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Objectives:

The journal aims to support and publish research and academic articles that focus on Buddhism, Religious Studies, and other related fields, or that explore the application of Buddhist principles in disciplines such as economics, social administration, environmental studies, and education. The target audience for JIBSC includes scholars, researchers, and practitioners in Buddhist Studies, as well as related disciplines, and those interested in the interdisciplinary applications of Buddhist principles in various sectors, such as economics, social administration, environmental studies, and education.

Owner:

International Buddhist Studies College.

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University IABU room, 3rd floor,
PhraBhambundit Building, 79 M.1, Phahon Yothin Road, Lam Sai, Wang
Noi, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, 13170, Thailand.

e-mail: ibscjournal@gmail.com

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Executive Editor:

Ven. Dr. Phrakhrusamu Vachiravich Thitavangso

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

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Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

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Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

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Le Manh That,	<i>Vietnam Buddhist University, Vietnam</i> Email: dhpgvn@vbu.edu.vn

Editorial Assistants:

Ven. Phramaha Siriwat Panyawuttho,
International Buddhist Studies College, MCU

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Editor's Note

The Journal of International Buddhist Studies College, Vol. 11 No.3 (September-December 2025), presents a diverse and insightful collection of scholarly works that reflect the dynamic integration of Buddhist teachings with contemporary social, psychological, and educational contexts. This issue brings together contributions from international scholars and practitioners, emphasizing both theoretical exploration and practical application.

A central theme across many articles in this volume is the role of mindfulness, wisdom, and virtue in enhancing human well-being. Several studies examine the application of mindfulness-based approaches to promote mental health, happiness, and emotional resilience, particularly among working individuals and couples. These contributions highlight the relevance of Buddhist principles in addressing modern psychological challenges.

In addition, this issue includes analytical and conceptual studies that deepen our understanding of Buddhist texts and doctrines. Notably, research on canonical sources, metaphorical teachings in Buddhist scriptures, and the relationship between Gross National Happiness and Buddhist peaceful means provides valuable interdisciplinary perspectives.

The journal also emphasizes educational innovation and social development. Articles on learning management models, mental immunity, and quality of life development demonstrate how Buddhist philosophy can be effectively integrated into higher education and community practices. Furthermore, discussions on volunteerism and cultural approaches to tourism reflect the broader societal impact of Buddhist values.

The editorial team extends its sincere appreciation to all contributors, reviewers, and readers who continue to support the advancement of Buddhist studies at an international level. It is our hope that this issue will inspire further research, dialogue, and practical application of Buddhist teachings for the benefit of individuals and society.

Ven. Phramaha Nantakorn Piyabhani

Chief- Editor

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Mindfulness, Wisdom, and Virtue: A Documentary Analysis of Canonical and Contemporary Sources

*Ven. Phra Medhivajarapundit (Hansa Dhammhaso)¹,
Ven. Phramaha Nantakorn Piyabhani²,
Ven. Phramaha Weerasak Abhinandavedi³,
Sanu Mahatthanadull⁴, Mae Chee Narumon Jiwattanasuk⁵,
Konit Srithong⁶ Mae Chee Supaporn Tongsupachok⁷*

International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University¹²³⁴⁵

Faculty of Social Sciences, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University⁶

Buddhamahametta Foundation⁷

Corresponding author email: tuktta44@gmail.com

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Abstract

This documentary study examines the conceptual foundations and applied relevance of mindfulness (sati), wisdom (paññā), and virtue (sīla) by synthesizing canonical Theravāda sources with contemporary scholarly literature. First, it undertakes a systematic textual analysis of foundational discourses, including the Satipaṭṭhāna and Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Suttas, Abhidhamma treatises, and the Sigālovāda Sutta, to reconstruct each principle's doctrinal architecture and ethical rationale. Second, it develops an integrative theoretical framework that maps canonical formulations of mindfulness, wisdom, and virtue onto modern psychological, educational, and therapeutic models, explicating pathways for methodological adaptation in contemporary settings.

Mindfulness is reframed beyond narrow attentional techniques as an ethically inflected cognitive discipline that cultivates sustained awareness, perceptual clarity, and liberative insight through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Wisdom is conceptualized as a multifaceted faculty comprising analytical discernment, reflective judgment, and existential realization; canonical accounts of paññā are aligned with contemporary models of cognitive–ethical development. Virtue is presented as the behavioral synthesis of mindfulness and wisdom, organized into six applied domains: personal, social, economic, civic, environmental, and spiritual, derived from canonical norms and cross-referenced with modern virtue ethics.

The resultant framework posits that mindfulness, wisdom, and virtue operate as an integrated system conducive to individual transformation and social flourishing. Practical implications are delineated for value-based curricula,

leadership development, and mindfulness-informed interventions in both secular and religious contexts. The study concludes by advocating further interdisciplinary research to refine assessment instruments, adapt training protocols, and empirically evaluate the model's effectiveness across diverse applied environments.

Keywords: Mindfulness; Wisdom; Virtue Ethics; Canonical Texts; Contemporary Psychology

Acknowledgement

This article is part of the research work in the title of “*The Development of Mindfulness, Wisdom, and Virtue Indicators according to Buddhist-based Principles.*”

Introduction

In an era defined by rapid technological change, political volatility, and ecological uncertainty, cultivating inner resources that support ethical discernment and resilient agency has become an urgent priority for both individuals and institutions. Within the Theravāda Buddhist tradition, mindfulness (*sati*), wisdom (*paññā*), and virtue (*sīla* or *guṇa-dhamma*) are repeatedly framed as interdependent capacities that together underpin personal flourishing and social harmony. This documentary research explores the canonical and contemporary interpretations of these core values, focusing on how they are conceptualized, practiced, and interconnected within the Buddhist framework, particularly as found in the Pāli Canon, commentarial texts, and selected academic discourses.

