคัญ ในการพัฒนาองค์กรสมัยใหม่ โดยเน้นความรับผิดชอบต่อสังคม ความโปร่งใส ความเป็นธรรม และการมีส่วนร่วม ของผู้เกี่ยวข้อง ซึ่งเป็นคุณลักษณะที่สอดคล้องกับบทบาทของพระสงฆ์ในการธำรงรักษาพระพุทธศาสนา (Phra Brahmamagunabhorn (P.A. Payutto), 2006) สำหรับจังหวัดนครราชสีมาซึ่งเป็นศูนย์กลางพระพุทธศาสนาที่สำคัญของภาคใต้และมีจำนวนวัด พระภิกษุ และองค์กรคณะสงฆ์จำนวนมาก พบว่าพระสงฆ์มีการต้องเผชิญกับความท้าทายในการบริหารงานหลายด้าน เช่น การกำกับดูแลวัดในพื้นที่ที่มีความแตกต่างหลากหลาย การประสานงานระหว่างคณะสงฆ์กับหน่วยงานภาครัฐและชุมชน การพัฒนาศักยภาพบุคลากรทางศาสนา ตลอดจนการนำเทคโนโลยีมาประยุกต์ใช้ในการบริหารและการเผยแผ่พระพุทธศาสนา จากการศึกษาที่เกี่ยวข้องพบว่าปัญหาด้านการบริหารจัดการ การวางแผนเชิงยุทธศาสตร์ และการพัฒนาภาวะผู้นำของผู้ปกครองสงฆ์ยังเป็นประเด็นที่ควรได้รับการส่งเสริมและพัฒนาอย่างต่อเนื่อง เพื่อให้การบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์สามารถตอบสนองต่อบริบทสังคมที่เปลี่ยนแปลงไปได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ

หลักทศพิธราชธรรมเป็นหลักธรรมสำคัญที่มุ่งพัฒนาคุณลักษณะของผู้นำให้มีความเสียสละ ความซื่อสัตย์ สุจริต ความรับผิดชอบต่อสังคม ความอดทน และความยุติธรรม อันเป็นรากฐานของภาวะผู้นำที่ดีและการบริหารที่มีประสิทธิภาพ (Boonrueang & Phra Anothai Gataponyo (Aunruean), 2021) เมื่อพิจารณาปัญหาการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ในปัจจุบัน ไม่ว่าจะเป็นข้อจำกัดด้านการบริหารจัดการ การพัฒนาศักยภาพบุคลากร การประสานงานกับหน่วยงานภายนอก หรือการสร้างความเชื่อมั่นแก่สาธารณชน จะเห็นได้ว่าปัญหาเหล่านี้สามารถเชื่อมโยงกับการประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมได้โดยตรง กล่าวคือ หลักทศและปริจาคะช่วยส่งเสริมภาวะผู้นำแบบเสียสละและมุ่งประโยชน์ส่วนรวม หลักอาชชวะช่วยสร้างความซื่อสัตย์สุจริตและความโปร่งใสในการบริหาร หลักมัททวะและอภิกษะช่วยส่งเสริมความสัมพันธ์อันดีและลดความขัดแย้งในองค์กร ส่วนหลักอวิโรธนะช่วยให้การตัดสินใจตั้งอยู่บนพื้นฐานของความถูกต้องและความเป็นธรรม ซึ่งล้วนเป็นคุณลักษณะที่สอดคล้องกับแนวคิดธรรมาภิบาล (Good Governance) และภาวะผู้นำเชิงจริยธรรม (Ethical Leadership) ที่ได้รับการยอมรับในศาสตร์การบริหารร่วมสมัย ทั้งยังสอดคล้องกับแนวคิดการบริหารองค์กรสมัยใหม่ที่เน้นความรับผิดชอบต่อสังคม การมีส่วนร่วม และการสร้างคุณค่าให้แก่ผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสีย (Stakeholders) ดังนั้น หลักทศพิธราชธรรมจึงไม่ใช่เพียงหลักธรรมสำหรับผู้ปกครองบ้านเมืองในอดีตเท่านั้น แต่ยังสามารถประยุกต์ใช้เป็นกรอบการพัฒนาภาวะผู้นำและการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ในยุคปัจจุบันได้อย่างเหมาะสมและมีประสิทธิผล การพัฒนาศักยภาพพระสงฆ์ให้สอดคล้องกับการเปลี่ยนแปลงของสังคม และการสร้างการมีส่วนร่วมของพระภิกษุและพุทธศาสนิกชนในพื้นที่ นอกจากนี้ งานวิจัยยังสะท้อนปัญหาเชิงโครงสร้างของการปกครองคณะสงฆ์ไทย ทั้งด้านการรวมศูนย์อำนาจ ความคล่องตัวในการบริหารงาน และการพัฒนาผู้บริหารคณะสงฆ์ (PhraNarong Sangkhawichit, 2017) ดังนั้น การศึกษาการใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมของพระสงฆ์จังหวัดนครราชสีมาจึงมีความสำคัญ เพื่อเป็นแนวทางในการพัฒนาภาวะผู้นำและประสิทธิภาพการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ให้สอดคล้องกับหลักพุทธธรรม หลักธรรมาภิบาล และบริบทสังคมร่วมสมัย อันจะนำไปสู่ความเข้มแข็งและความยั่งยืนขององค์กรคณะสงฆ์ต่อไป



นอกจากนี้ เมื่อพิจารณาจากแนวคิดธรรมาภิบาล (Good Governance) แนวคิดภาวะผู้นำเชิงจริยธรรม (Ethical Leadership) และแนวคิดภาวะผู้นำการเปลี่ยนแปลง (Transformational Leadership) จะพบว่าผู้นำองค์กรในศตวรรษที่ 21 จำเป็นต้องมีทั้งความรู้ ความสามารถ และคุณธรรมควบคู่กัน เพื่อสร้างความเชื่อมั่น ความร่วมมือ และการพัฒนาองค์กรอย่างยั่งยืน หลักทศพิธราชธรรมจึงเป็นกรอบคุณธรรมที่สามารถสนับสนุนการพัฒนาภาวะผู้นำดังกล่าวได้อย่างเป็นรูปธรรม โดยเฉพาะด้านอาชวะที่ส่งเสริมความซื่อสัตย์สุจริต ด้านมัทวะที่ส่งเสริมการบริหารแบบมีเมตตาและเข้าใจผู้อื่น ด้านตปะที่ส่งเสริมความเพียรพยายามในการปฏิบัติหน้าที่ และด้านอิริธนะที่มุ่งรักษาความถูกต้องและความชอบธรรมในการบริหารงาน ซึ่งล้วนเป็นองค์ประกอบสำคัญของการบริหารองค์กรสมัยใหม่ที่มุ่งเน้นประสิทธิภาพ ควบคู่กับคุณธรรมและความรับผิดชอบต่อสังคม

ด้วยเหตุนี้ บทความวิจัยนี้จึงมุ่งเสนอแนวทางการส่งเสริมหลักทศพิธราชธรรมในการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ของพระสังฆาธิการจังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราช โดยอาศัยการสังเคราะห์ข้อมูลจากผลการวิจัยเดิมและข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพจากผู้ทรงคุณวุฒิ เพื่อพัฒนาเป็นข้อเสนอเชิงวิชาการและเชิงปฏิบัติที่สามารถนำไปประยุกต์ใช้ในการเสริมสร้างประสิทธิภาพ ความโปร่งใส ความเป็นธรรม และความน่าเชื่อถือของการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ในสังคมร่วมสมัยต่อไป

วัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัย

เพื่อเสนอแนวทางการประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมในการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ของพระสังฆาธิการจังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราช

วิธีดำเนินการวิจัย

บทความนี้เป็นการสังเคราะห์ข้อมูลจากงานวิจัยแบบผสมผสานวิธี (Mixed Methods Research) โดยใช้รูปแบบการวิจัยเชิงอธิบายตามลำดับ (Sequential Explanatory Design) ซึ่งดำเนินการเก็บรวบรวมและวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงปริมาณในระยะแรก จากนั้นจึงเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพเพื่ออธิบาย ขยายความ และตรวจสอบความสอดคล้องของผลการวิจัยเชิงปริมาณให้มีความชัดเจนและลุ่มลึกมากยิ่งขึ้น งานวิจัยฉบับสมบูรณ์มีวัตถุประสงค์หลายประการ แต่บทความวิจัยนี้มุ่งนำเสนอเฉพาะผลการศึกษาดำเนินการตามวัตถุประสงค์ข้อที่ 4 คือ การเสนอแนวทางการประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมกับการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ของพระสังฆาธิการจังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราช เนื่องจากเป็นประเด็นที่สะท้อนองค์ความรู้เชิงประยุกต์และสามารถนำผลการวิจัยไปใช้ประโยชน์เชิงนโยบายและเชิงปฏิบัติได้อย่างเป็นรูปธรรม อีกทั้งเป็นการต่อยอดจากผลการศึกษาล่าสุด ปัญหา และปัจจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องซึ่งได้วิเคราะห์ไว้ในวัตถุประสงค์ก่อนหน้านี้ เพื่อนำไปสู่การสังเคราะห์ข้อเสนอเชิงระบบสำหรับการพัฒนาการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ตามหลักพุทธธรรม

ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพเก็บรวบรวมจากผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญ (Key Informants) จำนวน 9 รูป/คน ได้มาจากการคัดเลือกแบบเจาะจง (Purposive Sampling) โดยกำหนดคุณสมบัติว่าเป็นผู้มีความรู้ ความเชี่ยวชาญ และประสบการณ์เกี่ยวกับการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์หรือการศึกษาทางพระพุทธศาสนา ประกอบด้วย ผู้แทนพระสังฆาธิการระดับภาค จำนวน 2 รูป ผู้แทนพระสังฆาธิการระดับจังหวัด จำนวน 2 รูป ผู้แทนพระสังฆาธิการระดับอำเภอ จำนวน 2 รูป และนักวิชาการทางพระพุทธศาสนา จำนวน 3 คน ทั้งนี้เพื่อให้ได้ข้อมูลที่ครอบคลุมทั้งมิติด้านนโยบาย การบริหารจัดการ และการปฏิบัติงานจริงในพื้นที่ ทั้งนี้เพื่อให้ได้ข้อมูลที่ครอบคลุมทั้งเชิงนโยบายและเชิงปฏิบัติในการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์

เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัย ได้แก่ แบบสัมภาษณ์กึ่งโครงสร้าง (Semi-Structured Interview) ซึ่งพัฒนาขึ้นจากกรอบแนวคิดเกี่ยวกับหลักทศพิธราชธรรมและการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ โดยกำหนดประเด็นคำถามให้ครอบคลุมองค์ประกอบของทศพิธราชธรรมทั้ง 10 ประการ ได้แก่ ทาน ศีล ปริจาคะ อาชวะ มัทวะ ตปะ อักโกธะ อวิหิงสา ขันติ และอิริธนะ ตลอดจนภารกิจการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ 6 ด้าน เพื่อใช้เป็นกรอบ

ในการรวบรวมและวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล เครื่องมือดังกล่าวผ่านการตรวจสอบความตรงเชิงเนื้อหา (Content Validity) โดยผู้ทรงคุณวุฒิจำนวน 3 ท่าน และพิจารณาค่าดัชนีความสอดคล้องระหว่างข้อคำถามกับวัตถุประสค์การวิจัย (Index of Item-Objective Congruence: IOC) ก่อนปรับปรุงแก้ไขตามข้อเสนอแนะของผู้เชี่ยวชาญ และนำไปทดลองใช้กับกลุ่มที่มีลักษณะใกล้เคียงกับผู้ให้ข้อมูลจริงเพื่อตรวจสอบความชัดเจนของข้อคำถาม

การเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลดำเนินการเป็นลำดับขั้นตอน ดังนี้

1. ศึกษาเอกสาร แนวคิด ทฤษฎี และงานวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องกับหลักทศพิธราชธรรมและการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ เพื่อนำมากำหนดกรอบแนวคิดการวิจัย
2. พัฒนาและตรวจสอบคุณภาพเครื่องมือวิจัยโดยผู้ทรงคุณวุฒิ
3. ประสานงานและนัดหมายผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญตามเกณฑ์ที่กำหนด
4. ดำเนินการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก (In-depth Interview) ตามแนวคำถามกึ่งโครงสร้าง พร้อมบันทึกข้อมูลด้วยการจดบันทึกและบันทึกเสียงโดยได้รับความยินยอมจากผู้ให้ข้อมูล
5. ถอดเทปข้อมูลการสัมภาษณ์ ตรวจสอบความถูกต้อง และจัดเตรียมข้อมูลสำหรับการวิเคราะห์
6. วิเคราะห์และสังเคราะห์ข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพพร้อมกับผลการวิจัยเชิงปริมาณ เพื่อจัดทำข้อเสนอแนะแนวทางการส่งเสริมการใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมในการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์

การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลใช้วิธีการวิเคราะห์เชิงเนื้อหา (Content Analysis) โดยกำหนดกรอบการวิเคราะห์จากหลักทศพิธราชธรรมทั้ง 10 ประการควบคู่กับการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ 6 ด้าน จากนั้นจัดหมวดหมู่ข้อมูลตามประเด็นสำคัญ วิเคราะห์ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างหลักธรรมกับแนวปฏิบัติในการบริหารงานคณะสงฆ์ และตรวจสอบความสอดคล้องของข้อมูลจากผู้ให้ข้อมูลแต่ละกลุ่ม ก่อนนำผลการวิเคราะห์มาเชื่อมโยงกับผลการวิจัยเชิงปริมาณ เพื่อสังเคราะห์เป็นแนวทางการประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมในการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ในลักษณะข้อเสนอเชิงระบบ ซึ่งสามารถนำไปประยุกต์ใช้ได้ทั้งในระดับวัด ระดับเขตปกครองคณะสงฆ์ และระดับนโยบายของคณะสงฆ์จังหวัด อันจะนำไปสู่การพัฒนาประสิทธิภาพการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ต่อไป

ผลการวิจัยและอภิปรายผล

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า แนวทางการส่งเสริมการใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมกับการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ของพระสังฆาธิการจังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราช ประกอบด้วยแนวทางสำคัญ 5 ประการ ดังนี้

1. การบูรณาการหลักทศพิธราชธรรมเข้าสู่แผนและนโยบายการบริหารคณะสงฆ์ คณะสงฆ์ควรกำหนดให้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมเป็นกรอบแนวคิดสำคัญในการกำหนดนโยบาย การวางแผน การตัดสินใจ และการปฏิบัติงานเพื่อให้การบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ดำเนินไปบนพื้นฐานของความถูกต้อง ความเป็นธรรม และประโยชน์ส่วนรวม โดยเฉพาะหลักทาน ศีล และอาชวะ ซึ่งช่วยส่งเสริมความโปร่งใส ความสุจริต และความรับผิดชอบของพระสังฆาธิการในการบริหารงาน
2. การพัฒนาศักยภาพพระสังฆาธิการสู่การเป็นผู้นำเชิงคุณธรรม ควรมีการจัดอบรม สัมมนา และประชุมเชิงปฏิบัติการอย่างต่อเนื่อง เพื่อส่งเสริมให้พระสังฆาธิการมีความรู้ ความเข้าใจ และสามารถประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมในการบริหารงานจริง ทั้งด้านการปกครอง การบริหารบุคลากร การแก้ไขปัญหา ความขัดแย้ง และการทำงานร่วมกับชุมชน โดยเฉพาะหลักมัทวะและขันติ ซึ่งช่วยเสริมสร้างภาวะผู้นำที่มีความอ่อนโยน สุขุม รอบคอบ และอดทนต่อสถานการณ์ต่าง ๆ ได้อย่างเหมาะสม
3. การสร้างวัฒนธรรมองค์กรสงฆ์ที่ยึดหลักคุณธรรมและความร่วมมือ การส่งเสริมการใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมควรขยายผลไปสู่พระภิกษุและบุคลากรในองค์กรสงฆ์ทุกระดับ เพื่อสร้างวัฒนธรรมการทำงานร่วมกันบนพื้นฐานของเมตตา ความเคารพ และเหตุผล โดยอาศัยหลักอภัยโทษและอวิหิงสาในการจัดการปัญหา



และความขัดแย้งอย่างสันติ รวมทั้งยึดหลักอวิโรธนะในการปฏิบัติงานให้สอดคล้องกับพระธรรมวินัย กฎหมาย และระเบียบที่เกี่ยวข้อง อันจะนำไปสู่ความเป็นเอกภาพและความมั่นคงขององค์กรคณะสงฆ์

4. การสร้างเครือข่ายความร่วมมือระหว่างคณะสงฆ์กับภาคส่วนต่าง ๆ พระสังฆาธิการควรได้รับการส่งเสริมให้ประสานความร่วมมือกับหน่วยงานภาครัฐ สถานศึกษา องค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่น ผู้นำชุมชน และองค์กรสาธารณประโยชน์ เพื่อร่วมกันขับเคลื่อนภารกิจด้านการศึกษา การเผยแผ่พระพุทธศาสนา และการสาธารณสงเคราะห์ การสร้างเครือข่ายดังกล่าวจะช่วยให้การบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์สามารถตอบสนองต่อความต้องการของประชาชนได้อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ และส่งเสริมบทบาทของวัดในการเป็นศูนย์กลางการพัฒนาชุมชน

5. การพัฒนาระบบติดตามและประเมินผลการบริหารงานเชิงคุณธรรม ควรจัดให้มีระบบติดตามและประเมินผลการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์อย่างต่อเนื่อง โดยคำนึงถึงทั้งประสิทธิภาพของงานและการยึดมั่นในหลักคุณธรรม การประเมินผลควรครอบคลุมด้านความสำเร็จของงาน ความโปร่งใสในการบริหาร ความพึงพอใจของผู้เกี่ยวข้อง และระดับการนำหลักทศพิธราชธรรมไปประยุกต์ใช้ในการปฏิบัติงาน ทั้งนี้เพื่อให้การบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์เกิดการพัฒนายอย่างต่อเนื่อง มีความโปร่งใส ตรวจสอบได้ และสอดคล้องกับหลักธรรมทางพระพุทธศาสนา

เมื่ออภิปรายผลในเชิงภาพรวม ผลการวิจัยสะท้อนให้เห็นว่า แนวทางการส่งเสริมการใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมมิใช่เพียงการมุ่งพัฒนาคุณธรรมเฉพาะตัวของพระสังฆาธิการเท่านั้น หากแต่เป็นการยกระดับไปสู่การสร้าง “ระบบการบริหารเชิงคุณธรรม” ที่เชื่อมโยงอย่างเป็นองค์รวมระหว่างหลักธรรม ผู้นำ องค์กร และชุมชน โดยข้อค้นพบดังกล่าวเกิดจากการสังเคราะห์ความคิดเห็นของผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญทุกกลุ่ม ซึ่งส่วนใหญ่มีความเห็นสอดคล้องกันว่า การบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ในปัจจุบันจำเป็นต้องอาศัยทั้งหลักธรรมและหลักการบริหารสมัยใหม่ควบคู่กัน ผู้ให้ข้อมูลระบุหนึ่งให้ความเห็น “หลักธรรมจะเกิดประโยชน์สูงสุดเมื่อถูกนำมาใช้เป็นกรอบในการตัดสินใจและบริหารงานไม่ใช่เพียงเป็นหลักปฏิบัติส่วนบุคคล” (Key Informant 1, 2569) ขณะที่ผู้ให้ข้อมูลอีกท่านสะท้อนว่า “พระสังฆาธิการยุคปัจจุบันต้องทำงานร่วมกับหลายภาคส่วน จึงต้องมีทั้งคุณธรรม ความรู้ และทักษะการบริหารที่เหมาะสม” (Key Informant 2, 2569) ข้อค้นพบดังกล่าวแสดงให้เห็นว่า การบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ที่มีประสิทธิภาพในบริบทไทยร่วมสมัย จำเป็นต้องตั้งอยู่บนฐานของคุณธรรมที่สามารถแปลงไปสู่กลไกเชิงนโยบาย เชิงการปฏิบัติ และเชิงความสัมพันธ์กับสังคมภายนอกได้อย่างเป็นรูปธรรม นอกจากนี้ ผู้ให้ข้อมูลส่วนใหญ่ยังเห็นตรงกันว่า การพัฒนาพระสังฆาธิการควรมุ่งเสริมสร้างภาวะผู้นำเชิงคุณธรรมควบคู่กับการพัฒนาสมรรถนะด้านการบริหาร โดยเฉพาะความเพียร ความอ่อนโยน ความซื่อตรง และความสามารถในการควบคุมอารมณ์ ผู้ให้ข้อมูลรายหนึ่งกล่าวว่า “การเป็นผู้บริหารคณะสงฆ์ในปัจจุบันมีแรงกดดันมากขึ้น ต้องรับฟังความคิดเห็นจากหลายฝ่าย จึงต้องมีความอดทนและควบคุมอารมณ์ได้ดี” (Key Informant 3, 2569) ข้อค้นพบดังกล่าวสอดคล้องกับผลการวิจัยเชิงปริมาณที่พบว่าหลักอภิกษัมมีค่าเฉลี่ยต่ำกว่าหลักธรรมด้านอื่น สะท้อนว่า การจัดการอารมณ์และความขัดแย้งเป็นประเด็นที่พระสังฆาธิการควรได้รับการส่งเสริมและพัฒนาเพิ่มเติม ในด้านการสร้างวัฒนธรรมองค์กรสงฆ์ ผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญหลายท่านเสนอว่า การบริหารงานที่ยึดหลักเมตตา ความโปร่งใส และการมีส่วนร่วมจะช่วยลดความขัดแย้งและเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพในการดำเนินงาน ผู้ให้ข้อมูลรายหนึ่งให้ความเห็น “หากทุกฝ่ายสามารถทำงานบนพื้นฐานของความจริงใจและเปิดโอกาสให้มีส่วนร่วม องค์กรคณะสงฆ์จะมีความเข้มแข็งมากขึ้น” (Key Informant 4, 2569) ขณะเดียวกัน ผู้ให้ข้อมูลเกือบทุกกลุ่มยังเน้นถึงความสำคัญของการสร้างเครือข่ายความร่วมมือระหว่างคณะสงฆ์ ชุมชน หน่วยงานภาครัฐ และสถานศึกษา เพื่อร่วมกันขับเคลื่อนภารกิจด้านการศึกษา การเผยแผ่พระพุทธศาสนา และการสาธารณสงเคราะห์ให้เกิดผลอย่างเป็นรูปธรรม ซึ่งสะท้อนให้เห็นว่าการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ในปัจจุบันจำเป็นต้องขยายบทบาทจากการบริหารภายในองค์กรไปสู่การสร้างความร่วมมือกับสังคมภายนอกอย่างเป็นระบบ การส่งเสริมการใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมในการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ของพระสังฆาธิการจังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราช มิใช่เพียงการยึดถือหลักธรรมในเชิงอุดมคติ หากแต่เป็นการนำหลักธรรมมาประยุกต์ใช้เป็นกลไกในการบริหารจัดการองค์กรสงฆ์ให้สามารถตอบสนองต่อสภาพการณ์ของสังคมร่วมสมัยได้



อย่างมีประสิทธิภาพและถูกต้องตามพระธรรมวินัย โดยเฉพาะการบูรณาการคุณธรรมเข้ากับกระบวนการบริหาร การตัดสินใจ และการสร้างประโยชน์แก่ส่วนรวม ซึ่งสอดคล้องกับแนวคิดของ Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P.A. Payutto) (2014) ที่อธิบายว่า การบริหารตามแนวพุทธควรบูรณาการประสิทธิภาพในการดำเนินงานเข้ากับ หลักคุณธรรม โดยผู้บริหารต้องใช้ความรู้ ความสามารถ และกระบวนการบริหารอย่างเหมาะสม ควบคู่กับความ ถูกต้อง ความรับผิดชอบ และการคำนึงถึงประโยชน์ส่วนรวม เพื่อให้องค์กรบรรลุเป้าหมายอย่างมีคุณค่า เป็นธรรม และก่อให้เกิดประโยชน์สุข และสอดคล้องกับข้อเสนอของ Phrakhruphithunnakharaphirak (Anuchat Narintho) & Phramahasumek Samahito (2021) ที่มองว่าการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ควรขยายบทบาทจากการบริหารภายใน ไปสู่การบริการสังคมและการสร้างประโยชน์แก่ชุมชน โดยต้องดำเนินการอย่างเป็นระบบผ่านการกำหนดนโยบาย การพัฒนาศักยภาพพระสงฆ์ การสร้างวัฒนธรรมองค์กร การส่งเสริมการมีส่วนร่วม และการติดตาม ประเมินผลอย่างต่อเนื่อง เพื่อแปลหลักทศพิธราชธรรมให้เป็นแนวปฏิบัติที่ชัดเจนในการบริหาร นอกจากนี้ แม้ภาพรวมการใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรม จะอยู่ในระดับมาก แต่หลักอภัยโทษมีค่าเฉลี่ยต่ำกว่าด้านอื่น สะท้อนว่า การควบคุมอารมณ์และการบริหาร ความขัดแย้งยังเป็นประเด็นที่ควรได้รับการพัฒนา โดยควรบูรณาการหลักธรรม ด้านการพัฒนาตนเอง การสร้างความร่วมมือ และการรักษาความเป็นเอกภาพขององค์กรควบคู่กัน ซึ่งมีความ สอดคล้องกับข้อเสนอของ Phrakhrudhammadhorn Phirach Siricando & Phrasamu Prajurak Mahapanno (2025) เสนอว่า การบริหารคณะสงฆ์ควรประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรม 7 ไตรสิกขา และสาราณียธรรม เพื่อเสริมสร้างความร่วมมือ ความสามัคคี และเสถียรภาพขององค์กรสงฆ์ แม้การประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรม แต่จะสะท้อนว่าการควบคุมอารมณ์ การจัดการความขัดแย้ง และการรับมือกับภาวะกดดันยังเป็นประเด็น ที่ควรพัฒนา ดังนั้น จึงควรส่งเสริมทักษะการจัดการอารมณ์และความขัดแย้งควบคู่กับการพัฒนาสมรรถนะด้าน การบริหารและภาวะผู้นำเชิงพุทธ เพื่อให้การบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์มีความสมดุลและมีประสิทธิผลมากยิ่งขึ้น ซึ่งแตกต่างจากผลการศึกษาของ Phrapalad Wanchai Mayong et al. (2015) กล่าวว่า การนำหลักทศพิธราชธรรม มาใช้ในการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์โดยรวมอยู่ในระดับสูงและมีความครอบคลุมในทุกด้าน บริบทการบริหาร ในปัจจุบันมีความซับซ้อนมากขึ้น ทั้งด้านการบริหารบุคลากร การจัดสรรทรัพยากร การประสานความร่วมมือกับ หน่วยงานต่าง ๆ และการแก้ไขความขัดแย้งภายในองค์กร ซึ่งอาจส่งผลให้พระสงฆ์ต้องเผชิญกับแรงกดดัน ในการปฏิบัติหน้าที่มากขึ้น ดังนั้น ควรให้ความสำคัญกับการส่งเสริมหลักอภัยโทษ โดยพัฒนาควบคู่กับภาวะผู้นำ และทักษะการจัดการความขัดแย้ง เพื่อให้การประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมเกิดความสมดุล มีประสิทธิผล และสอดคล้องกับสภาพการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ในปัจจุบัน และยังแตกต่างจากผลการศึกษาของ Phrakhru Surativharkarn Khemadhammo (Rodkaew) et al. (2019) การประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมในการบริหาร กิจการคณะสงฆ์ทุกด้านมีความสมดุลและอยู่ในระดับสูง อย่างไรก็ตาม ความแตกต่างดังกล่าวอาจเกิดจากบริบท การบริหารคณะสงฆ์ในปัจจุบันที่มีความซับซ้อนและแรงกดดันเพิ่มขึ้น ทั้งด้านบุคลากร ทรัพยากร การประสานงาน กับภาคส่วนต่าง ๆ และการจัดการความขัดแย้ง ดังนั้น จึงควรส่งเสริมการพัฒนาหลักอภัยโทษ ควบคู่กับภาวะผู้นำ และทักษะการบริหารความขัดแย้ง เพื่อให้การประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมมีความสมดุลและเหมาะสมกับบริบท ปัจจุบัน การรักษาหลักอภัยโทษหรือการควบคุมอารมณ์ไม่ให้เกิดความโกรธจึงเป็นความท้าทายที่สำคัญกว่า หลักธรรมด้านอื่น โดยเฉพาะในสถานการณ์ที่ต้องตัดสินใจเกี่ยวกับผลประโยชน์ส่วนรวม ความขัดแย้งระหว่าง บุคคล หรือข้อร้องเรียนจากสังคมภายนอก นอกจากนี้ ข้อเสนอแนะจากผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญยังให้ความสำคัญ กับหลักตปะ มัททวะ และอาชชวะเป็นพิเศษ ซึ่งสะท้อนว่า พระสงฆ์และผู้ที่เกี่ยวข้องยังเห็นความจำเป็น ในการพัฒนาความเพียร ความอ่อนโยน และความซื่อตรงในการบริหารให้เด่นชัดยิ่งขึ้น ทั้งนี้เพราะคุณธรรมดังกล่าว มีความสัมพันธ์โดยตรงกับการสร้างความน่าเชื่อถือ ความไว้วางใจ และความร่วมมือภายในองค์กรคณะสงฆ์และชุมชน ดังนั้น เมื่อสังเคราะห์ผลการวิจัยร่วมกับงานวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องทั้งในส่วนที่สอดคล้องและแตกต่างกัน จะเห็นได้ว่า การบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ที่มีประสิทธิภาพในบริบทสังคมไทยร่วมสมัยจำเป็นต้องบูรณาการหลักธรรมเข้ากับ



กระบวนการบริหารอย่างเป็นระบบ โดยเฉพาะการพัฒนาภาวะผู้นำเชิงคุณธรรม การสร้างวัฒนธรรมองค์กรที่โปร่งใสและเกื้อกูลกัน การสร้างเครือข่ายความร่วมมือกับชุมชน และ การส่งเสริมทักษะด้านการจัดการอารมณ์และความขัดแย้งของพระสงฆ์ อันจะนำไปสู่การบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ที่มีทั้งประสิทธิภาพ ความชอบธรรม และความยั่งยืนในระยะยาว

องค์ความรู้ใหม่

องค์ความรู้ใหม่จากการวิจัยครั้งนี้สามารถสังเคราะห์เป็น “รูปแบบการส่งเสริมการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์เชิงคุณธรรมตามหลักทศพิธราชธรรม” (Dasavidha-rājadharmma-Based Moral Sangha Administration Model) ซึ่งเป็นรูปแบบการบริหารที่บูรณาการหลักธรรมเข้ากับกระบวนการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์อย่างเป็นระบบ โดยประกอบด้วย 5 องค์ประกอบที่มีความสัมพันธ์ต่อกัน ดังนี้

1. นโยบายเชิงธรรม (Dhamma-Based Policy) เป็นองค์ประกอบฐานของระบบ ทำหน้าที่กำหนดทิศทาง เป้าหมาย และกรอบการบริหารงานให้สอดคล้องกับหลักทศพิธราชธรรม พระธรรมวินัย และภารกิจของคณะสงฆ์ เพื่อให้การดำเนินงานทุกด้านมีแนวทางเดียวกัน
2. ผู้นำเชิงคุณธรรม (Moral Leadership) เป็นกลไกขับเคลื่อนนโยบายสู่การปฏิบัติ โดยมุ่งพัฒนาพระสงฆ์ให้มีความรู้ทั้งสมรรถนะด้านการบริหารและคุณธรรมด้านภาวะผู้นำ สามารถตัดสินใจและบริหารงานบนพื้นฐานของความถูกต้อง ความเสียสละ และประโยชน์ส่วนรวม
3. วัฒนธรรมองค์กรแห่งเมตตาและความโปร่งใส (Compassionate and Transparent Organizational Culture) เป็นผลที่เกิดจากการนำของผู้นำเชิงคุณธรรม ทำให้เกิดบรรยากาศการทำงานที่เคารพซึ่งกันและกัน มีความเมตตา ความรับผิดชอบ และสามารถตรวจสอบได้ ส่งเสริมการทำงานร่วมกันอย่างสร้างสรรค์ภายในองค์กรคณะสงฆ์
4. เครือข่ายความร่วมมือเพื่อพระพุทธศาสนาและสังคม (Collaborative Network for Buddhism and Society) เป็นการขยายผลจากภายในองค์กรสู่ภายนอก โดยเชื่อมโยงการทำงานระหว่างคณะสงฆ์ ชุมชน หน่วยงานภาครัฐ สถานศึกษา และองค์กรสาธารณประโยชน์ เพื่อร่วมกันขับเคลื่อนภารกิจด้านการศึกษา การเผยแผ่ และการสาธารณสงเคราะห์
5. การประเมินผลเชิงคุณธรรมและประสิทธิภาพ (Moral and Performance Evaluation) เป็นกลไกกำกับและสะท้อนผลการดำเนินงานของระบบทั้งหมด โดยประเมินทั้งผลสัมฤทธิ์ของงาน ความโปร่งใส ความพึงพอใจของผู้เกี่ยวข้อง และระดับการประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรม เพื่อนำข้อมูลกลับไปพัฒนานโยบายและการบริหารในรอบถัดไปอย่างต่อเนื่อง

รูปแบบดังกล่าวมีลักษณะการทำงานเป็นวงจรเชิงพัฒนา (Development Cycle) โดยเริ่มจาก การกำหนดนโยบายเชิงธรรม → การพัฒนาผู้นำเชิงคุณธรรม → การสร้างวัฒนธรรมองค์กรแห่งเมตตาและความโปร่งใส → การสร้างเครือข่ายความร่วมมือกับสังคม → การประเมินผลเชิงคุณธรรมและประสิทธิภาพ และนำผลการประเมินกลับไปใช้ในการปรับปรุงนโยบายและกระบวนการบริหารอย่างต่อเนื่อง ทำให้เกิดการพัฒนากระบวนการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ที่มีทั้งประสิทธิภาพ ความชอบธรรม



Figure 1 Model for Promoting Moral-Based Saṅgha Administration According to the Ten Royal Virtues (Dasavidha-rājadharmma)

