

#Virally Virtuous: A Multimodal Case Study of a Young Thai Influencer Addressing Dhamma for Mental Health Among Gen Z via TikTok

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(Received: May 9, 2024; Revised: August 9, 2024; Accepted: August 13, 2024)

Abstract

Generation Z is facing a critical mental health crisis exacerbated by excessive social media use. Such a challenge leads to the use of TikTok, the most prevalent platform among this demographic, to promote mental well-being and create a community of care. This research aims to scrutinise the digital communication strategies employed by a Thai Gen Z Dhamma influencer on TikTok to heal youth through spiritual advice.

Applying Multimodal Social Semiotics and Social Construction of Reality, this qualitative thematic content analysis explores 192 posts of Wanida Boonprasert² on her “wni.inbuddh” TikTok account from 2022 to 2024. The study reveals the five key communication strategies: inclusive rhetoric and hashtags; simplified Dhamma guidance and testimonials; Q&A and community building; and multimodal communication.

These techniques harmoniously integrate Buddhist teachings into the modern world, compatible with Gen Z’s learning interests, underscoring the relevance of Multimodal Communication, in creating supportive virtual mental health spaces among young audiences, which could potentially be transformed into sustainable offline Dhamma communities. This is a remarkable milestone in advancing mental wellness remedies tailored within the Thai socio-cultural context through TikTok application. The research showcases a novel tactic delivering critical insight for mental health practitioners, content producers, and researchers. The project brings to forth multimodality as a comprehensive lens in mastering the complicated occurrence in the current digitalised world.

Keywords: Generation Z Mental Health, Dhamma Influencer, TikTok, Multimodal Social Semiotics, Buddhist Digital Communication Strategies

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² A Thai Dhamma influencer who has been spreading Buddhist teachings since 2022. She is well-known among young people and those interested in Buddhism as she used Dhamma teaching to heal her previous mental health problem.

1. Introduction

1.1 Significances of the Issue

The global mental health crisis disproportionately affects Generation Z, with alarming figures indicating high rates³ of mental disorders, anxiety, and feelings of being overwhelmed among young adults (Harvard Graduate School, 2023; National Institute of Mental Health, 2024; UNICEF, 2021). Thailand is no exception. Statistically, 23 % of the Thai Gen Z⁴ show signs of depression, and 1 in 7 are diagnosed with mental health illnesses⁵ (UNICEF, 2024).

This phenomenon is caused by several factors. Most prominently are excessive use of social media, academic pressure, and feelings of social isolation, aggravated by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Tanasugarn et al., 2020; Thepsatha & Sripokangkul, 2022). Gen Z's mental health crisis becomes a challenge for Thailand, which could potentially affect the quality, productivity, and innovative potential of the future workforce, as well as national development in all aspects. Therefore, investing in mental health solutions for this demographic is essential both from moral imperative and national security stances.

The role of social media in relation to this crisis needs to be scrutinised, both as a cause and potential solution to the young generation mental health complications. Generation Z is profoundly connected with digital platforms, especially those offering highly customised content fostering intricate connections among users. This potentially renders detrimental influence on their mental well-being (Montag et al., 2021). On a reverse perspective, TikTok which has become the most favourable social media network among this digital native generation demonstrates optimistic future in addressing mental health difficulties as Thai users

³ Harvard Graduate School (2023) and the National Institute of Mental Health (2024) report that 40% of 18-25-year-olds have a mental illness, 90% of Gen Z students are nervous, and 70% are overwhelmed. UNICEF (2021) reports that one in seven people have mental health issues and 46,000 commit suicide annually.

⁴ Thai Gen Z, 12-27, uses TikTok widely and prioritises work-life balance, mental wellness, diversity, and sustainability. Social media influences students and young professionals in digital sectors and startups to choose mobile payments, e-commerce, technology, and creative occupations.

⁵ UNICEF (2024) reports that 1 in 7 of 10–19-year-olds suffer mental health difficulties. Thai teen bullying and suicide worsen the problem.

spend over 100 minutes daily on the app (Meltwater's Digital, 2023; Statista, 2023; We Are Social, 2023).

Thus, TikTok's promising function in alleviating mental health challenges cannot be overlooked. The platform fosters inclusive virtual communities, facilitating self-expression and mutual support among users (Gallagher, 2021; Ting, 2021; Stillwell, 2024). By conveying knowledge, sharing personal experiences, and collaborating with experts, TikTok influencers could potentially affect mental health dialogue (O'Reilly et al., 2024). However, the differences in quality and trustworthiness underline the necessity to investigate evidence-based techniques (Motta et al., 2024).

