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# **The Promotion of Sympathetic Joy (Muditā) in Buddhist Psychology of PhD Students at International Studies College (IBSC), Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU)**

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## **Abstract**

This study explores the promotion of sympathetic joy (muditā) in Buddhist psychology, focusing on PhD students in the Buddhist Studies program at the International Buddhist Studies College (IBSC), Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU). The research objectives are threefold: (1) to analyze muditā meditation in Theravāda Buddhism and modern psychology as effective methods for its cultivation; (2) to investigate the practice of muditā among PhD Buddhist Studies students at IBSC, MCU; and (3) to propose a structured framework for fostering muditā within Buddhist psychology. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates textual analysis of Theravāda scriptures (e.g., Visuddhimagga, Dīgha Nikāya) and contemporary psychological literature, alongside semi-structured interviews with 15 PhD students and 9 meditation masters.

The findings indicate that the cultivation of muditā unfolds through four progressive levels. The first stage emphasizes sammā saṅkappa (right intention) to establish benevolence as a foundational mindset. The second stage cultivates 19 sobhana cetasikas (wholesome mental factors), such as mindfulness (sati), equanimity (upekkhā), and mental pliancy (kāya-passaddhi), aligning with the Sun and Moon Theory's premise that positive states displace negative emotions like envy (issā). The third stage, termed "Maturement," integrates ethical discipline (sīla) through right speech, action, and livelihood, ensuring moral stability as a prerequisite for sustained practice. The final stage enables practitioners to embody impartial muditā, rejoicing in others' successes without bias, even toward adversaries. Findings reveal that successful muditā practice correlates with self-reported reductions in jealousy and enhanced emotional resilience, validated through

participants' reflective journals. Longitudinal benefits include advanced meditative absorption (jhāna), potential rebirth in the Brahmā realm, and progression toward the anāgāmi (non-returner) stage of enlightenment. This framework bridges classical Buddhist ethics with modern psychological paradigms, offering a structured pathway to nurture muditā as both a spiritual virtue and a tool for mental well-being in academic contexts. This research contributes significantly to the understanding and promotion of muditā, a valuable virtue for enhancing mental well-being and social relationships.

**Keywords:** Sympathetic joy (muditā); Buddhist psychology; Modern psychology; Sobhana Cetasikas; Sammā Saṅkappa; Mental Well-being.

## Introduction

Sympathetic joy (muditā) is a profound meditative practice within Buddhist psychology, designed to cultivate a sense of joy and mitigate deleterious emotions such as jealousy, envy, and judgmental negativity. The effective cultivation of muditā, particularly in response to the prosperity and success of others, necessitates the development of wise attention (yoniso manasikara), a fundamental psychological factor in Buddhism, which facilitates positive transformations in behaviour, speech, and thought (Bhikkhuni Do Le Anh Thi et al., 2022). Furthermore, the cultivation of muditā and positive emotional states is intrinsically linked to self-compassion, which fosters psychological resilience, kindness, and mindfulness, thereby contributing to overall well-being (Neff, 2022). The practical application of muditā involves a systematic approach, beginning with the cultivation of joy towards a cherished individual, subsequently extending this sentiment to neutral individuals, and ultimately encompassing all beings (Seppälä, 2017).

This research specifically focuses on the practice of muditā meditation within the framework of Buddhist psychology (Abhidhamma), drawing upon Theravāda canonical texts, commentaries, and sub-commentaries, as well as contemporary psychological literature. Primary textual resources include the Vibhaṅgatthakathā, Visuddhimagga, and Buddhaghosa's Atthasālinī, while modern psychological perspectives are informed by the therapeutic guidelines of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Jealousy, often rooted in an egocentric mindset characterized by 'me and mine,' is identified as a primary source of psychological

distress (Dhammananda, 2012). The practice of muditā meditation, when integrated into daily life, offers a potent antidote to such distress. Consequently, this study investigates the practice of muditā among PhD students in Buddhist Studies at the International Buddhist Studies College (IBSC), Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU).