สรุปได้ว่า องค์ความรู้ใหม่จากการวิจัยครั้งนี้ได้เสนอเพียงชุดคุณธรรมสำหรับพระสังฆาธิการ แต่เสนอ “รูปแบบการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์เชิงคุณธรรม” ที่แสดงความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างนโยบาย ผู้นำ องค์คร เครือข่าย และระบบประเมินผลอย่างเป็นระบบ โดยมีหลักทศพิธราชธรรมเป็นแกนกลางในการเชื่อมโยงทุกองค์ประกอบเข้าด้วยกัน องค์ความรู้นี้สามารถใช้เป็นกรอบแนวทางในการพัฒนาการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ทั้งในระดับวัด ระดับอำเภอ ระดับจังหวัด และพื้นที่อื่น ๆ ที่มีบริบทใกล้เคียงกันต่อไป

สรุปและข้อเสนอแนะ

ผลการวิจัยสรุปได้ว่า การประยุกต์ใช้หลักทศพิธราชธรรมในการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ของพระสังฆาธิการ จังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราช ควรดำเนินการอย่างเป็นระบบและบูรณาการ โดยเชื่อมโยงการกำหนดนโยบาย การพัฒนาศักยภาพพระสังฆาธิการ การสร้างวัฒนธรรมองค์กร การสร้างเครือข่ายความร่วมมือ และการประเมินผล ภายใต้กรอบหลักทศพิธราชธรรม เพื่อส่งเสริมการบริหารที่โปร่งใส เป็นธรรม มีความรับผิดชอบ สอดคล้องกับพระธรรมวินัย และตอบสนองต่อความต้องการของพระสงฆ์และประชาชน อันจะช่วยเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพการบริหาร และเสริมสร้างความศรัทธาต่อคณะสงฆ์ องค์ความรู้ใหม่จากการวิจัย คือ “รูปแบบการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์เชิงคุณธรรมตามหลักทศพิธราชธรรม” ประกอบด้วย 5 มิติ ได้แก่ 1) การกำหนดนโยบายเชิงธรรม 2) การพัฒนาผู้นำเชิงคุณธรรม 3) การสร้างวัฒนธรรมองค์กรแห่งเมตตา ความโปร่งใส และธรรมาภิบาล 4) การสร้างเครือข่ายความร่วมมือเพื่อพระพุทธศาสนาและสังคม และ 5) การประเมินผลด้านคุณธรรมและประสิทธิภาพ รูปแบบดังกล่าวบูรณาการคุณธรรม ภาวะผู้นำ ระบบบริหาร และการมีส่วนร่วมของเครือข่าย สามารถประยุกต์ใช้กับการบริหารคณะสงฆ์ในระดับจังหวัด ระดับภาค และระดับประเทศ โดยปรับให้เหมาะสมกับบริบทของแต่ละพื้นที่ กลุ่มผู้ใช้ประโยชน์จากผลการวิจัย 1) พระสังฆาธิการทุกระดับ สามารถนำรูปแบบไปใช้ในการกำหนดนโยบาย วางแผน ตัดสินใจ กำกับติดตาม และบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ทั้ง 6 ด้านให้มีประสิทธิภาพ โปร่งใส และสอดคล้องกับพระธรรมวินัย 2) องค์กรปกครองคณะสงฆ์และหน่วยงานด้านพระพุทธศาสนา เช่น มหาเถรสมาคม สำนักงาน



พระพุทธศาสนาแห่งชาติ และสำนักงานพระพุทธศาสนาจังหวัด สามารถใช้ประกอบการกำหนดนโยบาย แผนยุทธศาสตร์ ระบบประเมินผล และหลักสูตรพัฒนาพระสังฆาธิการ 3) สถาบันการศึกษาทางพระพุทธศาสนา และมหาวิทยาลัยสงฆ์ สามารถใช้เป็นองค์ความรู้ด้านการเรียนการสอน การพัฒนาหลักสูตร การฝึกอบรม และการวิจัย เกี่ยวกับการบริหารเชิงพุทธและธรรมาภิบาล 4) หน่วยงานภาครัฐ องค์กรปกครองส่วนท้องถิ่น และเครือข่าย ชุมชน สามารถใช้เป็นแนวทางสร้างความร่วมมือกับคณะสงฆ์ในการพัฒนาการศึกษา การเผยแผ่ การสาธารณ สงเคราะห์ และการแก้ไขปัญหาสังคม 5) พระภิกษุ สามเณร และประชาชน จะได้รับประโยชน์จากการบริหาร คณะสงฆ์ที่โปร่งใส เป็นธรรม และสามารถตอบสนองต่อปัญหาและความต้องการของชุมชนได้อย่างเหมาะสม และ 6) นักวิชาการและนักวิจัย สามารถนำผลการวิจัยไปศึกษาต่อยอด เปรียบเทียบในพื้นที่อื่น และพัฒนาตัวชี้วัด หรือเครื่องมือประเมินการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์เชิงคุณธรรม ข้อจำกัดของการวิจัย 1) การวิจัยศึกษาเฉพาะ พระสังฆาธิการในจังหวัดนครศรีธรรมราช ผลการวิจัยจึงสะท้อนบริบทของพื้นที่เป็นหลัก การนำไปใช้ในพื้นที่อื่น ควรปรับให้เหมาะสมกับโครงสร้าง สังคม และวัฒนธรรมของแต่ละแห่ง 2) ผู้ให้ข้อมูลส่วนใหญ่เกี่ยวข้องกับ ฝ่ายบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์โดยตรง จึงอาจสะท้อนมุมมองของฝ่ายบริหารมากกว่าพระภิกษุทั่วไป สามเณร บุคลากรวัด และประชาชน 3) ข้อมูลจากแบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์ขึ้นอยู่กับความรู้และประสบการณ์ ของผู้ให้ข้อมูล จึงอาจมีความคลาดเคลื่อนหรือได้รับอิทธิพลจากการตอบตามความคาดหวังของสังคม 4) หลักทศพิธราชธรรมมีลักษณะเป็นนามธรรม การนำมาพัฒนาเป็นตัวชี้วัดอาจไม่ครอบคลุมพฤติกรรม และสถานการณ์การบริหารที่ซับซ้อนได้ทั้งหมด 5) รูปแบบที่พัฒนาขึ้นยังไม่ได้ทดลองใช้และติดตามผลในระยะยาว จึงยังไม่สามารถยืนยันประสิทธิผลในทุกบริบทได้อย่างสมบูรณ์ และ 6) ปัจจัยภายนอก เช่น นโยบาย กฎหมาย เทคโนโลยี เศรษฐกิจ และความคาดหวังของประชาชน อาจส่งผลต่อการบริหารกิจการคณะสงฆ์ แต่การวิจัยครั้งนี้ ไม่สามารถควบคุมหรือศึกษาได้ครบทุกด้าน

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DEVELOPMENT OF AN AI-BASED DHAMMA TIKTOK PLATFORM INSPIRED BY BUDDHIST TEACHINGS TO PROMOTE PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE AMONG THE WORKFORCE

Narumon Jiwattanasuk^{1*}, Phra Medhavinaiyaros Suthep Buddhachanya², Phra Kittiched Premsakul³,
Phramaha Weerasak Sangphong¹, Supaporn Tongsupachok¹, Chintar Fungladda¹

¹International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University,

Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Thailand

²Chulabhorn Royal Academy, Bangkok, Thailand

³Faculty of Buddhism, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Thailand

*Corresponding author E-mail: narumonji@gmail.com

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Thailand's rapid transition from an agricultural-based economy to industrial and service-based sectors has intensified workplace stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion among the workforce. These mental health challenges were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased job insecurity and psychological distress. Although employee assistance programs are widely available, many interventions remain grounded primarily in Western psychological frameworks and often lack cultural relevance within Thai society. At the same time, short-form digital platforms such as TikTok have become influential communication channels but frequently contain misinformation and limited evidence-based mental health content. Consequently, a significant empirical gap persists regarding interventions that integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) with indigenous cultural wisdom to support psychological resilience. This study, therefore, aimed to: Examine current mental health challenges and resilience needs among the workforce; Develop an AI-based dhamma TikTok platform inspired by Buddhist teachings to enhance psychological resilience; And evaluate the effectiveness of the AI-based dhamma TikTok platform among working adults.

Methodology: This study employed a three-phase mixed-methods Research and Development (R&D) design. Phase 1 used semi-structured interviews with 35 workforce informants to explore current mental health challenges and resilience needs, using thematic analysis. Phase 2 involved the development and validation of 30 AI-generated Dhamma video clips integrating the Four Noble Truths (Ariyāsacca 4) and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna 4). Content development was conducted through in-depth interviews with experts (n = 17) and validated through focus group discussions (n = 9) before implementation as a 30-day intervention. Phase 3 employed a mixed-methods evaluation, including a pre-post assessment with the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10) and post-intervention qualitative interviews.



Main Results: Phase 1 identified three major mental health challenges among the workforce: Work-related stress, emotional and cognitive dysregulation, and interpersonal strain. Three resilience needs were also identified, including emotional support, emotional regulation skills, and accessible mental health tools. Phase 2 resulted in the development of an AI-based Dhamma TikTok platform featuring an animated novice monk delivering 30 short-form video clips grounded in a Buddhist psychological resilience framework. In Phase 3, quantitative findings demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in resilience scores, increasing from a moderate level ($\bar{x} = 23.29$, S.D. = 5.91) before the intervention to a high level after the intervention ($\bar{x} = 33.26$, S.D. = 5.55), as confirmed by paired sample t-test analysis ($t = 7.9060$, $p < 0.01$). Qualitative findings further indicated reduced occupational stress, improved emotional regulation, and more compassionate interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

Involvement to Buddhaddhamma: The finding demonstrated that the Four Noble Truths and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, when adapted into digital micro-practices, could support psychological resilience through inner regulation, empathic connection, purposeful mindset, and transformative growth. The resulting Samanera Kiddy Dhamma Wheel Model (SKDWM) integrated Buddhist contemplative principles with AI-supported digital communication for workforce mental health promotion. The study therefore contributes to both Traditional Buddhism, through the application of the Four Noble Truths and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness derived from Buddhaddhamma and the Pali Canon, and Applied Buddhism in the areas of Buddhist Innovation.

Conclusion: This AI-based Dhamma TikTok platform showed potential for enhancing psychological resilience among the Thai workforce by integrating Buddhist contemplative practice with modern digital technology. The intervention contributed to reduced occupational stress, improved emotional regulation, and healthier interpersonal interaction. The findings suggest that culturally grounded digital mental health tools offer a practical approach for workplace wellness promotion, helping working adults cultivate mindfulness, emotional balance, and inner resilience amid the pressures of everyday working life. Future studies should include larger samples, longer intervention periods, and broader population groups to further evaluate the effectiveness and applicability of the model.

Keywords: AI-based Dhamma TikTok, Buddhist Teachings, Psychological Resilience, Workforce

Introduction

Across the world, rapid technological and social transformation has generated both significant progress and increasing psychological strain. One major consequence of this continuous change has been the growing prevalence of mental health challenges, which have become an important factor influencing individual well-being and long-term economic productivity. The World Health Organization emphasized that mental health is a fundamental component of overall health and reported that depression and anxiety led to nearly one trillion USD in global productivity losses annually (World Health Organization, 2021). Thailand has experienced similar challenges. As the country rapidly transitioned from an agricultural-based economy to industrial and service-based sectors, the workforce increasingly encountered occupational stress, burnout, and emotional



exhaustion (National Statistical Office, Ministry of Digital Economy and Society, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified existing socioeconomic difficulties, resulting in greater job insecurity and psychological distress among the population (Ruengorn et al., 2021). Consequently, heavy workloads, managerial pressures, and interpersonal conflicts have continued to affect employees' emotional well-being negatively, making workplace stress a major concern at both national and global levels. For many workers, these pressures extend beyond the workplace and affect daily life. Persistent workload demands, job insecurity, and interpersonal tensions may contribute to sleep disturbances, emotional exhaustion, irritability, and difficulty maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Over time, these challenges can reduce psychological resilience and negatively affect both personal well-being and workplace performance.

These conditions highlight the need for effective approaches to strengthen psychological resilience in challenging work environments (Mohamad et al., 2025). At the same time, rapid digitalization has introduced new dimensions of occupational stress. Although digital technologies and remote working arrangements provide greater flexibility, they also create technostress, information overload, and a fear of missing out, all of which can deplete psychological resources (Marsh et al., 2024). Continuous connectivity between work and personal life has also been associated with anxiety, sleep disruption, and burnout, particularly among vulnerable workforce groups (Anwar & Iqbal, 2023). Despite the availability of conventional mental health programs and employee assistance services, many interventions remain short-term and are often based primarily on Western psychological frameworks with limited integration of Thai cultural and spiritual contexts. Concurrently, short-form digital media platforms, especially TikTok, have become central channels for communication and information exchange. Although TikTok has potential as a platform for psychological education and digital spiritual communication, concerns remain regarding misinformation and the limited availability of evidence-based content (Adha et al., 2025). Therefore, a notable empirical gap persists concerning interventions that integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) with culturally grounded knowledge to provide accessible and trustworthy mental health support (Rzyczniok et al., 2025).

In response to these challenges, Buddhist contemplative traditions within Thai society offer valuable psychological and ethical approaches for addressing the underlying causes of workplace suffering. The Four Noble Truths (Ariyāsacca 4) provide a framework for recognizing suffering, understanding its causes, and developing pathways toward emotional balance and well-being (Bodhi, 2000); (Feer, 1975). Similarly, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna 4) emphasize awareness, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping through mindfulness practice (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995); (Trenckner, 1979). Previous studies have shown that Buddhist mindfulness-based interventions can help reduce depression, anxiety, and psychological distress while promoting compassion, emotional awareness, and cognitive clarity (Phong, 2025). From Buddhist concepts, psychological resilience may be understood as the capacity to encounter adversity with awareness and wisdom rather than reacting automatically to difficult experiences. The Four Noble Truths provide a framework for understanding and responding



to suffering, while the Four Foundations of Mindfulness cultivate self-awareness and emotional regulation, both of which are recognized as important components of resilience (Bodhi, 2000); (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995). Research has also indicated that mindfulness-based resilience training successfully alleviated occupational stress and improved emotional regulation, particularly in demanding work environments (Michaelsen et al., 2023); (Singh et al., 2023). Therefore, adapting Buddhist contemplative practices into short digital micro-practices may provide a culturally appropriate approach for enhancing psychological resilience, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping among modern workers.

To address these theoretical and practical gaps, this study examined an innovative digital intervention specifically tailored for the Thai working-age population. Previous studies highlighted the preliminary success of AI-based conversational therapists and digital mental health platforms in providing brief, daily support for stress management and cognitive reframing (Nie et al., 2024); (van der Schyff et al., 2023). Building upon this technological foundation, the present study developed an AI-based Dhamma TikTok platform that seamlessly integrated artificial intelligence, social media engagement, and profound Buddhist teachings. This culturally grounded program aimed to transform brief digital interactions into meaningful moments of mindful reflection, emotional growth, and psychological recovery, directly supporting Thailand's National Mental Health Development Plan and the WHO Global Mental Health Framework, both of which emphasize accessible, preventive, and scalable approaches to mental health care. AI-assisted and culturally grounded interventions may therefore complement existing workplace mental health programs by expanding access to low-cost forms of psychological support.

Objectives

This study, therefore, aimed to: Examine the current mental health challenges and resilience needs among the workforce; Develop an AI-based Dhamma TikTok platform inspired by Buddhist teachings to enhance psychological resilience; And evaluate the effectiveness of the AI-based Dhamma TikTok platform among working adults.

Methodology

This study was conducted under a Research and Development (R&D) framework, applying a mixed-methods design, following the concept proposed by Creswell (2003). The overarching goal of the study was to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of an AI-based Dhamma TikTok platform that integrated Buddhist teachings to enhance psychological resilience among the workforce. To achieve this goal in a systematic and rigorous manner, the research was organized into three distinct phases. Each phase was carefully aligned with one of the three research objectives, and the findings from each phase served as the foundation for the subsequent phase. The following sections describe each phase in detail, including its purpose, key informants, instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods.



Phase 1: Examine the Current Mental Health Challenges and Needs Related to Psychological Resilience in the Workforce

The first phase of this study employed a qualitative research design as part of the broader Research and Development (R&D) process. The primary aim of this phase was to explore the current conditions of mental health challenges and the needs for psychological resilience among the workforce within the Thai socio-cultural context. Particular emphasis was placed on understanding the lived experiences of key informants in relation to work-related stress, burnout, coping mechanisms, and patterns of digital media consumption. The data gathered in this phase were intended to provide a rich, contextual understanding of the real-world problems that the intervention in later phases would seek to address.

Key Informants. The study was conducted among the workforce recruited through an announcement posted in the Buddhamahametta Foundation's official Line communication group, which had approximately 500 members. Participation was voluntary, and individuals who expressed interest in the study were screened according to the inclusion criteria. A total of 35 eligible participants met all criteria and agreed to participate in the study. This population was considered contextually relevant because its members had prior exposure to Dhamma practice. From this group, a single purposive sample of 35 key informants, hereafter referred to as the workforce ($n = 35$), was selected to identify information-rich cases consistent with qualitative inquiry standards (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018); (Patton, 2015). This same cohort of workforce ($n = 35$) was retained across Phases 1 and 3 of the study to enable longitudinal within-subject comparison. All key informants met the following inclusion criteria: 1) Aged between 25 and 60 years; 2) Capable of accessing TikTok via a personal smartphone; And 3) Possessing sufficient cognitive awareness to engage meaningfully with the study activities.

Research Instrument and Validation. Data in this phase were collected through semi-structured interviews using an interview guide specifically designed for this study. To ensure that the interview questions were valid and aligned with the research objectives, the interview guide was submitted to a panel of five experts for review. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was calculated based on experts' ratings of each item's relevance to confirm that the interview questions possessed strong content validity and were well-suited to capture the information needed to fulfill the research objectives.

Data Collection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the workforce ($n = 35$) to elicit detailed accounts of workplace stress, emotional difficulties, coping strategies, and digital media consumption habits, providing a comprehensive picture of the mental health landscape among the Thai workforce.

Data Analysis. All qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun & Clarke (2021), through a systematic process of coding, theme identification, and refinement. The resulting themes encompassing key mental health challenges and expressed needs for psychological resilience subsequently served as the empirical foundation for designing the AI-based Dhamma TikTok platform in Phase 2.



Phase 2: Develop an AI-Based Dhamma TikTok Platform Inspired by Buddhist Teachings to Enhance Psychological Resilience in the Workforce

The second phase of this study employed a qualitative research design as part of the ongoing Research and Development (R&D) process. The primary aim of this phase was to develop an AI-based Dhamma TikTok platform by integrating the empirical findings obtained from Phase 1 with a comprehensive literature review, relevant theoretical frameworks, and key Buddhist principles. In other words, the themes and needs identified through the thematic analysis in Phase 1 were used as the starting point for the platform development process. These empirical insights were then combined with established academic knowledge and spiritual wisdom to create an intervention that was both evidence-based and culturally grounded.

Particular emphasis was placed on the integration of two core Buddhist doctrines into the platform's conceptual design. The first was the Four Noble Truths (Ariyāsacca 4), which served as a conceptual framework for understanding the nature of psychological suffering and the pathway toward its cessation. The second was the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna 4), which provided a practical pathway for cultivating moment-to-moment awareness and emotional regulation. These elements were synthesized into a unified conceptual framework that guided all subsequent decisions regarding the content, format, and delivery of the intervention.

The development of the platform proceeded through three sequential steps, each of which involved a distinct group of key informants and served a specific purpose in the overall design process.

Step 1: Content Development through In-depth Interviews with Experts.

The first step involved conducting in-depth interviews with a group of 17 key informant experts who were selected through purposive sampling. These experts came from diverse and complementary fields of expertise, including insight meditation masters, TikTok content creators, and Buddhist scholars. The meditation experts had at least 10 years of experience in insight meditation instruction. Buddhist scholars held doctoral qualifications or equivalent expertise in Buddhist Studies, while TikTok content creators possessed demonstrated experience in digital media production and audience engagement on social media platforms. The purpose of engaging this multidisciplinary group was to ensure that the platform's content was rooted in authentic Buddhist teachings, practically applicable to the daily lives of the workforce, and suitable for delivery through the short-form video format of TikTok.

Step 2: Content Validation through Focus Group Discussion with Experts.

In the second step, all 30 video clips produced in Step 1 were presented to a separate group of 9 experts for critical review and validation through a focus group discussion. This second group of experts also comprised insight meditation masters, TikTok content creators, and Buddhist scholars; However, they were entirely different individuals from those who participated in Step 1. The deliberate use of a different group of experts ensured that the review process was independent and unbiased, providing a fresh and objective perspective on the quality, accuracy, and appropriateness of the content.



During the focus group discussion, these experts critically examined each of the 30 clips with respect to several key criteria, including the accuracy of the Buddhist teachings presented, the clarity and accessibility of the language used, the cultural appropriateness of the content, the visual and auditory appeal of the animations, and the overall feasibility of using the clips as a psychological intervention tool. The experts provided detailed feedback and recommendations for improvement, and the necessary revisions were made to the clips accordingly. All instruments used in both Step 1 and Step 2, including the in-depth interview guidelines and focus group discussion protocols, were validated by experts using the Content Validity Index ($CVI \geq 0.70$).

Step 3: Deployment to the Digital Platform. After the 30 video clips had passed through both the development process (Step 1) and the validation process (Step 2), they were uploaded and published on TikTok as a digital platform. The platform was then made accessible to the workforce ($n = 35$) who had been selected in Phase 1. This deployment marked the transition from the development phase to the intervention phase, as the workforce could now engage with the AI-generated Dhamma TikTok content as part of the structured intervention evaluated in Phase 3.

The result of this phase was the creation of a fully developed AI-based Dhamma TikTok platform consisting of 30 short-form video clips generated through artificial intelligence. The content was specifically designed to facilitate momentary awareness and mental pausing, emotional regulation, and mental reset in everyday life. The platform was thus prepared for pilot testing and effectiveness evaluation in Phase 3.

Phase 3: Evaluate the Effectiveness of the AI-Based Dhamma TikTok Platform Inspired by Buddhist Teachings to Enhance Psychological Resilience in the Workforce

The third and final phase of this study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive and well-rounded evaluation of the platform's effectiveness. The reason for using a mixed-methods design in this phase was that the quantitative data alone could show whether key informants' resilience scores changed numerically, but they could not explain how or why such changes occurred. Therefore, qualitative data were also collected to capture the key informants' lived experiences and to understand the underlying psychological mechanisms that contributed to any observed changes. By combining these two types of data, the study was able to present a more complete picture of the intervention's impact.

Key Informants. The same workforce ($n = 35$) recruited in Phase 1 was retained, enabling a repeated-measures design for direct within-subject comparison between pre- and post-intervention outcomes. All key informants provided informed consent in accordance with research ethics guidelines. To ensure confidentiality, all participants were assigned identification codes, and no personal names were recorded in the datasets. Interview transcripts were anonymized prior to analysis, and all digital files were stored in password-protected devices accessible only to the research team. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

Research Instruments. Two instruments were used: 1) The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10), a validated 10-item instrument measuring psychological resilience (Connor & Davidson, 2003), and 2) An in-depth interview guide exploring key informants' perceptions of psychological change, emotional growth, and the application of Dhamma principles in their working lives. All instruments were validated using the Content Validity Index (CVI ≥ 0.70). The internal consistency of the CD-RISC-10 was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha.

Data Collection and Analysis. Data collection proceeded in three stages: A pre-test CD-RISC-10 assessment to establish baseline resilience, a 30-day intervention period during which key informants engaged with the AI-generated Dhamma TikTok content, and a post-test assessment alongside in-depth interviews. During the intervention period, participants were instructed to view one AI-generated Dhamma TikTok clip per day for 30 consecutive days. Each clip lasted approximately 1 - 3 minutes. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Changes in psychological resilience before and after the intervention were examined using paired-sample t-tests. Qualitative interview data were transcribed verbatim, coded systematically, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The quantitative and qualitative findings were subsequently integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intervention outcomes. The complete overview of all three phases is illustrated in Figure 1.

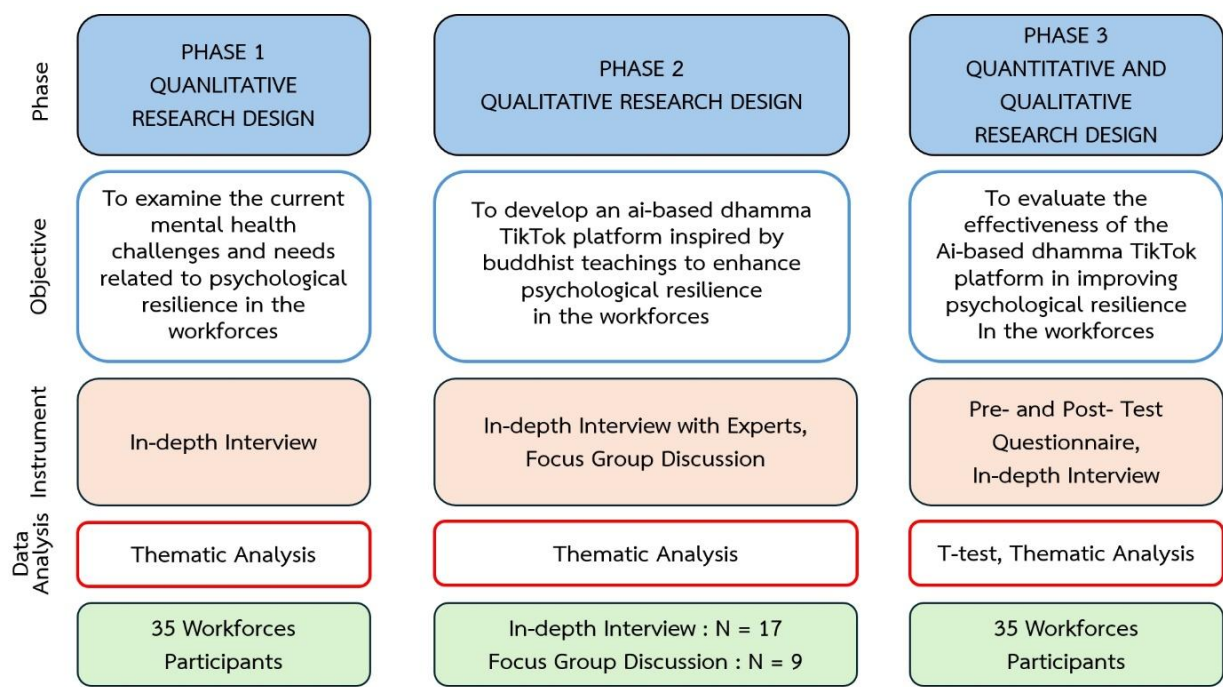


Figure 1 Overview of the Three-Phase R&D Framework: AI-based Dhamma TikTok Platform for Workforce Resilience



Results and Discussion

The results and discussion of this study were systematically organized to present the demographic profile of the key informants before addressing the three primary research objectives. The findings integrated quantitative data, qualitative insights, and theoretical discussions to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intervention impact.

General Data of the Sampling Group

The study collected demographic information from thirty-five working adults who participated in the digital intervention. The analysis of their age distribution revealed that the largest segment consisted of individuals aged twenty to thirty-nine years old, accounting for 37.14 percent of the total group. Key informants aged forty to forty-nine and fifty to fifty-nine years old formed the subsequent groups, representing an equal proportion of 31.43 percent each. Regarding marital status, more than half of the key informants were single, representing 51.43 percent. Married individuals accounted for 37.14 percent, and the remaining 11.43 percent were either widowed or divorced. In terms of educational background, the sample demonstrated a highly educated workforce. A significant majority, taking up 60.00 percent, held a bachelor's degree, while 34.29 percent possessed higher educational qualifications. Only 5.71 percent reported having an education lower than a bachelor's degree. The occupational profile illustrated diverse professional experiences. Private sector employees constituted the largest sector at 54.29 percent, followed by business owners at 22.86 percent, and freelancers at 17.14 percent. Additionally, government and state employees made up 5.71 percent. The data on working experience provided further insights into their professional maturity. More than half of the sampling group, or 51.43 percent, possessed between eleven and twenty years of working experience. Another 22.86 percent had twenty-one to thirty years of experience, while 17.14 percent had worked for one to ten years. The remaining 8.57 percent reported over thirty years of professional experience. Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the workforce participants involved in the psychological resilience evaluation.

Table 1 General Characteristics of the Sample Group

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	20 - 39 years old	13	37.14
	40 - 49 years old	11	31.43
	50 - 59 years old	11	31.43
Marital Status	Single	18	51.43
	Married	13	37.14
	Widowed / Divorced	4	11.43
Education Level	Bachelor's Degree	21	60.00
	Higher than a bachelor's degree	12	34.29
	Lower than a bachelor's degree	2	5.71
Occupation	Private Sector Employee	19	54.29
	Business Owner	8	22.86
	Freelance	6	17.14
	Government / State Employee	2	5.71

**Table 1** General Characteristics of the Sample Group (Continued)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Work Experience	1 - 10 years	6	17.14
	11 - 20 years	18	51.43
	21 - 30 years	8	22.86
	More than 30 years	3	8.57
Total		35	100.00

Phase 1: Examine the Current Mental Health Challenges and Needs Related to Psychological Resilience in the Workforce

To address the first research objective, this phase examined the current mental health challenges and psychological resilience needs among the workforce through in-depth interviews with 35 key informants. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings identified three major mental health challenges and three corresponding psychological resilience needs. These findings are presented under the following themes.

Theme 1: Work-related stress.

Much of the information given by these key informants reflected that stress at work did not come from a single factor but rather from work overload, high expectations from organizational leaders, and limited time for task completion. These pressures resulted in both physical and psychological consequences, including insomnia, panic, and feelings of burnout. One informant explained that work-related thoughts often continued long after office hours had ended, resulting in difficulty sleeping and a persistent sense of exhaustion.

These findings are consistent with Mohamad et al. (2025), who identified excessive job demands and role ambiguity as key stressors that undermine human well-being. While the findings are consistent with previous studies, the present study further highlights how workplace stress is intertwined with emotional and contemplative dimensions, particularly among individuals seeking resilience through Buddhist-informed practices.

Theme 2: The stress from handling one's own emotions and thoughts.

The key informants experienced difficulties related to their own thoughts and emotions, including overthinking, repetitive thinking, anger, dissatisfaction, and feelings of guilt. These issues persisted after work hours had ended and prevented the mind from truly resting, leading to mental restlessness, insomnia, and self-dissatisfaction. One informant explained that even after returning home, the mind continued to revisit unpleasant workplace events, leading to feelings of frustration, guilt, and self-blame.

These findings suggest difficulties in regulating one's own thoughts and emotions and reflect limitations in mindfulness skills for managing affective experiences. The findings are in line with the research of Wu et al. (2023), who studied the working population and found that work-related rumination, particularly affective rumination, is a significant variable that leads to the transmission of stress into mental health problems. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused



on cognitive rumination, the present findings emphasize the potential role of mindfulness and Buddhist contemplative practices in supporting emotional regulation and reducing persistent mental distress.

Theme 3: The problems related to relationships with others and the emotional impact of others on one's mind.

Workplace relationships represented another key factor contributing to stress. Many key informants reported having organizational conflicts that generated persistent discomfort and stress. Notably, some informants found themselves having to absorb the emotional burdens of others, whether customers or colleagues, for example, having to endure expressions of frustration and irritation, which led to emotional exhaustion and burnout. One informant explained that repeatedly absorbing customers' frustrations and colleagues' emotions often left them feeling emotionally drained at the end of the day.

This finding aligns with Tung & Rong (2022), whose research indicated that individuals working in customer-facing roles face considerable pressure arising from interactions with a diverse range of people, which leads to interpersonal conflicts or mutual misunderstanding, ultimately resulting in overall stress and mental health issues. Similar to previous research, interpersonal relationships were identified as a significant source of workplace stress. However, the present study further suggests that resilience-building interventions may benefit from incorporating compassion-based approaches that strengthen both self-awareness and relational well-being.

Regarding the need to develop psychological resilience among working-age individuals, the analysis revealed that these can be summarized into 3 main themes as follows:

Theme 1: The need for emotional support from others.

Most key informants reported a lack of encouragement from those around them and the desire for someone to listen to their problems without judgment. Positive relationships within the family and the workplace played a vital role in building psychological resilience.

This is consistent with Felszeghy et al. (2024), who found that a relaxing environment significantly reduces anxiety and fear. In the workplace context, receiving good support from friends and family can help mitigate stress.

Theme 2: The need for the development of emotional regulation.

Most participants reported difficulty managing persistent thoughts, rumination, and negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, and dissatisfaction. Furthermore, there was an expressed need for mental development through practices such as mindfulness and kindness, enabling individuals to navigate various situations with stability and emotional balance.

This is consistent with the research of Klangrit et al. (2025), which indicated that integrating Buddhist principles into daily life can strengthen emotional stability and psychological resilience.

Theme 3: The need for tools and media for psychological resilience.

The key informants expressed a need for practical tools and approaches that could be readily applied in managing stress, such as mindfulness practice techniques, the cultivation of letting go,



and inner development grounded in Buddhist principles. Participants also emphasized the importance of accessible short-form videos that promote mindfulness and mental well-being in daily life.

These findings align with Chung et al. (2025), who indicated that employees experiencing burnout tend to turn to short-form video clips as a form of digital leisure and mental recovery. Content that emphasizes mindfulness practice and mental relaxation was found to help alleviate stress and cultivate emotional and psychological resilience.

Phase 2: Develop an AI-Based Dhamma TikTok Platform Inspired by Buddhist Teachings to Enhance Psychological Resilience in the Workforce

Building upon the mental health challenges and resilience needs identified in Phase 1, this phase addressed the second research objective by developing an AI-based Dhamma TikTok platform designed to respond directly to the workforce's identified needs for emotional support, emotional regulation, and accessible mental health tools. Phase 1 identified three major mental health challenges: Work-related stress, emotional dysregulation, and interpersonal strain, alongside needs for emotional support, emotional regulation skills, and accessible mental health media. These findings were integrated with a comprehensive literature review, relevant theoretical frameworks, and core Buddhist principles to guide the development of the AI-based Dhamma TikTok platform in this phase. In doing so, the platform development process directly addressed the second research objective by translating the identified workforce needs into a culturally grounded and digitally accessible intervention.

Through in-depth interviews with 17 multidisciplinary experts, the platform's content model and media format were collaboratively developed. The experts unanimously agreed that the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna* 4) and the Four Noble Truths (*Ariyāsacca* 4) were the most appropriate Buddhist principles for the intervention, as they provided a fundamental framework for understanding suffering and regulating emotions.