Thai socio-cultural setting is deeply intertwined with Theravada Buddhism.⁶ With the shift towards a digitalised society, there has been substantial subject in adopting Buddhist teachings and mindfulness practices among younger audiences to address mental health challenges via digital platforms (Yamcharoen, 2015; Sri Sukul Cheablam et al., 2019). This endeavour aims to fill the gap posed by young Thais' declining connection with conventional spiritual practices⁷, including their stereotypical perception of Buddhism as outdated or ritualistic, which ignores its rich intellectual and spiritual foundation (Phra Sri Racha Mongkol Bandit, Waen Thong Boon Kham, Kamthon Pia Aia, Withawin Pak Kaew, & Nikhom Patha Wong, 2022). Despite young people's declining respect for religious authority figures and ignorance of traditional religious rituals, they are increasingly seeking in online spiritual counselling due to the immediate and prolonged impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, this transition requires religious leaders to adapt their communication strategies and relocate spiritual teachings for the young Thai audiences (Phra Khru Sangkha Raksa Suphath Phurawathano, 2023).

Multimodality is considered an effective communicative means for such purposes. It requires a communicator to effectively integrate spiritually uplifting contents across varied modal resources, including visual, auditory, gestural, and spatial modes, tailored to suit the learning style of this digital native generation and the complications of their mental health issues. To explore in-depth how these complex dynamics are conducted, this study investigates how a Gen Z Dhamma influencer, Wanida Boonprasert, uses multimodal communication

⁶ Theravada Buddhism's emphasis on the path to enlightenment and liberation from suffering, faces a challenge.

⁷ They are less involved in conventional activities such as temple visits and Dhamma discourses.

strategies to communicate Dhamma with her young generation audience via TikTok. The study applies Multimodal Social Semiotics Analysis (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006), and Social Construction of Reality theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) as an analytical framework, allowing for a thorough understanding of mental health issues faced by the young generation audience and how they could be addressed through contextualized multimodal communication.

Finally, the research aims to pave the way towards the development of mental health interventions that are culturally sensitive, integrating traditional wisdom with contemporary psychological knowledge, and audience engagement to address complex, digitally intertwined mental health issues of Generation Z. Findings from the study could potentially guide how multimodal communication could be applied to address complex socio-cultural issues in different cultures with strong spiritual binding that require adjustments to changes in the digital era.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research Objectives & Questions

The research aims to (a) scrutinise communication strategies that a young Thai Dhamma influencer employed to address Gen Z's mental health through multimodal resources, and (b) explore the potentiality of Buddhist Dhamma teaching in promoting Gen Z's mental well-being. The two research questions are used to guide the study: (i) *How does a young Thai Dhamma influencer use multimodal communication strategies to address Gen Z mental health issues via TikTok?* (ii) *What is the potential of Buddhist Dhamma teachings in promoting mental well-being among Generation Z?*

2.2 Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 Multimodal Social Semiotics and Social Construction of Reality

The study employs two theoretical frameworks to analyse the role of a Thai Gen Z Dhamma influencer in addressing mental health via TikTok. They are used complementarily. First, Kress and van Leeuwen's Multimodal Social Semiotics (2006), is used to investigate meaning-making via various communication modes, including speech, images, sounds, movement, and spatial elements. This framework is relevant for analysing digital content, using multiple types of communication such as in Tik Tok. It allows a comprehensive understanding of how different semiotic resources are used in an orchestrated manner to create engaging and effective messages, particularly with Gen Z audiences whose mental health crisis calls for solutions from comprehensive and interrelated perspectives. More importantly, multimodal

communication tactics that include multiple modes of expression suit well with their digital nativity.

Complementarily, the Social Construction of Reality by Berger and Luckmann (1966) argues that reality is shaped by experiences and social interactions. Building on this hypothesis, recent study underscores social media's pervasive role in moulding self-perception, emotional well-being, and social behaviour in young adults (Achmad et al., 2023). The study also indicates that TikTok audience often communicates mental health-related messages mainly based on their personal and cultural experiences, which highlights the importance of the virtual community's support and validation in normalising mental health discussions and reducing constant media exposure, which could bring about Gen Z's depression and anxiety if the material is unfavourable or unattainable (Basch, 2022). Gaining a comprehension of these principles enables Thai Generation Z to effectively engage with media and uphold their mental well-being.

The integration of these two theoretical approaches offers a sufficient analytical instrument for closely probing how Thai Generation Z Dhamma influencer on TikTok construct and articulates notions related to mental well-being. Whereas Multimodal Social Semiotics grants insights into the precise techniques employed to generate appealing materials, the Social Construction of Reality theory defines how these digital interactions contribute to their comprehension of mental health and Buddhist teachings. This integrated methodology facilitates an in-depth investigation of how conventional wisdom is transformed for digital medium and its influences on the development of mental health discourses among Thai Generation Z viewers.