This research paper examines the cultivation of muditā in Buddhist psychology, specifically focusing on PhD students in the Buddhist Studies program at IBSC, MCU. Aligned with the research objectives, this study explores four key aspects: (1) the conceptual foundations of muditā; (2) the impact of muditā on reducing jealousy, envy, judgmental negativity, and life dissatisfaction; (3) the components of muditā for daily practice; and (4) the types of muditā meditation techniques delineated in Buddhist scriptures. The anticipated outcomes of this research include the promotion of muditā practice for daily life, fostering wise attention, positive emotional states, non-judgmental happiness, and life satisfaction, while concurrently mitigating jealousy, envy, judgmental negativity, and life dissatisfaction.

## Objectives of the Research

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) To study sympathetic joy (*muditā*) meditation in Theravada Buddhism and modern psychology as an effective way of promotion,
- 2) To investigate the sympathetic joy (*muditā*) practice of PhD Buddhist studies program students at IBSC, MCU,
- 3) To propose the promoting way of sympathetic joy (*muditā*) practice in Buddhist Psychology of PhD Buddhist studies program students at IBSC, MCU.

## Literature Review

This review examines the cultivation of sympathetic joy (muditā) within Buddhist psychology, particularly among PhD students at the International Buddhist Studies College (IBSC), Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU). Existing research highlights various facets of mental cultivation, yet a specific focus on muditā within this academic context remains limited.

Bhikkhuni Do Le Anh Thi et al. (2022), explored the significance of wise attention (yoniso manasikara) in fostering mental well-being, emphasizing its role in transforming

negative thought patterns and behaviors. The "Mind Cultivation Based on Yoniso-Manasikāra" (MCBY) method, proposed by Bhikkhuni Do Le Anh Thi et al. (2022), offers a structured approach to personal growth through training in virtue, mind, and wisdom. This research underscores the transformative power of mindfulness in achieving a virtuous and liberated life.

Neff (2022) examined self-compassion as a bipolar continuum, challenging traditional dichotomous understandings. Neff's work highlights the importance of nuanced conceptualizations of self-compassion for psychological interventions. The Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) is utilized to measure this construct, emphasizing the need for clarity in psychometric evaluations. This approach advances the theoretical understanding of self-compassion and enhances its applicability in clinical settings.

Wattanaseth (2016) investigated the impact of Buddhist meditation on brain structure and emotional well-being. Using MiRi Scan technology, the study examined changes in cerebral cortical thickness and neural activity among meditation practitioners. The findings suggest that meditation practices contribute to enhanced emotional regulation and happiness, supporting the therapeutic potential of Theravāda meditation.

Doty (2012) explored the psychological and physiological effects of compassion through the Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) program. This eight-week program integrates contemplative practices with modern psychological principles, fostering prosocial behaviours and emotional resilience. CCT emphasizes the cultivation of self-compassion and interconnectedness, aligning with broader Buddhist psychological principles.

While these studies contribute significantly to understanding various aspects of mental cultivation, they do not specifically address the cultivation of muditā among PhD students in Buddhist studies. This research aims to bridge this gap by examining the practical application of muditā within this specific academic context, thereby contributing to both Buddhist psychological theory and practice.

## **Conceptual Framework**

This research is a research study. The conceptual framework of this research exhibits the significant research process in terms of input, process, and output as follows:

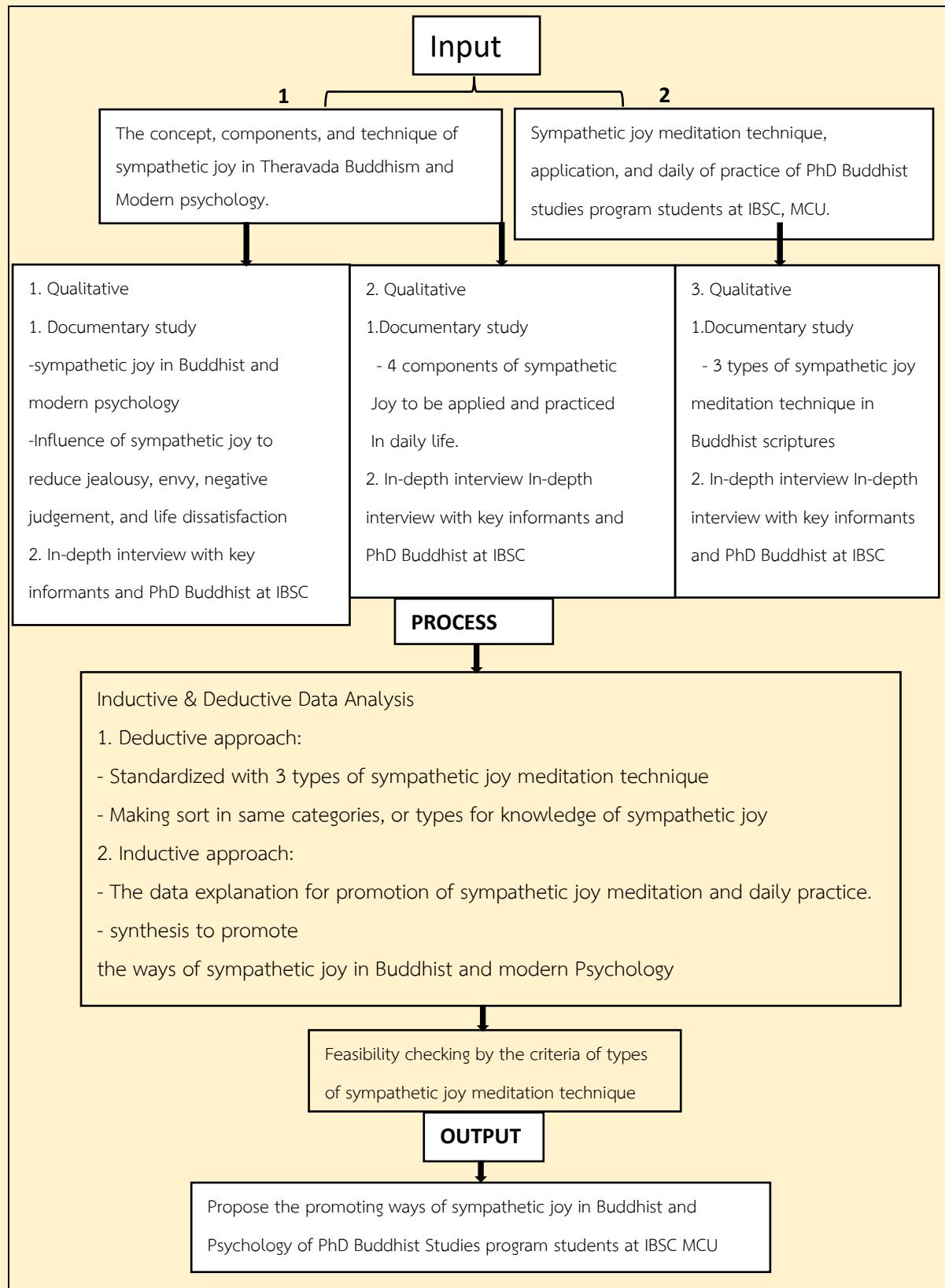


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing a range of research materials and instruments. Data collection and analysis are conducted using both primary and secondary sources, supplemented by in-depth interviews and the application of technological devices, to develop a comprehensive knowledge of the research objectives. The study population and sample groups are divided into two main categories: a) nine Buddhist meditation masters and scholars; and b) 15 PhD students in the Buddhist studies program at IBSC. The essential research tools employed in this work by two in-depth interviews with interview question papers, a mobile voice recorder and other related technological devices in data collection and analysis.

For the research data collection, primary sources from Pali Canon (*Tipiṭaka*), Commentaries (*atthakathā*), Sub-commentaries (*tīkās*), Sub-Sub-commentaries (*anutīkās*), The secondary sources are explored by the usage of Buddhist textbooks, research works, and articles. For the modern psychology sources, the data was collected from WHO, NIH, diagnostic manuals, and contemporary psychological textbooks. Moreover, to answer the research objectives, the data was collected from in-depth interviews with nine key informants who are Buddhist meditation masters and scholars and 15 PhD students in the Buddhist Studies Program at IBSC.

In data analysis, according to the deductive analysis approach, the collected data, both primary and secondary sources was analyzed by making sorts in the same categories, or types. Due to the Inductive data analysis approach, the data was explained for the promotion of sympathetic joy practice. On the other hand, after collecting the answers from in-depth interviews with nine key informants who were meditation masters and Buddhist scholars, the data was analyzed by making a sort or synthesis based on a deductive analysis approach. Unrelated comments and answers from the interviewees were removed and the analysis focused on only the relevant answers of sympathetic joy meditation.