This aligns with the *Dīgha Nikāya*, where the Buddha states that through the cultivation of mindfulness, one attains immediate awareness of emotional states (Rhys Davids & Carpenter, 1966).

A key outcome of this collaborative process was the decision to use an AI-generated animated character in the form of a young novice monk as the main presenter of the Dhamma content. This design choice was directly responsive to the Phase 1 findings, in which the workforce expressed a clear need for mental health media that was warm, approachable, non-judgmental, and easily accessible through short-form digital content. The animated novice monk character was designed to reduce the formality of religious teachings and encourage more relaxed engagement with Dhamma content.

The 30 clips were structured according to a Buddhist-Based Psychological Resilience Model for Working Adults, integrating the Four Noble Truths (*Ariyāsacca* 4) and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna* 4) with four dimensions of psychological resilience: Inner regulation, empathic connection, purposeful mindset, and transformative growth, organized as a progressive 30-day program across four weekly themes.



The experts recommended that these Buddhist teachings be translated into practical, hands-on exercises that viewers could immediately apply in their daily lives, such as guided breathing exercises designed to cultivate present-moment awareness and create a brief mental pause amidst workplace pressures. Regarding message design, the content utilized three- to five-second hooks to capture attention instantly and avoided overly formal religious terminology, instead using simple language that connected directly to real-life stressful situations. Visually, the platform employed relaxing aesthetics, featuring natural backgrounds and adorable AI-generated novice monk animations to convey brightness and wisdom without feeling intimidating. Crucially, a human-in-the-loop system was securely established, whereby human experts constantly supervised and verified the accuracy of the AI-generated content against the Tipitaka (Davids, 1978); (Feer, 1976) before public dissemination, ensuring doctrinal accuracy and preventing cultural insensitivity or algorithmic bias.

Following the development of the 30 clips, the focus group discussion with 9 independent experts confirmed the accuracy, cultural appropriateness, and feasibility of the content. After successful validation, the finalized 30 short-form video clips were deployed on TikTok, making them accessible to the workforce ($n = 35$) for the structured 30-day intervention evaluated in Phase 3.

The development of this platform bridged ancient contemplative wisdom with modern digital communication. The AI-generated novice monk character was perceived by experts as a warm, approachable, and culturally appropriate medium for communicating Buddhist teachings to working adults. The AI-generated novice monk character helped reduce psychological barriers to engaging with spiritual content.

This finding is consistent with the research of Adha et al. (2025), which demonstrated that TikTok functions as a dynamic and highly effective medium for spiritual and mental health education, particularly when the content is credible and accurately curated. By presenting the Dhamma through a visually warm and culturally familiar animated figure, the platform may lower the engagement threshold and make Buddhist teachings more accessible to a broader audience.

The structured alignment of the 30 clips with the Buddhist-Based Psychological Resilience Model demonstrated a high degree of conceptual coherence between Buddhist contemplative psychology and modern resilience theory. This finding is consistent with the research of Gross (2015), Neff (2003), and Tedeschi & Calhoun (2004), which demonstrated that the four dimensions of psychological resilience correspond closely to established Western psychological constructs, including emotion regulation, self-compassion, acceptance and commitment therapy, eudaimonic well-being, and post-traumatic growth. While previous studies largely examined these constructs within Western psychological frameworks, the present study demonstrates how Buddhist contemplative principles can be systematically translated into short-form digital interventions, thereby extending resilience research into culturally grounded and technology-assisted contexts. This synthesis confirmed that Buddhist teachings, when systematically operationalized, possessed a robust theoretical foundation fully compatible with evidence-based psychological frameworks for resilience enhancement.

By translating mindfulness principles into accessible micro-practices, the platform promoted emotional regulation and compassionate responses. The approach also suited the modern workforce, whose limited time and heavy workloads made long meditation sessions impractical. Furthermore, the human-in-the-loop system addressed key ethical concerns in AI-based mental health care.

These findings are consistent with Phophichit (2025), who demonstrated that mindfulness-based interventions can support emotional regulation and mental well-being. Similarly, Rzycki et al. (2025) highlighted the importance of addressing ethical concerns such as algorithmic bias and privacy issues in AI-assisted mental health care. The present findings further reflect the everyday realities of working adults who must navigate ongoing stress, emotional pressure, and interpersonal challenges in their daily lives.

Phase 3: Evaluate the Effectiveness of the AI-based Dhamma TikTok Platform in Improving Psychological Resilience in the Workforce

Building upon the challenges identified in Phase 1 and the intervention developed in Phase 2, this phase addressed the third research objective by evaluating the effectiveness of the AI-based Dhamma TikTok platform in enhancing psychological resilience among the workforce. In this phase, the same 35 workforce key informants from Phase 1 engaged with the AI-based Dhamma TikTok content over 30 days. The intervention was evaluated using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative measures of psychological resilience with qualitative insights into key informants' experiences. The results are presented as follows:

Quantitative Results: The effectiveness of the AI-based Dhamma TikTok intervention was evaluated using the 10-item Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10) with a sample of 35 key informants who engaged with the platform continuously over a 30-day period. The pre-test results revealed that the key informants possessed a moderate level of psychological resilience, with a mean score of 23.29 and a standard deviation of 5.91. Following the 30-day intervention, the post-test assessment demonstrated a distinct and concrete improvement. The mean resilience score increased to 33.26, and the standard deviation decreased to 5.55. A paired sample t-test confirmed that the psychological resilience scores of the sampling group after interacting with the AI-based Dhamma TikTok clips were significantly higher than before the experiment at the 0.01 level ($t = 7.9060$, $p < 0.01$), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Comparison of Psychological Resilience Scores of the Sampling Group (Pre-test, Post-test & t-test)

Assessment Phase	Number of Key informants	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Reliability	Resilience Level	t-test	p-value
Pre-test	35	23.29	5.91	0.88	Moderate	7.9060	< 0.01
Post-test	35	33.26	5.55	0.93	High		

Note: Statistical significance at the 0.01 level



Qualitative Results: The qualitative findings, derived from post-intervention interviews conducted after 30 days of exposure to the platform, further support the effectiveness of the AI-based Dhamma TikTok platform by revealing key psychological and behavioral mechanisms underlying resilience improvement. The results can be organized into three interrelated themes that illustrate how the platform fostered resilience in the modern workplace. Notably, these themes align with the key problem domains identified under objective 1, reflecting how the intervention directly addressed the workforce's mental health challenges and resilience needs.

Theme 1: Reduction of Occupational Stress and Enhancement of Work Performance.

Following regular exposure to the Dhamma TikTok platform, many key informants reported a marked reduction in occupational stress, particularly stress arising from workload demands and time pressure. Participants described a shift toward mindful working, including better task prioritization and faster stress recovery. These changes suggest that short-form dhamma content functioned as an accessible micro-intervention within the natural flow of the workday. These findings are consistent with Lee et al. (2025), who demonstrated that mobile mindfulness training constitutes an effective strategy for reducing stress and preventing burnout among office workers. Specifically, short-form video content was found to facilitate psychological micro-breaks that elevate state mindfulness, enabling employees to reorganize cognitive priorities and manage workload more effectively even under high-pressure conditions.

Theme 2: Development of Emotional and Cognitive Regulation Skills.

Key informants reported an enhanced capacity for metacognitive and affective awareness, including faster recognition of maladaptive emotional states such as anger, cognitive rumination, and negative ideation. The Dhamma TikTok clips functioned as a daily mindfulness tool that interrupted ruminative thought cycles and facilitated prompt emotional disengagement. Representative experiences included the use of mindful breathing to return attention to the present moment and the emergence of cognitive reframing, which key informants identified as a key shift toward greater psychological flexibility among participants. Taken together, these findings suggest the strengthening of metacognitive awareness and affective regulation as core mechanisms of resilience. These findings are corroborated by Yuvasri & PM (2025), who identified mindfulness practice as a principal mechanism for enhancing emotional regulation and cognitive flexibility. Consistent with the present results, Dhamma-based media was found to serve as an attentional anchor to the present moment, enabling individuals to interrupt automatic, maladaptive thought patterns and transition from emotional reactivity to mindful responsiveness, thereby strengthening psychological resilience.

Theme 3: Development of Compassionate Relationships and Compassionate Leadership.

Following the intervention, key informants reported meaningful improvements in interpersonal functioning, including reduced emotional reactivity, greater use of empathy and compassion in workplace interactions, and an increased capacity for active listening. Participants reported calmer communication, reduced emotional reactivity, and fewer ego-driven expectations toward colleagues. At the organizational level, these shifts corresponded to improved team



dynamics, a more positive workplace climate, decreased operational errors, and enhanced service user satisfaction. These findings reflect the development of compassionate leadership and healthier workplace relationships. These findings align with Liu et al. (2025), who found that mindfulness and compassion meditation delivered via short-form video effectively cultivated interpersonal mindfulness and prosocial orientation. The Dhamma TikTok format served as an instrument enabling workers to regulate their own emotional states while extending compassionate awareness toward colleagues, thereby transforming the relational quality of the work environment, reducing interpersonal conflict, and fostering broader service satisfaction.

When interpreting these results, it is important to acknowledge that participants' prior familiarity with Buddhist teachings may have introduced a selection bias, as those already engaged with the practice are likely to respond more favorably and demonstrate greater engagement with the platform than the general population would. This limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized beyond practitioners with similar backgrounds. Furthermore, because the study lacked a control group, claims about the platform's effectiveness in improving psychological resilience must be treated with caution. It is not possible to rule out alternative explanations such as the passage of time, regression to the mean, or other concurrent influences. Future studies incorporating diverse populations and randomized controlled designs are therefore necessary to establish stronger causal links and broader generalizability.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

The primary contribution of this study lies in the development of the Samanera Kiddy Dhamma Wheel Model (SKDWM), a novel framework that integrates the Four Noble Truths, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, AI-generated digital content, and TikTok-based micro-learning into a unified approach for enhancing psychological resilience among working adults. Unlike conventional mindfulness interventions that primarily focus on meditation practice or psychological skills training, the SKDWM model combines Buddhist contemplative wisdom with AI-assisted digital delivery to create a culturally grounded and scalable resilience-building intervention. Building upon this contribution, the study generated three interconnected areas of new knowledge that advance the fields of Buddhist studies, occupational psychology, and digital mental health communication.

First, this study proposed the integration of culturally resonant Buddhist teachings, specifically the Four Noble Truths (Ariyāsacca 4) and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna 4), into an AI-driven short-form video platform. By translating traditional contemplative practices into accessible digital micro-practices, the study addressed the time constraints of the modern workforce while preserving the doctrinal integrity of Buddhist teachings.

Second, the study introduced a human-in-the-loop verification system in which Vipassana monks and Buddhist scholars continuously reviewed AI-generated content against the Tipiṭaka to ensure doctrinal accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and ethical integrity.

Third, the study generated a new body of knowledge regarding the mechanisms through



which digital spiritual communication enhanced psychological resilience, culminating in the conceptualization of the Samanera Kiddy Dhamma Wheel Model (SKDWM). This contribution extends existing digital mental health research by demonstrating how Buddhist contemplative principles can be systematically operationalized within AI-assisted short-form media environments.

Component 1: The Inner Dhamma Wheel of Contemplative Wisdom (Ariyāsacca 4 and Satipaṭṭhāna 4)

In simple terms, the SKDWM was designed as a 30-day resilience-building program for working adults. The model combines key Buddhist teachings with daily digital micro-practices to help participants develop emotional regulation, compassionate relationships, purposeful thinking, and personal growth. The Inner component constituted the doctrinal and psychological core of the intervention: A 30-day structured curriculum integrating the Four Noble Truths as the conceptual macro-framework with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness as the experiential micro-mechanism. This integration resulted in four structured phases aligned with established dimensions of psychological resilience. In practical workplace settings, these four phases were designed to help participants recognize stress more clearly, regulate emotional reactions, strengthen workplace relationships, and develop greater resilience when facing daily work challenges.

Week 1: Dukkha x Kāyānupassanā - Inner Regulation (7 Clips). This phase focused on cultivating bodily awareness as the foundation for recognizing workplace suffering and strengthening emotional regulation.

Week 2: Samudaya x Vedanānupassanā - Empathic Connection (7 Clips). During this phase, participants observed feelings as transient experiences, fostering self-compassion, empathic understanding, and reduced emotional reactivity toward both themselves and others.

Week 3: Nirodha x Cittānupassanā - Purposeful Mindset (7 Clips). During this phase, participants cultivated awareness of impermanence as a liberating insight, supporting acceptance, meaning-making, and the development of a more purposeful perspective toward work and life challenges.

Week 4: Magga x Dhammānupassanā - Transformative Growth (9 Clips). During this phase, the preceding insights were integrated into a holistic practice grounded in sīla, samādhi, and paññā, supporting personal transformation, resilience, and growth through adversity.

Component 2: The Outer Samanera Kiddy as the Culturally Engaging Digital Messenger

The outer component represented the platform's delivery mechanism through an AI-generated animated novice monk character. The design of Samanera Kiddy was a theoretically grounded intervention strategy derived directly from the empirical needs identified in Phase 1, in which key informants expressed a clear desire for mental health media that was warm, approachable, and non-judgmental. The character's gentle appearance, saffron robes, and serene natural backgrounds were specifically crafted to reduce the psychological barriers associated with formal religious instruction, transforming what might otherwise be perceived as intimidating content into an inviting daily companion for mindfulness practice.

Samanera Kiddy plays a central role in communicating Buddhist-based psychological resilience content through the TikTok platform. Just as the Dhammacakka symbolizes the turning of the Wheel of Dhamma in Buddhist tradition, Samanera Kiddy serves as a digital communication medium for delivering Buddhist contemplative practices to the modern workforce. The character facilitates the communication of Buddhist principles in ways that are understandable and applicable to participants' daily lives. The combination of three- to five-second hooks, accessible language, and the human-in-the-loop verification system ensures both maximum engagement and doctrinal fidelity.



Figure 2 The Samanera Kiddy Dhamma Wheel Model (SKDWM)

Synthesis: The Samanera Kiddy Dhamma Wheel Model (SKDWM)

The convergence of the Inner and Outer components produced the SKDWM, visually represented in Figure 2. In this model, the Dhammacakka served as the central metaphor: Its hub contained the doctrinal core of Ariya^āsacca 4 and Satipa^{ṭṭ}hāna 4; Its four segments represented the 30-day progressive curriculum across Dukkha, Samudaya, Nirodha, and Magga; And Samanera Kiddy stood as the joyful force propelling it forward along the TikTok platform.

This model established that effective digital mental health interventions require the inseparable integration of doctrinally rigorous content (Inner) and a culturally engaging delivery mechanism (Outer). It was precisely this synergy, the ancient wisdom of the Buddha delivered through a digital novice monk on a modern social media platform, that produced the statistically significant and



qualitatively profound enhancement of psychological resilience observed among the Thai workforce.

Ultimately, this study demonstrated that the ancient contemplative wisdom of the Buddha, when systematically operationalized into a 30-day micro-practice curriculum and delivered through an ethically governed AI character, possessed the capacity to transform occupational stress into inner regulation, emotional reactivity into empathic connection, existential anxiety into a purposeful mindset, and adversity into transformative growth.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study demonstrated that an AI-based Dhamma TikTok platform grounded in Buddhist teachings may contribute to enhancing psychological resilience among the Thai workforce. The three-phase Research and Development process indicated that working adults commonly experienced occupational stress, emotional dysregulation, and interpersonal conflicts, while also expressing the need for accessible and culturally relevant mental support tools. The 30-day digital intervention based on the Four Noble Truths and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness was associated with statistically significant improvements in psychological resilience scores ($t = 7.9060$, $p < 0.01$). Qualitative findings further suggested reductions in occupational stress, improvements in emotional regulation, and more positive interpersonal interactions in the workplace. The study also proposed the Samanera Kiddy Dhamma Wheel Model (SKDWM), which integrated Buddhist contemplative principles with AI-supported digital communication for workplace mental health promotion. The findings suggest that culturally grounded digital interventions may provide a practical and accessible approach for supporting employee well-being in contemporary work environments. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples, longer intervention periods, and comparative or cross-cultural investigations to further evaluate the applicability and effectiveness of the proposed model. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the integration of Buddhist contemplative practices and modern digital technology for sustainable mental health promotion.

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COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION MODELS FOR MANAGING TEMPLE SUBSIDIES TO PREVENT CORRUPTION

Tanet Ketsil*, Nalin Ratnarathorn

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

*Corresponding author E-mail: tanet.ket@mahidol.ac.th

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Temple subsidy corruption has become a major governance issue in Thailand, undermining public financial transparency, the credibility of Buddhist institutions, and public trust. Although previous studies have examined individual corruption cases and legal responses, limited research has systematically analyzed corruption patterns, governance failures, and structural factors underlying temple subsidy corruption. This study, therefore, aimed to analyze the patterns and processes of temple subsidy corruption in Thailand; Investigate the structural and administrative factors that facilitate corruption; And assess the extent to which the financial management of Thai temples aligns with the principles of good governance. Based on these findings, the study proposes the TEMPLE Model as a preventive governance framework for sustainable corruption prevention.

Methodology: This study employed a qualitative Research and Development (R&D) approach using a multiple case study design. Data were collected from documentary and corruption case file analysis, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. Fifty key informants representing monks, temple administrators, government officials, auditors, anti-corruption agencies, community leaders, and related stakeholders were selected through purposive and snowball sampling. Seventeen temples associated with officially documented corruption cases were included as case studies. Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and cross-case synthesis. Methodological triangulation was employed to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

Main Results: The findings indicated that temple subsidy corruption primarily occurred in three major budget categories: Temple restoration and renovation, Buddhist education, and Buddhist propagation. Major corruption patterns included kickback arrangements, document falsification, budget skimming, fund misappropriation, and collusion among multiple stakeholders involved in budget administration. Rather than isolated misconduct, corruption operated as a systemic process driven by governance deficiencies, including weak accounting systems, inadequate auditing, limited transparency, poor accountability, fragmented information management, and insufficient community participation. These structural weaknesses increased opportunities for discretionary decision-making, reduced effective oversight, and undermined public confidence in temple financial administration. Based



on these findings, the study developed the TEMPLE Model, consisting of six governance mechanisms: Transparent Planning, Exclusive Accounting, Mandatory Disclosure, Participatory Monitoring, Likelihood Prevention Strategy, and Exhibited Information Board.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: The findings demonstrate that temple subsidy corruption is not only a governance issue but also an ethical challenge that conflicts with core Buddhist teachings. The proposed TEMPLE Model integrates modern governance principles with Buddhist values embodied in the Seven Aparihaniyadhamma (Condition of Welfare), the Suppurisa-Dhamma (The Seven Virtues), and the Ten Principles of a Righteous King, particularly the virtues of integrity, accountability, collective responsibility, and ethical stewardship. The model, therefore, promotes both effective governance and the practical application of Buddhist ethics in temple administration. Accordingly, this manuscript falls within the scope of Applied Buddhism, specifically focusing on the application of Buddhist principles to administration and management through the TEMPLE Model for corruption prevention and good governance in Thai temples.

Conclusions: Temple subsidy corruption in Thailand represents a structural governance problem rather than isolated individual misconduct. Sustainable corruption prevention requires strengthening transparency, accountability, standardized financial management, independent auditing, digital information systems, and community participation. The TEMPLE Model contributes to the literature by providing a preventive governance framework specifically designed for temple subsidy administration, integrating legal, administrative, and participatory mechanisms into a practical model that can enhance transparency, strengthen public trust, and support sustainable governance within Buddhist institutions.

Keywords: Temple Subsidy Corruption, Good Governance, Community Participation, TEMPLE Model

Introduction

Temples play a vital role in Thai society in the domains of religion, education, culture, and community development. In addition to serving as centers for religious activities, temples contribute to social cohesion, promote moral values, and provide learning opportunities for local communities. For this reason, the government allocates financial subsidies to temples through various programs, including funds for restoration and renovation, religious infrastructure development, Buddhist activities, and the preservation of religious heritage. These subsidies are intended to support temple operations and enhance their capacity to serve the public interest effectively (Chunsom, 2014). However, in recent years, numerous cases involving a lack of transparency and allegations of corruption in the management of temple subsidy funds have emerged. In particular, corruption cases related to the disbursement of government-funded temple subsidies have revealed weaknesses in governance, oversight, auditing, and accountability mechanisms within both temples and the responsible public agencies. Such problems undermine public confidence in the Sangha institution and government agencies while reducing the effectiveness of public resource utilization for religious and social purposes.

The National Office of Buddhism (NOB) serves as the principal government agency responsible for promoting, supporting, and overseeing Buddhist affairs in Thailand. It also plays a key role in



allocating subsidy funds to temples and monastic organizations nationwide. Nevertheless, the NOB faces several challenges, including limited authority to conduct internal audits within temples, variations in administrative capacity among temples, constraints in personnel and resources, and religious and cultural sensitivities that complicate rigorous monitoring and financial oversight. Consequently, efforts to prevent, monitor, and manage corruption risks in temple subsidy administration continue to face significant challenges. The management of state subsidies allocated to religious institutions functions as an important mechanism for enabling temples to fulfill their religious, educational, social, and community development functions and activities. In Thailand, government support for Buddhist temples contributes significantly to temple restoration and maintenance, monastic education, and the dissemination of Buddhist teachings. However, persistent concerns regarding corruption and non-transparent budgetary practices have emerged in various sectors, including religious institutions, thereby undermining public confidence and generating skepticism among local communities (Chunsom, 2014); (Srisuwannaket, 2021). Historically, corruption studies and public attention have primarily focused on politicians, civil servants, and government agencies, while comparatively little attention has been directed toward corruption within religious institutions and the agencies responsible for their administration. This relative neglect has become increasingly problematic following the exposure of corruption cases involving temple subsidy allocations widely referred to in Thailand as temple subsidy corruption, which have significantly damaged the credibility of both temples and the National Office of Buddhism (Srisuwannaket, 2021). From a theoretical perspective, this study is grounded in the concept of Good Governance, which encompasses key principles including transparency, accountability, participation, the rule of law, and the efficient use of public resources. Good governance is widely recognized as a fundamental mechanism for preventing corruption and enhancing stakeholder trust. Studies on temple administration in Thailand have shown that the application of good governance principles in the management of temple finances and assets can improve oversight effectiveness, enhance transparency, and reduce opportunities for inappropriate practices in resource management (Chunsom, 2014); (Kittirattanamongkol, 2023).

Temple subsidies are allocated by the National Office of Buddhism to temples across Thailand for three primary purposes: 1) Temple restoration and renovation, 2) Buddhist education, and 3) Buddhist propagation and religious activities. In cases involving temple subsidy corruption, subsidy funds are formally transferred from central government authorities to a temple, after which individuals associated with the allocation process demand that a portion of the funds be returned. In many instances, prior agreements specify the amount to be reclaimed before budget disbursement takes place. This practice, commonly known as a kickback, often resulted in distribution arrangements reportedly reaching a ratio of 70:30, whereby temples retained only 30 percent of the allocated budget, while the remaining funds were appropriated by officials and other actors involved (Pontrai et al., 2024); (Srisuwannaket, 2021). Investigations further revealed that such practices had persisted over extended periods but received limited scrutiny due to institutional contentment and the widespread assumption that religious organizations were less susceptible to unethical



conduct (Srisuwannaket, 2021). Under The Sangha Act, B.E. 2505 (1962), temples are recognized as juristic persons possessing legal rights and obligations. Although temples operate as non-profit religious organizations outside the conventional market system, similar to foundations and charitable organizations, they rely substantially on state subsidies and public donations for their operations (Phrakataavoot Kavasakatammo (Pangtee) & Singkaneti, 2022). This financial structure creates an imperative for sound governance, requiring transparency, accountability, auditability, and effective oversight mechanisms. From the perspective of good governance theory, public resources should be managed in a manner that promotes integrity, efficiency, stakeholder participation, and public trust. The absence of such governance mechanisms increases opportunities for discretionary decision-making, information asymmetry, and abuse of authority, all of which contribute to corruption risks within public subsidy systems.

Financial disclosure and standardized financial reporting constitute essential mechanisms for demonstrating the sources and uses of temple funds and enabling public scrutiny (Chunsom, 2014). Effective financial management not only enhances transparency and accountability but also reinforces public trust and strengthens the role of temples as moral and spiritual centers within communities. Moreover, robust governance systems contribute to the long-term sustainability of religious institutions by ensuring that public resources are utilized appropriately and efficiently. Despite the significance of this issue, previous studies have paid limited attention to the structural and procedural dimensions of temple subsidy corruption. Existing literature has primarily focused on descriptive reporting of corruption incidents or legal aspects of misconduct, while systematic analyses of corruption patterns, governance failures, accountability mechanisms, and community participation remain scarce (Tanakiatwaree, 2019). Consequently, a significant research gap exists regarding how corruption networks operate within temple subsidy systems and how governance mechanisms can be strengthened to prevent recurrence. Temple subsidy corruption in Thailand has therefore resulted not only in substantial fiscal losses but also in severe damage to the credibility of religious institutions and public confidence in Buddhism. The problem reflects a complex interaction of collusion among state officials, members of the clergy, and external actors, combined with weak oversight systems, inadequate accountability mechanisms, and limited public participation in monitoring processes (Chagnong & Sompong, 2020). From a governance perspective, these conditions illustrate broader challenges associated with principal-agent problems, information asymmetry, and institutional weaknesses in public resource management. To prevent temples from being exploited as instruments of corruption and to restore public trust, it is essential to critically examine the structural vulnerabilities embedded within temple financial administration and subsidy allocation systems. Such an examination can contribute not only to the development of more effective anti-corruption measures but also to the advancement of knowledge concerning governance and accountability within religious institutions.

In addition, this study draws upon Principal-Agent Theory proposed by Jensen and Meckling (1976) to explain corruption risks in the administration of temple subsidy budgets. Under this framework, citizens and the government act as principals who delegate authority to public officials, project administrators, or temple representatives as agents responsible for managing public funds.



However, when information asymmetry and unequal decision-making power exist, agents may engage in self-interested behavior, exercise authority without adequate oversight, or misuse public resources in ways that deviate from their intended purposes. Addressing these problems requires effective monitoring mechanisms, information disclosure, and stakeholder participation to promote checks and balances and strengthen accountability in budget administration (Jensen & Meckling, 1976). Although a number of studies have examined temple asset management, temple financial administration, and the application of good governance principles in religious organizations, the literature indicates that most research has focused on administrative structures, asset management practices, or corruption cases that have already occurred. Relatively limited attention has been paid to the role of community participation as a preventive mechanism for corruption and as a means of strengthening governance in the administration of temple subsidy funds. In particular, few studies have integrated the concepts of governance, accountability, and public participation within the context of temple budget management (Junsontima, 2018); (Ki-ian et al., 2023). To address this gap, the present study focuses on examining the role of community participation in the management of temple subsidy budgets as a strategy for corruption prevention. Specifically, it investigates how the involvement of citizens, temple committees, community leaders, and other stakeholders in information access, monitoring, auditing, and evaluation of budget expenditures can enhance transparency, accountability, and good governance in temple financial administration. Rather than concentrating primarily on corruption incidents, this study adopts a preventive approach and seeks to develop appropriate governance mechanisms for the future management of temple subsidy funds (Freeman, 2010); (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1997).

Although previous studies have examined issues related to temple financial administration, temple asset management, good governance, and various forms of temple subsidy corruption, the literature review indicates that most research has primarily focused on explaining corruption incidents that have already occurred or on examining financial management systems and relevant legal frameworks. Relatively few studies have analyzed temple subsidy corruption as a structural and procedural problem by systematically linking corruption mechanisms with the concepts of governance, accountability, and public participation. Furthermore, there remains a lack of research utilizing corruption case files to synthesize corruption patterns, processes, and structural factors that facilitate corrupt practices while simultaneously developing participatory governance approaches for future corruption prevention. This gap highlights the need for studies that integrate knowledge on corruption, governance, and community participation within the context of temple subsidy administration in Thailand. To address this gap, the present study analyzes patterns and processes of temple subsidy corruption based on corruption case files from the past five years, investigates the structural and governance factors that facilitate corruption, synthesizes lessons learned from multiple case studies, and evaluates the extent to which the financial management of Thai temples aligns with the principles of good governance. Particular attention is given to the role of community participation as a preventive mechanism against corruption.



The findings are expected to contribute to the academic understanding of the relationship between governance, public participation, and corruption prevention in religious institutions. In addition, the study aims to develop policy recommendations and propose the "TEMPLE Model," an integrated governance framework that connects budget planning, financial control, information disclosure, risk management, and community participation. The proposed framework is expected to benefit the National Office of Buddhism, the Sangha, temples, and related agencies in enhancing transparency, accountability, and efficiency in the administration of temple subsidy funds, while strengthening public confidence in Buddhist institutions in a sustainable manner.

Objectives

This study aimed to analyze the patterns and processes of temple subsidy corruption in Thailand; Investigate the structural and administrative factors that facilitate corruption; And assess the extent to which the financial management of Thai temples aligns with the principles of good governance. Based on these findings, the study proposes the TEMPLE Model as a preventive governance framework for sustainable corruption prevention.

Methodology

Research Design and Scope of the Study

This study employed a Research and Development (R&D) approach within a qualitative multiple-case study design. The research aimed not only to investigate the problem of temple subsidy corruption but also to develop practical knowledge, governance mechanisms, and preventive models applicable to the administration of temple subsidy funds in Thailand. The R&D approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the researchers to examine actual corruption cases, synthesize lessons learned from previous corruption incidents, and translate the findings into policy recommendations and governance models consistent with the principles of good governance and the context of the Thai Sangha administration. The study adopted methodological triangulation by integrating documentary analysis, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. This approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the legal, administrative, governance, social, and religious dimensions of temple subsidy corruption. Data triangulation further enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings by enabling comparisons across multiple sources of evidence.

The study area consisted of seventeen temples purposively selected from investigation reports, official rulings, and government documents issued by the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) and related public agencies. These temples were identified as being associated with cases of temple subsidy corruption and were selected as multiple case studies to facilitate an in-depth analysis of corruption patterns, governance weaknesses, and structural risk factors. The selected temples were not intended to represent all temples in Thailand statistically; Rather, they were chosen because they provided rich empirical evidence relevant to the research objectives (As Shown in Table 1).



Table 1 Temples that have been found guilty of embezzlement of temple funds by the National Anti-Corruption Commission in 2023

Number	Province	List of Temples
1	Bangkok	Wat Pleng
2	Nonthaburi	Wat uamongprachanaruemit
3	Nonthaburi	Wat Intharam
4	Nonthaburi	Wat Ruak
5	Nakhon Pathom	Wat Huai Chorakhe
6	Phetchabun	Wat Lat Khae
7	Saraburi	Wat Nong Rae
8	Saraburi	Wat Thong Yoi
9	Saraburi	Wat Nong Sutta
10	Saraburi	Wat Ko Kaeo Arun Kham
11	Ayutthaya	Wat Pho Thong
12	Ayutthaya	Wat Jonggonnee
13	Ayutthaya	Wat Tamnak
14	Samut Songkhram	Wat Klang Nuea
15	Samut Prakan	Wat Yai
16	Buriram	Wat Santithammawat
17	Surin	Wat Prachasamakkee

Research Instruments and Data Collection

Data collection was conducted over a six-month period from May to October 2025 and consisted of three phases. First, documentary research was undertaken for two months through the collection and analysis of corruption case files, laws, regulations, audit reports, and relevant academic literature. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 key informants. Each interview lasted approximately 60 – 90 minutes and continued until data saturation was achieved. Third, focus group discussions were conducted, each involving five participants, for a total of 20 participants. Each session lasted approximately two to three hours and followed a semi-structured discussion guideline to validate findings, synthesize lessons learned, and refine governance recommendations. The collected data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. To enhance methodological rigor, data triangulation was employed through systematic comparisons among documentary evidence, interview data, and focus group findings. This process strengthened the credibility, validity, and trustworthiness of the study results.

Participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The study involved 50 key informants representing various stakeholder groups, including abbots, monks, temple stewards, temple committee members, community leaders, local residents, representatives of anti-corruption agencies, public auditing organizations, Buddhist administrative agencies, and experts in anti-corruption and educational development. The inclusion of diverse



stakeholder groups ensured comprehensive perspectives on temple financial management, governance practices, corruption risks, and preventive measures.

Instrument Validation

Following the development of the research instruments, the research team proceeded to examine their content validity by submitting the instruments to three qualified experts and academics for review. The experts evaluated the content relevance and the appropriateness of the language used in the instruments to ensure that the collected data would be consistent with the research objectives and capable of addressing the research problems under investigation. The Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was employed as the criterion for content validation, and only items with an IOC value of 0.60 or higher were retained (Tirakanant, 2003). The interview questions were subsequently revised and refined in accordance with the recommendations and comments provided by the experts. After the revision process, the finalized research instruments were submitted to the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Mahidol University, for ethical consideration. The interview questions were formally approved by the committee under Certification No. 2025/056.0506. It covers the procedures for obtaining consent and maintaining confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process began with the analysis, synthesis, and categorization of documentary data to identify recurring patterns and mechanisms of temple subsidy corruption in Thailand. This stage involved reviewing secondary sources, including academic literature, official documents, media reports, and historical corruption case files covering the period 2017 - 2022. Subsequently, data obtained from in-depth interviews were analyzed thematically, focusing on issues related to temple financial management and good governance principles. The findings from this stage were consolidated into an analytical framework that informed the design and facilitation of focus group discussions. The focus group data were then analyzed to generate policy-oriented and participatory recommendations, particularly those aimed at strengthening good governance and enhancing community participation in the prevention and mitigation of temple subsidy corruption.

Qualitative data collection and analysis were conducted concurrently throughout the study. Data saturation was used as the primary criterion for determining the adequacy of the collected data. Saturation was considered to have been achieved when additional in-depth interviews no longer generated new themes, concepts, or patterns of temple subsidy corruption beyond those already identified, and when the data consistently reflected similar findings regarding corruption patterns, structural factors, governance mechanisms, and good governance challenges. Following each interview, the recorded data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Codes and emerging themes were continuously compared and refined throughout the data collection process. The analysis indicated that data saturation was reached during the final stage of the in-depth interviews, when participants from different stakeholder groups repeatedly reported similar issues, and no substantial new codes or themes emerged. Subsequently, focus group discussions were conducted to validate, confirm, and further elaborate upon the findings derived from the in-depth



interviews. This process enhanced the credibility, validity, and methodological rigor of the study by enabling cross-verification of the findings across multiple sources of evidence.

Results and Discussion

The process of temple subsidy corruption generally began when temples or temple administrators submitted funding requests to the National Office of Buddhism (NOB) through the established budget allocation procedures. Applications were reviewed by the relevant committees, and lists of eligible temples were prepared together with supporting documentation for budget approval. Once approved by the authorized authorities, subsidy funds were transferred to the designated temples in accordance with official administrative procedures.