2.2.2 Thai Gen Z and Mental Health, Digital Media, and Dhamma Teachings

Buddhist Dhamma teachings offer a holistic approach to optimising Thai Generation Z's mental well-being. This approach accentuates the relationship of the body and mind, the cultivation of mindfulness, and the regulation of emotions via meditation. These frameworks propose an avenue for recognising suffering and developing resilience using contemporary psychological techniques that are culturally suitable (Ratanakul, 2008; Phrakru Kantadhammo, 2021). Applying to the current setting and methods of communication, these Buddhist teachings render strategies for addressing the mental health challenges experienced by Generation Z, encouraging ethical conduct, and cultivating perseverance in response to rapid societal changes (Puriwattano, 2020). Considering the increasing incidence of mental health

constraints among the Thai Generation Z, worsen by the overload of digital media exposure, the use of Buddhist Dhamma teachings through different digital platforms shows promise to advocate mindfulness, emotional regulation, and resilience. This approach complies with cultural conventions and could assist present-day psychological approaches for tackling the unique difficulties imposed on the new generation, who are acquainted with digital advancements

Thus, a unique blend of theoretical frameworks and the Thai socio-cultural context is detailed in *Figure I* below.



Figure I. Key Elements included in the Analysis

2.3 Research Methodology

2.3.1 Thematic Content Analysis

This qualitative study analyses “wni.inbuddh” TikTok video from 2022 to 2024, using thematic content analysis, which delivers an in-depth explanation of the influencer’s communication strategies, prioritising extensive quantitative datasets. Given the intricate design of media’s effects on Gen Z’s mental health, quantitative metrics may not adequately depict individual experiences and viewpoints. This qualitative device showcases how Buddhist Dhamma teachings are tailored to Gen Z audiences, combining cultural and generational

variables. The study additionally explores Wanida's speech via YouTube: wni.inbuddh⁸ and Facebook channel: Inbuddh⁹ to understand perspectives, setting, direction, and understated essences concerning her Buddhist lessons via social media. The incorporation allows a deeper analysis of the influencer's TikTok video clips' communication techniques, particularly how she targets Gen Z mental health topics.

2.3.2 Limitations and Data Collection and Analysis

The research does not centre on audience-centric analysis as it is designed to compile data from the Dhamma influencer, which, leaves out the deeper impact of TikTok on these matters, or the wider implications for concerning parties in tackling such challenges, leaving room for further exploration. Nonetheless, certain remarks and critiques posted by TikTok audiences are observed to assess the extent to which the material contributes to benefit mental well-being.

The methodological steps mentioned below are employed to ensure the research's authenticity and credibility.

i. Data Collection: Retrieve and compile TikTok videos available between 2022 to 2024 on various topics and dates. Add context and cross-platform instances acquired from her YouTube and Facebook content.

ii. Content Analysis: Examine TikTok videos on mental health for subject matter, delivery, and execution of multimodal resources. Identify common language, themes, and engagement strategies, such as keywords, hashtags, music, visual representation and celebrity, etc. to comprehend the way the influencer attracts and engages with viewers.

iii. Thematic Identification: Identify recurring themes, patterns, and relationships among the video's various modalities e.g., music, sound effects, spoken language; and text like captions, hashtags, written content, etc. Categorise video clips on mental health based on given advice; visual representations, i.e., designing components, materials, colours, and positioning; and auditory. Then explore how Buddhist principles are presented in selected clips and how applicable they are to Gen Z.

iv. Thematic Classification: Cluster-related videos into themes such as “mental health advice,” “emotional well-being,” “Buddhist teachings,” “audience feedback,” and

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/@wni.inbuddh>

⁹ https://www.facebook.com/Inbuddh/?_rdc=1&_rdr

“employed multimodal resources”. Document the influencer’s statements supporting these themes.

v. *Refinement*: Review thematic groups for uniformity, sorting out overlaps or inconsistencies. Clarify and consolidate groupings, merging or subdividing as necessary.

vi. *Interpretation*: Analyse the influencer’s use of TikTok’s multimodal features, content distribution, and her integration of Buddhist principles with mental health discussions.

vii. *Validation*: Verify findings with established Buddhist teachings and youth mental health literature.

viii. *Synthesis and Reporting*: Construct a report outlining how TikTok’s content supports youth mental health. Provide evidence-based analysis of her approach, discussing the role of social media in mental health communication.

This comprehensive technique allows crucial guidance on functional cyberspace for mental wellness via TikTok materials, revealing Buddhist teachings, mental health discourse, and social media manoeuvres.