## Research Results

**Objective 1:** To study sympathetic joy (*muditā*) meditation in Theravada Buddhism and modern psychology as an effective way of promotion. The concept of sympathetic joy, or *muditā*, is a Buddhist meditation technique to promote genuine happiness for others'

achievements and well-being. In etymological analysis, the word "*muditā*," which can be divided into two words, "*muda*" (joyful) + "*tā*" (practice), in combination means joyful practice or the practice of sympathetic joy (Rhys Davids & Stede, 1925). This practice counters jealousy, possessiveness, and self-centeredness, replacing them with feelings of satisfaction and emotional growth. By nurturing sympathetic joy, individuals develop mental well-being and strengthen social bonds, contributing to a more harmonious community (Muller, 1979).

Sympathetic joy reduces psychological problems such as jealousy, dissatisfaction, and pessimism. The practice encourages satisfaction in others' successes, alleviating feelings of scarcity and competition. Notably, it has therapeutic potential for conditions like autism, as it promotes positive emotional states and mental resilience (Morris, 1976).

Sympathetic joy is an effective Buddhist teaching and signifies "the practice of joy." As one of the four *brahmavihāras*, it is aligned with compassion, loving-kindness, and equanimity, aiming to promote a universal, unbiased joy for all beings (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1993). Practising sympathetic joy allows individuals to cultivate a soft-hearted and non-competitive outlook, which is very important for psychological maturity. This positive psychological impact is vital for leading a joyful life (Mahatthanadull, 2019).

According to the *Visuddhimagga*, sympathetic joy, sympathetic joy begins with focusing on the joy of a respected individual and gradually extends universally. Advanced practices such as promoting unconditional joy, overcoming biases and embracing all beings. Practitioners affirm positive phrases to build joy that transcends personal connections (Rhys Davids, 1975).

Sympathetic joy also is supported by positive mental factors such as mindfulness, non-attachment, and compassion, which aid emotional flexibility. In contrast, jealousy, conceit, and avariciousness obstruct sympathetic joy, as they hinder both personal joy and social harmony. By replacing these emotions with sympathetic joy, individuals experience inner peace and improved interpersonal relationships (Taylor, 1979).

Sympathetic joy is concerned with modern psychological principles of mindfulness, social connection, and emotional regulation, which can benefit individuals facing PTSD, autism, and other conditions by developing adaptability, joyfulness, and a supportive mindset (National Institute of Mental Health, 2024). WHO recommendations for mental health include

the qualities of compassion and non-harmful behaviours promoted by sympathetic joy (WHO, 2023).

To practice sympathetic joy, one should cultivate positive emotions through "wise attention" (*Yonisomansikāra*) and maintain the right speech, actions, and livelihood. This approach shifts focus from jealousy to self-achievement, fostering a joyful, content life. Practitioners are encouraged to celebrate daily successes and personal growth, leading to resilience and fulfilment (Muller, 1979).

Additionally, sympathetic joy promotes mental and social well-being by cultivating sympathetic joy, reducing negative emotions, and cultivating a balanced, harmonious life (Barcaccia et al., 2019). Through sympathetic joy, individuals find satisfaction and resilience, aligning with the Buddhist ideal of *santutthi*, or contentment as life's greatest wealth (Hardy, 1961).

In the In-Depth Interview of this objective, Buddhist scholars and meditation masters responded that *muditā bhāvanā*, or the practice of sympathetic joy, is a Buddhist meditation that promotes emotional well-being by cultivating joy in the success and happiness of others, countering emotions like jealousy and dissatisfaction. They also said that this practice helps reduce self-centred comparisons, dissolving envy and attachment to external achievements. By celebrating others' happiness, individuals shift away from rivalry and develop a mindset rooted in shared joy and positive relationships. The Abhidhamma teachings identify jealousy, conceit, and avarice as obstacles to mental and social health, which *muditā bhāvanā* weakens, fostering resilience, compassion, and emotional generosity.