The findings revealed that major vulnerabilities within this process were associated with discretionary decision-making in the selection of temples, the preparation of supporting documents, and the monitoring of budget expenditures, all of which lacked sufficient transparency. These weaknesses facilitated collusion among monks, government officials, and certain external actors who sought to benefit from temple subsidy funds. In several cases, arrangements were made to return a portion of the allocated funds after disbursement, a practice commonly referred to as the "Kickback Scheme." However, the findings indicated that such practices represented only one manifestation of a broader pattern of temple subsidy corruption. The study further found that corruption occurred systematically throughout the entire budget administration process, including the submission of funding requests, budget approval, fund disbursement, and the transfer of illicit benefits. Consequently, public funds intended for temple restoration and renovation, Buddhist education, and religious propagation were not fully utilized for their intended purposes. These practices undermined the principles of good governance, weakened transparency and accountability, and reduced public confidence in the financial administration of temples and the government agencies responsible for subsidy oversight, as illustrated in Figure 1.

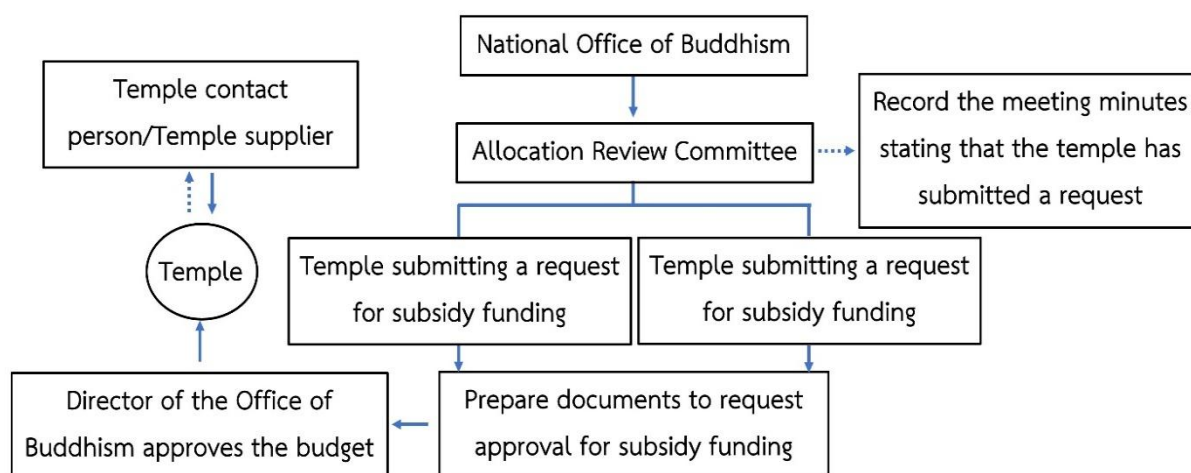


Figure 1 Diagram illustrating the process of corruption in temple subsidy budgets



The qualitative analysis of data obtained from informants coded ID01 – ID050 clearly indicated that temple subsidy corruption did not arise solely from the misconduct of individual actors but rather constituted a structural problem rooted in weaknesses within budget allocation systems, monitoring processes, and oversight mechanisms that were not fully aligned with the contemporary context of temple administration. Informants across all stakeholder groups consistently reported that the existing system allowed a high degree of discretionary decision-making, lacked transparency, and made retrospective auditing difficult. Representative quotations from interview participants

"...The Problem of Temple Financial Administration Is Not Merely the Result of Individual Misconduct; Rather, It Reflects Structural Weaknesses in The Budget Allocation System and State Oversight Mechanisms. These Weaknesses Create Opportunities for Excessive Discretion and A Lack of Transparency, Ultimately Undermining Public Trust in Religious Institutions..."

"...Strengthening Good Governance in Temples Requires the Design of a Balanced Governance System That Integrates Sound Accounting Standards, Targeted Auditing Mechanisms, And Meaningful Community Participation, While Respecting the Unique Context, Identity, And Administrative Capacity of Each Temple..." (FG1, 2026)

Previous studies by Tansrisook (2023) and Chunsom (2014) reached similar conclusions, particularly regarding the role of the state in the governance of temple administration. Representatives from government agencies and auditing organizations emphasized the importance of strengthening legal measures, oversight mechanisms, and sanctions to improve accountability. In contrast, some monks and community representatives expressed concern that excessive regulatory control could undermine public confidence and weaken the traditional identity of religious institutions. These contrasting perspectives reflect an inherent tension between state governance principles and the established practices of temple administration. The findings indicate that corruption involving temple subsidies in Thailand follows recurring patterns across multiple stages of the budget cycle, including project planning, budget allocation, procurement, financial disbursement, and reporting. Corruption was driven not only by individual misconduct but also by structural and administrative weaknesses, including fragmented oversight mechanisms, inadequate internal controls, limited transparency, overlapping institutional responsibilities, and insufficient accountability among relevant stakeholders. The findings further revealed that corruption risk varied according to temple size and organizational structure, with larger temples facing greater vulnerability due to more complex financial management systems and greater reliance on governmental procedures and external actors, whereas smaller temples generally operated under simpler administrative systems and were subject to closer community oversight. Most informants also acknowledged that budgetary reforms introduced after 2019, particularly earmarked subsidy allocations and multi-level screening procedures, had significantly reduced opportunities for corruption (Srisuwannaket, 2021). Nevertheless, the assessment of temple financial management



showed that important gaps remained in the implementation of good governance principles, particularly regarding transparency, accountability, participation, the rule of law, and effective financial oversight.

Discussion

These findings suggest that the sustainable prevention of temple subsidy corruption requires governance reforms that strengthen financial management systems, improve inter-agency coordination, reinforce accountability, and integrate state governance principles with Buddhist monastic regulations and community participation while recognizing the diverse administrative capacities of temples and the legal framework of the Thai Sangha. This interpretation is consistent with the findings of Ragsakaew et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of balancing governance standards with religious and community contexts to promote transparent, accountable, and sustainable management of public resources.

The findings of this study addressed the research objectives by identifying the patterns and processes of temple subsidy corruption, examining the structural and governance factors facilitating corruption, evaluating the extent to which the financial administration of Thai temples aligned with the principles of good governance, and developing policy recommendations for sustainable corruption prevention. The discussion of these findings is presented as follows.

1. Temple subsidy corruption operated as a systemic process

The analysis of corruption case files from the past five years revealed that temple subsidy corruption occurred through multiple mechanisms, including the submission of inaccurate supporting documents, the misuse of development projects for private gain, and the return of a portion of allocated funds after disbursement. These practices extended throughout the budget administration process, from proposal submission and project approval to fund disbursement and post-project monitoring. The findings indicated that corruption was not the result of isolated individual misconduct but rather involved multiple actors operating within the budget allocation system. This pattern reflected characteristics of systemic corruption arising from weaknesses in administrative and oversight processes. The findings were consistent with Principal-Agent Theory, which explains that corruption becomes more likely when agents possess greater information and decision-making power than those responsible for oversight and accountability.

2. Structural and governance factors facilitated corruption

The study found that several structural conditions contributed to corruption, including centralized decision-making authority, excessive administrative discretion, inadequate field verification, the absence of integrated databases, and the lack of standardized accounting systems. These findings were consistent with Klitgaard's (1988) corruption framework, which proposes that corruption tends to increase when monopoly power and discretion are high while accountability is weak. Furthermore, the absence of integrated financial information systems contributed to information asymmetry between regulatory agencies and local temples, creating opportunities for data manipulation and ineffective oversight.



3. Case studies demonstrated governance failures as the root cause of corruption

The synthesis of corruption cases suggested that temple subsidy corruption was fundamentally associated with weaknesses in governance systems, particularly in transparency, accountability, participation, and internal control mechanisms. When evaluated against the principles of good governance, the most significant deficiencies were found in transparency and accountability. These weaknesses contributed to excessive discretion, inadequate monitoring, and limited public participation. The findings support the position of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) (2013), which identifies good governance as a critical mechanism for preventing corruption and strengthening public trust in public institutions.

4. The financial administration of Thai temples demonstrated limited alignment with good governance principles

Although governance reforms were introduced following major temple subsidy corruption scandals, the findings revealed that many temples still lacked standardized accounting systems, public financial disclosure practices, and effective mechanisms for citizen oversight. Consequently, the financial administration of Thai temples demonstrated only limited alignment with good governance principles, particularly regarding transparency, auditability, and stakeholder participation. These dimensions remain essential components of effective public sector governance and corruption prevention.

5. Policy Implications and the Development of a Participatory Governance Framework

The findings suggested that legal sanctions and enforcement measures alone were insufficient to address corruption because the problem was deeply rooted in structural and governance weaknesses. Interview data and documentary evidence further indicated that temple subsidy corruption adversely affected public confidence in temples and relevant government agencies. Although this study did not directly measure public trust, most informants agreed that corruption scandals had increased public concern regarding the transparency of temple budget administration. Based on these findings, the study proposes a Participatory Governance Framework, referred to as the "TEMPLE Model." The framework integrates the roles of the National Office of Buddhism, the Sangha, temple committees, public auditing agencies, civil society organizations, and local communities in monitoring and overseeing the use of temple subsidy funds. It also incorporates digital accounting systems, centralized databases, public disclosure mechanisms, and community-based oversight processes. This integrated governance approach can enhance transparency, reduce information asymmetry, strengthen accountability among stakeholders, mitigate future corruption risks, and promote sustainable financial governance in accordance with the principles of good governance.

The findings suggest that the persistence of temple subsidy corruption in Thailand should be understood primarily as a governance problem rather than solely as a consequence of individual unethical behavior. Corruption opportunities arise when institutional arrangements fail to ensure effective transparency, accountability, coordination, and oversight throughout the



public budgeting process, indicating that systemic weaknesses, rather than individual misconduct alone, create conditions that enable corruption. This interpretation is consistent with contemporary governance literature, which emphasizes that corruption is more likely to occur where institutional capacity is weak, accountability mechanisms are fragmented, and monitoring systems are ineffective. The findings, therefore, imply that governance reforms should move beyond strengthening financial controls to establishing integrated accountability frameworks that combine regulatory enforcement, institutional coordination, digital financial management, stakeholder participation, and context-sensitive governance. Such reforms are particularly important in the administration of Thai temples, where financial management operates within both public administrative systems and Buddhist monastic governance. In this context, temple subsidy corruption should also be viewed as an ethical challenge that contradicts fundamental Buddhist teachings. Accordingly, the proposed TEMPLE Model provides a holistic governance framework by integrating modern governance principles with Buddhist values embodied in the Seven Aparihaniyadhamma (Condition of Welfare) (A.IV.(Thai) 23/21/31 - 32) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2017), the Suppurisa-Dhamma (The Seven Virtues) (D.III.(Thai) 11/330/333) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2017) and the Ten Principles of a Righteous King (J.(Thai) 28/176/112) (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2017). Through this integration, the model promotes integrity, accountability, collective responsibility, and ethical stewardship in temple administration. This interpretation is consistent with recent international studies highlighting that sustainable anti-corruption strategies require governance systems that balance legal compliance with institutional legitimacy, local participation, and organizational capacity rather than relying solely on punitive measures or procedural controls (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015). Consequently, the long-term prevention of temple subsidy corruption depends on strengthening governance ecosystems that integrate institutional reforms with ethical values, reinforce public trust, and promote transparent, accountable, and sustainable financial management across all levels of governance.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

The TEMPLE Model is an integrated conceptual framework developed to prevent corruption in temple budget administration. The model was formulated through an analysis of structural gaps in legal regulations, administrative systems, and public participation mechanisms. It consists of six key components: Strategic planning, financial control, information transparency, community participation, risk management, and on-site public disclosure. Its key characteristic is the transition from reactive, post-audit control toward proactive prevention and participatory governance.

The development of the TEMPLE Model is based on three major structural gaps.

First, the legal gap stems from regulations that allow broad discretionary power in budget consideration and approval processes. In addition, although abbots are legally recognized as public officials, many lack adequate knowledge and skills in financial and budget management.



Second, the administrative gap is reflected in the absence of separate accounting systems, resulting in mixed financial records and weak financial accountability. The findings also reveal insufficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, while budget disbursement is often disconnected from actual performance outcomes.

Third, the social gap is characterized by limited public access to information and minimal community participation in oversight processes. The low level of transparency has consequently contributed to declining public trust and reduced confidence in temple administration.

Overall, the TEMPLE Model emphasizes transparency, accountability, and participatory governance as core mechanisms for strengthening integrity in temple budget management and preventing corruption in a sustainable manner.

The TEMPLE Model consists of six key measures designed to strengthen transparency, accountability, and anti-corruption mechanisms in temple subsidy management.

1. Transparent Planning: A five-year strategic action plan aligned with the National Strategy should be developed to ensure systematic and sustainable administration.

2. Exclusive Accounting: Subsidy funds for specific projects should be separated from other temple accounts through a "Project-specific Account" system to prevent the misuse or leakage of funds.

3. Mandatory Disclosure: Information related to special subsidy projects for construction, temple restoration, and temple development should be publicly disclosed to enhance transparency.

4. Participatory Monitoring: A community participation mechanism should be established to enable local communities to monitor and oversee subsidy-funded projects through three stages of inspection: Before, during, and after project implementation.

5. Likelihood Prevention Strategy: This key refers to the prevention of corruption risks from the earliest stages of the budget administration process through the development of corruption risk management plans, the identification of potential risk points, the establishment of control measures, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. Particular emphasis should be placed on earmarked subsidy projects related to construction, temple restoration and renovation, and temple development, where corruption risks are more likely to occur and may have significant impacts on the effective utilization of public funds.

6. Exhibited Information Board: Public information boards displaying project details, budget information, and complaint channels should be installed to improve public access to information and strengthen accountability.

Therefore, six key measures are proposed to prevent and address these issues, covering planning, budget management, transparency, and public participation, as illustrated in Figure 2.

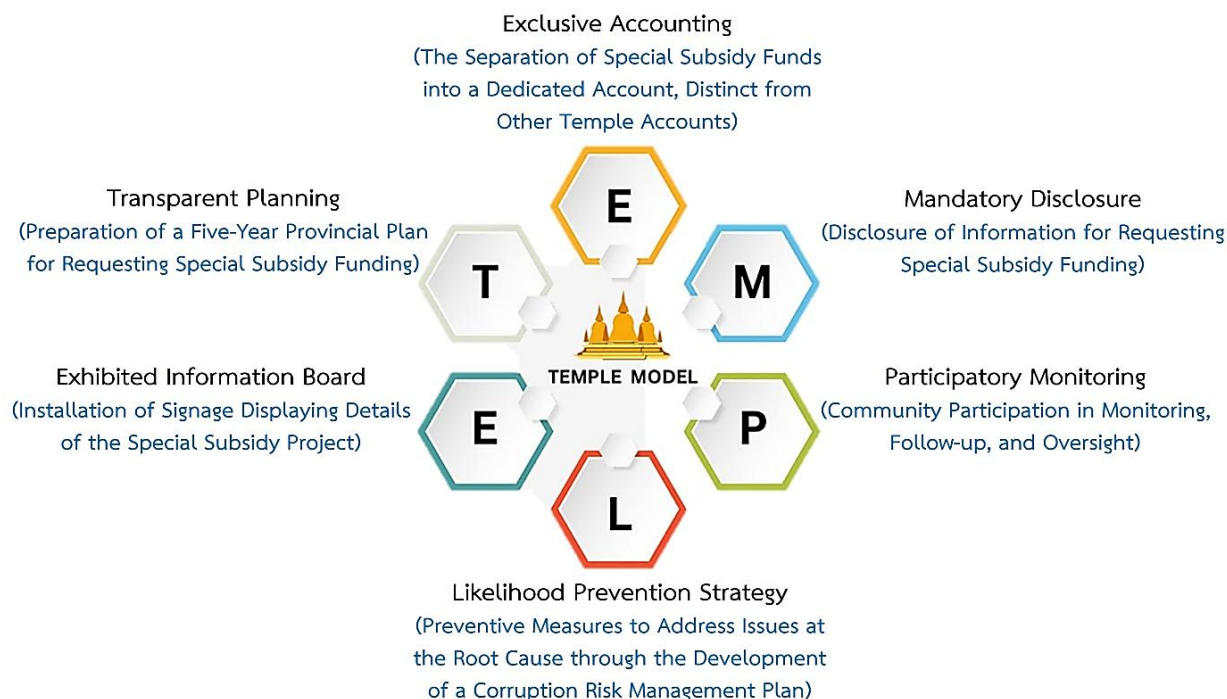


Figure 2 TEMPLE Model

The originality of the TEMPLE Model, when compared with existing governance frameworks, does not lie merely in the application of established principles such as transparency, accountability, and public participation, as these concepts have long been recognized in the governance and anti-corruption literature. Rather, its distinctive contribution lies in the development of a specialized Temple Subsidy Governance Framework designed specifically for the administration and oversight of temple subsidy funds. The model is grounded in empirical evidence derived from the analysis of temple subsidy corruption case files in Thailand, together with insights obtained from stakeholders directly involved in temple budget administration and oversight. Unlike conventional approaches that primarily emphasize post-audit control, the TEMPLE Model promotes a preventive governance approach by integrating a series of proactive measures throughout the budget administration cycle. These measures encompass budget planning, project-specific accounting, public disclosure, community participation, corruption risk management, and on-site disclosure mechanisms. By combining legal, administrative, and community-based governance dimensions within a single framework, the model offers a novel contribution that has not been clearly articulated in previous studies on temple budget administration and corruption prevention within religious institutions in Thailand.

Furthermore, the TEMPLE Model is developed from the analysis of three major structural gaps that facilitate temple subsidy corruption: The Legal Gap, the Administrative Gap, and the Social Participation Gap. Each component of the model is specifically designed to address these structural deficiencies. The TEMPLE Model consists of six integrated governance mechanisms designed to strengthen transparency, accountability, and corruption prevention in temple subsidy



administration. Transparent Planning (T) emphasizes that the National Office of Buddhism develop and regularly review a five-year strategic plan aligned with national strategies and related policy frameworks to ensure effective and adaptive budget management. Exclusive Accounting (E) requires temple subsidy funds to be maintained in separate accounts and used exclusively for their intended purposes. Mandatory Disclosure (M) promotes transparency through the public disclosure of essential project information, including project objectives, implementation schedules, budget allocations, contractual information, and project outcomes. Participatory Monitoring (P) encourages communities and stakeholders to participate in monitoring and oversight, thereby reducing corruption risks and strengthening public confidence. Likelihood Prevention Strategy (L) focuses on early-stage corruption risk assessment and preventive control measures to minimize opportunities for misconduct before it occurs. Finally, the Exhibited Information Board (E) enhances public access to financial and project information through publicly displayed information boards, reinforcing transparency, accountability, and good governance. Consequently, the six components of the TEMPLE Model do not function as isolated measures but operate as an integrated system that collectively responds to the three identified structural gaps. The model therefore serves as a Preventive Governance Framework aimed at reducing opportunities for corruption at the earliest stages of the budget administration process while simultaneously strengthening transparency, accountability, and community participation in the sustainable management of temple subsidy funds.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that corruption in Thailand's temple subsidy system is a structural and systemic governance problem rooted in weaknesses in budget administration rather than the misconduct of individual actors. Evidence from corruption case files and key informants indicates that corruption occurs throughout the budget cycle, including budget requests, project approval, fund disbursement, and project monitoring, reflecting deficiencies in transparency, accountability, internal control, and oversight mechanisms. To address these challenges, the study develops the TEMPLE Model, an integrated governance framework that links three structural gaps (Legal Gap, Administrative Gap, and Community Participation Gap) with six governance mechanisms: Transparent Planning, Exclusive Accounting, Mandatory Disclosure, Participatory Monitoring, Likelihood Prevention Strategy, and Exhibited Information Board. The model advances a preventive and participatory approach to governance and represents a significant contribution to both the literature and policy practice on corruption prevention in religious organizations. Accordingly, the study recommends enhancing financial transparency and public disclosure in the short term, strengthening internal control and independent auditing in the medium term, and promoting participatory governance involving communities and civil society in the long term to reduce corruption risks, restore public trust, and ensure the sustainable administration of temple subsidy funds.

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MEANING-MAKING OF LIFE PROBLEMS THROUGH BUDDHADHAMMA IN DIGITAL DHAMMA COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE THAMMA SAWASDEE' LIVE PROGRAM

Sitsadanoot Uttha*, Thinnawat Sroikudrua

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen, Thailand

*Corresponding author E-mail: sitsadanoot@pticec.ac.th

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Digital media has transformed Buddhist communication from the dissemination of religious teachings in traditional settings into interactive environments where individuals interpret life experiences and life problems through engagement with Buddhadhamma. In these digital contexts, Dhamma communication functions as a meaning-making process through which lived experiences are interpreted and understood from Buddhist perspectives. Previous studies have primarily examined digital media as a channel for disseminating Buddhist teachings. However, limited attention has been paid to how Buddhadhamma functions as an interpretive framework for reconstructing the meanings of life problems and to the linguistic and communicative strategies supporting this process. The Thamma Sawasdee' Live Program by Mae Chee Sansanee Sthirasuta was selected as the case study because it represents an interactive form of digital Dhamma communication in which audiences engage with emotional suffering, interpersonal relationships, family issues, and social uncertainty through reflective dialogue grounded in Buddhadhamma. Accordingly, this study aimed to examine the meaning-making process through which life problems are interpreted and understood in the Thamma Sawasdee' Live Program, to investigate how Buddhadhamma functions as an interpretive framework for understanding and reconstructing the meanings of life problems, to analyze the linguistic and communicative strategies employed in Dhamma communication, and to develop a conceptual framework explaining Buddhadhamma-based meaning-making in digital Dhamma communication.

Methodology: This qualitative study employed interpretive content analysis. The data consisted of 51 episodes of the Thamma Sawasdee' Live Program published on the SDS Channel YouTube platform between 2019 and 2021. Purposive sampling was used to select episodes with more than 5,000 views. Data were analyzed through meaning-unit identification, thematic coding, thematic categorization, and interpretive analysis. Trustworthiness was enhanced through expert validation, peer debriefing, and theoretical triangulation.



Main Results: The findings revealed that digital Dhamma communication functioned as a Buddhadhamma-based meaning-making process through which participants interpreted and reconstructed life experiences. Four meaning-making dimensions were identified: 1) Life Suffering, 2) Emotional and Mental Management, 3) Relationships and Family, and 4) Contemporary Social Context. Across these dimensions, life experiences were interpreted through core Buddhadhamma principles, leading to emotional resilience, social adaptation, and personal transformation. The analysis further demonstrated that metaphorical expressions, repetition, contextual explanation, and reflective dialogue functioned as the principal linguistic and communicative strategies for translating Buddhist principles into practical frameworks for everyday life.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: The findings demonstrate the application of core Buddhadhamma principles, including the Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca), the Three Characteristics (Tilakkhaṇa), Dependent Origination (Paṭiccasamuppāda), Mindfulness (Sati), Loving-kindness (Mettā), and Compassion (Karuṇā), as applied in digital Dhamma communication to help individuals interpret life problems and reconstruct meaningful understandings of lived experiences. Rather than functioning solely as religious doctrine, Buddhadhamma is applied as a practical interpretive framework for emotional management, interpersonal relationships, social adaptation, and personal transformation in contemporary digital society. Accordingly, this study is positioned within the field of Applied Buddhism, specifically the development of wisdom and morality through Buddhism, by demonstrating how digital Dhamma communication enables individuals to interpret life problems, cultivate wisdom and moral understanding, and reconstruct meaningful understandings of lived experiences through Buddhadhamma.

Conclusions: Digital Dhamma communication can be understood as a Buddhadhamma-based meaning-making process in which language and communication function as interpretive mechanisms linking lived experiences with Buddhist principles. This study proposes the Buddhadhamma-Based Meaning-Making Model of Life Problems in Digital Dhamma Communication, which explains how lived experiences, interpretive communication, linguistic and communicative strategies, and Buddhadhamma are integrated into a unified framework for reconstructing life understanding in contemporary digital society. The findings contribute to the theoretical development of digital religion and Dhamma communication while providing practical implications for digital Buddhist communication, religious education, and contemporary Dhamma dissemination.

Keywords: Meaning-Making, Dhamma Communication, Digital Religion, Buddhadhamma, Mae Chee Sansanee Sathirasuta

Introduction

Contemporary society is increasingly characterized by rapid social change, economic uncertainty, emotional distress, interpersonal conflicts, family tensions, and social instability.



These conditions require individuals not only to cope with life problems but also to construct meaningful interpretations of suffering, anxiety, loss, and uncertainty. Within Buddhist traditions, Buddhadhamma has long functioned as an interpretive framework through which human experiences are understood, suffering is explained, and constructive responses to life challenges are developed. Rather than serving solely as a source of moral guidance, Buddhadhamma provides explanatory principles that enable individuals to interpret lived experiences, understand the causes of suffering, and reconstruct life understanding. In contemporary society, however, the communication and interpretation of Buddhadhamma have been profoundly transformed by digital media, which has become an increasingly important environment for religious communication, interaction, and meaning-making (Cloete, 2015).

The emergence of digital communication technologies has created interactive environments in which religious teachings are disseminated, discussed, interpreted, and continuously reconstructed. Digital religion describes the integration of religion and digital media in ways that reshape religious practices, religious experiences, and interactions between communicators and audiences (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020). Likewise, media functions not merely as a channel for transmitting religious content but also as a social institution that influences how religion is interpreted and practiced in contemporary society (Hjarvard, 2011). Hoover (2006) further argues that religious meaning is increasingly constructed through media environments where communication becomes intertwined with everyday life. Within Buddhist contexts, Dhamma communication therefore extends beyond the transmission of doctrinal knowledge to become an interpretive communicative process through which Buddhist teachings are connected with lived experiences. From a meaning-making perspective, communication enables individuals to construct understanding, negotiate meanings, and reinterpret life experiences through core Buddhadhamma principles, including the Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca), the Three Characteristics (Tilakkhaṇa), and Dependent Origination (Paṭiccasamuppāda).

Previous studies have substantially advanced knowledge of digital religion by examining online religious participation, audience engagement, and the dissemination of religious teachings through digital media (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020); (Hjarvard, 2011). More recent Buddhist studies have explored the dissemination of Buddhism through digital technologies and the interpretation of Buddhist teachings in contemporary digital society (Phrakhrutheerasatpaisa & Phrabaidika Saengtham Supano, 2025); (PhramahaMichai Kijjasaro & PhramahaVoraphan Vorapanyo, 2024). Nevertheless, these studies have primarily emphasized communication as a means of religious dissemination rather than as a process through which individuals construct and reconstruct meanings of lived experiences through Buddhadhamma. Consequently, limited attention has been given to the interpretive mechanisms, linguistic and communicative strategies, and the dynamic processes through which Buddhist principles become practical resources for understanding emotional suffering, interpersonal relationships, family challenges,



and contemporary social uncertainty. Addressing this gap, the present study conceptualizes digital Dhamma communication as a Buddhadhamma-based meaning-making process, emphasizing the interaction among lived experiences, linguistic and communicative strategies, and Buddhist principles in the reconstruction of life understanding.

Interactive Dhamma communication provides an especially valuable context for examining these processes because it enables audiences to engage directly with Buddhist teachings in relation to everyday life concerns. The Thamma Sawasdee' Live Program presented by Mae Chee Sansanee Sthirasuta represents a distinctive example of such communication. The program comprises 51 highly viewed episodes broadcast between 2019 and 2021, each receiving more than 5,000 views and addressing emotional suffering, relationship conflicts, family challenges, workplace pressures, and social uncertainty. Rather than presenting doctrinal instruction alone, the program facilitates reflective dialogue by connecting lived experiences with Buddhadhamma. Accordingly, this study investigates the meaning-making process through which life problems are interpreted in the Thamma Sawasdee' Live Program, examines how Buddhadhamma functions as an interpretive framework for reconstructing life experiences, analyzes the linguistic and communicative strategies employed in digital Dhamma communication, and proposes the Buddhadhamma-Based Meaning-Making Model of Life Problems in Digital Dhamma Communication. By integrating lived experiences, Buddhadhamma, linguistic and communicative strategies, and meaning-making within a unified explanatory framework, this study contributes a new theoretical perspective to digital religion and Dhamma communication while extending contemporary scholarship on Buddhadhamma-based meaning-making in digital society.

Objectives

This study aimed to examine the meaning-making process through which life problems are interpreted and understood in the Thamma Sawasdee' Live Program, to investigate how Buddhadhamma functions as an interpretive framework for understanding and reconstructing the meanings of life problems, to analyze the linguistic and communicative strategies employed in Dhamma communication, and to develop a conceptual framework explaining Buddhadhamma-based meaning-making in digital Dhamma communication.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to investigate the meaning-making process through which life problems were interpreted in digital Dhamma communication in the Thamma Sawasdee' Live Program presented by Mae Chee Sansanee Sthirasuta. The study focused on examining how Buddhadhamma functioned as an interpretive framework for understanding lived experiences and how linguistic and communicative strategies facilitated meaning-making within contemporary digital media contexts.

The population consisted of all episodes of the Thamma Sawasdee' Live Program officially published on the Sathira Dhammasathan Digital Service (SDS Channel) YouTube platform.



The period from 2019 to 2021 was selected because it marks the beginning of the program's official dissemination through the SDS Channel, providing a stable, publicly accessible, and systematically archived corpus for qualitative analysis. Prior to 2019, Dhamma communication by Mae Chee Sansanee Sthirasuta was delivered through various offline activities and non-systematic online channels but was not consistently published as an official digital series. Beginning in 2019, the program was regularly broadcast and archived on the official YouTube platform, enabling audiences to access complete episodes and engage continuously with interactive Dhamma communication. This period therefore represents the earliest comprehensive and coherent corpus of digital Dhamma communication available for research. Furthermore, it corresponds to the period during which Mae Chee Sansanee Sthirasuta personally conducted the live broadcasts until her passing in December 2021. Episodes published after 2021 were excluded because they primarily consist of rebroadcasts or edited excerpts rather than newly produced interactive Dhamma communication. Accordingly, the selected timeframe provides both a theoretically appropriate and methodologically reliable corpus for investigating Buddhaddhamma-based meaning-making in digital Dhamma communication.

Purposive sampling was employed to select information-rich episodes relevant to the objectives of the study. Episodes were included if they 1) Addressed life problems, emotional suffering, interpersonal relationships, family concerns, or contemporary social issues, and 2) Had received at least 5,000 views. The viewership criterion was adopted because it reflects audience engagement, public accessibility, and the broader social reach of digital Dhamma communication. Based on these criteria, 51 episodes were selected for analysis.

The research instruments consisted of 1) A data-recording form, 2) A thematic coding framework developed from the perspectives of meaning-making, digital religion, and Dhamma communication, and 3) An analytical framework for identifying Buddhaddhamma principles together with linguistic and communicative strategies employed throughout the discourse.

The unit of analysis comprised the spoken discourse of Mae Chee Sansanee Sthirasuta.

Audience comments and other online interactions were excluded because the study focused specifically on the interpretive construction of meaning within the presenter's discourse.

Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis in combination with discourse analysis.

First, meaning units related to life problems and lived experiences were identified from the program transcripts. Second, the data were coded and organized into thematic categories through constant comparison and thematic analysis. Third, Buddhaddhamma principles embedded within the discourse were identified and interpreted as the conceptual resources through which participants reconstructed the meanings of lived experiences.

Finally, discourse analysis informed by Foucault's concept of discourse was employed to examine how linguistic choices, communicative practices, and interpretive discourse constructed meanings and guided participants' understanding of life experiences. The findings were subsequently



synthesized into the Buddhadhamma-Based Meaning-Making Model of Life Problems in Digital Dhamma Communication, which explains the dynamic relationships among lived experiences, Buddhadhamma principles, linguistic and communicative strategies, and meaning-making processes. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, expert validation, peer debriefing, and theoretical triangulation were employed throughout the analytical process.

Results and Discussion

Overview of the Findings

The findings revealed that Dhamma communication in the Thamma Sawasdee' Live Program functioned as a meaning-making process through which participants interpreted and reconstructed life problems in relation to the Buddhadhamma. Analysis of the 51 selected episodes identified recurring interpretive patterns showing that experiences of suffering, emotional distress, interpersonal relationships, and social uncertainty were consistently understood through Buddhist principles. The findings further demonstrated that linguistic and communicative strategies employed throughout the program enabled participants to connect lived experiences with Buddhist teachings, thereby reconstructing the meanings of life experiences and fostering reflective self-understanding. Collectively, these findings indicate that language and communication functioned not merely as channels for transmitting Buddhist teachings but as interpretive mechanisms through which audiences actively constructed meaning within contemporary digital Dhamma communication.

The analysis further identified four interrelated meaning-making dimensions through which participants interpreted and reconstructed life problems: 1) Life Suffering, 2) Emotional and Mental Management, 3) Relationships and Family, and 4) Contemporary Social Context. These dimensions emerged inductively through coding, constant comparison, and thematic analysis of recurring interpretive patterns identified across the 51 selected episodes. The findings also revealed that linguistic and communicative strategies played a central role in the meaning-making process by connecting participants' lived experiences with Buddhist teachings and facilitating reflective interpretation. Collectively, these dimensions provide an analytical framework for understanding how language, communication, and Buddhadhamma jointly contributed to the reconstruction of life meanings in digital Dhamma communication.

Table 1 presents representative examples from the selected episodes together with their corresponding meaning-making dimensions and the interpretive Buddhist principles identified through the analysis. Rather than serving as simple thematic classifications, the four meaning-making dimensions emerged inductively from recurring interpretive patterns identified across the 51 selected episodes. Each representative episode illustrates how participants interpreted specific life experiences through particular Buddhist principles, thereby demonstrating the analytical relationships among empirical findings, meaning-making dimensions, linguistic and communicative strategies, and Buddhadhamma in the reconstruction of life meanings within digital Dhamma



communication. Together, the four dimensions represent interconnected processes through which participants interpreted, reconstructed, and integrated the meanings of life experiences from Buddhist perspectives.