2.3.3 Ethical application

To comply with ethical norms on research conducts, the analysis is based only on publicly available TikTok video clips from “wni.inbuddh” between 2022–2024 with anonymous comments in safeguarding the audience’s privacy. Personal data irrelevant to the research objectives is excluded, whilst data is securely encrypted, and accessible to only authorised researcher(s). The method of analysis ensures cultural sensitivity as well as objectivity. Buddhist teachings and mental health issues are navigated carefully and sensibly. By considering the feasible consequences on the influencer, audience, and community at large, the results will be disclosed with the greatest integrity and respect. These ethical strategies aim to perpetuate the research’s legitimacy and trustworthiness while embracing all participants.

3. Findings

3.1 Multimodal Communication Strategies of a Young Thai Dhamma Influencer in Addressing Gen Z Mental Health on TikTok

An analysis of 192 TikTok videos by “wni.inbuddh” (2022–2024) found 71 clips that addressed mental health issues. There has been a persistent trend in addressing mental health

problems, emphasising depression and panic disorder¹⁰. Other relevant negative emotions, i.e., anger, fear, jealousy, cravings and steps towards emotional management were also mentioned but to a lesser intensified degree. The research unveils the five multimodal communication techniques as follows.

3.1.1. *Fostering Inclusiveness & Employing Captivating Language and Hashtags*

The influencer makes Dhamma teachings accessible using informal language, slang, and ordinary discourse. This informality neutralises Dhamma's formality stereotype. The influencer's attire and conduct also create a comfortable mood. This Dhamma presenter conveys a warm and relatable image by wearing casual attire and using personal pronouns like “กู” [koo]¹¹ for herself and “มึง”¹² [mueng] with interlocutors in Dhamma sessions. Interestingly, the influencer occasionally used unpleasant terminology like “เหี้ย”¹³ [hiey] and “แม่ง”¹⁴ [maeng] to depict her pre-Dhamma background. The influencer addresses Gen Z mental health issues with engaging language, hashtags, and phrases, like “*What is the true cause of suffering?*” “*How can Dhamma help those who have never experienced love?*” “*Is it self-love or selfishness to leave a toxic family?*” and “*Youth today face problems. Dhamma can't help*”. The TikToker also utilises hashtags and keywords to draw in audiences, and endorse material related to mental well-being (Lee et al., 2022; Hussain et al., 2021), such as #WaniInBuddha [วนิอินพุทธ]¹⁵, #Buddhayouth [พุทธยุวชน], #Dhammaforteens [ธรรมะวัยรุ่น]¹⁶, #Kalyanamitta [กัลยาณมิตร]¹⁷, and #BuddhistYouthCamp [ค่ายพุทธยุวชน]. These hashtags foster

¹⁰ Gen Z globally struggles with depression and panic disorder, which can worsen and overwhelm individuals.

¹¹ The first pronoun equivalent to “I” or “me”

¹² The second person equivalent to “you”

¹³ referring to something or someone that is considered contemptible or disgusting.

¹⁴ expressing anger or dissatisfaction in an unofficial manner and is not suitable for formal or professional communication.

¹⁵ A customized hashtag combining her name with the word “Buddha,” underlining recognition and identification with Buddhism.

¹⁶ It is also aimed to educate young people who are interested in Buddhism and its teachings.

¹⁷ It means “good friends” or “spiritual companions” in Buddhism, referring to those who support others on their spiritual journey.

community engagement, Dhamma practice, and personal and spiritual growth among members of the newly established online Buddhist groups.

3.1.2. *Introducing Simplified Buddhist Teachings & Providing Practical Dhamma Guidelines*

The influencer emphasises applying Dhamma and Buddhist teachings to daily life. She skilfully adapts classic themes like the Triple Gems [*Triratana*]¹⁸ to Gen Z's experiences, whilst making the Buddha¹⁹ an approachable figure for young adults by simply telling how his teaching could practically help one to overcome suffering and have new hopes in life. An inducement of the Triple Gems Chant [*Dhamma*] emphasises mindfulness and self-awareness for mental and emotional well-being. Whilst Gen Z often feels isolated; the content stresses the significance of community [*Sangha*].

Multimodal resources like verbal, visual, auditory, and gestural communication show how Buddhist activities like chanting relieve anxiety and build connectedness. Importantly, the influencer dispels Buddhist myths like amulets for protection, emphasising inner development, self-cultivation and personal responsibility in line with the Noble Truth [*Ariyasacca*]²⁰ as the true path to release from suffering.

