
Buddhist Guideline for Intercultural Communication in Harmony for Foreign Students of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

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Abstract

This study is about how to live harmoniously in a society that includes people of many different races and cultures. This is very important, but how to live harmoniously between different races and cultures has been neglected in previous studies. The objectives of the research are: 1) to explore the coexistence problems of foreign students of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU.) 2) to study the rules & regulations for MCU's foreign students and Buddhist doctrine for living in harmony and 3) to analysis the Buddhist guideline for multicultural living in harmony of foreign students of MCU., The data was obtained from Buddhist doctrine, rule & regulation of MCU. This study explores the Buddhist guidelines for fostering harmonious multicultural living among international students at MCU.

The research findings indicate that the application of Buddha's doctrines, along with the university's meditation program, creates a conducive environment for international students from diverse cultural backgrounds. These guidelines, although beneficial for international students, require active practice to be effective and are also applicable to multicultural societies at large. The primary challenges faced by international students, including disagreements and cultural differences, can be mitigated through the principles of *sāraṇīyadhamma*, which emphasize conciliation. The study reveals that the successful implementation of these Buddhist principles and regulations hinges on the participants' attitudes. Promoting patience, tolerance, mutual joy, multicultural awareness, social discipline, and dhamma for social life are identified as key components for achieving harmony in a multicultural setting.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication; Harmony; Social Discipline; Dhamma for Social life; *sāraṇīyadhamma*

Introduction

The coexistence problem in multicultural contexts refers to challenges that arise when people from different cultural backgrounds live together. These challenges can include misunderstandings, stereotypes, communication barriers, and conflicts arising from cultural differences in values, beliefs, and behaviors. Addressing the coexistence problem requires fostering cultural sensitivity, promoting dialogue, and implementing policies that support diversity, inclusion, and mutual respect among individuals from various cultural backgrounds.

Intercultural awareness in Buddhism refers to understanding and respecting the diversity of cultures and traditions within the context of Buddhist teachings. It involves recognizing the different cultural expressions of Buddhism around the world and appreciating how they contribute to the richness and depth of the tradition. This awareness encourages dialogue, empathy, and mutual understanding among practitioners from various cultural backgrounds. According to Buddhism treat every human and any different cultural being with unconditional respect. (Norman, 1997) A religious attitude of respect is needed for any philosophical understanding to grow. Buddha himself made friends with people of different faiths and preached his teachings. This is because they respect each other. (Feer,1991)

Social discipline revolves around principles and practices that guide individuals in their interactions with others, aiming to create harmony, reduce suffering, and promote ethical living within society. This discipline is deeply rooted in the core teachings of Buddhism, such as the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, and is manifested through various aspects of moral conduct, community engagement, and personal development. This principle encourages actions that are ethical and beneficial to oneself and others, avoiding harm and promoting wellbeing. It includes adhering to the Five Precepts and engaging in acts of generosity and compassion. (Kasulis, 2015)

Social discipline relates to organizing compassion, loving-kindness, mindfulness, and awareness in our life involves incorporating these principles into our daily routines and interactins. (Kasulis, 2015) Here are practical ways to cultivate and organize these qualities:

1) Compassion and Loving-Kindness (Metta): Buddhist teachings emphasize the cultivation of compassion and loving-kindness towards all beings. This attitude underpins social interactions and encourages a supportive and caring community.

2) Mindfulness and Awareness: Mindfulness practice is central to Buddhism and involves being fully present and aware of one's thoughts, actions, and motivations. This awareness helps individuals make ethical decisions and act with consideration for the impact of their actions on others. (Kasulis, 2015) Buddhist social discipline, therefore, is not just about individual moral behavior but also about creating a society based on compassion, ethical living, and mutual support. It encourages individuals to reflect on the consequences of their actions and to live in a way that contributes to the peace and wellbeing of all students.

Buddhism deeply integrates its ethical teachings into social life, emphasizing compassion, kindness, and interconnectedness. Key ethical guidelines for Buddhists include abstaining from taking life, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxication, promoting respectful and honest relationships. Buddhists are encouraged to adopt a compassionate attitude towards all beings, aiming to positively impact society. The Buddhist community, or Sangha, provides vital support through group activities, strengthening social bonds. Engaged Buddhism advocates for active involvement in social and political issues, applying Buddhist principles to address societal problems. Generosity and mindfulness, practiced both in material and non-material ways, enhance social cohesion and the quality of relationships. Overall, Buddhism fosters an ethical, compassionate, and mindful social life aimed at the wellbeing of all and positive community relationships.