Table 1 Meaning-Making Dimensions, Representative Episodes, and Interpretive Buddhist Principles Identified from the Data

Meaning-Making Dimension	Number of Episodes	Representative Episode	Interpretive Buddhist Principles Identified from the Data
Life Suffering	15	Doing Everything Wrong: When Life Reaches a Dead End	Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca), Law of Causality
Emotional and Mental Management	13	Simple Happiness Resilient Mind	Mindfulness (Sati), Non-attachment
Relationships and Family	14	The Secret of Love	Loving-kindness (Mettā), Compassion (Karuṇā)
Contemporary Social Context	9	How to Cope with Loss without Losing Oneself	Three Characteristics (Tilakkhaṇa), Impermanence (Anicca), Dependent Origination (Paṭiccasamuppāda)
Total	51	-	-

Note: The table summarizes the four meaning-making dimensions identified through the interpretive analysis of the 51 selected episodes. Each representative episode represents a recurring interpretive pattern through which participants understood particular life experiences by drawing upon specific Buddhist principles. The associated Buddhist principles were identified inductively from recurring interpretive patterns in the data rather than being predetermined analytical categories. Collectively, the four dimensions demonstrate how lived experiences were reconstructed into meaningful understandings through digital Dhamma communication. The Four Noble Truths, the Three Characteristics, and Dependent Origination emerged as higher-order interpretive frameworks across multiple dimensions rather than from isolated episodes, and these relationships are further elaborated in the following sections.

Life Suffering

The analysis revealed that participants interpreted life suffering not as an unavoidable personal burden but as an experience that could be understood and reconstructed through Buddhaddhamma. Across the selected episodes, suffering was consistently presented as a condition arising from identifiable causes and therefore open to reflection, understanding, and transformation. Rather than encouraging avoidance of suffering, Dhamma communication guided participants to recognize suffering as an opportunity for developing wisdom and self-understanding.

The findings were further supported by representative episodes selected from the dataset, which illustrate how life suffering was interpreted and reconstructed through Buddhaddhamma in digital Dhamma communication. The following examples demonstrate



the interpretive process through which participants were encouraged to understand suffering not merely as an emotional experience but as an opportunity for reflection, self-understanding, and personal transformation.

Example 1

"Suffering Exists to Be Seen, Not to Be." (Sthirasuta, 2019a)

From Example 1, suffering is presented not as a condition to be avoided or emotionally resisted but as an experience to be consciously recognized and understood. This statement reflects an interpretive process through which participants are encouraged to develop awareness of suffering rather than identify themselves with it. By shifting the focus from emotional attachment to mindful observation, Dhamma communication reconstructs the meaning of suffering as an opportunity for reflection, wisdom, and personal transformation.

Example 2

"It is Not Separation Itself That Causes Suffering, But the Inability to Accept Separation That Causes Suffering." (Sthirasuta, 2019b)

From Example 2, suffering is interpreted as arising not from external events but from individuals' responses to those events. The statement emphasizes acceptance as an essential process of meaning-making through which participants reinterpret loss and separation from a Buddhist perspective. This interpretive process enables participants to recognize the causes of suffering and to transform emotional distress into reflective understanding through Buddhадhamma.

Collectively, these findings demonstrated that suffering was interpreted not as an unavoidable condition but as a meaningful life experience that could be understood through Buddhадhamma. By recognizing the causes and conditions underlying suffering, participants reconstructed life problems into opportunities for reflective understanding and personal transformation.

Emotional and Mental Management

The analysis further revealed that the meaning-making process related to emotional and mental management was constructed through communicative strategies that encouraged participants to observe, interpret, and regulate their emotional experiences through Buddhадhamma. Rather than viewing emotions as fixed personal identities, emotional states were presented as temporary conditions that could be understood through mindful awareness and reflective observation. Representative episodes illustrated how linguistic and communicative strategies enabled participants to reinterpret emotional experiences and cultivate greater self-awareness.



Example 3

"Practicing Dhamma Means Standing Back and Observing It. We are Not Our Jealousy; We are Merely the Observer, Not the Actor." (Sthirasuta, 2019c)

From Example 3, the findings showed that Mae Chee Sansanee employed metaphorical language by contrasting the roles of "The Observer" and "The Actor" to encourage participants to detach themselves from emotional identification. Instead of becoming overwhelmed by emotions such as jealousy, individuals were guided to observe these emotions with mindful awareness. This communicative strategy reconstructed emotional experiences as objects of reflection rather than as fixed aspects of personal identity, thereby enabling participants to develop emotional regulation and reflective self-understanding through the practice of mindfulness (Sati).

Example 4

"Liking is Brief; Disliking is Brief." (Sthirasuta, 2019d)

From Example 4, the findings demonstrated that concise, repetitive expressions were employed to communicate the transient nature of emotional attachment. By emphasizing that both liking and disliking were temporary experiences, the discourse encouraged participants to recognize emotions as impermanent conditions rather than enduring realities. This communicative strategy supported the reinterpretation of emotional experiences through mindful awareness and non-attachment (Anupāḍāna), enabling participants to understand, regulate, and respond to emotions with greater balance and psychological resilience.

Collectively, these findings indicated that emotional and mental management was constructed through mindful awareness rather than emotional suppression. Through linguistic and communicative strategies, participants learned to observe emotional experiences reflectively, enabling Buddhaddhamma to function as an interpretive framework for emotional regulation and inner stability.

Relationships and Family

The analysis further revealed that the meaning-making process related to relationships and family was constructed through communicative strategies that encouraged participants to reinterpret interpersonal relationships from the perspective of self-understanding, compassion, and mutual acceptance. Rather than emphasizing the control or transformation of others, Dhamma communication guided participants to reflect upon their own thoughts, expectations, and attitudes, thereby reconstructing relationships as opportunities for personal growth and compassionate coexistence. The following representative examples illustrate how participants interpreted family and interpersonal relationships through Buddhaddhamma.



Example 5

"To Love Someone is to Understand Them Deeply, Not to Change Them to Satisfy Our Own Expectations. Instead of Trying to Change Others, We Should Transform Our Own Minds so That We can Understand and Love Them as They are. Once We Accept Reality, Suffering No Longer Dominates the Heart, and Relationships Become Enduringly Harmonious." (Sthirasuta, 2019e)

From Example 5, relationships are interpreted not as relationships that require changing or controlling others but as opportunities for cultivating self-understanding and compassionate acceptance. The statement emphasizes that suffering within relationships arises from attachment to personal expectations rather than from other people themselves. By encouraging participants to transform their own perspectives instead of attempting to change others, the discourse reconstructs interpersonal relationships through Buddhadhamma, enabling participants to develop mutual understanding, compassion, and harmonious coexistence.

Example 6

"It is Easier to Change Ourselves in Order to Understand Others Than to Try to Change Them. Do Not Think About Changing Anyone. Whether in Marriage or In the Relationship Between Parents and Children, Attempting to Change Others is Futile. Instead, Train Your Own Mind to Understand Them Deeply." (Sthirasuta, 2020)

From Example 6, relationships are interpreted as processes of self-transformation rather than attempts to control or modify other people. The statement emphasizes that harmonious family relationships emerge when individuals cultivate self-awareness and adjust their own perspectives instead of imposing expectations on others. Through this interpretive process, participants reconstruct family relationships from a Buddhist perspective, recognizing that genuine understanding begins with transforming one's own mind. Consequently, Buddhadhamma functions as an interpretive framework that promotes compassionate coexistence, mutual acceptance, and sustainable interpersonal relationships.

Collectively, these findings demonstrated that relationships and family were interpreted not through the control or transformation of others but through self-understanding, compassion, and mutual acceptance. Through the meaning-making process facilitated by digital Dhamma communication, interpersonal conflicts were reconstructed as opportunities for reflective understanding, reconciliation, and compassionate coexistence. These findings indicate that Buddhadhamma functioned as an interpretive framework through which participants reinterpreted family and interpersonal relationships in ways that fostered sustainable human relationships and inner well-being.



Contemporary Social Context

The analysis further revealed that the meaning-making process related to contemporary social contexts was constructed through communicative strategies that encouraged participants to interpret social change, uncertainty, loss, and crisis through Buddhadhamma. Rather than perceiving contemporary social realities as sources of fear or instability, participants were guided to understand change as a natural condition of life and to respond through mindful awareness, resilience, and acceptance. Representative episodes illustrated how digital Dhamma communication enabled participants to reconstruct contemporary social experiences into opportunities for reflection, adaptation, and personal transformation.

Example 7

"A Person Who Experiences Loss Without Losing Oneself is Someone Who Accepts Loss Without Surrendering to Suffering. We Do Not Suffer Because of Loss Itself; Rather, We Suffer Because We Refuse to Accept It. Loss is A Natural Part of Life That Everyone Must Inevitably Encounter." (Sthirasuta, 2019f)

From Example 7, contemporary social uncertainty is interpreted through the acceptance of impermanence rather than resistance to change. The statement emphasizes that suffering does not originate from external events such as loss but from the inability to accept the realities of change. By encouraging participants to recognize loss as a natural condition of human existence, Dhamma communication reconstructs contemporary crises into opportunities for reflective understanding, resilience, and personal growth. Through this interpretive process, participants are encouraged to confront uncertainty with mindful awareness rather than emotional attachment, enabling Buddhadhamma to function as an interpretive framework for understanding change in contemporary society.

Example 8

"Life is Change. Nothing in this World Remains Unchanged. Whenever We Gain Something, We Must Also Prepare Ourselves for Losing It." (Sthirasuta, 2019d)

From Example 8, contemporary social realities are interpreted through the Buddhist understanding of impermanence rather than through resistance to change. The statement emphasizes that change is an inherent characteristic of life and that suffering emerges when individuals expect permanence in an impermanent world. By encouraging participants to prepare their minds for inevitable change, Dhamma communication reconstructs uncertainty as an opportunity for adaptation, resilience, and reflective understanding. Through this interpretive process, participants are guided to engage with contemporary social change mindfully, enabling



Buddhadhamma to function as an interpretive framework for living meaningfully within an ever-changing digital society.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that contemporary social contexts were interpreted not as sources of fear or uncertainty but as opportunities for reflection, adaptation, and personal transformation through Buddhadhamma. Through the meaning-making process facilitated by digital Dhamma communication, experiences of loss, social change, and uncertainty were reconstructed into opportunities for developing resilience, mindful awareness, and acceptance of impermanence. These findings indicate that Buddhadhamma functioned as an interpretive framework through which participants understood and responded constructively to the challenges of contemporary digital society.

Linguistic and Communicative Strategies

The analysis revealed that the meaning-making process in digital Dhamma communication was facilitated through a combination of linguistic and communicative strategies that enabled participants to interpret, reconstruct, and apply Buddhadhamma to diverse life experiences. Rather than presenting Buddhist teachings as abstract doctrines, Mae Chee Sansanee employed metaphorical expressions, contrastive language, repetition, lexical selection, contextual explanation, and conversational discourse to translate complex Buddhist principles into practical frameworks for everyday life. Across the four dimensions of meaning-making: Life Suffering, Emotional and Mental Management, Relationships and Family, and Contemporary Social Context, these strategies enabled participants to connect lived experiences with Buddhadhamma through reflective interpretation.

For example, metaphorical expressions such as "The Observer" and "The Actor" encouraged participants to develop mindful awareness by distinguishing observation from emotional identification. Concise repetitive expressions such as "Liking is Brief; Disliking is Brief" reinforced the impermanent nature of emotional experiences, while reflective dialogue and contextual explanation encouraged participants to reinterpret interpersonal relationships, family challenges, social uncertainty, and life crises through acceptance, compassion, and wisdom. Collectively, these linguistic and communicative strategies functioned as interpretive resources through which abstract Buddhist teachings became meaningful, accessible, and applicable to contemporary life.

Discussion

These findings suggest that digital Dhamma communication functions as an interpretive process through which individuals understand and respond to contemporary social change by integrating lived experiences with Buddhadhamma. Rather than perceiving social uncertainty as a source of fear or instability, participants reconstructed changing circumstances into opportunities for reflection, adaptation, and personal growth. Previous studies have similarly demonstrated that digital religious communication enables individuals to reinterpret everyday experiences within changing social environments (Cloete, 2015). Interactive digital communication



also encourages participatory meaning construction through continuous engagement and communication (Srisarakham & Supphakitcharoen, 2024). Likewise, contemporary digital life requires the ongoing reinterpretation of cultural and religious meanings in response to rapidly changing social contexts (Janpitakchai & Sirinkaraphon, 2026). Buddhist studies further indicate that Buddhaddhamma provides practical resources for enhancing adaptive understanding and quality of life in digital society (Phramaha Sarawut Rattanasanti et al., 2023). In addition, digital media has become an important cultural space in which meanings are continually negotiated and reconstructed through communication (Tongterm, 2025). Collectively, these previous studies support the present finding that Buddhaddhamma functions as an interpretive framework through which participants meaningfully understand, reinterpret, and respond to the uncertainties and transformations of contemporary digital society.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

This study contributes an original body of knowledge by proposing the Buddhaddhamma-Based Meaning-Making Model of Life Problems in Digital Dhamma Communication (Figure 2). The model explains how digital Dhamma communication functions as an interpretive meaning-making process through which individuals construct, negotiate, and reconstruct the meanings of lived experiences by integrating Buddhaddhamma principles, lived experiences, linguistic strategies, and communicative strategies within a unified conceptual framework. The model demonstrates that language and communication function not merely as channels for transmitting religious teachings but as interpretive mechanisms that transform Buddhist principles into practical resources for understanding life problems, regulating emotions, strengthening interpersonal relationships, and adapting to contemporary social contexts. Accordingly, this study establishes a new conceptual framework for explaining Buddhaddhamma-based meaning-making in digital Dhamma communication and contributes a theoretical foundation for future research in digital religion, Dhamma communication, and Applied Buddhism.

The model conceptualizes meaning-making as a dynamic and interconnected process consisting of five sequential components. First, individuals encounter life problems and lived experiences associated with suffering, emotional distress, interpersonal relationships, family challenges, and social uncertainty. Second, these experiences enter the process of digital Dhamma communication, where they are communicated, discussed, and reflected upon within interactive digital environments. Third, participants interpret these experiences through core Buddhaddhamma principles, including the Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca), the Three Characteristics (Tilakkhaṇa), Dependent Origination (Paṭiccasamuppāda), Mindfulness (Sati), Loving-kindness (Mettā), and Compassion (Karūṇā). Fourth, this interpretive process generates four interconnected meaning-making dimensions: Life Suffering, Emotional and Mental Management, Relationships and Family, and Contemporary Social Context. Finally, these dimensions facilitate

the reframing of life understanding through reflective awareness, emotional resilience, self-understanding, relational understanding, social adaptation, and personal transformation.

This model further demonstrates that digital Dhamma communication functions as an interpretive mechanism through which the lived experiences of individuals are continuously reconstructed into new understandings guided by Buddhadhamma principles. Rather than serving solely as a medium for transmitting religious teachings, language and communication function as interpretive resources that facilitate the application of Buddhist principles as practical frameworks for interpreting everyday life. The model further explains how linguistic and communicative strategies enable individuals to construct meaning, regulate emotions, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and adapt to contemporary social contexts through Buddhadhamma. Accordingly, the proposed model provides a new theoretical explanation of digital Dhamma communication as a Buddhadhamma-based meaning-making system that integrates lived experiences, linguistic strategies, communicative strategies, and Buddhadhamma principles within a unified explanatory framework.

As shown in Figure 2, the proposed Buddhadhamma-Based Meaning-Making Model illustrates the dynamic process through which life experiences are interpreted according to Buddhadhamma principles and reconstructed into meaningful life understanding within digital Dhamma communication.

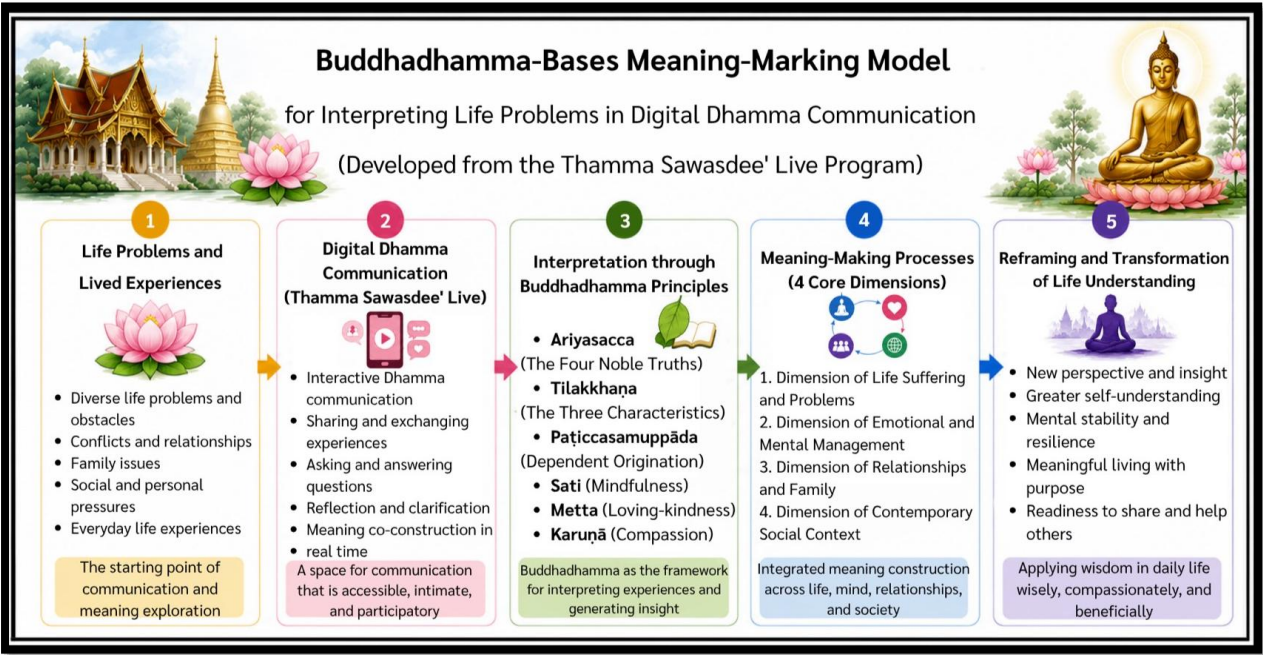


Figure 2 Buddhadhamma-Based Meaning-Making Model for Interpreting Life Problems in Digital Dhamma Communication

Developed by the researcher based on the findings of this study. The model illustrates how lived experiences are interpreted through core Buddhadhamma principles within digital



Dhamma communication and reconstructed into four interconnected meaning-making dimensions. Through linguistic and communicative strategies, these interpretive processes contribute to the reconstruction of life understanding and constitute the body of knowledge generated by this study.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of digital Dhamma communication by conceptualizing it as a Buddhadhamma-based meaning-making process in which language and communication function as interpretive mechanisms linking lived experiences with Buddhist principles. Rather than transmitting Buddhist teachings as fixed doctrinal knowledge, digital Dhamma communication enables individuals to interpret, reconstruct, and reframe life experiences through Buddhadhamma within contemporary digital contexts. The findings demonstrated that life experiences were interpreted through core Buddhadhamma principles, including the Four Noble Truths (Ariyasacca), the Three Characteristics (Tilakkhaṇa), Dependent Origination (Paṭiccasamuppāda), Mindfulness (Sati), Loving-kindness (Mettā), and Compassion (Karūṇā), resulting in four interconnected meaning-making dimensions: 1) Life Suffering, 2) Emotional and Mental Management, 3) Relationships and Family, and 4) Contemporary Social Context. These dimensions collectively explain how Buddhadhamma functions as an interpretive framework through which individuals understand, reinterpret, and transform life experiences in digital Dhamma communication. The study further demonstrates that linguistic and communicative strategies, including metaphorical expressions, conversational discourse, repetition, contextual explanation, and reflective dialogue, constitute the principal interpretive mechanisms through which abstract Buddhist principles become meaningful and applicable to everyday life. Accordingly, the proposed Buddhadhamma-Based Meaning-Making Model of Life Problems in Digital Dhamma Communication offers an original conceptual framework that integrates lived experiences, digital Dhamma communication, linguistic and communicative strategies, and Buddhadhamma into a unified explanation of meaning-making in contemporary digital society, thereby extending current scholarship on digital religion and Dhamma communication. Although the proposed model may be applicable to other forms of digital religious communication, the findings should be interpreted within the scope of this study, which focused exclusively on the 'Thamma Sawasdee' Live program by Mae Chee Sansanee Sathirasuta and did not investigate audience interpretations or interactions. Future research should therefore examine audience meaning-making through interviews, focus groups, or digital ethnography and compare linguistic and communicative strategies across different Buddhist communicators, digital platforms, and religious traditions to further develop theories of digital religion, Dhamma communication, and Buddhadhamma-based meaning-making in contemporary society.



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THE SADHU MODEL: A FEASIBILITY-ORIENTED APPLIED BUDDHIST FRAMEWORK FOR RECREATIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AMONG AGEING MONKS IN RURAL THAILAND

Tachapon Tongterm

Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Sisaket Rajabhat University, Sisaket, Thailand

Corresponding author E-mail: tachapon.t@sskru.ac.th

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: Population ageing raises concerns regarding functional decline, frailty, and the sustainability of independent living. Ageing Buddhist monks represent a specialised ageing population whose functional capacity is shaped by biological ageing and the institutional structure of monastic life, including the Vinaya, meaning monastic discipline, and samana-sarupa, meaning appropriate monastic conduct. Conventional exercise programmes may not fit these conditions, creating a need for physical activity approaches compatible with daily religious practice. This study aimed to examine the implementation of the SADHU Model, a context-specific Buddhist-based recreational physical activity framework, among ageing monks in rural Thailand; To describe preliminary trends in health-related functional fitness; And to assess participant satisfaction and perceived feasibility within a feasibility-oriented framework.

Methodology: The intervention phase reported in this article formed part of a broader mixed-methods research project and employed a quantitative quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design with descriptive feasibility assessment. Thirty ageing Buddhist monks aged 50 years and above from rural temples in Sisaket Province, Thailand, participated in an intervention lasting 12 weeks. The SADHU Model reorganised existing monastic routines into structured opportunities for extremely light to very light intensity recreational physical activity, corresponding to ratings of 7 to 9 on the Borg 6 - 20 Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale. The intervention incorporated inherent monastic routines, supportive temple-based activities, and structured movement practices. Health-related functional fitness was assessed using the Senior Fitness Test, while participant satisfaction and perceived feasibility were assessed using a researcher-developed 10-item, five-point rating scale. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and paired-samples t-tests, with statistical significance set at $p < .05$.

Main Results: Mean scores changed in a favourable direction across cardiovascular endurance, upper- and lower-body strength, lower- and upper-body flexibility, and agility with dynamic balance; However, none of the observed changes met the prespecified threshold for statistical significance ($p = .052$ to $.08$). The mean 2-Minute Step Test score increased from 105.57 ± 13.06



to 106.93 ± 11.68 repetitions, while the mean 8-Foot Up-and-Go Test completion time decreased from 7.66 ± 1.17 to 7.53 ± 1.14 seconds. Overall participant satisfaction was high (4.01 ± 0.73), and perceived benefit was rated very high (4.23 ± 0.57). These findings were interpreted as a preliminary pattern consistent with short-term functional stability and perceived contextual acceptability, rather than as evidence of physiological improvement or intervention efficacy.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: This study is classified within Applied Buddhism because it applies Buddhist principles to the sustainable development and implementation of a context-specific health-related process model. The SADHU Model situates bodily movement within disciplined and attentive monastic practice. The Vinaya and samana-sarupa provide contextual grounds for ensuring that activities remain compatible with monastic conduct, while sati, meaning mindfulness, and appamāda, meaning heedfulness, inform the rationale for measured, careful, and context-appropriate movement. These principles function as contextual foundations for activity design and method development rather than as clinical explanations for the observed outcomes.

Conclusions: The findings did not demonstrate statistically significant physiological improvement or causal intervention efficacy. Rather, they showed that the SADHU Model was implemented within daily monastic routines and was accompanied by favourable directional changes in health-related functional fitness, while participants reported high satisfaction indicative of perceived feasibility. SADHU should therefore be understood as an empirically informed, context-sensitive Applied Buddhist model for organising recreational physical activity within monastic routines. Controlled studies with larger samples, longer follow-up periods, and additional functional outcomes are needed to examine its longer-term implications.

Keywords: Ageing Monks, Functional Fitness, Recreational Physical Activity, Buddhist Monastic Life, Sustainable Development

Introduction

Thailand is experiencing population ageing alongside profound changes in family structure, community care, economic security, and access to health and social resources. Older adults increasingly live with chronic disease, loneliness, financial insecurity, and reduced family-based caregiving, while rural communities continue to rely on temples as moral, social, and health-supportive spaces (Akarathanarak & Sukonthasab, 2024). Within this changing social landscape, ageing Buddhist monks represent a specialised ageing population. They are not only older adults experiencing physiological decline, but also members of a religious institution whose daily life is shaped by alms-based food dependence, temple duties, community expectations, and regulated bodily conduct. From a sports and recreation science perspective, these conditions are important because ageing is associated with progressive reductions in muscle strength, neuromuscular coordination, aerobic capacity, flexibility, and balance, all of which are essential for maintaining daily function and physical independence (Izquierdo et al., 2025).

For ageing monks, functional capacity is expressed through ordinary but essential actions within monastic life: Walking for alms, rising from seated postures, maintaining balance on temple



grounds, cleaning temple spaces, and participating in routine monastic duties. These actions are not athletic performances; They are the functional basis of daily religious life. Evidence from Thailand indicates that Buddhist monks experience substantial health vulnerabilities, including noncommunicable diseases, obesity, and hypertension (Jeamjitvibool et al., 2022); (Ko-amornsap et al., 2024), as well as medication-related concerns and diabetes-related self-management challenges (Chisana et al., 2023); (Codrington et al., 2025). These vulnerabilities are closely linked to structural determinants of temple life, including dependence on donated food, limited autonomy in food selection, restricted opportunities for regular physical activity, and the expectation that monks continue to serve as spiritual and community figures even as their own bodies age. Similar challenges have also been reported in other Buddhist contexts, where ageing monastic communities face growing concerns related to long-term care, institutional support, and functional participation (Park & Kim, 2025). Health-related functional fitness, therefore, provides an appropriate framework for examining the physical capacities required for ordinary monastic life.

A major challenge in promoting physical activity among ageing monks is that conventional exercise programmes may not fit the discipline, rhythm, and bodily expectations of monastic life. The Vinaya, meaning monastic discipline, and samana-sarupa, meaning appropriate monastic conduct, shape how monks move, behave, eat, rest, and participate in daily routines (Panyachit, 2026). Exercise formats designed for lay older adults may be difficult to apply directly when they are perceived as external to temple life, overly performance-oriented, or inconsistent with monastic comportment. Within the Pali Canon, the Satipatthāna Sutta identifies awareness of walking, standing, sitting, and lying down as part of attention to bodily experience (MN 10), while the Dhammapada presents appamāda as heedful and non-negligent conduct (Dhp 21 - 23). These doctrinal references do not function as clinical evidence; Rather, they clarify why attentive and moderated movement may be contextually compatible with monastic life. This creates a contemporary problem for sports and recreation science: How can health-supportive movement be organised for a population whose physical activity must remain compatible with religious discipline, limited resources, community expectations, and changing systems of care? The issue is not simply whether monks should exercise, but how functional movement can be embedded within existing monastic routines without adding unnecessary burden or disrupting religious practice. Evidence on Buddhist walking meditation and mindful walking further suggests that such practices warrant careful examination as contextually relevant health-related activities, although existing studies remain heterogeneous in their populations, formats, and outcomes (Montalva-Valenzuela et al., 2025).

Despite increasing attention to monks' health conditions, frailty-related vulnerability, medication issues, mental health, and health behaviours, limited empirical evidence exists on routine-embedded recreational physical activity models that are compatible with monastic discipline and assessed through health-related functional fitness outcomes (Chisana et al., 2023); (Langgapin et al., 2024); (Prapassorakul & Yotsombut, 2025). This gap is important because physical activity interventions are more likely to be acceptable and sustainable when they are aligned with everyday social, cultural, and environmental contexts (Zubala et al., 2017). The SADHU Model



was developed to address this gap by reorganising existing monastic routines into structured opportunities for extremely light to very light intensity recreational physical activity rather than introducing exercise as a separate programme. The model was designed to organise routine monastic activities, individual adaptation, safety procedures, and participatory reflection into a repeatable, context-specific recreational physical activity process. This design distinguishes the SADHU Model from monk-focused initiatives that have primarily emphasised health promotion through community participation or mental health support, rather than the systematic organisation of daily monastic movement in relation to health-related functional fitness assessment (Langgapin et al., 2024). In this study, functional stability was specified as a study-specific interpretive framework for examining health-related functional fitness within the structural conditions of monastic life. The contribution of this study lies in examining the feasibility of embedding Buddhist-based recreational physical activity within monastic routines under contemporary social, monastic, and structural constraints.

Objectives

This study aimed to examine the implementation of the SADHU Model, a context-specific Buddhist-based recreational physical activity framework, among ageing monks in rural Thailand; To describe preliminary trends in health-related functional fitness; And to assess participant satisfaction and perceived feasibility within a feasibility-oriented framework.

Methodology

This study constituted the intervention phase of a broader mixed-methods research project on Buddhist-based health promotion for ageing monks in rural Thailand. It employed a quantitative quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design to examine the implementation of the SADHU Model within daily monastic routines and preliminary trends in health-related functional fitness.

Methodological Positioning

Earlier phases of the broader project examined community food-offering practices, self-health-management behaviours among ageing monks, and the roles of local administrative organisations and primary healthcare services in monastic health promotion. These findings informed the contextual development and refinement of the SADHU Model before field implementation. Given the exploratory and context-specific nature of the intervention, the present phase was positioned as a feasibility-oriented quasi-experimental study rather than a full-scale effectiveness trial. Health-related functional fitness was the measured outcome, whereas functional stability was used as a study-specific interpretive framework describing the absence of measurable decline or the presence of slight favourable directional change across the measured indicators during the intervention period. This interpretive approach was adopted because functional fitness serves as a practical indicator of older adults' ability to perform daily activities (Izquierdo et al., 2025).

Study Design, Ethical Considerations, and Participants

A quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design was used because random assignment and a control group were not feasible in real-world rural temple settings. The study



was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Sisaket Rajabhat University (Approval No. HE641001), and informed consent was obtained from all participants before enrolment. Procedures were designed to align with the Vinaya, meaning monastic discipline, and samana-sarupa, meaning appropriate monastic conduct (Panyachit, 2026). Field photographs were included solely as documentation of intervention delivery and assessment procedures. Identifiable images were retained only when permission for publication had been documented; Otherwise, identifying features were obscured before manuscript submission.

The study was conducted in Bakdong Subdistrict, Khun Han District, Sisaket Province, Thailand. The area was selected because it had a substantial population of ageing monks, safe conditions for field implementation, and cooperation from local monastic and community leaders. A purposive sample of 30 Buddhist monks aged 50 years and above was recruited from temples in the study area. The age threshold was selected to capture chronic health constraints and functional vulnerability before the conventional older-age threshold of 60 years (Ratanasiri & Lerttrakarnnon, 2019).

Participants were eligible if they were aged 50 years or older, had resided in a temple within the study area for at least one year, were able to perform daily monastic routines independently, and were suitable for participation in extremely light to very light intensity physical activity according to their functional capacity. Monks were excluded if they had severe medical, neurological, or psychiatric conditions; Had mobility, visual, hearing, or other physical limitations that could preclude safe participation; Or had participated in another health-promotion programme during the preceding 6 months. Baseline information, including chronic health conditions, use of assistive devices, perceived effects of health problems on monastic duties, daily functional ability, and relevant health limitations, was recorded before the intervention and summarised descriptively. All 30 enrolled participants completed both the pretest and posttest assessments.

The SADHU Model: Development and Intervention Protocol

The SADHU Model was developed as a context-specific Buddhist-based recreational physical activity framework for ageing monks. Its development incorporated contextual assessment, review of relevant concepts and research evidence, prototype development, expert review, revision, and field implementation over 12 weeks. Rather than introducing conventional exercise as a separate health behaviour, the model reorganised existing monastic routines into structured opportunities for extremely light to very light intensity movement. This approach was selected to maximise contextual fit by embedding movement within the everyday social, cultural, and environmental conditions of monastic life (Zubala et al., 2017).

The model comprised five components: Spiritual-Physical Integration, Adaptability, Disciplined Movement, Holistic Community Care, and Ultimate Well-being. These components guided the alignment of physical activity with functional capacity, monastic discipline, and community support. The content validity of the model components, intervention activities, and related assessment materials was reviewed by a three-member expert panel with expertise in health promotion, physical activity, and Buddhist community health contexts. The review examined congruence between the model components, activity procedures, monastic appropriateness,



functional fitness objectives, and feasibility of implementation in rural temple settings. The Index of Item Objective Congruence was 0.80. Revisions were made following expert feedback to improve the clarity, appropriateness, and contextual fit of the intervention activities.

The intervention was implemented over 12 weeks. Before implementation, participating monks received individualised guidance on sufficient physical activity and health-oriented nutrition and were introduced to the practical application of the activity model. The protocol incorporated three activity categories, as summarised in Table 1. Perceived exertion was monitored using the Borg 6 - 20 Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale, with target ratings of 7 to 9, corresponding to extremely light to very light intensity (Borg, 1998). Activities were selected because they were compatible with monastic duties, required no specialised equipment, and could be adjusted according to individual functional capacity. Safety procedures included eligibility screening, warm-up and cool-down stretching, monitoring of perceived exertion within the target range, and individualised activity adjustment.

Table 1 Summary of the SADHU Model Intervention Protocol

Activity category	Main activities	Duration and frequency	Intensity	Implementation purpose
Inherent monastic routines	Alms-round walking	Performed according to the actual schedule of each temple; Recommended 6 - 7 days per week	Extremely light to very light intensity, Borg 6 - 20 RPE ratings of 7 - 9	To use routine monastic duties as daily opportunities for ambulatory movement without disrupting religious practice
Supportive temple-based activities	Washing monastic garments, sweeping temple grounds, cleaning monks' residences, trimming vegetation, removing weeds, and other light temple maintenance tasks	Approximately 10 - 20 minutes per day; Recommended 3 - 5 days per week	Extremely light to very light intensity, Borg 6 - 20 RPE ratings of 7 - 9	To organise temple maintenance and self-care tasks as opportunities for functional movement and daily physical engagement
Structured movement practices	Walking meditation, arm-swing walking, brisk walking, and warm-up and cool-down stretching	Approximately 20 - 30 minutes per day; Recommended 3 days per week	Extremely light to very light intensity, Borg 6 - 20 RPE ratings of 7 - 9	To provide planned, repeatable, context-appropriate movement practices compatible with monastic conduct and individual functional capacity

Note: The intervention was implemented over 12 weeks. The protocol specified the inclusion of all three activity categories each week.