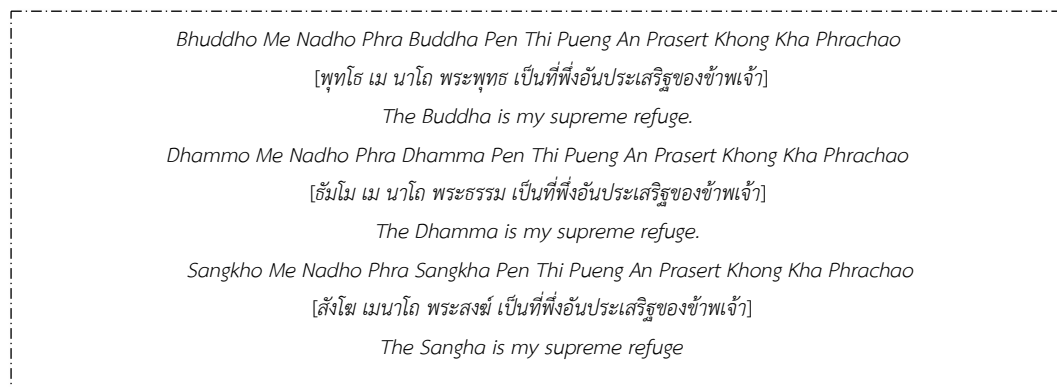


Figure II. The Tripple Gems reciting chant as a mindfulness practicing step, with a direct English translation

¹⁸ The Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha are the three fundamental components that represent the foundation of Buddhism. However, most conventional interpretations rely on the 'divinity' of these three parts rather than understanding the underlying meanings of these concepts.

¹⁹ The first component of the Tripple Gems

²⁰ It is the path to attain enlightenment in Buddhism.

Besides, the video clips include Gen Z-specific mindfulness practice “Observing Thoughts & Greeting Emotions” which addresses mental wellness. It helps the Gen Z audience overcome emotional control and minimise mental difficulties by accepting their feelings and monitoring incoming thoughts without judgement. The technique of labelling emotions as they emerge alleviates self-consciousness. When an emotion comes, the marking is like “Hello, sadness. You’re here.” Repeat the same process until that emotion disappears. The practitioner then applies the same strategy to new sensations. This mindfulness practice helps the gen z audience detach from negativity, adopt thoughtful responses, and achieve self-awareness, whilst promoting self-awareness, managing anxiety and sadness, and being compatible with Gen Z’s hectic lifestyles. This target group can relate to the practice through short, captivating videos on TikTok. Mastering this strategy can increase comprehension, empathy, impulsivity, and attentive communication. The mindfulness practice helps Generation Z manage their emotions and build resilience.

“This is anger.”
 “Anger is arising in my mind.”
 “My mind is experiencing anger.”
 “Anger is conditioning my mind.”
 “My mind is being conditioned by anger.”
 “I see fear, fear is overwhelming me.”
 I see sadness, sadness is engulfing me.”
 “I see loneliness, loneliness is greeting me.”

3.1.3 Sharing Personal Experiences and Engaging Well-Known Figures

The Dhamma influencer advocates for the mental well-being of Generation Z by utilising testimonies and celebrity endorsements. Interviews with well-known figures demonstrate the efficacy of Buddhist practices in coping with sadness, anxiety, and the stresses from social media messages. These practices highlight the Triple Gems Chant and methods like as “Observing Thoughts” and “Greeting Emotions.” The influencer effectively showcases the efficacy of Dhamma in addressing mental health concerns with the use of multimodal narrative, Gen Z-friendly language, on-screen scripting, and split-screen comparisons. The compassionate tone generates captivating information.



Figure III. TikTok screengrabs showing communication strategy on “Experience Sharing and Celebrity Collaborations.” (Far left) Phra Ajahn Ton and Wani; (2nd from Far Left) Kru Ngor and Wani; the rests are speakers at youth Dhamma camps who recovered from mental health problems by Dhamma. Accessed: <https://www.tiktok.com/@wni.inbuddh>

In addition to personal anecdotes, the influencer showcases prominent individuals recounting their experiences with Dhamma. These individuals encompass Phra Ajahn Tonne Dhammanava²¹, esteemed mentors like Kru Ngor²², and prominent figures like a rapper Ui Buddha Bless²³ and a media personality like Dhu Sanya²⁴ discussing current matters. The use of personal testimonies, professional insights, and celebrity viewpoints in Dhamma teachings

enhances its appeal and credibility of the Dhamma practice among Gen Z viewers, therefore expanding its reach and making it more accessible.

3.1.4. Conducting Q&A Sessions and Establishing a Supportive Community

The young Thai Dhamma influencer utilises interactive Q&A sessions and a caring community to improve mental health among her youth audiences. The sessions let Gen Z viewers discuss their concerns and receive personalised Dhamma advice, fostering open discussion and minimising loneliness, stress, anxiety, and grief.

²¹ a Dhamma master admired by Gen Z for his innovative teaching style

²² A well-known public speaking and soft skills trainer in Thailand with successful social media channels related to communication and personal development contents.