Virtues for fraternal living (*saraniyadhamma*) refer to qualities or principles that promote harmony, unity, and positive relations within a community. These principles are particularly emphasized in the context of the Sangha, the community of Buddhist monks and nuns, but they also extend to lay followers and society at large. By integrating these principles into intercultural communication, individuals and communities can foster a more inclusive, respectful, and harmonious Buddhist society. The teachings of Buddha Dhamma offer timeless wisdom that can address contemporary challenges of cultural misunderstanding and conflict, promoting an environment where diversity is celebrated and embraced through compassionate and mindful interaction. Buddhists believe that the Buddha's teachings can guide different cultures to coexist harmoniously. These teachings represent a solution to

various problems and a source of hope for international students, presenting a framework for how different cultures can interact and live together peacefully.

This article aims to systematically review the concept of multicultural living in Buddhist scriptures. The goal is not to prescribe a specific form of harmony in Buddhism but to analyze how understanding and harmony function in different cultural and traditional contexts.

Research Objectives

- 1) To explore the coexistence problems of foreign students of MCU.
- 2) To study the rules & regulations for MCU's foreign students and Buddhist doctrine for living in harmony,
- 3) To analysis the Buddhist guideline for multicultural living in harmony of foreign students of MCU.

Literature Review

Academic and social integration for international students are crucial aspects of their overall success and well-being on campus. Research suggests that institutional strategies like staff and student interaction, student orientation programs, and classroom organization play a significant role in promoting academic integration (Jieyi et al, 2022). Additionally, the development of interactive and intercultural communication skills is essential for both international and domestic students to function effectively in academic settings (Abdul-Rahaman et al, 2022). Social integration, on the other hand, can be facilitated through programs like volunteer organizations, where students can interact across nationalities and socialize, fostering a sense of community and belonging. Moreover, initiatives such as buddy programs provide social support and aid in the integration of international students through engaging in social activities, although integration with domestic students may present challenges (Park, 2019). By addressing both academic and social integration through various strategies and programs, institutions can enhance the overall experience and success of international students on campus.

Mindfulness plays a crucial role in fostering harmony among diverse university students by enhancing intercultural sensitivity, reducing loneliness, improving coping strategies in stressful situations, and promoting emotional equilibrium. Studies have shown that

mindfulness is positively correlated with acceptance of diversity and intercultural sensitivity (UYGUR, 2022), while also being associated with lower levels of loneliness and higher affect balance among college students. Additionally, regular mindfulness practice has been linked to better coping mechanisms, increased focus, calmer responses to stress, and improved decision-making among university students (Lackova et al, 2019). Furthermore, trait mindfulness has been found to have a reciprocal association with positive affect, contributing to positive well-being and emotional balance during challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic (Lee et al, 2022). Overall, mindfulness can serve as a valuable tool in promoting understanding, empathy, and harmony among diverse student populations, leading to a more inclusive and supportive academic environment.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the research exhibits the significant research process in terms of input, process, and output as follows:

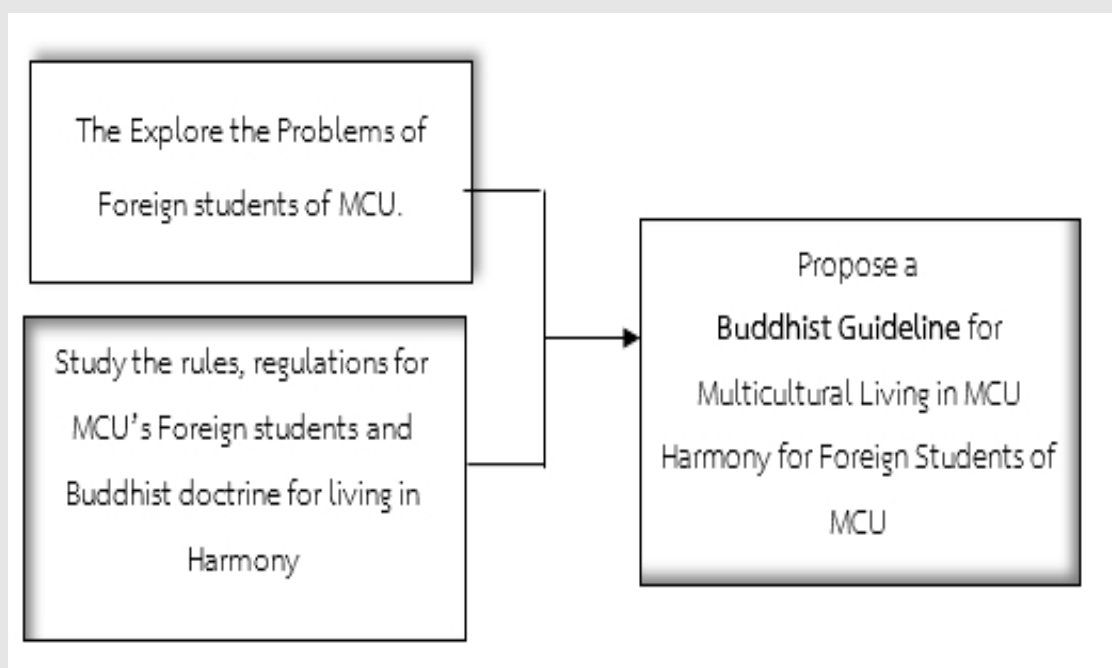


Figure 1: Basic Conceptual

Research Results

Foreign students studying in Buddhist multicultural settings where both Theravada and Mahayana traditions are practiced may encounter several challenges. These challenges can be broadly categorized into cultural, religious, linguistic, and social aspects:

1. Cultural Differences:

a. Cultural Shock: Foreign students may experience cultural shock due to differences in social norms, behaviors, and lifestyles.

b. Adapting to Local Customs: Buddhist traditions often have specific customs and rituals. Adjusting to these, such as particular ways of dressing, eating, or showing respect, can be challenging.

2. Religious Practices:

a. Understanding Diverse Practices: Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism have different practices, rituals, and philosophical interpretations. Understanding and respecting these differences can be complex.

b. Participation in Rituals: Students may feel uncertain about participating in rituals or may feel excluded if they do not understand the significance of these practices.

3. Language Barriers:

a. Communication: Language differences can make it difficult for students to engage fully with the community, understand teachings, and participate in discussions.

b. Study Materials: Accessing and comprehending study materials in a different language can be a significant hurdle.

4. Social Integration:

a. Making Friends: Forming friendships can be difficult due to cultural and language barriers, as well as different social norms.

b. Feeling Isolated: Foreign students might feel isolated if they are unable to integrate well with local students and the community.

5. Academic Challenges:

a. Different Educational Systems: Adjusting to different teaching methods, evaluation systems, and academic expectations can be demanding.

b. Access to Resources: Limited access to resources such as books, mentors, or guidance in their native language can impede their academic progress.

To help foreign students overcome these challenges, the following measures can be beneficial:

- a. Orientation Programs: Organizing comprehensive orientation programs to familiarize students with local customs, religious practices, and the educational system.
- b. Language Support: Providing language classes and resources to help students overcome language barriers.
- c. Cultural Exchange Activities: Encouraging cultural exchange activities where students can share their own culture and learn about others in a supportive environment.
- d. Mentorship and Counseling: Establishing mentorship programs and offering counseling services to assist students in their academic and personal lives.
- e. Inclusive Community Practices: Creating an inclusive community where diversity is respected and celebrated, ensuring that all students feel valued and included.

In Buddhism cause of problem is ignorance - specifically ignorance of the nature of reality. Ignorance encompasses misunderstanding the nature of the self, the impermanence of all things, and the principles of cause and effect (kamma). The navigating regulations and living calmly or living with integrity or living with wisdom can contribute to their difficulties. Together, these principles help to foster a peaceful and supportive environment, encouraging mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation. They are essential for the spiritual growth of individuals and for the stability and harmony of the community. By seeing the interconnectedness of all beings and the nature of reality, one can dissolve anger and cultivate a peaceful mind.

The way to achieve equality for foreign students is to follow the rules and practice the teachings of the Buddha. First, one of the best ways for international students to maintain their minds is mindfulness meditation. They are insight meditation (vipassanā) and calm meditation (samatha). In fact, the two are indivisible facets of the same process. Calm is the peaceful happiness born of meditation; insight is the clear understanding born of the same meditation. When we strive for vipassanā work, we gain peace of mind, understand the concepts of physical form, and reduce our passions. Mindfulness and loving-kindness meditation are key practices that help individuals observe their minds, understand the roots of the suffering, and transform these emotions into wisdom and compassion. Second,

Saranīyadhamma (virtues for a fraternal living) is the way to achieve equality for foreign students. Saranīyadhamma (virtues for a fraternal living) guide the various practices to overcome the problems. The saranīyadhamma consists of six qualities:

1)Mettā (loving-kindness): Cultivating an attitude of goodwill and kindness towards all beings, wishing them happiness and well-being.

2) Karunā (compassion): Feeling empathy towards those who are suffering and wishing to alleviate their suffering.

3)Mudita (sympathetic Joy): Taking joy in the happiness and achievements of others, rather than feeling envy or jealousy.