Participatory reflection meetings were conducted approximately monthly, resulting in three sessions across an intervention period lasting 12 weeks. These meetings were used to review implementation progress, address practical concerns, and adapt activities when necessary; They were not treated as formal measures of individual adherence. As illustrated in Figure 1, alms-round walking and temple maintenance activities were integrated into daily monastic life during the intervention period. As shown in Figure 2, structured movement practices, assisted participation where required, and post-intervention assessment were conducted within participating temples. The photographs served as field documentation of intervention delivery and assessment procedures rather than as outcome data.



Figure 1 Field Documentation of Functional Integration of Physical Activity into Daily Monastic Routines

The photographs show alms-round walking and temple maintenance activities performed by participating monks during the intervention period. These activities were prescribed at an extremely light to very light intensity and embedded within daily monastic practice. Assistance, when required, reflected adaptation to individual functional capacity while preserving engagement in routine monastic duties.



Figure 2 Field Documentation of Routine-Based Movement and Post-Intervention Assessment in Ageing Monks



The photographs show routine-based movement practice, assisted participation, seated interaction, and post-intervention assessment. They document how the intervention was implemented and adapted to individual functional capacity and how assessment procedures were conducted within real-world monastic settings.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the SADHU Model was implemented through a sequential process conducted over 12 weeks beginning with contextual assessment, individualised guidance, and pretest assessment; Continuing with three routine-based activity categories supported by ongoing adaptation, safety procedures, and participatory reflection; And concluding with posttest assessment and evaluation of participant satisfaction and perceived feasibility.

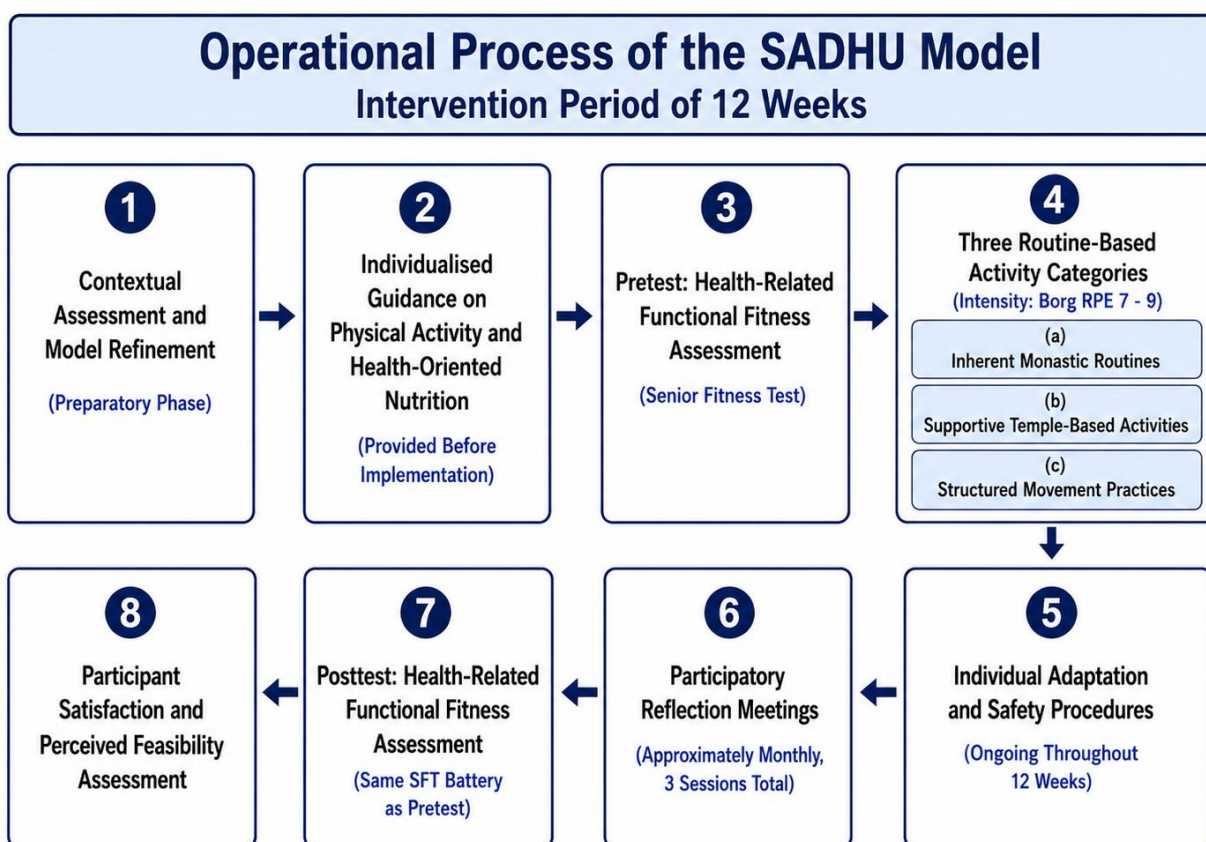


Figure 3 Operational Process of the SADHU Model over 12 Weeks

Outcome Measures and Data Collection

Data were collected at two time points, before the intervention and after 12 weeks of implementation. The same assessment procedures were used at both time points, and the same trained assessors administered the tests using the same standardised testing sequence and equipment.

Health-related functional fitness was assessed using the Senior Fitness Test (Rikli & Jones, 2013), comprising the 2-Minute Step Test for cardiovascular endurance, Arm Curl Test for upper-body strength, Chair Stand Test for lower-body strength, 8-Foot Up-and-Go Test for agility and dynamic



balance, Chair Sit-and-Reach Test for lower-body flexibility, and Back Scratch Test for upper-body flexibility.

Participant satisfaction and perceived feasibility were assessed after completion of the intervention using a researcher-developed 10-item, five-point rating scale. The assessment covered knowledge improvement, attitude towards physical activity, participatory reflection meetings, motivational support, programme relevance, appropriateness of activities, flexibility, knowledge transferability, daily application, and perceived benefit. An overall satisfaction score was calculated descriptively from participants' responses.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarise baseline characteristics, health-related functional fitness outcomes, and participant satisfaction. The normality of pretest-posttest difference scores was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test before paired-samples t-tests were performed. Pretest and posttest Senior Fitness Test scores were compared using paired-samples t-tests, with statistical significance set at $p < .05$. Given the one-group design and modest sample size, both the statistical results and the direction of change across functional fitness indicators were considered in the interpretation.

Satisfaction scores were analysed descriptively and interpreted using an equal-interval classification with an interval width of 0.80: 1.00 - 1.80 = very low, 1.81 - 2.60 = low, 2.61 - 3.40 = moderate, 3.41 - 4.20 = high, and 4.21 - 5.00 = very high. Satisfaction findings were interpreted as descriptive feedback on perceived feasibility and contextual acceptability, whereas functional stability was interpreted through the study-specific framework described above.

Results and Discussion

Results

The results are presented in four sections: 1) Baseline characteristics and health conditions of the participants, 2) Implementation of the SADHU Model within daily monastic routines, 3) Preliminary trends in health-related functional fitness, and 4) Participant satisfaction and perceived feasibility.

Baseline Characteristics and Health Conditions of Participants

The intervention phase included 30 ageing Buddhist monks who met the eligibility criteria and participated in the implementation of the SADHU Model over 12 weeks. As summarised in Table 2, half of the participants reported chronic diseases or health problems lasting longer than six months, with hypertension being the most commonly reported condition. More than half reported using assistive devices, most commonly eyeglasses. Although most participants reported that health problems did not interfere with monastic duties or routine activities, 40.00% reported some degree of activity-related limitation.



Table 2 Baseline Health Characteristics and Functional Limitations of Participants (n = 30)

Characteristic	n	%
Chronic disease or health problem lasting longer than six months	15	50.00
Hypertension	10	33.33
Use of any assistive device	17	56.67
Use of eyeglasses	16	53.33
Health problems did not interfere with monastic duties or routine activities	18	60.00
Some degree of activity-related limitation	12	40.00

Note: Participants may have reported more than one chronic health condition or assistive device.

Implementation of the SADHU Model within Daily Monastic Routines

The SADHU Model was implemented over 12 consecutive weeks. Before implementation, participating monks received individualised guidance on sufficient physical activity, health-oriented nutrition, and application of the activity model. All three activity categories described in Table 1 were implemented during the intervention period.

Three participatory reflection meetings were conducted over 12 weeks of implementation to review implementation progress and practical issues. As illustrated in Figure 1, alms-round walking and temple maintenance activities were incorporated into daily monastic life. As shown in Figure 2, routine-based movement practices, assisted participation, and post-intervention assessment procedures were conducted within the participating temples.

Preliminary Trends in Health-Related Functional Fitness

Health-related functional fitness was assessed before the intervention and again after 12 weeks using the Senior Fitness Test. As summarised in Table 3, mean scores changed in a favourable direction across cardiovascular endurance, upper- and lower-body strength, lower- and upper-body flexibility, and agility with dynamic balance. The p-values ranged from .052 to .08.

Table 3 Comparison of Health-Related Functional Fitness Before and After the Intervention (n = 30)

Variable	Pre-test $\bar{X}$ (S.D.)	Post-test $\bar{X}$ (S.D.)	t	p-value
2-Minute Step Test (reps)	105.57 (13.06)	106.93 (11.68)	-1.91	.07
Arm Curl Test (reps)	18.77 (2.77)	19.03 (2.67)	-1.86	.07
Chair Stand Test (reps)	15.27 (2.50)	15.50 (2.51)	-1.88	.07
8-Foot Up-and-Go Test (sec)	7.66 (1.17)	7.53 (1.14)	1.99	.06
Chair Sit-and-Reach Test (Left, cm)	12.27 (5.27)	12.37 (5.18)	-1.80	.08
Chair Sit-and-Reach Test (Right, cm)	13.33 (5.02)	13.50 (5.01)	-1.98	.06
Back Scratch Test (Left, cm)	-10.73 (15.31)	-10.52 (15.29)	-2.04	.052
Back Scratch Test (Right, cm)	-8.47 (15.23)	-8.32 (15.10)	-1.87	.07

Note: Higher scores indicate better performance for the 2-Minute Step Test, Arm Curl Test, Chair Stand Test, Chair Sit-and-Reach Test, and Back Scratch Test. A lower completion time indicates better performance for the 8-Foot Up-and-Go Test.



Participant Satisfaction and Perceived Feasibility

Participant satisfaction and perceived feasibility were assessed after 12 weeks of intervention. As summarised in Table 4, overall satisfaction was rated at a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.01, S.D. = 0.73). Perceived benefit received the highest mean score and was rated at a very high level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.23, S.D. = 0.57). All other assessed items were rated at a high level. The lowest relative mean scores were observed for participatory reflection meetings ($\bar{x}$ = 3.82, S.D. = 0.79) and daily application of knowledge ($\bar{x}$ = 3.80, S.D. = 0.89); However, both remained within the high-level category.

Table 4 Participant Satisfaction and Perceived Feasibility of the SADHU Model (n = 30)

Item	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level
- The guidance provided improved participants' knowledge and understanding of proper health-related practices.	4.00	0.74	High
- The guidance improved participants' attitudes towards physical activity.	4.07	0.64	High
- Participatory reflection meetings helped participants follow the routine-based physical activity model more effectively.	3.82	0.79	High
- The researcher's encouragement supported participants' engagement with the routine-based physical activity model.	4.00	0.74	High
- The activity process was consistent with the objectives of the research project.	4.10	0.66	High
- The routine-based physical activity model included activities appropriate for ageing monks in rural communities.	4.08	0.72	High
- The routine-based physical activity model was flexible and practical for implementation.	4.13	0.78	High
- Participants could transfer knowledge gained from the project to advise fellow monks or other people.	4.16	0.79	High
- Participants could apply knowledge gained from the project in their daily lives.	3.80	0.89	High
- Participants perceived benefits from participation in the research project.	4.23	0.57	Very High
Overall satisfaction	4.01	0.73	High

Note: Mean score interpretation: 1.00 - 1.80 = very low; 1.81 - 2.60 = low; 2.61 - 3.40 = moderate; 3.41 - 4.20 = high; and 4.21 - 5.00 = very high.

Discussion

This study found favourable directional changes in health-related functional fitness and high participant satisfaction after 12 weeks of implementing the SADHU Model among ageing monks in rural Thailand. Because none of the observed changes met the prespecified threshold for statistical significance, the findings should not be regarded as evidence of definitive physiological



improvement or causal intervention efficacy. Rather, they should be interpreted as a preliminary pattern consistent with short-term functional stability and perceived contextual acceptability.

Functional Stability and Adaptation under Structural Constraints

The absence of statistically significant differences should be interpreted in relation to ageing physiology and the design of the present study. Ageing is commonly associated with gradual declines in muscle strength, neuromuscular coordination, aerobic capacity, flexibility, and balance, all of which are important for maintaining functional independence in later life (Izquierdo et al., 2025). Within this context, the absence of group-level mean decline across the Senior Fitness Test indicators over 12 weeks may be viewed as a functionally relevant preliminary finding, particularly because the intervention was implemented in a real-world monastic setting rather than in a controlled exercise environment. The one-group pretest-posttest design did not establish whether the observed pattern differed from what would have occurred without the intervention.

The baseline profile also showed that 50.00% of participants reported chronic health conditions, 56.67% used assistive devices, and 40.00% reported some degree of activity-related limitation. Thus, the observed results were consistent with a preliminary pattern of short-term functional stability, but it did not demonstrate that SADHU prevented decline or produced physiological adaptation. Although all measured indicators showed favourable directional changes at the descriptive level, none met the prespecified threshold for statistical significance. The findings, therefore, justify further evaluation of routine-based movement in monastic settings rather than a claim of intervention efficacy. This interpretation is consistent with the use of functional fitness as an indicator of older adults' capacity to perform daily activities (Tomás et al., 2018). Previous evidence has identified obesity, hypertension, and other social determinants as important health concerns among Buddhist monks (Jeamjitvibool et al., 2022), while frailty-related vulnerability has also been reported among older monks in Thailand (Ratanasiri & Lerttrakarnnon, 2019).

Embedded Recreational Physical Activity within Monastic Routines

A primary contribution of the SADHU Model is its organisation of physical activity as recreational movement embedded within daily monastic life. The model did not introduce conventional exercise as an external requirement. Instead, it reorganised existing monastic routines and temple-based activities into structured opportunities for extremely light to very light intensity movement. In this study, alms-round walking, washing monastic garments, sweeping temple grounds, light temple maintenance, walking meditation, arm-swing walking, and brisk walking were used as routine-based activities that supported functional engagement without separating movement from the structure of monastic life.

The novelty of SADHU, therefore, lies less in creating unfamiliar exercises than in arranging familiar monastic activities into a repeatable movement structure. This is relevant to scientific recreation because the practical question is not simply whether ageing monks can participate in conventional exercise, but whether movement already embedded in temple life can be



organised more systematically without disrupting monastic responsibilities. Social and environmental fit may be relevant to the uptake and maintenance of physical activity among older adults (Zubala et al., 2017). However, the present study showed only that the planned activities were implemented over 12 weeks in participating temples; It did not evaluate long-term maintenance.

The intervention protocol prescribed activities within a Borg 6 - 20 target range of 7 to 9, corresponding to extremely light to very light perceived exertion. This low-demand structure was appropriate to the participants' functional circumstances and the routine-based character of monastic life. It also reduced the need for specialised equipment or substantial changes to daily routines. By relying on existing routines and minimal additional resources, the model may offer a locally adaptable health-promotion approach relevant to sustainable development in rural monastic communities. Exercise interventions have been associated with improvements in physical performance and activities of daily living among the oldest-old and frail older adults, although effects vary according to intervention content, dose, and participant characteristics (Lau et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the present study did not measure physical activity volume, individual adherence, energy expenditure, or long-term training adaptation. The observed trends should therefore not be equated with the effects expected from supervised multicomponent exercise training.

Contextual Legitimacy and Acceptability within Monastic Life

Participant satisfaction was high. The overall satisfaction score was 4.01 ± 0.73 , while perceived benefit received the highest score at 4.23 ± 0.57 . These ratings were interpreted as descriptive feedback on perceived feasibility and contextual acceptability rather than as evidence of physiological effectiveness. They indicated that participants viewed the activities as beneficial, relevant, and compatible with monastic routines. The model's contextual acceptability may partly reflect its compatibility with monastic discipline and established monastic routines. Panyachit (2026) similarly indicates that monks' health behaviours and bodily movement are shaped by the Dhamma-Vinaya and enacted through ordinary monastic activities. This alignment may have reduced the extent to which participation required a separate exercise identity or new institutional routine. The lower relative ratings for daily application and participatory reflection meetings also suggest that future implementation may require greater support from temple leadership and local health networks. This is consistent with work on health promotion among older monks that has emphasised coordination among monks, communities, and health-related actors, although those studies addressed different interventions and outcomes (Akarathanarak & Sukonthasab, 2024).

Mindful Movement and Functional Stability

The SADHU Model provides a Buddhist-compatible interpretation of movement while remaining grounded in sports science. Activities such as walking meditation, alms-round walking, and temple-based movement were understood as forms of mindful movement when they involved bodily awareness, moderation, and rhythm. Mindful movement was used as a contextual rationale for activity design, not as a measured psychological mechanism.



The doctrinal foundation was deliberately narrow. The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta identifies awareness of walking, standing, sitting, and lying down as part of attention to bodily experience (MN 10), while the Dhammapada presents appamāda as heedful and non-negligent conduct (Dhp 21 - 23). These references were not used as clinical evidence for the outcomes observed in this study. They clarified the compatibility of attentive movement and careful participation with monastic life. A recent systematic review similarly identified Buddhist walking meditation, walking meditation, and mindful walking as health-related practices studied in adults and older adults, while also noting substantial variation in populations, intervention formats, and outcomes (Montalva-Valenzuela et al., 2025). Buddhist ethical thought may offer a broader orientation for health-related conduct, but it does not replace exercise-science evidence or establish a physiological mechanism for the present findings (Bodhiprasiddhinand, 2024).

From a sports and recreation science perspective, the selected activities involved repeated extremely light to very light intensity movement relevant to cardiovascular endurance, mobility, balance, and flexibility. The favourable directional changes observed across the Senior Fitness Test indicators were consistent with the possibility that routine-based movement could be examined further as one approach to supporting functional participation. However, because the study did not include a control group and none of the observed changes met the prespecified threshold for statistical significance, this interpretation remains preliminary. Buddhist principles, therefore, function as contextual grounds for activity design, whereas functional fitness assessment and outcome interpretation remain grounded in sports and exercise science.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations should be considered. The one-group pretest-posttest design limited causal interpretation, and the modest sample size may have reduced the ability to detect small changes. In addition, the intervention period, which lasted 12 weeks, may not have been sufficient to detect measurable physiological adaptation. The findings were specific to rural Thai temple communities and should therefore be interpreted within this context. Future research should examine the SADHU Model using controlled study designs, larger samples, and longer follow-up periods. Further studies should also assess adherence, physical activity volume, frailty status, falls, and daily functional performance to provide a more complete understanding of whether routine-embedded movement contributes to sustained functional health among ageing monks.

Overall, the findings did not demonstrate statistically significant physiological improvement or causal intervention efficacy. They showed that a routine-embedded programme was implemented over 12 weeks among ageing monks and was accompanied by favourable directional changes in health-related functional fitness and high participant satisfaction reflecting perceived feasibility. SADHU should therefore be understood as an empirically informed, context-sensitive model for organising recreational physical activity within monastic routines rather than as evidence of intervention efficacy.

Originality and Body of Knowledge



Figure 4 Context-Integrated Ecological Model of Functional Stability under Monastic Structural Context

As shown in Figure 4, the body of knowledge generated by this study is a context-integrated ecological synthesis in which monastic structural context, comprising the Vinaya, samana-sarupa, daily routines, and behavioural constraints, shapes movement within the conditions of ageing physiology and monastic lifestyle. The figure depicts alms-round walking, temple maintenance tasks, walking meditation, arm-swing walking, and brisk walking as routine-embedded movement practices. At its centre, preliminary functional stability is positioned as a contextually meaningful outcome, represented by the absence of group-level mean decline and favourable directional trends in health-related functional fitness, rather than as evidence of physiological adaptation or causal intervention efficacy.



As reflected in this synthesis, the originality of the SADHU Model lies not in introducing unfamiliar exercises or claiming a new physiological training effect, but in organising ordinary monastic life into a repeatable, context-sensitive structure for Buddhist-based recreational physical activity. It addresses a gap left by monk-focused health initiatives that have mainly emphasised community participation, mental health support, medication-related concerns, or broader health behaviours, while evidence on Buddhist walking meditation and mindful walking remains heterogeneous in populations, formats, and outcomes. The SADHU Model differs from these approaches in three respects. First, it systematically organises existing monastic duties into three routine-based activity categories, namely inherent monastic routines, supportive temple-based activities, and structured movement practices. During the intervention, these activities were delivered at an extremely light to very light intensity within a Borg 6 - 20 RPE target range of 7 to 9, and health-related functional fitness was assessed using the Senior Fitness Test. Second, it incorporates the Vinaya, samana-sarupa, sati, and appamāda as contextual design principles that guide compatibility with monastic conduct, while keeping outcome assessment and interpretation grounded in sports and exercise science rather than treating Buddhist principles as clinical explanations. Third, its contribution does not rest on a claim of intervention efficacy; Instead, it specifies functional stability as a study-specific interpretive framework for understanding favourable directional changes in health-related functional fitness in the absence of statistically significant change during the intervention period. Participant satisfaction and perceived feasibility were assessed separately as descriptive indicators of perceived contextual acceptability. This contribution extends sports and recreation science by conceptualising recreational physical activity as culturally appropriate and institutionally embedded movement for populations whose opportunities for activity are shaped by ethical, religious, and organisational conditions.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings did not demonstrate statistically significant physiological improvement or causal intervention efficacy. Rather, they showed that the SADHU Model was implemented over 12 weeks through three activity categories embedded within daily monastic routines: Inherent monastic routines, supportive temple-based activities, and structured movement practices. The implementation was accompanied by favourable directional changes across health-related functional fitness indicators, although none reached the prespecified threshold for statistical significance. Within the study-specific interpretive framework, this pattern was consistent with short-term functional stability rather than evidence that the model prevented decline or produced physiological adaptation. Participant satisfaction was high and was interpreted as descriptive feedback on perceived feasibility and contextual acceptability rather than as evidence of physiological effectiveness. As a contribution to Applied Buddhism, SADHU demonstrates how the Vinaya, samana-sarupa, sati, and appamāda can inform the development of a health-related process model without displacing sports and exercise science as the basis for outcome assessment and interpretation. SADHU should therefore be understood as



an empirically informed, context-sensitive model that organises existing monastic duties, temple-based activities, and structured movement practices into extremely light to very light intensity recreational physical activity compatible with monastic conduct, individual functional capacity, and the ordinary rhythm of temple life. For practice, temples, monastic leaders, community health volunteers, and local health personnel may consider supporting context-appropriate activities such as alms-round walking, light temple maintenance, walking meditation, arm-swing walking, and brisk walking as flexible routine-based movement practices for ageing monks, provided that these remain compatible with monastic conduct and are adapted to individual functional capacity and health limitations. Future research should examine the SADHU Model using controlled study designs, larger samples, and longer follow-up periods, while further assessing adherence, physical activity volume, frailty status, falls, quality of life, and daily functional performance to clarify whether routine-embedded recreational physical activity contributes to sustained functional health among ageing monastic populations.

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SHIFTING ETHICS AND PSYCHOLOGY: HOW BUDDHIST PRACTICE, EXEMPLARS, AND ROUTINE CAN CHANGE INDIVIDUALS AT GOMDE

Gregory Placidi

Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom

Corresponding author E-mail: gp526@cantab.ac.uk

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Abstract

Background: Ethical life can be modified depending on the cultural context one is situated within: "Our" good is not the only good, nor, potentially, the good we should aspire to at all. The variety that exists in the domain of ethical life leads to questions about the sanctity of a supposed predetermined morality, hence raising issues for those who adhere to certain ethical conduct because that conduct is believed to be ethical. In Rangjung Yeshe Gomde, a Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhist meditation centre located in the foothills of the Upper Austrian Alps, these questions and issues come to the fore. It is a centre that acts as a transition zone for potential self-reformation; One that supplies Western meditators interested in Tibetan Buddhist philosophy a place in which to reset from the dominant values in one's social milieu. Here, students learn that there are alternative ways to realize values that differ from the ones that have been inculcated within themselves. Gomde thus enables Western students to reframe and alter their ethical and psychological considerations; Many individuals I describe in this article turn to Buddhism when life becomes heavy and no longer makes sense, and they subsequently have profound shifts in how they think they ought to be living. The setting, teachings, practices, and exemplars encourage this reassessment. That Buddhist meditation, which allows students to reframe mental phenomena and thus induces a critical reflexivity about their responses to the vicissitudes of life, is clear in a setting like Gomde. Yet this "Universal" capacity for moral reasoning is contextually inflected. Nevertheless, self-formation at Gomde provides an environment for a fruitful analysis of the reflexive efforts people employ to lead an ethical life, even if located in "Pedagogically" oriented forms and embedded in the routines of daily life. Therefore, with ethnographic engagement, I show how Buddhadhamma, in this setting, accompanied by other factors, can lead to ethical and psychological transformation: I enable an anthropological account of how and why some Western interlocutors deviate from societal and psychological norms. To work through this argument, I detail: The role that meditation and Buddhadhamma have in reassessing values; The importance of an openness to new ideals; And how exemplars can



simultaneously allow people to reimagine their ethical conduct whilst enabling a continuation of a culturally divergent set of ethical values in a novel environment.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: This article analyses how contemporary Western subjects utilize Tibetan Buddhist practices, routines, and relationships to transform their psychological well-being, highlighting a link between Buddhism and the development of wisdom and morality.

Conclusions: The meditative practices, ethical teachings, and exemplars at Gomde allow interested students a chance to diverge from pre-existing values and norms, causing substantial changes in some. Although these techniques are profound, the ability they have to alter people's values depends on other social factors. Hence, underpinning the ethical transformations at Gomde are pertinent social dynamics ranging from the political landscape one inhabits to health factors. The original data of this research is a significant subject matter to engage with because it allows a close connection with a form of social life historically underdeveloped in the anthropological canon. Understanding how people believe they ought to live, the mechanisms that enable these evaluations to change, and what happens when they do change are all topics that have thus been assessed. I therefore provide important material for helping gain insight into the various dimensions of ethics across society. When this can be better understood, how people work and operate in different settings can be better understood: A study of ethics is a study of social life, and vice versa.

Keywords: Tibetan Vajrayana, Psychological Transformation, Ethics

Introduction



Figure 1 Gomde: A Centre of Transition for Western Students of Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy



Rachel, a middle-aged woman from Vienna, first came to Gomde four years ago. She described how life before visiting Gomde, the grounds of which are shown in Figure 1, was one of confusion and uncertainty, going from one thing to the next but not knowing why. One morning, whilst still at her old job in the city, she looked at an elderly employee who had been there for over 30 years. To her, this person embodied her future self, and she resented the fact that she, too, would potentially end up as someone she deemed unhappy and without purpose. In that moment, she decided that this was not the life she desired. After visiting Gomde, she quickly became enthralled by the centre's doctrine, practices, and daily routine: Her internal dialogue (Her Mental Evaluation of Events) had shifted after engaging with the centre's teachings, enabling her to become more appreciative of life. She thus withdrew from her addictions, regularly meditated, and began spreading loving kindness; These changes were endorsed and encouraged by the centre's teachings. Rachel noted to me that she now had new aim, an unshakeable motivation to liberate herself from suffering. This ethical transition exemplifies how Gomde triggers a "Technology of the Self," allowing students to turn an internal dialogue into an object of reflection.

The story of Rachel is common amongst those frequenting Gomde and is important to recognise as it shows how engagement with Buddhist teachings and settings can radically shift the way one perceives one's "Self" and all external events. As I have been visiting Gomde for over five years, I thus couple my personal experiences and relationships with ethnographic fieldwork to principally argue that Gomde and Buddhadhamma can remold Western practitioners' view and attainment of "Ethical Life." This assessment will have a particular focus on the use of meditative practice and the way it shifts ethics (What One Believes to Be a Good/Bad Way to Live).

As other important ethnographies have shown in religious settings, employing a Foucauldian "Analytic of Ethical Reasoning and Practice" allows for an assessment of "Different Projects of Self-formation" (Laidlaw, 2014). I therefore adopt this evaluative stance to analyse the unique type of self-formation at Gomde. I show how the meditation practice taught at Gomde is structurally similar to Foucault's "Technologies of the Self" as both require a capacity for working on oneself through reflection. I argue that enabling a student to "Sit Back" and reflect entails the creation of a free, ethical subject (Foucault, 1997). Importantly, I show that when this reflection occurs at Gomde, it can lead to significant changes in the perceptions and aspirations of those who engage with this "Ethical Project."

Another central argument of my paper, however, will highlight how in this setting the ethical shifts that take place occur in tandem with other important social factors, such as rupture to "Being Existentially Comfortable in One's World" (Zigon, 2010) due to health, economic or political reasons: The self-formation in which one constitutes themselves as free subjects by learning how to be ethical (Foucault, 1997) relies on other things to work. Rachel and others like her appear to have been able to utilise the tools of meditation and Buddhist philosophy to shift ethical evaluations as they were already seeking change. I therefore

argue that an "Openness" to new ethical ideas subsequently affects how ethical transformations take place.

Notably, one key factor that I discuss in enabling people to diverge from social norms is the example of Rinpoche. In my assessment of his role, I show that exemplars are more than bridges between what is and what ought to be. How Rinpoche relates to the main concepts contained within this paper is highlighted below in Figure 2.



Figure 2 Key concepts influencing ethical and psychological transformation at Gomde

Ethical and Psychological change through meditation Ethics

I argue throughout my paper that Gomde provides a site for shifting ethical perspectives. But what exactly does this mean, and how does it occur? Ethics has traditionally been understood in the West in a narrow sense (Lambek, 2000), usually as related to rules that stem from unique obligations which are untainted by personal interest (Laidlaw, 2014). Other ways of understanding how one ought to live had historically been swept aside from this dominant "Morality System"



(Williams, 1985). At Gomde, however, meditation, Rinpoche and the centre itself provide an example and setting of self-cultivation or "Autopoiesis" (Faubion, 2001) and a way to realise that there are wider considerations of the ethical. There is now consensus in the anthropological canon that ethics is "Not a Timeless, Trans-historical Concept but Requires to be Understood Genealogically, in the Way that Anthropologists have Learned to Understand the Category of Religion" (Asad, 1993); (Laidlaw, 2023).

As such, I draw on the work of Foucault (1978) and the technologies of the self. These techniques enable agents to effect operations "On their Own Bodies and Souls, Thoughts, Conduct, and Way of Being" (Foucault, 1988) to ensure that they can transform themselves to attain a specific ethical outcome. Although these techniques and processes that affect operations are not created individually and are instead based on "Models that He Finds in His Culture and Are Proposed, Suggested, Imposed Upon Him by His Culture" (Foucault, 1997), this does nothing to remove the active, reflective freedom that is needed to actualise them. For Foucault, this freedom is based on the existence of reflexive thought and the structure that it holds. It is the ability to "Step Back" (Foucault, 1997) from acting or reacting in a certain way and enables one to create a relationship with oneself. Having the ability to reflect upon a part of the self (One's Thoughts or Actions, for Example) means that it can be problematised: It can be reflected upon and thus worked on. Foucault, in his later writings, understood ethics to be this conscious practice of freedom, the form freedom manifests as when shaped by consciously reflecting (Heywood, 2023). I therefore build on this work by highlighting a novel way in which technologies of the self and conscious reflection can be realised; Gomde enables people like Rachel to transform ethically through conscious self-cultivation.

I also employ the work of Laidlaw (2014) as he effectively shows how to mobilise Foucault's ideas into different projects of self-formation. Laidlaw (2014) highlights that for any period or milieu, something will always be problematised, with this being a part of Foucault's genealogical method for understanding ethics. This problematisation applies to Gomde as, through the ethical teachings and practices, students are encouraged to realise that thoughts, emotions, and the physical world are illusory, problematising them to encourage students to no longer attach to these phenomena. Laidlaw (2014) shows that Foucault is a good starting point for moving beyond deterministic social theory by engaging with questions pertaining to the effects of reflective thinking in ethical life, even in contexts traditionally excluded by the dominant morality system. By building on Foucault, Laidlaw broadens ethical understandings (To Places Like Gomde and People Like Rachel) by asserting that topics previously discarded as forms of power and oppression are instead constitutive of agents acting freely. Laidlaw induces us to view individuals as oriented toward visions of human flourishing that are specific both culturally and historically, highlighting how more varied ethical considerations exist in settings of self-formation. His work thus sparked anthropological engagement with contexts of "Ethical Life" that cannot be accounted for in a "Progressive Politics" framework (Hirschkind, 2006), showing



also that freedom can be chosen despite potentially authoritative norms. I therefore draw on the work of Laidlaw (2014) to "Take Seriously" the form that ethical life takes in a novel Tibetan Buddhist setting, enabling an understanding of a distinct mode of human flourishing whilst simultaneously describing a "Diverse form of Ethical Reflection and Practice so as to Bring its Distinctiveness into Focus" so we can "Learn not Only About but Also From" those engaging in an ethical project at Gomde. These insights allow us to understand better how a unique form of meditation and Buddhism can enable Western interlocutors to change habits, thoughts, and considerations of how one ought to live. That Gomde encourages the use of self-technologies, which require freedom and reflection to work, highlights how modes of self-making, that is, how the ways through which human agents constitute themselves alter views on topics like how one ought to live, "Depend on Historically Specific Social Relationships" (Laidlaw & Mair, 2019). I therefore use ethics in this broader sense, encompassing more than a narrow morality system premised on rules and obligations. I can therefore show: How people ethically transform themselves; The role of exemplars that people aspire to emulate; And the relationships these depend on. The work people undertake at Gomde is an example of an ethical project because the practices and teachings are premised on the idea that people can, do, and should improve themselves through cultivation and "Problematisation" in order to be free from suffering. And, as Laidlaw & Mair (2019) highlight, cultivation is a core tenet of Buddhist ethics: Humans can be fashioned through practice. Techniques like meditation exist at Gomde to enable this to occur and can be recognised by exploring the life stories of people like Rachel.

One final introductory note on ethics: Consent was gained from all participants in this study, and any distinguishing features have been altered to ensure anonymity, other than for Rinpoche.

Gomde

Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche is one of the greatest living Tibetan meditation masters and the seventh reincarnation of Gar Drubchen, an emanation of Nagarjuna, who is widely regarded as the second most important Buddhist philosopher after the Buddha (Westerhoff, 2022). He is also the spiritual figurehead of Gomde and eight other international meditation centres.