This practice also aligns with psychological insights, as it encourages emotional regulation and stability, benefiting conditions like PTSD, autism, and insomnia. PhD students in Buddhist studies suggest that understanding concepts such as *kamma* (cause and effect) aids in managing jealousy by clarifying that others' successes result from past actions rather than any measure of personal worth. Regular *muditā* practice fosters a mindset of genuine joy for others, which not only reduces personal dissatisfaction but strengthens social bonds and promotes communal harmony. This transformation from competitive tendencies to empathy and support highlights *muditā bhāvanā*'s role in personal and collective well-being, nurturing a deep joy independent of personal gain.

**Table 1:** Result of First Objective

Concepts	Result	Accordance
General concepts	General sense, Sympathetic joy is a Buddhist meditation technique for joyful life and to reduce negative emotion such as: jealousy, envy and negative judgment.	Abhidh-s & Vism
Etymology of Sympathetic Joy	Etymological sense, it is derived from "muda" meaning joy, and "tā" referring to practice, in combination means "joyful practice in others' wealth, success and prosperity."	Pali-English dictionary
The Function of Sympathetic Joy	The function of sympathetic joy is to liberate individuals from mental defilements ( <i>cetovimutti</i> ), such as attachment, aversion, delusion, jealousy, and envy. And to gain five levels of jhana, Brahma world, finally, to achieve the third level of enlightenment- non-returner, <i>anāgāmi</i> (supramundane Level).	Abhidh-s
Accompanied Mental States and Opposite Mental States	Accompanied: 25 beautiful mental states (positive emotional factors) as the below diagram.  Opposite: 14 (unwholesome mental states (negative emotional factors) as the below diagram	Abhidh-s
Related Modern Psychological Factors	The Related Modern Psychological Factors: (1) Protection from conceit, (2) Avoidance of harshness, (3) Overcoming grudges, (4) The intention to alleviate others' suffering, (5) Passion for helping others, (6) non-harmfulness, and (7) Helpfulness towards others. (for psychological well-being as well as for the treatment of insomnia, autism, and PTSD)	WHO and NIH

**Objective 2:** To investigate the sympathetic joy (*muditā*) practice of PhD Buddhist studies program students at IBSC, MCU. The second objective focused on studying four components of sympathetic joy which are important to practice in daily life. The practice of sympathetic joy has four core components, which effectively encourage to be sympathetically joyed in others' prosperity and success to cultivate positive mental states and reduce jealousy (Muller, 1979). The first component, "happy acquiescence," encourages genuine happiness in others' achievements, seeing them as results of individual actions and karmic influences. This

approach aligns with the Buddhist belief that celebrating others' well-being prevents negative emotions like jealousy, envy, and dissatisfaction (Daw Mya Tin, 1986). The second component, "embracing prosperous beings," emphasizes extending sympathetic joy toward those who are successful, similar to other sublime states such as loving-kindness and equanimity. By actively recognizing and celebrating the successes of others, practitioners promote social harmony and encourage a mindset free from rivalry (Rhys Davids, 1978).

The third component, "elimination of dislike," seeks to remove feelings of unhappiness and jealousy, both for oneself and others. It calls for reflection on personal achievements to cultivate satisfaction and reduce feelings of inferiority or envy (Taylor, 1979). *Muditā* practice is seen as a countermeasure to ego-driven jealousy, promoting a balanced perspective on wealth, status, and success by understanding them as results of karma (Chalmers, 1977). Finally, the fourth component, a "congratulatory attitude," improves genuine positivity and respect for others' progress. This attitude supports one's focus away from comparisons and cultivates a habit of sincere appreciation, reinforcing a positive social environment (Rhys Davids & Carpenter, 1966).

Together, these four components provide a holistic approach to nurturing sympathetic joy, offering practical ways to reduce jealousy and create deeper connections. By aligning personal happiness with the success of others, practitioners can strengthen their mental well-being, contribute to a supportive community, and pursue personal growth free from destructive competition.

In the in-depth interview of Objective 2, on practising sympathetic joy (*muditā*) in daily life, the Buddhist meditation masters and scholars emphasized four core aspects: rejoicing in others' success, embracing successful individuals without jealousy, reducing envy, and cultivating a genuine congratulatory attitude. By consciously celebrating others' achievements and replacing comparison with appreciation, practitioners can improve positive internal and external transformations. Practical daily applications include recognizing others' success, expressing sincere compliments, and engaging in mindfulness to combat envy. These practices not only enhance personal well-being and relationships but also contribute to a compassionate society, counteracting negative emotions like jealousy and hatred, which mostly have fuelled discord.