4)Upekkhā (equanimity): maintaining a calm and balanced mind, especially in difficult situations, recognizing the changing nature of life.

5) Sāma Citta (equality of mind or harmony): Cultivating a mind that sees the equality in all beings, not discriminating or favoring some over others.

6) Saddhā (faith or confidence): Having confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, and in the moral and ethical teachings of Buddhism.

Virtues for a fraternal living (saranīyadhamma) refers to the qualities or principles that promote harmony, unity, and good relations among individuals in a community. These principles are particularly emphasized in the context of the Sangha, the community of Buddhist monks and nuns, but they are also applicable to lay followers and society at large.

Virtues for a fraternal living (saranīyadamma) is very important for international students. It is to ways for harmony. The way to fmulticultural living make space for differences to co-exist in harmony without homogeneity. Diversity needs to be honored, acknowledged and celebrated. On the other hand social disciplines refer to the societal norms which are basically unwritten rules of conduct that are acceptable to a culture that are part of society. It is sure to become a harmonious organization by applying the principles of Saranīyadhamma.

Discussions

The research highlights various coexistence challenges faced by foreign students in universities, primarily focusing on intercultural adaptability issues such as language barriers and unfamiliarity with local cultures, as well as academic difficulties like scientific research writing

and limited course options (Ye et al., 2018; Shakirova et al., 2022). Moreover, interaction problems between students and teaching staff further complicate the adaptation process (Козилова, 2022). The sociolinguistic profile and linguistic diversity of international students also contribute to these challenges, impacting learning environments and necessitating awareness among stakeholders for effective policymaking (Costa & Mariotti, 2020). To mitigate these issues, various studies recommend enhancing language skills, increasing cultural awareness, improving student-supervisor interactions, and providing more support and resources to foster a more inclusive and supportive university environment for foreign students. Living in multicultural environments often presents foreign students with challenges stemming from differences in cultural norms and practices. Navigating these differences requires patience to prevent conflicts and misunderstandings, which is crucial for fostering a harmonious atmosphere (Horiuchi, 2013). Buddhist teachings offer a comprehensive framework for addressing these challenges through principles such as conciliation (*sāraṇīyadhamma*), discipline (*ajīvattamaka sīla*), the four principles of service (*sanghaha-vatthu*), and fostering good friendships (*kalyanamitta*). These guidelines emphasize friendship, mutual respect, and ethical conduct, which are essential for maintaining harmony in a multicultural setting (Thongchuay & Suwannual, 2017). Additionally, Thongchuay et al. (2022) advocate for the implementation of multicultural education in schools. This approach, integrating humanistic and pluralistic values, promotes social action programs aimed at reducing prejudice, ensuring equality, and empowering cultural diversity. By adhering to these principles, foreign students can enhance their cultural adaptation, language skills, and intercultural communication abilities, ultimately contributing to a harmonious and inclusive environment in educational institutions and beyond.

Furthermore, Agoritsas et al. (2022) highlight how Buddhist principles can enhance multicultural understanding among students by emphasizing interdependence, nonessentialist identity, and the importance of listening and understanding others. These principles foster empathy, cooperation, and respect for diversity, encouraging individuals to appreciate the interconnectedness of all things. By adopting a fluid and non-monolithic view of identity, students can better comprehend the dynamic nature of cultures and traditions, promoting openness and acceptance towards others. The emphasis on active listening and respectful communication underscores the significance of dialogue in achieving mutual understanding and harmony among diverse groups. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of a

multifaceted approach in addressing the coexistence challenges faced by foreign students. By integrating practical recommendations with cultural and ethical frameworks, universities can better support international students in their adaptation process, promoting a more inclusive and harmonious educational environment.