Due to expansion into a Western setting, the founders believed it was necessary to cater to the tastes of Western people to attract and retain them. As shown in Figure 3, Gomde is thus a unique site: Its manicured lawns, alpine location, large estate, luxurious rooms, natural swimming ponds, and decadent food provide a spa-like environment. Yet this scene is juxtaposed with Buddha statues, stupas, prayer flags sprawling between the trees of the grounds, and, of course, dedicated meditation halls filled with "Typical" Buddhist articles ranging from pictures and ornaments of realised masters to singing bowls and decorated protectors. The collection of diverging assets ensures the environment of Gomde is unlike the myriad Tibetan monasteries I have stayed at and visited across the Himalayas. Yet this is to be expected given that Buddhism is best understood as grounded in localised social practices and that "The Continuities and



Constant Reinterpretations of Buddhism" entail "A Set of Socially Located Traditions" (Cook & Diemberger, 2021).



Figure 3 The pools of Gomde

Gomde thus appeals more to the middle classes, as it has been "Transplanted" (Baumann, 1994) in such a way that it appeases certain Western sensibilities. I had conversations with a Lama close to Rinpoche to discuss why these bifurcations from "Typical" Tibetan customs were allowed to occur. The Lama detailed how a monastery, or any other Tibetan setting to learn of the Buddha's teachings, is merely a different form in which to hold and transmit dhamma. Dhamma is conceptualised as "Truth" that actualises in accordance with its surroundings, and I was advised to focus on the "Truth" itself. Yet this novel Tibetan Buddhist environment is exactly what requires anthropological interpretation, so that we can grapple with the "Lived Experience" of Western interlocutors engaging with philosophies that may subsequently cause radical shifts in ethical perspectives. Gomde should be analysed because it holds unique relationships and social interactions that, once understood, can allow for a better comprehension of how ethical transformations can take place. However, the Lama is right: There should be an engagement



with Buddhist texts and teachings, but this needs to be in context, underpinning "The Importance of Buddhist Living Settings" (Cook & Diemberger, 2021).

Meditation

To understand how meditation entails ethical and psychological transformation, I outline in this section what exactly happened at Gomde whilst I undertook fieldwork and how this impacted students. I argue that this shows Buddhadhamma-infused self-cultivation to be active and potentially radical.

On weekday evenings at exactly 19:00, students at the centre attended a class where fundamental concepts of Tibetan Buddhism were taught. For this, students gathered in the meditation hall, the largest room of Gomde. Before entering, individuals had to ensure they were appropriately dressed. On some occasions, I noticed that unaware individuals who wore shorts were told that this could not be repeated, and although told gently, it was a command that must be adhered to, or else continued practice would be forbidden. In the meditation hall, students sat on the floor in assigned rows facing a large Buddha statue and pictures of revered masters. The Lama who ran the session sat in a separate row and often detailed how humans should "Liberate from Samsara, the Constant Cycle of Death and Rebirth," with meditation being the tool to enable this to happen. The reason it was taught that this needed to occur is that only through liberation can one be free from suffering. To accomplish this feat, the Lama anchored the Four Noble Truths within the canonical framework of the "Four Dharma Seals" common to Mahayana and early doxographies: Namely, that all conditioned things are impermanent, all defiled emotions entail suffering, all phenomena are empty of inherent self, and nirvana is peace. Rather than using these scriptures for dogmatic theology, however, Gomde deploys them as highly practical psychological templates to shift what people value.

After these teachings were given, the Lama explained a meditative technique suited for all experience levels, such as Chenrezig. In Chenrezig (Buddha of Compassion) meditation, students are told to focus solely on receiving loving compassion from the visualised Buddha, with thoughts about things other than this "Beam of Infinite Loving Wisdom" to be "Let Go." When other thoughts arise, which they often do for novice meditators, students are told to accept them for their "Unreality." After the Lama gonged the singing bowl, the room fell silent as the meditation began. Due to a large proportion of meditation neophytes present, the space, which is shown in Figure 4 below, quickly became alive with sounds of itching, awkward shuffling, and swallowing.

After another gong that signalled an end to the brief practice, which clearly came as a relief to many, the Lama asked if there were any questions. Typical queries that arose were, "What should We Do with these Random Thoughts that Keep Occurring?" The Lama explained that they should be applied to the accompanying Buddhist teachings about the three key characteristics that underpin all phenomena: Thoughts are impermanent (Anitya), inherently unsatisfactory (Dukkha), and empty of a permanent self (Anatman). This framework traces directly



to authoritative Mahayana scriptures like the Samadhiraja Sutra (King of Samadhi Sutra), a text central to the Kagyu and Nyingma lineages taught at Gomde. Rather than engaging in textual philosophy, however, practitioners deploy these canonical schemas as live psychological tools to navigate how they think they ought to be living.



Figure 4 A typical meditation session in Gomde's great hall

By attending more sessions (There are at Least Two Daily, Starting Promptly at 07:30 and 17:00), students learn that their attachments to impermanent things only perpetuate dukkha because one cannot successfully attach to ever-changing phenomena. Through these attachments, one remains in samsara, as both are underpinned by karma (Deeds Driven by Intentions). Gomde's teachings thus look to enable students to liberate themselves by detaching from their thoughts and actions to have a "Right View" of these concepts.

Daniel, a lanky blonde from France, was living full-time at the centre when I met him, and he provided an example of how Gomde's routine and practices forge ethical transformations. He worked towards liberation by embodying the presented teachings and by constantly reassessing his thoughts and actions throughout the day so that he could reduce attachments, though the repetitive reflection that Daniel said he engaged with was tricky, as his mind easily wandered. Daniel often downplayed the extent of his experience in this way, humbly remarking that these were just a layperson's views. Through understanding that liberation is the only route to salvation he also aimed at liberating all other sentient beings, actualised through his vegetarianism and great care he takes to be kind to all whom he meets; His friendly attitude, warm smile, and patient demeanor made conversing with him enjoyable. Daniel also regularly worked on spreading loving kindness through a meditative practice known as Tonglen, a visualisation whereby one takes



on the ills of others whilst simultaneously sending them loving wisdom. In a conversation after daily chores had finished, Daniel noted that his utilitarian reasons for attending Gomde were met quickly, as meditative tools enabled a calming of his mind.

However, these benefits became only secondary in importance as to why he thought he should stay. Daniel detailed how he realised that to truly be free from suffering, he must continue to work on himself, cultivating the ethical quality of non-attachment that aids liberation. He subsequently left his hometown to stay at the centre, leaving behind a girlfriend and a well-paying job as he realised that his goals and life were not going to bring lasting happiness and were merely boosting the false ego that was not really him, a reflection of the substantial shifts that can occur in ethical outlook after frequenting Gomde. Daniel's abandonment of capitalistic career markers demonstrates Foucault's conscious practice of freedom. By "Subjectifying" his mind as an object of ethical cultivation, his radical transformation is explicitly negotiated through the centre's doctrine and practices, rather than occurring in isolation.

I argue that the meditation practices that encourage ethical shifts at Gomde are akin to Foucault's reflexive thought and are an example of an ethical project: It is an "Active Process of Reflective Self-Formation" (Laidlaw, 2014). This is because the meditations are not limited to just the content of thinking, "Which is Recognised as Cross-culturally Variable" (Cook, 2015). Speaking on reflexive thought, Foucault (1997) states:

It is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and to question it as to its meaning, its condition, and its goals. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem.

Interestingly, the emphasis of both Foucault and teachers at the centre is on the capacity for stepping back. Despite this form of stepping back being a culturally and historically specific occurrence, it nevertheless acts as a form of reflexivity that Foucault argues is universal. Importantly, the reflexive analysis of thoughts and emotions means that students are "Subjectifying" themselves to themselves. They are doing this to "Problematise" a certain aspect of oneself in order to change it. This process at Gomde involves acknowledging that thoughts are illusory and suffering-inducing if attached to; Meditation is a type of training that enables the skill of detachment. The ethical principles that are actualised through meditation at Gomde are thus ethical projects and similar to Foucault's thought. However, by introducing the students to Tibetan Buddhist soteriology, at Gomde meditation goes one step further than what Foucault describes: It manifests as an understanding that thoughts are not a true depiction of reality and instead should be seen as something impermanent. At Gomde, students learn to "Step Back" during meditative visualisations to realise that thoughts that are unrelated to the practice are not real and merely create suffering. Yet one is still able to choose to do certain things based on thoughts, though one now acts with a new perspective that acknowledges that these thoughts are not a true depiction of reality.



These different reactions students now have to their thoughts and emotions enable them to reduce stress and anxious tendencies (Teasdale, 1999). For Daniel, this had noticeably improved and altered his day-to-day life, as he stated he was happier and aimed at spreading loving kindness. Yet enjoying these utilitarian benefits is not where the student is left. The aptitude to skilfully detach from thoughts to relieve suffering leads to the cultivation of certain attitudes. This conduct differs markedly from previous ways of being, given the newfound aim of liberation. To attain salvation goals acts that promote nonattachment, like Daniel's humility (So He is No Longer Attached to The Illusory Self), his move to live full-time at the centre (So He is No Longer Attached to Relationships and Possessions), and attempt to have complete meditative awareness (So He Merely Perceives the World Rather than Attaches to How They Think it Should Be) are all therefore brought into fruition by the centre's encouragement and individual cultivation efforts. This leads to a drastic change of ethics, values, and psychology, given that students like Daniel were previously set on gaining wealth and status. As the interest here is in training individuals so that they may have skills and certain attitudes to attain a specific state, this relates well to Foucault: This training comes from the ability to look at the self in order to mould it.

Clearly, meditation at Gomde is therefore an example of a "Self-technology." To have this capacity also entails someone creating a relationship with oneself and others, subsequently making them an ethical subject (Foucault, 1997). This thus implies freedom, as the individual can decide how they ought to behave. This is important to note because I am therefore describing ethical change here as a choice. However, from my discussion of Gomde thus far, it may instead seem like the center works in a repressive way, as somewhat strict schedules and rules (On Clothing, Timings of Sessions, and Where One can Sit) stem from authoritative Tibetan Buddhist structures. Yet I, like others (Mahmood, 2011); (Faubion, 2011), am showing that ethical ways of being do not necessarily have to be seen through a lens of progressive politics: There is freedom in actively choosing to encompass perhaps authoritative norms. Hence, in this context, I argue that shifting away from ethical ideals that are dear to liberal readers of anthropology not only sometimes entails radical changes within a practitioner but also that this different form of ethical life is a mode of human flourishing: The Western agent is a free subject despite having to follow moral codes that are set by potentially authoritarian Tibetan Buddhist hierarchies. The conscious self-formation to become a virtuous subject at Gomde manifests through meditation. And although this meditation is institutionally prescribed, it is also voluntary. The institution of Gomde states what to do and students are set within hierarchical systems whereby teachers instruct in a top-down manner. However, the student can decide when and for how long to attend Gomde, and for which practices they engage with. The process of meditating shapes the student into perceiving herself differently as she realises the thoughts that constitute her are not actually her, generating what Cook (2010) describes as "A Special Kind of Constitutive Knowledge of the Self." Meditation is thus the training that shifts ethical perspectives, but also the tool that enables students to make themselves ethical subjects: This "Technology of Self" is therefore a manifestation of freedom as the individual



is able to decide how to behave. Importantly, therefore, this process at Gomde that changes Western interlocutors into aspiring to a different and particular type of human flourishing is an example of an ethical transformation as opposed to adherence to authoritative hierarchies.

Meditation?

Aoife is 45 but has the energy and playfulness of someone much younger. Quick to laugh, conversations with Aoife were rarely downbeat, but whilst cleaning the centre's hallways, we discussed her reasons for coming to Gomde. She initially arrived at the centre after leaving her home due to the unfulfilling life she was leading in Dublin. She came to Gomde with the hope of finding something new, as her life had been plagued with mental health woes. Just before coming to Gomde, she had also recently been made redundant. This sudden and forced change gave her a chance to reflect on what she had valued. Moreover, a long history of family instability had been coming to a head, and Aoife felt like she needed to escape.

Most questions I put to Mark on Tibetan Buddhist doctrine he could readily explain, given his years of devoted practice. I thus found it surprising when he told me that he begrudgingly followed his wife to Gomde for the first few times after I asked him a question on karmic ripening. During a drive to the local supermarket, he said his choice to come to Gomde was solely to support his wife's aim of deepening her meditative practice. After a pause in his story to let some cars pull out of a junction, he described that his karma was clearly ripening as "Why Else Would I have Come to Gomde and Met the People I have?" The influences of others had made a profound impact on Mark and he found the passion people had to change for the good inspiring. Mark spoke about how he previously had strong and opposing ethical values to those taught at Gomde, based on a self-described secular and scientific worldview. However, these strong "Anti-religious" values that he held were challenged as he spent a considerable amount of time with people he saw as courageously compassionate.

Joan is a young, quiet woman from Kyiv. One evening, she told me that she had a profoundly revelatory near-death experience that drastically changed how she thought she should be living. Her life of drinking and partying was radically altered after this out-of-body event. It also made her reflect on the negative way in which "Friends" and a partner had been treating her. She thus started engaging with religious teachings as she was looking for answers that could explain both her "Supernatural" episode as well as provide solace from her troubled relationships. This desire to realise something deeper was exacerbated by her disillusionment and unease with the war against Russia, which caused her to leave Ukraine. When arriving at the centre she said she quickly felt at home due to the welcoming nature of those who stay, a feeling she had not had for a long time.

The ways in which people develop themselves as ethical subjects at Gomde are, quite naturally, shaped by social context and historical specificity: "Self-cultivation" practices are here clearly an aspect of social life. That this and other modes of "Subjectivation" are culturally shared is thus unsurprising (Cook, 2023). As Laidlaw (2014) aptly states, "The Reflective Motion of Stepping Back is Not Negated by The Fact that in Order for This to be possible You have to



Be Standing Somewhere in Particular to Begin With." As such, understanding where individuals are situated before stepping back is important to analyse if a full connection with this unique project of ethical transformation is to be realised.

As can be seen through the above ethnographic cases, people often come to the centre during a time of "Moral Breakdown" (Zigon, 2007). This is a period that forces one to reflect and make choices about what they want in their life. These occurrences help attract people to Gomde because they encounter a moment "Of Freedom and Creativity in the Exercise of Choice" as to which ethical considerations they should uphold (Laidlaw, 2014); (Zigon, 2008) describes moments like Joan's near-death experience, Aoife's job loss and Rachel's health conditions as important "Ethical Moments" because they are a chance to leave the "Equilibrium" of everyday moral life.

Although Zigon's formulation locates ethical reflexivity in unique moments of "Moral Breakdown," thus being structurally dissimilar to Foucault's "Problematisation" as the "Standing Back" "Is an Inherent Dimension of All Human Conduct, Thus Ordinary in the Sense" utilised by (Das, 2007); (Lambek, 2010); (Laidlaw, 2014), it is useful for my analysis as it enables an outline for why a subject may choose to start the transition to upholding different values and ethical outlooks. Yet although Zigon's argument falls short because "Moral Breakdown" is clearly not the only moment of "Ethics" (Gomde's Students Strive for A State of Meditative Awareness Even During Moments of Everyday Social Life) Zigon (2008), it is helpful to analyse as oftentimes unordinary moments of uncertainty lead people to the Gomde. Many students like Rachel, Aoife, and Joan arrive at the centre because they have already had a shift away from their usual ethical habitus. This reflects an important criterion for Buddhist teachings at Gomde to be effective for some people: Students need to be open to new ideas and ways of being. Without this "Openness," I argue that students are much less likely to engage.

Importantly, I must state that I am not here trying to argue that a specific interlocutor's circumstances necessarily entail a specific ethical shift at Gomde, nor that coming to the center at a time of moral (Un)certainly will mean the discrediting (Or Uptake) of Buddhist teachings and practices. However, I am also not trying to highlight that simply the self and its reflection, which can be encouraged through Buddhist teachings and practices, are a determinant of profound self-liberating "Self-directedness" (Seigel, 2005). Instead, I reject this binary of competing and opposite theories of self-cultivation that claim it either reproduces "A Normative Social Order" or is based wholly on "A Matter of Individual Choice" (Cook, 2023). Clearly, Gomde shows that the way in which people "Reflect Upon Themselves and Seek to Act" is "Informed by the Particularities" of specific contexts (Cook, 2023): informed, not decided.

Moral lives at Gomde, much like elsewhere, are intricate and seldom homogeneous. The way in which people employ self-cultivation techniques that stem from Tibetan Buddhism, and the ability these have to shift ethical perspectives, are shaped by the institution itself as well as other factors that affect individuals, such as Mark's awe of others, Joan's meaningless partying, and Aoife's family difficulties. The specific type of self-cultivation at Gomde, therefore, manifests within the



moral pluralism of diverse, tangled social relations. Hence, self-cultivation in specific lives cannot always be reduced to "A Thin Analysis of Either Atomistic Individualism or Social Determinism" (Cook, 2023). Gomde and the changes it fosters within individuals show that even in a somewhat intense setting of personal ethical training, people are still bound by sociality: How ethical transformations occur is both self-directed and socially determined.

Rinpoche

On the day of his arrival at Gomde, which happened by chance during my fieldwork, a shining Land Rover pulled into view at the edge of the estate and gradually ploughed up the long, meandering gravel lane.

When the car arrived, the passenger-side door was slowly opened, and out stepped Rinpoche. As he descended from his chariot, a devotee shielded the sun from him with a large umbrella. The expectant crowd stood in awe as he proceeded to acknowledge each person who stood in the glaring sun. Dressed in typical Tibetan Buddhist monastic attire of the highly spiritual deep reds and maroons, Rinpoche exuded a simple way of being. Yet surrounding this man was quite the opposite situation: Some people in tears, some people ecstatic, many clearly anxious. All members of the community followed him as he proceeded to walk around the grounds. One of his first acts after arriving was to pause at an ant mound. Although seemingly inconspicuous, Rinpoche spent a considerable amount of time blessing the busy pile of earth that the ants had created, as shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5 Rinpoche's blessing of ants in Gomde's Bodhi Garden



I spoke to Stijn in the gardens shortly after Rinpoche had retired to his private area. He told me, whilst clearly still buzzing over the afternoon's events, that it was fantastic that Rinpoche was here. Stijn, 20, was studying for an economics degree, but he regaled me with how his decision to go to university was difficult: He was initially unsure whether he should obtain a degree in order to get a well-paying finance job, as perhaps it was better to fully devote one's life to meditation. Yet he mentioned that devoted meditation is not what Rinpoche did. He knew that Rinpoche acts to alleviate the suffering of as many beings as possible (Including Those Ants), expanding dhamma so that this can occur. From this understanding, Stijn decided that it was best for him to go to university to study economics because, as he reasoned, he could then use his skills to also spread dhamma.

Mark, too, had his choices influenced by the conduct of Rinpoche. Whilst walking to the evening puja session on the same day as Rinpoche's arrival, Mark detailed how loving and kind Rinpoche was. He informed me that Rinpoche decided to take human form to liberate more beings, even though this is a perilous task, as it is easy to succumb to attachments. Mark was smiling whilst we ambled towards the meditation hall, and he spoke more about Rinpoche's daily work to spread compassion, noting often how noble and inspiring he was. Mark also claimed that when he goes through the day, he aims to act similarly to Rinpoche, which consequently makes him a better person. Stijn's educational pivot and Mark's outlook change show that their ethical evaluations are not governed by abstract text-based rules but are interpersonally modelled on a living exemplar.

Rinpoche is also the reason why Gomde exists: His message and conduct were enough of an impetus for individuals who had met him in Nepal to return home to found the centre. Exemplars like Rinpoche have been understood in the philosophical canon as a bridge between what is and what ought to be. That is, a force of example like Rinpoche enables a chance to reconcile theories of pluralism (Which Anthropology Lies Within) with theories of universal coherence (Such as Marxism) (Ferrara, 2008). However, in this section, I am more concerned with how Rinpoche acts as a bridge between another theoretical divide: That between the collective and the solitary. I argue that this "Tussle Between Agency and Structure" (Evans, 2023) may be better understood by engaging with an exemplar like Rinpoche, and further show how and why free agents may subsequently reproduce or change social norms. By drawing on the work of Humphrey (1997), I detail how Rinpoche provides an analytic that enables devoted students to diverge from previous rules and values by considering their choices with his example in mind. I also detail how Rinpoche acts as an exemplar that reinforces existing cultural forms (Robbins, 2018). Despite these perhaps contradictory statements, Rinpoche simultaneously enables individuals to reframe their ethical perspectives whilst allowing a continuation of diverging ethical norms in a new setting.

Humphrey's (1997) Exemplars and Rules details how rules that guide Mongols are understood outside of "The Sphere of Morality" (Evans, 2023) and conceptualised instead as modes of control. Following rules is not in and of itself moral for Mongols, as rules are merely a form of power, and they do not leave space for any critical moral judgement (Humphrey, 1997). Therefore, Mongols instead decide how to act by cultivating relationships with exemplary figures (Humphrey,



1997). What Humphrey's article effectively points to is that when people question which moral rules they should follow, they are also asking a question of what kind of person they wish to be. Exemplars thus become items of contemplation because they enable individuals to engage with sometimes conflicting and often complex entanglements of values and ethics (Evans, 2023).

Students at Gomde, like Mark and Stijn, thus contemplate Rinpoche's example to know how to act as taught by Buddhist ideals of detachment juxtapose with "Typical Western" ideals of attachment to things like the ego, property, and status. Without his example, Mark and Stijn would have been confused about what to do: How would Stijn have decided whether or not to attend university? How would Mark know how to act day-to-day? A different case where interlocutors do not know how best they should live is raised by Robbins (2007) in his study of the Urapmin: The interlocutors here are trying to be good Christians whilst simultaneously attempting to uphold traditional Urapmin values that contradict this new way of being. At Gomde, people also often have to reconcile two sets of moral ideals and two systems of personal virtue that contradict one another, such as wanting to go to university but not wanting to attach to this status-boosting activity. Despite the Urapmin cultural context differing from Gomde, it seems that both cases lead to what Robbins describes as a state of moral torment, whereby interlocutors are caught between two ethical modes. The situation at Gomde, much like with the Urapmin, is that many undergo a radical but incomplete transition to accepting only Buddhist ethical perspectives. This means individuals must navigate between competing values.

Due to these conflicting values that arise when Western students embody Buddhist teachings, many turn to Rinpoche in order to understand how they should act. This happens because people want to know what virtues may look like in physical form, enmeshed within an individual as opposed to only embedded within an abstract morality system (Evans, 2023). It can be easier to see and copy than to understand and perform. Rinpoche epitomises the goals and teachings of Tibetan Buddhism as he is believed to be a fully realised being, one who has escaped the wheel of samsara and attained liberation.

Stijn therefore knew how to act when deciding whether to go to university. He managed to uphold his desire to go to university by creatively reinterpreting Buddhist teachings. The conflict between career goals and Buddhist philosophy was resolved by emulating Rinpoche so that the university became a means to spread dhamma more effectively. Similarly, when Mark looks at how to act each day, he tries to diverge from his old self by asking how Rinpoche would act. His conduct is altered by knowing that to be a better person, he must work to spread loving compassion like Rinpoche.

Hence, Rinpoche acts as an inspiration for moral action that entails a divergence from "Old" values towards those found in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Morality and ethical transformation here is thus highly individualistic too because the change in how one acts occurs not only due to rules or insight from mediation, but also through an individual's attempt to reckon with moral judgements, modelled on an exemplar's behaviours (Humphrey, 1997). This individual aspect of deciding how one should act again helps in diverging from social norms because it is the person's



navigation of what it means to be living a good life, as opposed to the rules that come from society (Humphrey, 1997). Hence, the ethical transformations that occur in Western students are often shaped by Rinpoche's example.

Importantly, Rinpoche as an exemplar entails the relative uniformity of Buddhist ideals and virtues. He is seen as someone to emulate because he embodies dominant Tibetan Buddhist values in pure form. Robbins (2018) argues that exemplars like Rinpoche can emerge because they "Realise Specific Values to The Fullest Extent Possible in A Given Cultural Setting." Most people and their actions are unable to "Realise" the most important values despite their aim to do so. This is true for almost all Buddhists globally because only a select few beings are liberated, and it is especially true in a centre like Gomde as Western students typically have little lived experience of how a Buddhist should act. What is interesting in Robbins' argument is that he outlines exemplars to connect human actions to a realm of values, showing people how they should and could live. This means that Rinpoche is key in understanding why Buddhist values can be reproduced in a novel setting like Gomde, highlighting an important relationship between individual and social life. For students like Rachel, Mark, and Stijn, this gives them an opportunity to understand why and how they should transform, and what this may look like. Rinpoche and other exemplars like him can therefore explain the reason for relative cultural uniformity because they highlight how values emerge within, and then go on to order, social life (Robbins, 2018). This implies, contrary to Humphrey (1997), that exemplars exhibit a force to maintain rules and norms because they are chosen for the virtues people aspire to have, ones which are valued in the cultural setting. Hence, due to Rinpoche's example, the students of Gomde can imitate and reproduce Tibetan Buddhist values that are ultimately at the heart of students' ethical shifts. His teachings, as shown in Figure 6, enable this to happen.



Figure 6 Guidance from Rinpoche by Gomde's pools



Interestingly, though, Rinpoche is maintaining the relative uniformity of a conflicting set of moral values in a unique location for Tibetan Buddhism. Although norms are being upheld in one tradition, they are being simultaneously transposed into another. This necessarily means a conflict of values, one where the student must decide for themselves how to engage. Although Robbins (2004) never explains what happens when the "Cultural Setting" shifts whilst the exemplar remains, I argue that it creates a new system whereby those of the "New" setting aim to emulate that of the "Old" setting via an exemplar. Those at Gomde work hard not only to attain the same virtues as those that are dominant in Tibetan Buddhist strongholds, but also to uphold similar traditions, such as blowing conch shells for a great master's arrival. This creates a unique context that simultaneously causes shifts in ethical perspectives whilst leading to the continuation of the norms that the exemplar embodies.

Hence, I argue that Gomde and Rinpoche provide a new way of understanding the effects that exemplars can have on society: A combination of shifting and maintaining ethical perspectives.

Rinpoche's status aids in allowing students at Gomde to realise different sets of norms and values from those previously embodied. This is because people can use him to bridge the gap between "Abstract Moral Cosmologies and Lived Ethical Action" (Evans, 2023). The impact he has on the lives of students at Gomde ultimately shows us that in certain Buddhist settings, shifting how one thinks they should be living can incorporate modes beyond meditation.

For Humphrey (1997) & Robbins (2018), exemplarity is an important feature of morality systems, helping people decide how they ought to live. However, Robbins seeks to explain relative uniformity with exemplars, almost replacing "Culture" as an explanatory factor in this process, whilst Humphrey (1997) instead shows that students can stray from moral norms because they can be reflexive, determining how to live based on an attempt to creatively reimagine how an example like Rinpoche would act if he were in their position. I argue that with the example of Rinpoche, both theories can exist in tandem. This helps us understand how people come to relate to virtues that stray from cultural norms through an exemplar of a different origin. Studying an individual like Rinpoche, thus, is not just about the individual; It's also a way to see where values occur, shift, and mutate in the social domain, and what people think is a proper relationship to have with these values (Evans, 2023).

Conclusions

Gomde provides a distinct site for mapping how ethical considerations shift through lived practice. This article advances the "Ethical Turn" in the anthropology of religion by challenging the theoretical dichotomy between radical individual choice and social determinism. While conventional textual scholarship treats Buddhist ethics as an internal or scriptural rule-following exercise, my ethnographic account demonstrates that ethical transformation is an inherently relational process. As observed among interlocutors like Rachel, Daniel, and Stijn, Western practitioners do not cultivate ethical subjectivity in psychological isolation; Rather, they achieve



moral agency precisely by embedding themselves within highly structured and communal relations. By treating scriptural concepts like *anitya* and *dukkha* as living social objects rather than static dogmas, this study illuminates how contemporary subjects mobilise external traditions to navigate localised crises of meaning. Ultimately, the moral revisions taking place at Gomde reveal that the cultivation of the self is inextricably bound to daily sociality.

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BEYOND INDIANIZATION: BUDDHIST KNOWLEDGE CIRCULATION IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Stanley Khu^{1*}, Iwan Pranoto²

¹Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia

²Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Institut Teknologi Bandung, West Java, Indonesia

*Corresponding author E-mail: khustanley01@gmail.com

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: The concept of "Indianization" has long shaped scholarly understandings of cultural exchange between South and Southeast Asia as a largely unidirectional process through which Indian religious, political, linguistic, and cultural forms spread into a receptive Southeast Asian periphery. Although this framework has contributed significantly to the study of early Asian history, it has also encouraged hierarchical representations in which India appears primarily as a source of civilization and Southeast Asia as a recipient. Such a framework can obscure the historical agency of Southeast Asian societies in selecting, transforming, and circulating cultural and religious knowledge. This study has three objectives. First, to reassess the concept of "Indianization" and the diffusionist assumptions that have historically shaped interpretations of cultural exchange between South and Southeast Asia. Second, to examine how Buddhist knowledge in Southeast Asia was transmitted, localized, and transformed through processes of adaptation, reinterpretation, and materialization. Third, to propose a framework of multidirectional knowledge circulation to explain how religious and technical forms of knowledge moved across interconnected regional networks in early Asia.

Methodology: The study employed an interdisciplinary integrative literature review drawing on scholarship from history, archaeology, epigraphy, Buddhist studies, anthropology, and art history. The literature was selected for its relevance to debates on cultural diffusion, convergence, circulation, localization, and connected histories, as well as for its empirical evidence concerning the movement and transformation of cultural and religious forms. The analysis examined secondary scholarship on inscriptions, textual traditions, iconography, architecture, ritual practices, and mathematical notation. The selected cases were compared to identify recurring patterns of transmission, localization, transformation, and possible re-circulation.

Main Results: The findings showed that Buddhist formations in Southeast Asia were not simply reproductions of Indic models but were actively localized and reconfigured within particular sociopolitical, cultural, and cosmological contexts. Epigraphic, textual, artistic, architectural, and anthropological evidence demonstrated that Buddhist doctrines, ritual practices, visual forms, narratives, and religious figures underwent selective appropriation and reinterpretation across the



region. The analysis further identified the encounter between the Śrīvijayan teacher Dharmakīrti and the Indian Buddhist scholar Atiśa as an important example of knowledge moving from Southeast Asia into wider Buddhist networks. The discussion of early Southeast Asian inscriptions containing zero notation likewise demonstrated that mathematical knowledge circulated through complex regional networks, although the lack of definitive empirical evidence rendered both cases largely speculative and, thus, served mainly to pave the way for further interdisciplinary research.

Involvement to Buddhadhamma: This manuscript falls under the scope of Applied Buddhism, focusing specifically on Buddhism and globalization, since it applies Buddhist history and the concept of upāya to modern transregional and anthropological theories. The findings showed that the circulation of Buddhadhamma involved more than the movement of fixed doctrinal formulations. Buddhist teachings were transmitted through textual, ritual, intellectual, and embodied practices and were repeatedly interpreted and adapted within different cultural and historical contexts. In this respect, the Buddhist principle of upāya, or skillful means, provides a useful interpretive perspective for understanding how Buddhist teachings could be expressed in forms appropriate to particular contexts while maintaining broader ethical and soteriological orientations.

Conclusions: This article proposes multidirectional knowledge circulation as an alternative to rigid center-periphery models of South and Southeast Asian cultural exchange. It foregrounds Southeast Asia as an active site of Buddhist knowledge production, interpretation, preservation, and transformation while avoiding the opposite claim that Southeast Asia was the sole or primary source of regional innovation. The article thus contributes to the decolonization of Asian historiography by shifting analytical attention from singular origins toward the movements, transformations, and historical agencies through which knowledge was produced and circulated across interconnected Asian worlds.

Keywords: Indianization, Re-circulation, Localization, Southeast Asia, Local Agency

Introduction

The concept of "Indianization," most prominently associated with George Coedès, has long shaped scholarly understandings of cultural exchange between the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. Throughout much of the twentieth century, it provided one of the most influential explanations for the widespread presence of Indic religious traditions, political ideas, languages, and cultural forms across the region. At the same time, the concept also shapes how Southeast Asia is positioned within broader narratives of Asian history, often representing the region as a receptive periphery rather than as an active participant in the production and transformation of knowledge. Although this perspective has generated important insights into historical connections between South and Southeast Asia, it also risks reproducing a hierarchical model of knowledge production in which agency is unevenly distributed (Chakrabarty, 2000); (Subrahmanyam, 1997).

Indianization nevertheless remains influential because it provides a convenient shorthand for describing the widespread presence of Indic religious, linguistic, political, and artistic forms across Southeast Asia. It is therefore important to distinguish between Indianization as a historical process and Indianization as an academic interpretation. As a historical process, the term refers



broadly to the circulation, adoption, and transformation of cultural forms associated with South Asia across different parts of Southeast Asia. As an academic interpretation, however, Indianization often functions as an explanatory model that emphasizes diffusion from an Indian center toward a Southeast Asian periphery. It is primarily this latter interpretation, rather than the existence of historical interactions between the two regions, that this article reassesses.

Recent scholarship has increasingly challenged unidirectional models of cultural influence by emphasizing transregional connectivity, local agency, and convergence. Within Buddhist studies, particular attention has been given to the mobility of texts, rituals, monastic networks, and religious specialists, as well as to the processes through which Buddhist ideas were translated, localized, and reconfigured across different social and political settings. These developments resonate with broader critiques of diffusionism in the social sciences, which emphasize agency and negotiation in the movement of cultural forms. Appadurai (1996), for example, highlights the indigenization of global cultural forms, while Lieberman's (2003) analysis of "Strange Parallels" suggests that similarities across regions may emerge through convergent historical processes rather than through direct transmission alone.

Despite these developments, existing approaches give comparatively less attention to what happens after cultural forms are localized. Scholarship generally focuses on diffusion, interaction, or convergence, while the possibility that locally transformed forms of knowledge could subsequently move beyond their immediate contexts and enter new circuits of transmission has received less systematic attention. This issue is particularly important in the study of Buddhism, where Southeast Asia has often been treated primarily as a site of reception rather than as a site of religious knowledge production. Such a perspective can obscure the role of Southeast Asian communities and teachers in preserving, transforming, and, in some cases, transmitting Buddhist knowledge beyond the region. Similar questions arise in non-religious domains, where the circulation of technical and intellectual knowledge has also often been described through relatively linear models of transmission.