²³ A prominent Thai rapper noted for his distinct style and socially concerned songs.

²⁴ A charismatic and articulate television personality who has charmed viewers on a variety of Thai programmes.

The influencer also actively builds online supportive communities which extensively create a potentially sustainable Dhamma group which collaborates to support each others' mental health difficulties. These activities not only strengthen a sense of belonging but also render a nurturing environment in which Gen Z viewers learn to cope, become self-aware, feel connected, and find meaning in this loving atmosphere. The influencer employs visualisations, podcasts, and interactive components which boost mental health by regulating emotions, bringing tranquillity, and building resilience to comfort the audience's mental suffering.

3.1.5. Employing Multimodal Communication Strategies

To attract Gen Z and propagate Dhamma, the new TikToker copies social media shows like “Kuy Kap Ui,” [คุยกับอุ๊ย] “Jor Jai,” [เจาะใจ] and “Manoot Tang Wai” [มนุษย์ต่างวัย]. Repurposing interviews across media boosts program credibility and her reach beyond existing followers. Different content kinds and lengths engage Gen Z and boost authenticity. Gen Z learns by graphics, voice, and interactivity. Social media ads and surveys enhance mental health and Dhamma communities and viewpoints.

TikTok is where the influencer posts Gen Z-friendly videos. Live sessions and Q&As on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram enhance Dhamma interaction. Line engages followers with bite-sized content and encouraging phrases, while Canva's visually appealing features link to other social networks. Monthly Dhamma camps, retreats, and sessions enhance her online communication with face-to-face and more in-depth interaction. This holistic approach connects Gen Z to various and accessible Dhamma-based mental health services, creating a supportive community for mental health.

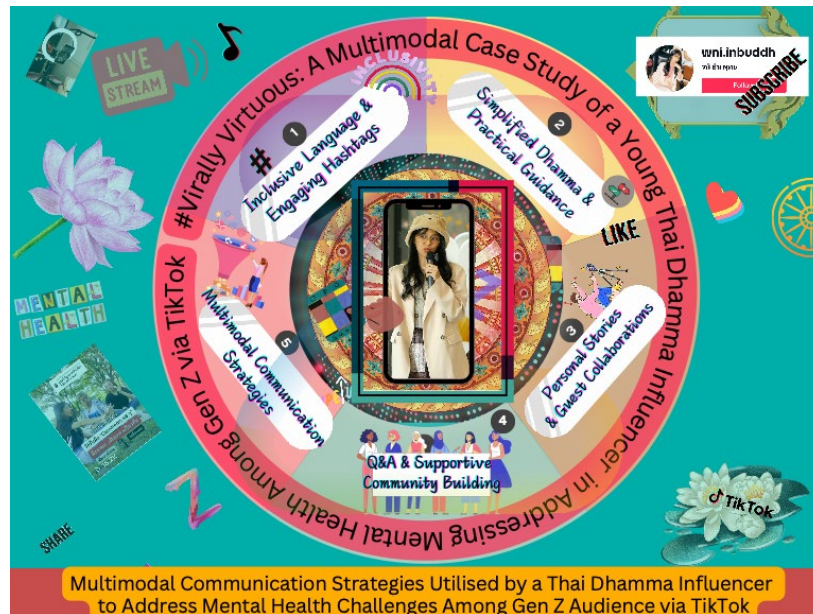


Figure IV. Research Findings: Multimodal Communication Strategies Employed by a Young Thai Dhamma Influencer to Address Mental Health via TikTok

3.2 The Potential of Buddhist Dhamma Teachings for Gen Z Mental Well-being

3.2.1. Addressing Modern Mental Health Challenges

The influencer adapts Dhamma teachings to address specific mental health concerns such as binge eating, toxic relationships, family clashes, and self-love. This makes the teachings relevant and empowering for young audiences.

3.2.2. Providing Practical Tools for Emotional Management

Simplified Dhamma practices, such as chanting the Triple Gems and mindfulness techniques, help manage emotions and improve mental well-being by fostering inner tranquillity and reducing anxiety. This testimony is reflected by young people who participate in Dhamma youth camps.

3.2.3. Fostering Self-Awareness and Resilience

The teachings promote self-awareness and resilience through mindfulness and self-reflection which as crucial skills for emotional regulation and mental well-being.

3.2.4. Offering an Alternative to Materialistic Coping Mechanisms

By clarifying misconceptions about dependency on the magic power of amulets and emphasizing inner self-cultivation and self-reliance, TikTok encourages Gen Z to develop internal resources for coping with life's challenges.

3.2.5. Promoting Inclusivity and Community Support

The supportive community built around Dhamma teachings provides a network for peer support and shared experiences, addressing feelings of isolation and fostering a sense of belonging.