**Table 2:** Result of Second Objective

Component	Result to practice	Accordance
1. Character of happy acquiescence	Feel happy in others' wealth prosperity, success etc.	DhsA
2. Embraces of prosperous beings	Acknowledge those who are prosperous. Celebrate the success of others, and make the recognition of others' prosperity.	DhsA
3. Elimination of dislike	remove feelings of dislike, and negative emotions such as jealousy, envy, negative judgment and so on.	DhsA
4. Congratulatory attitude of a person	Express a congratulatory attitude, encourage and appreciate the achievements and prosperities of others.	DhsA

**Objective 3:** To investigate the sympathetic joy (*muditā*) practice of PhD Buddhist studies program students at IBSC, MCU. The third objective was to study the types of sympathetic joy meditation techniques. There are three types of sympathetic joy meditation: unlimited, limited, and directional as described in the *paṭisambhidāmagga* text (Taylor, 1979). Unlimited sympathetic joy meditation promotes goodwill toward all beings, using categories like creatures and individuals as focal points to cultivate boundless joy, which is also known as unlimited sympathetic joy (Narada Maha Thera, 1979). Limited meditation targets specific groups (e.g., women, men, deities), allowing a focused appreciation of their well-being. Directional meditation extends joy to beings in all ten spatial directions, covering categories from creatures to noble beings. The benefits of practising these techniques include higher meditation states, potential enlightenment, and positive emotional changes, such as reduced envy and increased adaptability in daily life (Feer, 1989).

In the in-depth interview of the third Objective, the informants responded that these three techniques individually promote sympathetic joy in others' success. Unlimited meditation encourages boundless goodwill, Limited meditation focuses on specific individuals, and Directional meditation radiates joy universally. Practitioners progress through these techniques, learning to overcome envy and broaden their compassion. According to the

Visuddhimagga, this practice promotes inner peace and reduces biases. Buddhist scholars emphasize that sympathetic joy transforms personal happiness into a shared experience, nurturing community bonds, gratitude, and friendliness while diminishing jealousy and resentment.

**Table 3:** Result of Third Objective

Types:	Method to Practice	Pāli
1. Unlimited Sympathetic Joy Meditation	To all beings: All creatures, all breathing creatures, all beings, all persons, all individuals who own their actions, may they not lose whatever prosperity they have gained.	<i>sabbe sattā, sabbe pāṇā,</i> <i>sabbe bhūtā, sabbe puggalā,</i> <i>Sabbe attabhāvapariyāpannā</i> <i>yathāladdhasampattito mā</i> <i>vigacchantu kammassakā.</i>
2. Limited Sympathetic Joy Meditation	Specific beings: all women, all men, all the noble, all the ignoble, all gods, all human beings, all who have fallen (into the lower worlds) own their actions; may they not lose whatever prosperity they have gained.	<i>Sabbā itthiyo, sabbe purisā,</i> <i>Sabbe ariyā, sabbe anariyā,</i> <i>Sabbe devā, sabbe manussā,</i> <i>sabbevinipātikā</i> <i>yathāladdhasampattito mā</i> <i>vigacchantu kammassakā</i>
3. Directional Sympathetic Joy Meditation	Spread <i>muditā</i> to 10 directional beings: east, south, west, north, south-east, south-west, north-west, north-east, up, and down.	<i>Puratthimāya disāya,</i> <i>pacchimāya disāya' uttarāya</i> <i>disāya etc.</i>

## Discussion

The findings of Research Objective 1 robustly indicate that the cultivation of sympathetic joy (*muditā*) significantly ameliorates psychological distress, particularly in the reduction of jealousy, dissatisfaction, and pessimism. This practice fosters a profound appreciation for others' successes, thereby mitigating feelings of scarcity and competition while simultaneously enhancing overall mental resilience. As delineated in the Visuddhimagga, the practice of *muditā* commences with a focused cultivation of joy towards a respected

individual, progressively extending this sentiment universally. Advanced practitioners achieve a state of unconditional joy, transcending personal biases and embracing all beings with equanimity. This practice is further reinforced through the employment of affirmations, which cultivate an enduring sense of joy that surpasses personal affiliations.