To address this gap, this article develops a framework of multidirectional knowledge circulation based on three related processes. Transregional circulation refers to the movement of texts, practices, ideas, and cultural forms across interconnected regional networks. Localization refers to the selective appropriation, adaptation, and reinterpretation of circulating knowledge within particular social and historical contexts. Re-circulation refers to the subsequent movement of locally transformed forms of knowledge beyond their immediate contexts, creating the possibility of recursive or multidirectional flows. The framework therefore shifts attention from fixed centers and peripheries toward the movements and transformations through which knowledge acquires new forms and trajectories.

The article develops this framework through two complementary cases. The first examines the circulation of Buddhist ethical and practical knowledge through the encounter between Atiśa Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna and the Śrīvijayan teacher Dharmakīrti. This case is particularly significant because it documents the movement of an Indian Buddhist scholar to Southeast Asia in search of Buddhist teachings and therefore provides a concrete example of knowledge moving from Southeast Asia



into wider Buddhist networks. The second case examines the historical development of zero notation and the decimal system as a comparative example from outside the explicitly religious domain. Both cases do not demonstrate definitive reverse transmission; Rather, they serve to illustrate the importance of examining knowledge through broader networks of circulation rather than assuming a single linear pathway.

Objectives

This study has three objectives. First, to reassess the concept of "Indianization" and the diffusionist assumptions that have historically shaped interpretations of cultural exchange between South and Southeast Asia. Second, to examine how Buddhist knowledge in Southeast Asia was transmitted, localized, and transformed through processes of adaptation, reinterpretation, and materialization. Third, to propose a framework of multidirectional knowledge circulation to explain how religious and technical forms of knowledge moved across interconnected regional networks in early Asia.

Methodology

This article was a conceptual-historical study based on an integrative literature review that synthesized scholarship from history, archaeology, epigraphy, Buddhist studies, anthropology, and the history of science. An integrative review sought to synthesize and reinterpret findings from diverse bodies of literature to generate new conceptual insights (Baumeister & Leary, 1997); (Torraco, 2005). In this context, it enabled the study to trace how Buddhist practices had been interpreted across disciplines and to re-situate them within a framework of multidirectional circulation.

This study was guided by three research questions: 1) How had the concept of "Indianization" structured interpretations of cultural exchange between South and Southeast Asia, and what were its limitations? 2) How were Buddhist forms of knowledge transmitted, localized, and transformed across Southeast Asian contexts? and 3) To what extent could patterns of multidirectional circulation, including possible re-circulation, be identified across both religious and non-religious domains of knowledge?

The corpus of sources examined in this study was deliberately interdisciplinary, drawing on research from history, archaeology, epigraphy, and anthropology. This reflected the broader orientation of area studies, which was particularly well suited to analyzing complex regional formations such as Southeast Asia by foregrounding connections across disciplinary boundaries (Pye, 2001). At the same time, particular emphasis was placed on scholarship that engaged with Buddhist materials, such as inscriptions, textual traditions, ritual practices, and visual culture, in order to understand how religious knowledge was produced, transmitted, and transformed across contexts.

More specifically, sources were selected when they provided either 1) Theoretical discussions relevant to diffusion, convergence, circulation, or connected histories, or and 2) Empirical evidence capable of illuminating how cultural and religious forms moved across regional networks. This selection strategy was guided by the need to ensure analytical comparability across cases rather than representativeness of all available literature. Sources were excluded when they lacked



clear relevance to debates on cultural exchange between South and Southeast Asia, did not engage with questions of transmission, localization, or circulation, or provided insufficient empirical or theoretical material for comparative analysis. The study therefore focused on scholarship that directly contributed to understanding processes of knowledge movement and transformation across regional contexts. This article, moreover, did not involve original analysis of primary historical materials. Instead, it relied on secondary scholarship that interpreted primary sources such as inscriptions, manuscripts, archaeological remains, iconography, architectural structures, and ritual traditions.

The analysis followed a structured three-stage procedure. First, the selected literature was reviewed to identify major interpretive frameworks used to explain cultural exchange between South and Southeast Asia, particularly diffusionist, convergence-based, and circulation-oriented approaches. Second, empirical cases drawn from Buddhist studies, archaeology, epigraphy, and the history of science were comparatively examined in order to identify recurring patterns of transmission, localization, transformation, and possible re-circulation. Third, the recurring patterns identified across the cases were synthesized into a broader conceptual framework of multidirectional knowledge circulation that was capable of accounting for both continuity and transformation across regional settings.

Finally, this study adopted a reflexive methodological stance informed by recent discussions on decolonizing knowledge production (Moosavi, 2023); (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). It critically reflected on the use of analytical categories such as "Indianization" and their implications for representing cultural exchange and historical agency in South and Southeast Asia. This reflexivity also extended to the ways Buddhist knowledge had been categorized and interpreted in modern scholarship, thereby contributing to a more critically informed understanding of transregional cultural and religious processes.

Results and Discussion

1. Rethinking "Indianization" as Theoretical Framework: Convergence, Circulation, and Buddhist Knowledge in South and Southeast Asia

This section developed the analytical framework through which the article reassessed the concept of "Indianization" and examined the circulation of Buddhist knowledge between South and Southeast Asia. It brought together three strands of scholarship: Critiques of diffusionist interpretations of Southeast Asian history, convergence approaches to South-Southeast Asian interaction, and theories of transregional circulation. Taken together, these perspectives provided a framework for addressing the article's first objective: To move beyond models that conceptualized Southeast Asia primarily as a recipient of cultural forms originating in India.

The literature was organized thematically rather than according to disciplinary boundaries. Historical and historiographical critiques of Indianization were considered first, followed by archaeological and inscriptional perspectives on regional interaction and, finally, philological, art-historical, and anthropological approaches that examined the circulation and localization of Buddhist and Sanskrit forms. These bodies of scholarship were treated as complementary



perspectives on a common problem: How cultural and intellectual forms moved across regions, and how they were transformed through processes of local appropriation.

1.1 From Diffusion to Convergence

Earlier interpretations of Southeast Asian history were strongly influenced by the concept of "Indianized States," most prominently associated with Coedès. This framework generally understood the appearance of Indic religions, political institutions, languages, and cultural forms in Southeast Asia in terms of influence originating from the Indian subcontinent. More recent scholarship challenged this model by drawing attention to its implicit hierarchy between cultural "Sources" and "Recipients." Manguin (2023), for example, argued that such interpretations often reproduced an Orientalist tendency to position India and China as primary sources of civilization while reducing Southeast Asia to a receptive periphery. From a broader postcolonial perspective, Chakrabarty (2000) similarly demonstrated how historical narratives could reproduce asymmetrical models in which particular regions were treated as normative centers of historical development.

This critique did not require denying the substantial presence of Indic cultural forms in Southeast Asia. Rather, it raised questions about the analytical assumptions through which their presence had traditionally been explained. Terms such as "Greater India" and "Indianization" could therefore be understood not simply as descriptive labels but also as historiographical categories that privileged particular directions of cultural influence. Archaeological and epigraphic evidence further complicated such models by demonstrating that Southeast Asian societies possessed their own trajectories of political, technological, and cultural development. The significance of this evidence lay not in establishing complete cultural autonomy, but in demonstrating that the incorporation of Indic forms occurred within societies that already possessed established cultural and political institutions.

An alternative approach was provided by the convergence hypothesis. Kulke (2023) argued that cultural interaction between South and Southeast Asia was facilitated not simply by geographical proximity or unilateral influence but by forms of socio-political and economic interaction that brought different societies into sustained contact. Earlier work by Wolters (1986) and Smith (1999) similarly emphasized the active participation of Southeast Asian actors in establishing and maintaining connections with the Indian subcontinent. From this perspective, cultural similarities across the region were better understood as outcomes of interaction than as evidence of straightforward cultural transmission from a single center.

Applied to Buddhism, the convergence perspective shifted analytical attention from the question of where a particular teaching or cultural form originated to the social and historical networks through which it circulated. Shared doctrinal, ritual, linguistic, and artistic forms could consequently be understood as evidence of participation in overlapping transregional networks. Local actors were not merely recipients of already-formed traditions, for they participated in selecting, adapting, institutionalizing, and transmitting them.

1.2 From Convergence to Circulation

The convergence approach nevertheless left open a further question. If cultural forms were actively localized in Southeast Asia, could those localized forms subsequently travel



beyond the contexts in which they were initially received? Addressing this question required moving beyond the opposition between diffusion and local agency toward a broader conception of circulation.

Subrahmanyam's (1997) concept of "Connected Histories" provided one useful basis for such an approach by emphasizing historical processes that crossed conventional regional and civilizational boundaries. Pollock's (2006) concept of the "Sanskrit Cosmopolis" similarly conceptualized Sanskritic culture as a transregional formation in which linguistic, political, literary, and religious forms circulated across different societies and were repeatedly localized. Appadurai (1996), meanwhile, emphasized the processes through which cultural forms were appropriated and transformed as they moved between social contexts. These approaches directed attention away from fixed centers of cultural production and toward the routes, institutions, actors, and practices through which knowledge became mobile.

The framework adopted here therefore built upon convergence theory while extending its analytical implications. The article agreed with Kulke, Wolters, and Smith that Southeast Asian agency was constitutive of cultural exchange. It further proposed that agency should not be conceptualized only as the capacity to receive and transform external cultural forms. Localized forms of knowledge could themselves become mobile, enter new networks, and acquire significance beyond their original contexts.

The distinction was important for understanding Buddhist history. Buddhism was not treated here as a fixed body of doctrine that originated in India and subsequently spread into Southeast Asia. Rather, it was approached as a mobile and transformable field of knowledge comprising texts, ritual practices, ethical techniques, artistic forms, and institutional arrangements. These forms could be transmitted, localized, recombined, and, under particular historical conditions, transmitted again. Multidirectional circulation therefore provided a way of conceptualizing cultural exchange without replacing the diffusionist model with an equally rigid model of Southeast Asian autonomy.

The following sections examined this proposition through three sets of evidence. The first concerned the localization of Buddhist and Indic forms within Southeast Asia. The second examined the *Atiśa-Śrīvijaya* encounter as a case in which knowledge associated with Southeast Asia subsequently became significant beyond the region. The third considered the history of decimal notation as an exploratory comparison from outside the religious domain.

2. Neither Indianization nor Indianized Asia

The concept of the Sanskrit cosmopolis provided an important starting point for reconsidering the spatial assumptions embedded in "Indianization." Pollock (2006) described the Sanskrit cosmopolis as a transregional cultural formation in which Sanskrit circulated across South and Southeast Asia and became embedded in political, literary, religious, and intellectual practices. Unlike a model of imperial expansion in which a political center directly imposed its institutions on peripheral territories, the Sanskrit cosmopolis operated through processes of mobility, appropriation, and localization.

Buddhist texts, inscriptions, ritual practices, and intellectual traditions circulated through many of the same networks. Monastic communities, pilgrimage routes, scholarly exchanges, and



inscriptional practices provided overlapping channels through which religious and linguistic knowledge moved across regions. The circulation of Buddhist knowledge was consequently embedded within wider processes of Sanskritic interaction rather than occurring as an isolated movement from India into Southeast Asia.

This perspective also complicated the assumption that the geographical categories involved in these exchanges corresponded neatly to modern territorial boundaries. Premodern references to "India," for example, did not necessarily designate a territorially bounded political entity equivalent to the modern nation-state. Kaye (1919) noted the fluidity of geographical conceptions of India within historical sources, suggesting that the category could encompass broader cultural and commercial networks. Such fluidity made rigid center-periphery models difficult to apply to premodern Asian interaction.

The historiographical problem nevertheless persisted in colonial scholarship. Coedès's (1968) formulation of "Indianized Asia" placed Southeast Asian societies within a conceptual framework in which Indic civilization appeared as the principal source of cultural development. Such terminology encouraged interpretations of Southeast Asian traditions as derivatives of Indian models rather than as historically situated formations produced through processes of selection, adaptation, and recombination. Postcolonial scholarship subsequently challenged this hierarchy by questioning the privileging of particular regions as historical centers (Chakrabarty, 2000); (Wolf, 1982).

Archaeological evidence provided an additional basis for questioning this interpretation. Evidence of autonomous cultural development in Southeast Asia, including independent Bronze Age traditions, demonstrated that the region possessed complex trajectories of social and technological development before and alongside its sustained engagement with South Asia. Peleggi (2016), among others, showed how such evidence complicated earlier assumptions that Southeast Asian cultural development depended fundamentally upon external intervention.

Taken together, these findings indicated that the presence of Indic forms in Southeast Asia could not adequately be explained through a simple model of cultural replacement or unilateral transmission. The evidence instead pointed toward sustained interaction between societies with their own institutional and cultural trajectories. The theoretical implication was that "Indianization" was most useful not as a description of a completed historical process but as a historiographical problem whose assumptions needed to be reconsidered.

The convergence and circulation approaches developed above offered such an alternative. They retained the importance of South Asian cultural and intellectual connections while allowing Southeast Asian actors and institutions to appear as participants in the production, transformation, and movement of cultural knowledge. The issue therefore was not whether "Indian Influence" existed, but how such influence operated within networks in which cultural forms were repeatedly recontextualized.

3. The Localization of Indian Culture

The evidence examined in this section demonstrated how Buddhist and other Indic forms were transformed after entering Southeast Asian contexts. Three domains were particularly



significant: Epigraphic and textual evidence, visual and architectural culture, and ritual and narrative practice. Across these domains, the evidence indicated that cultural transmission did not consist of simple replication. Instead, textual, artistic, and religious forms were selectively appropriated and reconfigured within particular social, political, and cosmological settings.

3.1 Epigraphic and Textual Evidence

One example was provided by Skilling's (2015) study of a Sanskrit verse preserved in multiple lithic inscriptions across Southeast Asia, including the Malay Peninsula, Brunei, Kalimantan, and Java. The verse had not been identified in known Indian, Chinese, or Tibetan textual traditions. It incorporated Buddhist doctrines such as *paṭicca-samuppāda* and *kilesa* while giving particular prominence to *karma* (Tsong-kha-pa, 2000).

The geographical distribution and doctrinal configuration of the verse indicated that Buddhist ideas were articulated in Southeast Asian inscriptional contexts in forms that could not simply be reduced to the reproduction of an identifiable Indian textual source. At the same time, the geographical spread of the inscriptional tradition demonstrated that a form of Buddhist knowledge articulated within Southeast Asia could itself circulate across different parts of the region.

The significance of this evidence therefore extended beyond the question of textual origin. It demonstrated that localization and circulation were not mutually exclusive processes. A Buddhist formulation could acquire a distinctive regional form while simultaneously becoming mobile within Southeast Asian networks. Localization, in this sense, could generate rather than inhibit further circulation.

3.2 Visual and Architectural Localization

Comparable processes were evident in Buddhist visual and architectural culture. Revire (2015), for example, identified iconographic features at Chedi Chula Prathon that displayed connections with Indonesian, particularly Śrīvijayan, artistic traditions. The presence of Sanskrit narrative forms within a predominantly Pali-oriented environment demonstrated that Buddhist traditions circulated across Southeast Asia through multiple regional routes rather than following a single India-to-Southeast Asia trajectory.

Woodward (2015) provided a further example through his analysis of a tenth-century Cambodian stele depicting Avalokiteśvara. The image employed the *pretasantarpita* gesture, which had no known equivalent in Indian iconography, and placed Avalokiteśvara within a triadic configuration involving the Buddha and *Prajñāpāramitā*. The absence of a clear Indian textual or iconographic precedent suggested that the configuration was not simply a reproduction of an imported model, but perhaps pointed toward a local esotericization of Buddhist traditions (Woodward, 2004).

These examples demonstrated that localization operated materially. Imported or circulating Buddhist concepts were translated into visual arrangements whose meanings were shaped by the contexts in which they were produced. The resulting images were neither straightforward copies of Indian prototypes nor isolated local inventions. They were products of interaction in which external forms became meaningful through local artistic and religious conventions.



A similar process was evident in Java and Bali. Aciri (2015) identified forms of Hindu-Buddhist synthesis that represented a "Progressive Departure" from Indic points of origin. Such configurations illustrated how religious traditions could be recombined after entering new social and cultural environments. Romain's (2011) study of the Dieng temples similarly demonstrated that, although South Indian Pallava influences were visible in their architectural forms, the temples exhibited distinctive Javanese characteristics. Indian influence therefore appeared less as a process of direct replication than as a polymorphous process of adaptation within the wider Sanskrit cosmopolis (Aciri, 2017).

3.3 Ritual, Myth, and Narrative

Localization was not restricted to textual or material forms. It also occurred through ritual practice, mythology, and narrative traditions. Strong (1992), for example, demonstrated how the Buddhist figure Upagupta, originally associated with North Indian traditions, was reinterpreted in mainland Southeast Asia through connections with local guardian deities. Tambiah (1970) similarly showed how Upagupta in northeastern Thailand could be conceptualized simultaneously as a monk and a naga, thereby occupying a symbolic position between cultural and natural domains.

The transformation of the Rāmāyaṇa in mainland Southeast Asia provided another illustration. Sahai (2011) showed how the Lao Phra Lak Phra Lam involved more than linguistic translation. The narrative was geographically and culturally relocated into the Mekong environment, where it became embedded within local moral and ritual worlds.

These examples demonstrated that localization involved changes in meaning as much as changes in form. Buddhist figures and narratives could be incorporated into existing cosmologies, acquire new ritual functions, and become meaningful through relationships that were not necessarily present in their earlier contexts.

Across the epigraphic, artistic, architectural, ritual, and ethnographic evidence, localization therefore emerged as a generative process. Buddhist knowledge was not merely transferred from one geographical context to another and then preserved unchanged. It was repeatedly reformulated through local institutions, aesthetic conventions, ritual practices, and moral concerns. Crucially, these localized forms could subsequently enter wider circuits of exchange. Localization and circulation were consequently best understood as mutually constitutive rather than sequential processes.

4. Upāya and the Srivijaya-Tibet Connection

The preceding section demonstrated how Buddhist knowledge was localized within Southeast Asia. The Atiśa-Dharmakīrti encounter provided a different kind of evidence: A case in which a Buddhist scholar from India traveled to Southeast Asia to acquire knowledge and subsequently carried that knowledge into another intellectual and religious environment. This case was particularly important because it provided comparatively direct evidence for movement in a direction that could not be adequately described as India-to-Southeast Asia diffusion.

4.1 The Evidence: Atiśa and Dharmakīrti

Historical accounts indicated that Atiśa Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna (982 - 1054) traveled to Suvarṇadvīpa, commonly associated with Śrīvijaya, where he studied under the Buddhist teacher



Dharmakīrti. Although details of the journey differed across sources, scholarship generally agreed that Atiśa traveled to Southeast Asia specifically to receive teachings that he considered important for his Buddhist training (Chattopadhyaya & Atiśa, 1967); (Samuel, 1993); (Apple, 2019).

Atiśa was already an accomplished Buddhist scholar associated with Vikramaśīlā and had been trained in major Indian intellectual traditions. His journey therefore could not easily be interpreted as the movement of an uninformed recipient toward a culturally superior source. Rather, the evidence indicated that an established Indian scholar considered Southeast Asia an important site of Buddhist learning.

The teachings associated with Dharmakīrti were particularly connected with the cultivation of bodhicitta, the altruistic intention to attain awakening for the benefit of other beings. This emphasis subsequently became important within Tibetan Buddhist traditions, including the lojong, or mind-training, tradition. As Jinpa (2011) explained, lojong was concerned with transforming Buddhist insight and wisdom into lived practice.

One important practice within this tradition was tonglen, or "Giving and Receiving," through which practitioners imaginatively took upon themselves the suffering of others while cultivating and extending compassion. The practice illustrated the practical dimension of Buddhist knowledge: Teachings were not merely transmitted as propositions but could travel as techniques of ethical and contemplative cultivation.

4.2 Discussion: From Reception to Re-circulation

The historical significance of the Atiśa-Dharmakīrti encounter lies precisely in this reversal of the conventional direction of cultural transmission. The evidence does not demonstrate that every element of Tibetan lojong originates in Southeast Asia, nor does it establish that all practices associated with later Tibetan traditions are transmitted directly from Śrīvijaya. Such claims exceed the available evidence.

What the case does demonstrate is more specific. An Indian Buddhist scholar travels to Southeast Asia because a particular form of Buddhist knowledge is regarded as valuable there. That knowledge is subsequently incorporated into a broader intellectual and religious trajectory that extends beyond Southeast Asia. Southeast Asia therefore appears not merely as a location where Indian Buddhism is received and localized, but as one node within a larger network of Buddhist knowledge production and transmission (Aciri, 2018).

This distinction is important for the theoretical framework developed in this article. The case does not require replacing the concept of Indianization with a simple Southeast Asia-centered model. Instead, it demonstrates why both models are inadequate when treated as exclusive explanations. Knowledge can move from South Asia to Southeast Asia, be cultivated or reformulated there, and subsequently move onward to other regions. Cultural circulation is therefore potentially sequential, recursive, and multidirectional.

The concept of upāya is particularly useful for interpreting this process because it draws attention to the practical dimension of Buddhist knowledge. What Atiśa seeks is not simply additional textual information but a mode of cultivation capable of transforming ethical and



contemplative dispositions. The transmission of such knowledge therefore involves the movement of practices and techniques as well as doctrines.

The Atiśa-Dharmakīrti encounter consequently provides a relatively strong historical example of the article's broader argument. It shows that cultural circulation cannot be adequately represented as a linear sequence in which India functions as source and Southeast Asia functions as recipient. At least in this instance, Southeast Asia occupies a position within a wider Buddhist network in which knowledge can be sought, cultivated, transmitted, and subsequently recontextualized elsewhere.

5. Zero and Decimal System: An Exploratory Comparison Beyond Buddhism

The Buddhist cases above demonstrated multidirectional circulation within religious and intellectual traditions. The history of zero and the decimal place-value system provided an opportunity to examine whether a similar analytical framework could illuminate a non-religious domain. This comparison was exploratory rather than intended to establish a direct parallel between Buddhist and mathematical transmission.

5.1 The Evidence

The development of zero and decimal place-value notation represented a major transformation in the history of mathematics. The system eventually entered European mathematical practice through a complex process of transmission involving the Islamic world, with Leonardo Fibonacci's *Liber Abaci* (1202) playing an important role in its subsequent European dissemination (Kaplan, 1999). The conventional designation "Hindu-Arabic" reflected the widely accepted association of the system with developments in South Asia and its subsequent transmission through Arabic-speaking intellectual networks.

Evidence from South Asia demonstrated the early development of decimal and place-value concepts. Aryabhata (476 - 550 CE), for example, articulated mathematical principles consistent with place-value notation. Explicit epigraphic evidence, however, was more difficult to date. One of the most frequently cited examples was the Gwalior inscription of 876 CE, which provided clear evidence for the use of a zero symbol in a decimal system (Ifrah, 1998). Salomon (1998) emphasized the value of inscriptions for establishing chronological evidence because their material form provided a relatively secure basis for dating.

Evidence from Southeast Asia introduced a further chronological and geographical complication. The Kedukan Bukit inscription of 682 CE was interpreted as containing numerical notation in which a zero-like symbol appeared in the representation of "604" (Diller, 1995). A roughly contemporaneous inscription from Trapang Prei in Cambodia was also discussed in relation to the use of a dot as a zero symbol.

These examples did not, by themselves, establish that the decimal system originated in Southeast Asia or that it was transmitted from Southeast Asia to South Asia. The evidence was insufficient for such a conclusion. They did, however, demonstrate that numerical practices associated with decimal representation were in use in Southeast Asian inscriptional contexts earlier than some of the most widely cited explicit epigraphic evidence from India.



The chronological relationship generated debate. Kaye (1919) cautioned against assuming the direction of transmission solely on the basis of later or earlier surviving evidence and considered the possibility that aspects of numerical notation may have circulated from regions east of the Indian subcontinent. Coëdès (1931) rejected this possibility, characterizing it as "Strange." Needham (1959) likewise drew attention to the geographical distribution of early zero notation and argued for the importance of considering a wider zone of interaction. More recent accounts continued, in many cases, to emphasize the development of the system in India and its subsequent transmission outward (Dalrymple, 2024).

5.2 Discussion: Circulation Without a Claim of Reverse Origin

The evidence does not warrant the stronger claim that Southeast Asia invented zero or that the decimal system was transmitted from Southeast Asia to India. Such a claim requires substantially stronger chronological, epigraphic, and comparative evidence than is currently available.

The significance of the Southeast Asian evidence lies elsewhere. It demonstrates that numerical notation is already embedded within regional administrative and inscriptional practices and that the history of decimal representation cannot be reconstructed solely through a linear sequence of Indian invention followed by passive Southeast Asian adoption. The existence of early Southeast Asian evidence raises the possibility that numerical knowledge circulates through interconnected networks whose precise directions cannot always be reconstructed from surviving sources.

This point is methodologically important for the concept of multidirectional circulation. Circulation does not necessarily imply that every region contributes equally to the invention of a particular cultural form, nor does it require demonstrating a direct reverse transmission in every case. It instead directs attention to the movement, appropriation, stabilization, and re-use of knowledge across interconnected spaces.

The decimal system therefore functions as a deliberately cautious comparative case. Unlike the Atiśa-Dharmakīrti encounter, where the historical movement of a scholar from India to Southeast Asia is relatively well established, the direction of early numerical transmission remains uncertain. The mathematical evidence should consequently be understood as demonstrating the need for a circulation-based framework rather than as proving a case of reverse diffusion.

6. From Indianization to Multidirectional Circulation

Across the cases examined above, the evidence suggests that the cultural relationship between South and Southeast Asia cannot be adequately represented through a simple model of Indianization. The archaeological and historiographical evidence demonstrates that Southeast Asian societies possess their own trajectories of cultural and political development. The epigraphic, textual, artistic, and ethnographic evidence further shows that Indic and Buddhist forms are selectively appropriated and transformed within Southeast Asian contexts. Finally, the Atiśa-Dharmakīrti encounter provides evidence that Buddhist knowledge associated with Southeast Asia can acquire significance beyond the region.

These findings support a shift from a diffusionist framework toward one centered on circulation. A diffusionist model asks primarily where a cultural form originates and how it moves



outward from that origin. A circulation-based approach instead asks how knowledge travels, who carries it, which institutions facilitate its movement, how it is transformed in different settings, and whether localized forms subsequently enter new circuits of exchange.

The evidence also indicates that localization and circulation should not be treated as separate stages. The Sanskrit verse discussed by Skilling (2015), for example, appears in multiple Southeast Asian contexts while displaying a doctrinal configuration that cannot readily be traced to a single known Indian source. Visual and architectural traditions similarly reveal processes of regional recombination. The Aśoka-Dharmakīrti encounter then demonstrates that Southeast Asia can function as a site from which valued Buddhist knowledge enters wider intellectual networks.

The article does not deny the importance of India as a major source of Buddhist, Sanskrit, and other intellectual traditions. Nor does it seek to replace one civilizational hierarchy with another by presenting Southeast Asia as an alternative "Center." Instead, it conceptualizes South and Southeast Asia as interconnected historical spaces in which cultural forms move in multiple directions and acquire different meanings through successive processes of localization and recontextualization.

Such an approach also allows Buddhist knowledge to be understood as more than a collection of doctrines transmitted across geographical boundaries. Buddhist knowledge consists of texts, concepts, images, rituals, ethical dispositions, contemplative techniques, and institutional practices that can move through different social and material infrastructures. Their meanings are transformed through these movements, and those transformations can themselves become historically consequential.

The broader implication is that cultural exchange in premodern Asia is better understood through connected processes of movement, localization, and re-circulation than through fixed distinctions between origin and periphery. In this framework, the historical significance of Southeast Asia lies not merely in how successfully it receives Indian cultural forms, but also in how it transforms those forms and participates in their subsequent movement across the wider Asian world.

Originality and Body of Knowledge

This article advances a model of multidirectional knowledge circulation for understanding South and Southeast Asian interactions. Moving beyond diffusionist frameworks such as "Indianization," it conceptualizes cultural exchange as an iterative process of transmission, localization, transformation, and possible re-circulation rather than as unilinear transmission from a single civilizational center. The originality of the model lies in explicitly incorporating the possibility of re-circulation.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the model begins with the circulation of transregional knowledge, including Buddhādharma and related cultural forms. Through interaction between South and Southeast Asia, texts, doctrines, rituals, and artistic traditions become embedded within new historical settings. Rather than being passively adopted, these forms are selectively appropriated, adapted, and reinterpreted through processes of localization. The examples discussed in this article, including Buddhist inscriptions, Cambodian iconography, Hindu-Buddhist syntheses in Java and Bali, and

reinterpretations of figures such as Upagupta, demonstrate how circulating traditions acquire new meanings within local cosmological, political, and ritual contexts.

Localization, moreover, does not mark the end of the process. The inclusion of both Buddhist and mathematical examples serves a comparative purpose. The Buddhist cases illustrate multidirectional circulation within religious traditions, while the history of the zero and decimal system provides a non-religious example. If similar patterns of transmission, localization, transformation, and possible re-circulation appear in both domains, multidirectional circulation may represent a broader historical process instead of one limited to Buddhism.

From this perspective, Southeast Asia appears not merely as a recipient of external influences but also as a site of knowledge production, preservation, and transformation. The model therefore shifts attention from questions of origin and influence toward questions of interaction, transformation, and historical agency.

In relation to Buddhadhamma, the model reflects the principle of upāya, whereby teachings are adapted to particular socio-cultural contexts while retaining broader doctrinal significance. The circulation of Buddhadhamma therefore involves both continuity and transformation: Teachings remain recognizable across regions, but their practical expression and social significance are continually reshaped through local engagement. The model thus highlights both the mobility of Buddhist knowledge and the creative role of Buddhist communities in its ongoing renewal.

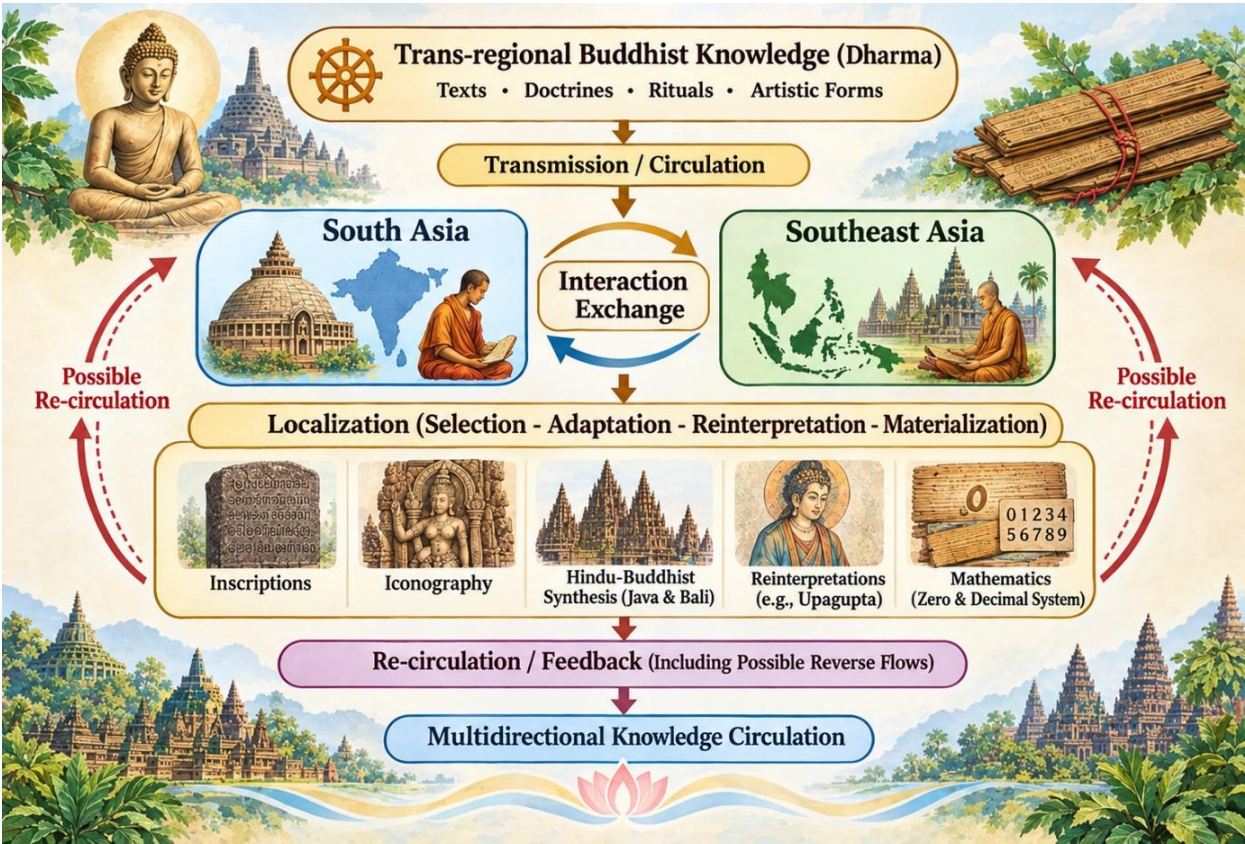


Figure 1 A model of multidirectional circulation showing how Dhamma moves through processes of transmission, localization, and re-circulation across South and Southeast Asia



Conclusions and Recommendations

This article reconsiders the historiographical legacy of "Indianization" by examining how cultural and intellectual forms associated with South Asia are received, transformed, and, under particular historical circumstances, transmitted beyond Southeast Asian contexts. Concerning the last point, the two cases discussed in the article vary considerably in their evidentiary strength: The Atiśa-Dharmakīrti encounter offers comparatively clear evidence of an Indian scholar seeking Buddhist knowledge in Southeast Asia, whereas the evidence concerning early mathematical notation is insufficient to establish a direction of reverse transmission and should therefore be treated as a prompt for further investigation rather than as proof of Southeast Asian priority. The principal contribution of the study is consequently to demonstrate the usefulness of tracing how particular forms of knowledge acquire different meanings and trajectories as they move through changing institutional, linguistic, material, and intellectual environments. This approach also opens several directions for future research. More systematic comparison of inscriptions, manuscripts, archaeological remains, artistic traditions, and documentary sources can clarify the routes through which particular concepts and practices travel, while network-based approaches may help identify the monasteries, scholarly communities, commercial connections, and political institutions that sustain such movements over time. Similar investigations can extend to fields such as medicine, astronomy, law, political thought, and technology, where the direction and mechanisms of transmission may likewise prove more complex than conventional historiographies suggest. Ultimately, the value of a circulation-based perspective lies in its capacity to redirect historical inquiry from the search for singular origins toward the study of movement, transformation, and the conditions under which knowledge becomes consequential in new contexts.

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