3.2.6. Flexibility and Integration with Modern Lifestyles

Presenting Buddhist practices as a flexible "way of life" allows Gen Z to integrate Dhamma principles into their daily lives without feeling constrained, making it more appealing and sustainable.

3.2.7. Addressing the Root Causes of Suffering

Concepts like the Four Noble Truths offer a framework for understanding suffering and its causes, benefiting those dealing with existential questions or seeking meaning in life.

3.2.8. Developing Emotional Intelligence

Practices of observing thoughts and greeting emotions contribute to emotional intelligence, crucial for navigating relationships, managing stress, and maintaining overall mental well-being.

3.2.9. Providing a Path to Inner Peace

Dhamma teachings offer a path to inner peace independent of external circumstances. It is a valuable navigator to help one go through different circumstances in the rapidly changing world.

3.2.10. Encouraging Self-Reflection and Personal Growth

Emphasis on self-awareness and mindfulness as a continual process helps Gen Z to become more aware of their thoughts and emotions and can manage them more effectively. The process contributes to long-term mental well-being and aligns with GEN Z's interest in self-improvement to a happy life in the modern world with complex challenges.

4. Discussion

The integration of Multimodal Social Semiotics and Social Construction of Reality theories provides a comprehensive understanding of how multimodal communication strategies and Dhamma teachings effectively address Gen Z mental health issues, offering practical tools and fostering a supportive community as discussed below.

4.1 TikTok's Role in Mental Health Support for Gen Z

This study underscores the significant role of TikTok in providing mental health support for Gen Z. The platform's ability to foster inclusive virtual communities aligns with recent research (Gallagher, 2021; Ting, 2021; Stillwell, 2024). Wanida Boonprasert, a young Thai Dhamma influencer, effectively leverages TikTok's features such as visual storytelling, music, text overlays, and hashtags to communicate mental health concepts and Dhamma teachings. This approach resonates with Gen Z's preference for authentic, bite-sized content and peer-to-peer communication (Stillwell, 2024). On top of that, the study also highlights the varying quality and credibility of TikTok content, emphasizing the need for evidence-based approaches in mental health communication (Motta et al., 2024).

4.2 Effectiveness of Multimodal Communication Strategies

The research indisputably illustrates the efficacy of multimodal communication tactics in tackling mental health concerns among Gen Z individuals. The TikTok video clips successfully impart difficult Dhamma teachings and mental health topics by skillfully combining verbal, visual, auditory, spatial, and gestural aspects, resulting in entertaining and relevant material. This is consistent with the Multimodal Social Semiotics Analysis methodology that Kress and Van Leeuwen proposed in 2006. It emphasises the significance of adapting communication techniques to suit the digital proficiency of Generation Z.

The study's emphasis on multimodality provides useful insights for mental health practitioners, content producers, and academics. The statement implies that by adopting a complete strategy that includes several methods of communication, it is possible to provide more individualised and efficient interventions that meet the varying requirements of those seeking mental health assistance.

4.3 Adapting Buddhist Dhamma Teachings for Modern Mental Health Support

The study addresses the critical need for contemporary approaches to disseminating Buddhist teachings, as highlighted by scholars like Phra Phurawathano (2020) and Schedneck

(2021). By demonstrating how a young laywoman can effectively teach Dhamma through social media, the study challenges traditional gender and age restrictions in Buddhist teaching.

The adaptation of Dhamma concepts to address modern mental health concerns showcases the potential of traditional wisdom in tackling contemporary issues. This approach is in line with the growing interest in incorporating Buddhist teachings and mindfulness practices into mental health therapies for younger populations (Yamcharoen, 2015; Sri Sukul Cheablam et al., 2019).