Knowledge from Research

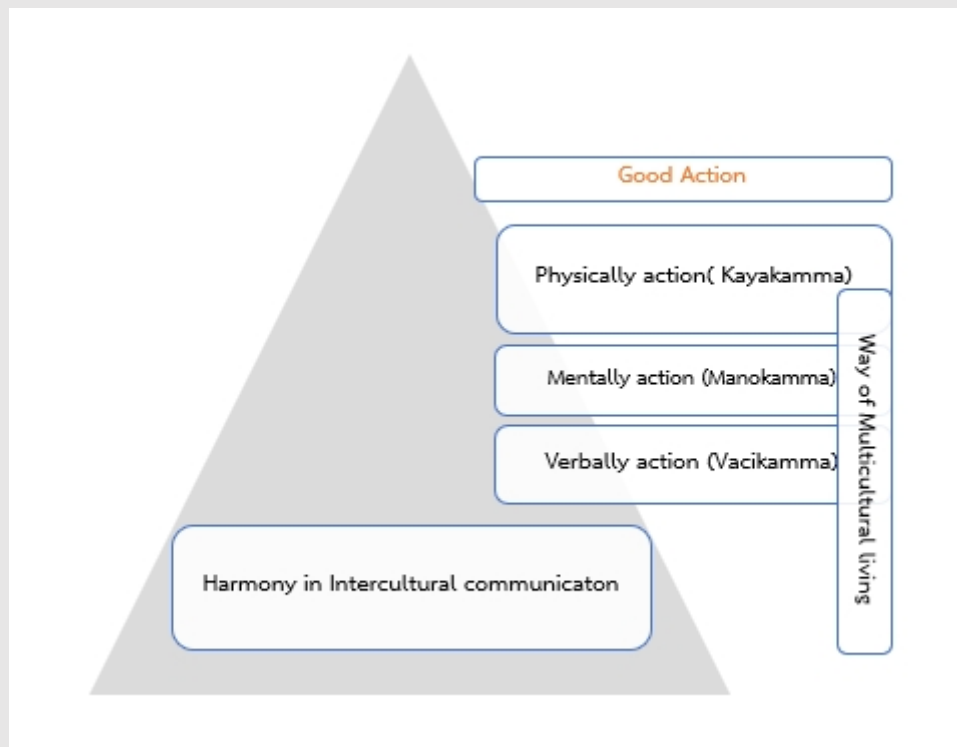


Figure. 2 Harmony way of Intercultural Communication

The Buddha's guide is to practice the Dhamma. There is harmony in living with different cultures and peoples, but living with discipline can lead to harmony. In addition, if there try to practice Samta Vipassana, it will be calm and aware of greed and anger, and it will create a peaceful mind. Mutual understanding, friendship among people, respect each other. Only then will the multicultural organization be harmonious. By implementing these strategies, a community can not only coexist peacefully but thrive by leveraging the strengths and unique contributions of its diverse members. Harmony is not just the absence of conflict but the presence of a vibrant, respectful, and engaged community life.

Conclusions

This research emphasizes the effectiveness of Buddhist principles in assisting international students to navigate the challenges of residing in culturally diverse surroundings. The guidance of the Buddha, in conjunction with the regulations of MCU, establishes a strong foundation for addressing disagreements, cultural differences, and diverse viewpoints. The issue of cohabitation in multicultural contexts frequently arises from inconsistencies, differing opinions, and a lack of self-control. Adherence to the dhamma is crucial for alleviating these challenges. Disputes, cultural disparities, and non-conformity are typical obstacles encountered by students. Failing to apply Buddhist teachings can worsen these issues. It is imperative for students to socialize with companions in accordance with Buddhist doctrines, offer mutual support, and uphold disciplined lifestyles. Such practices have the potential to significantly decrease conflict occurrences. Additionally, discrepancies in opinions, the absence of positive companions, and the presence of detrimental habits contribute to these difficulties. Patience is essential in a multicultural society, particularly in the face of disagreements. Embracing the Buddhist principles of associating with virtuous companions, assisting one another, and maintaining disciplined conduct can cultivate a harmonious atmosphere. The enforcement of regulations, alongside the engagement in vipassanā meditation, can assist students in navigating cultural variances and conflicting viewpoints. Engaging in daily vipassanā meditation, as instructed by the University, empowers students to cultivate mindfulness and attain a balanced perspective on life. Fundamental moral values like patience, forgiveness, and conflict resolution play a key role in addressing disputes. Cultivating positive ethics, which include patience and loyalty to Buddhist precepts like good companions (kalyānamitta), principles of reconciliation (sāraṇīyadhamma), self-restraint (sīla), the four bases of social unity (sanghaha-vatthu), and harmony (sāmaggī), can effectively alleviate issues. International students are urged to correctly practice these dhamma principles to coexist harmoniously in multicultural environments. This research highlights that the utilization of Buddhist teachings can significantly improve students' capacity to adjust and flourish in varied cultural contexts.

Suggestions

The main thing I would like to recommend is that there should apply the dharma of saraniya. Saraniyadhamma refers to the principles of amicability or concord, which are pivotal in fostering harmony within a community, particularly in a multicultural context. Derived from

the Buddhist teachings, these principles emphasize the cultivation of certain qualities that promote peaceful coexistence and mutual respect. Here are some key elements of *saranīya dhamma* that can be applied to multicultural living. These principles, when practiced diligently, can help individuals and communities thrive together in a multicultural environment by fostering respect, understanding, and cooperation among all its members.

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