Empirical research corroborates that muditā is potentiated by positive mental factors such as mindfulness, non-attachment, and compassion, which collectively contribute to enhanced emotional flexibility. Conversely, obstructive emotions, including jealousy, conceit, and avarice, impede the cultivation of muditā, thereby hindering personal well-being and social harmony. By systematically replacing these negative affective states with muditā, individuals can attain profound inner peace and cultivate improved interpersonal relationships. This practice aligns with contemporary psychological principles relating to mindfulness, social connectedness, and emotional regulation, offering potential therapeutic benefits for conditions such as PTSD, autism spectrum disorder, and depression. Mirchandaney et al. (2024) underscore the importance of compassion and non-harming behaviours in mental health care, thereby reinforcing the significance of muditā as a viable psychological intervention.

In the context of Buddhist psychological research, Bhikkhuni Do Le Anh Thi et al. (2022), emphasized the pivotal role of wise attention (yoniso manasikara) in shaping a meaningful and virtuous life. She posited that the cultivation of wise attention is crucial for individuals experiencing mental health challenges, as it facilitates self-reconciliation and mindfulness, ultimately leading to enhanced well-being. Similarly, Neff (2022) examined self-compassion within a bipolar continuum, demonstrating how compassionate self-responding (CS) contributes to mental stability while counteracting self-critical tendencies. These studies collectively suggest that the cultivation of muditā can effectively alleviate psychological distress and promote emotional resilience by fostering an adaptive and supportive cognitive framework.

The findings associated with Research Objective 2 elucidated four key components of muditā that enhance its practical applicability in daily life. The first component, "happy acquiescence," encourages individuals to derive genuine pleasure from others' achievements, acknowledging them as outcomes of karmic influences and individual effort. This perspective aligns with Buddhist teachings that advocate rejoicing in others' success to counteract envy

and dissatisfaction. The second component, "embracing prosperous beings," advocates extending muditā towards those who have attained prosperity, mirroring the principles of mettā (loving-kindness) and upekkhā (equanimity). The third component, "elimination of dislike," involves transcending jealousy through introspective reflection on one's own accomplishments and the cultivation of gratitude, thereby mitigating feelings of inferiority or envy. The fourth component, "congratulatory attitude," fosters a sincere appreciation for others' progress, promoting a positive and supportive social milieu.

A study conducted by Wattanaseth (2016) examined the effects of meditation on brain structure and emotional well-being, demonstrating that meditative practices contribute to increased cortical thickness and neural plasticity, which are associated with enhanced emotional regulation and well-being. These findings support the proposition that the practice of muditā can yield significant psychological benefits by reinforcing positive neural pathways and attenuating negative emotional patterns.

The results of research objective 3 further demonstrated that muditā meditation is most efficacious when practised through a structured, four-tiered approach. The initial tier emphasizes the cultivation of wise attention and the establishment of a foundation for successful meditation practice. The second tier involves the refinement of 19 sobhana cetasikas (wholesome mental factors), reinforcing joyful mental states. The third tier integrates sīla (ethical discipline) through sammā vācā (right speech), sammā kammanta (right action), and sammā ājīva (right livelihood), ensuring that practitioners embody their meditative insights in daily interactions. Finally, the fourth tier enables advanced practitioners to fully immerse themselves in muditā, cultivating an enduring sense of joy for others' success and growth.

Doty (2012) at Stanford University conducted a pilot study on the psychological and physiological effects of compassion, developing the Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) program. This eight-week program integrates contemplative practices, contemporary psychological principles, and empirical research to promote emotional regulation and prosocial behaviors. The CCT framework aligns closely with the structured approach to muditā meditation, reinforcing the notion that the systematic cultivation of positive mental states can yield substantial psychological and social benefits.

In summation, the research findings underscore the transformative potential of muditā in alleviating psychological distress, fostering positive emotional states, and enhancing

interpersonal relationships. By integrating structured meditative practices with contemporary psychological insights, muditā emerges as a valuable tool for promoting mental well-being and social harmony within both Buddhist and modern psychological paradigms.