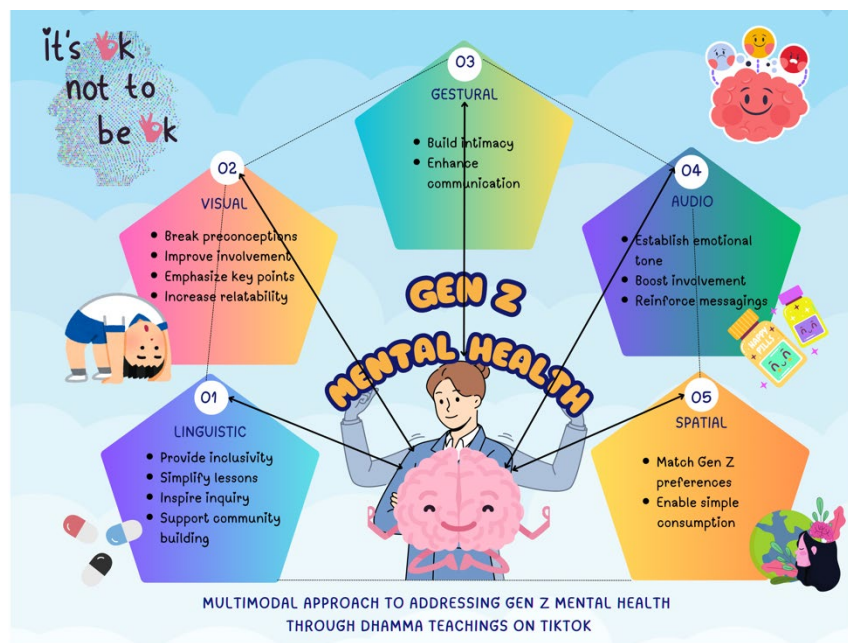


Figure IV. Multimodal Approach to Addressing Gen Z Mental Health through Dhamma Practice

4.4 Social Construction of Mental Health Realities on Social Media

The results validate the Social Construction of Reality theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) within the framework of discussions on mental health on social media. The TikTok user's utilisation of relevant language, personal anecdotes, and pragmatic Dhamma practices plays a significant role in influencing the mental health perspectives of Generation Z and their understanding of the potential advantages of Buddhist practices.

This is consistent with a recent study that suggests social media presents widespread representations of reality that impact how individuals see themselves, their emotional state, and their social interactions (Achmad et al., 2023). The study emphasises how TikTok users generate and disseminate depictions of mental health that are rooted in their own personal and cultural encounters. Additionally, it explores how the supportive nature of community

comments might contribute to the normalisation of mental health conversations and minimising associated stigmatisation.

4.5 Cultural Sensitivity and Global Applicability

The research delivers a substantial contribution to the development of mental health remedies which are culturally sensitive and technologically relevant, utilising social media and customary cultural resources. The study proposes a model that combines perceived ‘conventional’ Dhamma teachings with modern communication tactics. This model could potentially be extended to other cultures that have strong spiritual traditions and are dealing with comparable issues in the digital era.

This study also responds to the issue of insufficient accessibility to mental health services in Thailand (Charoenwong et al., 2021) and investigates how social media can be leveraged to provide mental health assistance (Kitiarsa, 2021). The text illustrates how conventional knowledge can possibly be deployed as an alternative to offer culturally suitable mental health assistance in the face of swift societal transformations and growing exposure to digital media.

4.6 Further Implications

The study constitutes avenues for further investigation, such as exploring the enduring impacts of these treatments on the mental health behaviours and perspectives of Generation Z. Further research could look into the influence of various modalities on audience engagement and learning, offering significant insights for content creators who produce mental health material for Generation Z.

Furthermore, the results underline the possibility of implementing nature-based resources to improve overall well-being by including visual and audio features that are influenced by natural surroundings. This is consistent with the comprehensive methodology of Buddhist teachings and has the potential to provide novel avenues for mental health therapies.

5. Conclusion

To bridge the gap between old-styled delivering of Buddhist teachings and the mental well-being demands of Generation Z, this research entails a social media Dhamma influencer such as Wanida Boonprasert to accomplish this endeavour using her TikTok content and multimodal communication. The research reveals the utilisation of language, visuals, and

active engagement aiming to develop supportive online communities in which members of Generation Z may seek and provide aid for mental health complications.

The inclusive online communities and peer-to-peer interactions rendered by TikTok are beneficial to Gen Z's mental well-being. Multimodal components showcase how traditional knowledge and modern psychology could be integrated. This unique technique demonstrates how young people without professional training may impart Dhamma information, surpassing its conventional boundaries and providing valuable insights for mental health practitioners and content creators trying to reach Generation Z's audience.

Furthermore, the study showcases the impact of social media platforms such as TikTok on the perceptions of Generation Z regarding mental health and the possible advantages of Buddhist practices, whilst additionally promoting the notion of the social construction of reality. As an influencer, Wanida Boonprasert actively promotes discussions on mental health and aims to diminish the prevailing stereotypes around it. She can accomplish this by adopting clear and comprehensible language, sharing personal anecdotes, and offering practical Dhamma practices.

Integrating Buddhist teachings and mindfulness practices into existing mental health therapy can offer culturally appropriate help to young individuals. This approach tackles the limited accessibility of mental health services in Thailand by a GEN Z non-professional communicator with grounded experience in Dhamma practice who uses social media to offer culturally and age-suitable support to her peer audience.

In a nutshell, the study suggests that the multifaceted mental health needs of Generation Z could be effectively handled by combining conventional knowledge, modern communication methods, and social media platforms. It supports the global effort to enhance the welfare of young individuals in the digital age by offering a framework for culturally sensitive and technologically flexible interventions that may be implemented globally.

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