### **Knowledge from Research**

The research emerges valuable knowledge for sympathetic joy practitioners to practice sympathetic joy meditation systematically. This research knowledge is the proposing of new promoting way of sympathetic Joy technique, which introduces a four-level framework to make sympathetic joy meditation more effective, fruitful, and convenient for practice. The first level encourages practitioners to set a positive intention, cultivating benevolence as a foundational mindset. In the second level, practitioners are guided to develop 19 positive emotional factors, such as mindfulness, equanimity, and mental tranquillity, to counteract negative emotions like jealousy or hatred, following the Sun and Moon Theory. This theory posits that positive and negative emotions cannot coexist, allowing practitioners to replace negative states with positive ones, which are necessary for sympathetic joy meditation.

The third level, called the “Maturement Step,” focuses on cultivating the right speech, action, and livelihood, enabling practitioners to engage more meaningfully with sympathetic joy meditation. Finally, in the fourth level, mature practitioners can fully immerse themselves in sympathetic joy by expressing genuine happiness for others' successes, even for those they may dislike. The practice's effectiveness can be self-assessed by observing one's emotional response toward others' achievements: true sympathetic joy is free from jealousy or discomfort. Long-term benefits of the successful practice include higher meditative states, the potential to attain the Brahma realm, and achieving spiritual liberation from defilements at an advanced level or to achieve the third level of enlightenment called non-returner, *anāgāmi* (supramundane Level).

### **Conclusion**

This research has articulated a structured, four-stage model for the cultivation of muditā within the framework of Buddhist psychology, specifically tailored for PhD students at IBSC, MCU. The initial stage emphasizes the establishment of *sammā saṅkappa* (right intention), fostering benevolence as a foundational cognitive disposition. Subsequently, the second stage necessitates the deliberate refinement of 19 *sobhana cetasikas* (wholesome mental factors),

crucial for mitigating detrimental mental states such as jealousy, conceit, and restlessness. Proficiency in this stage is paramount, as it addresses the potential for intrusive negative emotions that can impede muditā practice, aligning with the Sun and Moon Theory's principle of positive states displacing negative ones.

The third stage, designated as the "Maturement Phase," underscores the indispensable role of sīla (ethical discipline) through sammā vācā (right speech), sammā kammanta (right action), and sammā ājīva (right livelihood). These ethical prerequisites ensure a stable moral foundation, without which practitioners remain ill-equipped for sustained engagement in muditā. This study validates the Maturement Phase as essential for the enduring practice of muditā, enabling practitioners to seamlessly integrate it with karuṇā (compassion), forming two of the four appamaññā (immeasurable virtues).

The culminating stage facilitates the full embodiment of muditā, enabling practitioners to rejoice in the successes of others without bias or resentment, even towards adversaries. The effectiveness of this stage is self-assessed through introspective analysis of emotional responses to others' achievements. This research demonstrates that consistent muditā practice yields significant spiritual and psychological benefits, including the attainment of advanced jhāna (meditative states), the potential for rebirth in the Brahmā realm, and progression towards anāgāmi (non-returner), the third stage of enlightenment. By implementing this structured framework, Buddhist psychology can effectively guide the cultivation of muditā, fostering enhanced mental well-being and profound spiritual development among Buddhist scholars and practitioners. This model offers a systematic approach to cultivating muditā, thereby contributing to the broader understanding and practical application of Buddhist psychological principles in contemporary academic and spiritual contexts.

## Suggestions

This research findings underscore the potential of muditā as both a transformative spiritual practice and a practical tool for cultivating joy and mitigating negative emotions such as jealousy. Consequently, this area presents a fertile ground for further investigation. Potential avenues for future research include exploring the nuanced role of muditā in the attainment of the Brahmā realm and its intricate connection to the progression towards anāgāmi, the third

stage of enlightenment. Further studies could delve into the synergistic relationship between muditā and the brahmavihāras, as well as its adaptability to the complexities of contemporary life. Moreover, analytical exploration of muditā as an appamaññā (illimitable mental state) could significantly deepen our understanding of its profound significance in both spiritual and psychological domains. Additionally, longitudinal studies examining the long-term effects of muditā practice on psychological well-being and spiritual development would be highly beneficial. Comparative studies across different cultural and religious contexts could also provide valuable insights into the universality and cultural specificity of muditā practice.

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