Mindfulness (*sati*), often defined as moment-to-moment awareness, is more than a cognitive skill; it is a spiritual faculty vital for insight and ethical living. In canonical texts such as the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, mindfulness is positioned as a methodical cultivation of awareness that penetrates bodily, emotional, and mental states to lead toward liberation (M I 55; D II 290). Contemporary scholars such as Gethin (2001) emphasize that mindfulness in its Buddhist context differs from secular definitions by its connection to ethical purification and ultimate liberation. Likewise, wisdom (*paññā*) in Buddhism is not merely intellectual acumen but refers to a profound understanding of reality that arises through direct experience, critical reflection, and ethical discernment. It enables practitioners to discern

causes and conditions, right and wrong, and to act accordingly with compassion and clarity. Classical interpretations link *paññā* to the culmination of the Threefold Training (*tisikkhā*), morality, concentration, and wisdom, where it arises after the mind has been stabilized and purified through ethical conduct and meditation (D.III.220; A.I.229).

Virtue (*sīla* or *guṇa-dhamma*), the moral dimension of Buddhist practice, encompasses behaviors such as honesty, responsibility, gratitude, and altruism. Canonical sources such as the *Sigālovāda Sutta* and the *Cūlakammavibhaṅga Sutta* offer practical frameworks for virtuous living in familial, communal, and societal contexts (D III.180; M III.202). These moral values function both as religious prescriptions and as psychological resources that promote resilience, interpersonal trust, and sustained well-being. Empirical research corroborates this synthesis: experimental work indicates that intentionally cultivating virtues such as gratitude produces measurable increases in subjective well-being and improves social functioning (Emmons & McCullough, 2003).

This documentary analysis deploys close textual exegesis of key Pāli sources (Tipiṭaka, Atthakathā, and Tīkā), together with critical engagement with secondary literature in religious studies, philosophy, psychology, and educational policy. The study explicitly eschews empirical fieldwork in favor of a comprehensive, methodical re-reading of texts and policy materials, most notably, contemporary value-education frameworks, to generate a theoretically coherent model that preserves doctrinal fidelity while remaining amenable to contemporary application. By situating canonical formulations alongside findings from psychology, the analysis highlights points of convergence and divergence that are salient for translational work in education, clinical practice, and leadership development.

The contribution of this research is twofold. Theoretically, it reconstructs the triadic relation of *sati*–*paññā*–*sīla* as a system of mutually reinforcing cognitive, ethical, and behavioral capacities, thereby providing a robust conceptual platform for interdisciplinary inquiry. Practically, it offers initial pathways for integrating classical Buddhist insights into value-based curricula, mindfulness interventions, and organizational ethics, while emphasizing the need for cultural sensitivity and doctrinal integrity in translational efforts. The remainder of the article proceeds as follows: a review of relevant literature and hermeneutical issues; a systematic textual analysis of

canonical sources; synthesis with contemporary theoretical and empirical work; and a concluding discussion that outlines implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

Research objectives

Objective 1. To examine and articulate the conceptual foundations of mindfulness, wisdom, and virtue through a systematic analysis of canonical Buddhist texts.

Objective 2. To develop a comprehensive theoretical framework that synthesizes canonical Buddhist formulations with contemporary scholarly interpretations of mindfulness, wisdom, and virtue, demonstrating their practical applicability and methodological adaptation for modern psychological, educational, and therapeutic contexts.

Literature review

The scholarly literature on mindfulness (*sati*), wisdom (*paññā*), and virtue (*sīla*) reveals a sustained, interdisciplinary engagement that bridges classical Buddhist exegesis and contemporary empirical inquiry. Two analytic strands characterize this corpus: close philological and doctrinal work that clarifies canonical meanings and internal relations among these capacities, and empirical–theoretical research that seeks to adapt, operationalize, and evaluate them in modern psychological, educational, and clinical contexts.

Canonical sources situate *sati*, *paññā*, and *sīla* within an integrated soteriological matrix. The *Satipaṭṭhāna* discourses (e.g., MN 10) present mindfulness as a methodical attentional discipline oriented toward insight into body, feeling, mind, and dhammas, with liberation as its telos (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2011). *Abhidhamma* treatments and commentarial exegesis further elaborate *paññā* as a discriminative and liberative cognitive factor—one that presupposes ethical comportment (*sīla*) and meditative stability (*samādhi*) for its maturation (Gethin, 1998). Classical syntheses (e.g., *Visuddhimagga* analyses; Rahula, 1974) emphasize the mutual conditioning of these elements, often instantiated within the Noble Eightfold Path, thereby underscoring their functional interdependence.

Contemporary scholarship has pursued two broad projects: (a) secular translation and empiricization of practices, most notably through mindfulness-based programs (e.g., Kabat-Zinn, 1994), and (b) conceptual work on wisdom

and virtue that seeks correspondence with psychological constructs (e.g., Baltes & Smith, 2008; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Systematic reviews document efficacy of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and related interventions for diverse clinical outcomes (Goyal et al., 2014; Khoury et al., 2013), but critics caution that secular formulations frequently attenuate canonical ethical and soteriological dimensions (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011; McMahan, 2012). Measurement and operationalization remain persistent methodological hurdles: scholars note difficulties in capturing the depth and normative content of *paññā* and *sīla* within standard psychometric paradigms (Grossman & Van Dam, 2011; Keown, 2016).

Integrative theoretical efforts, such as contemplative science, neurophenomenology, and integral psychology, offer promising templates for rapprochement between first-person phenomenology and third-person empirical methods (Gover, 1996; Wilber, 2000). These approaches enable investigation of practice-dependent neural and cognitive correlates while preserving attention to subjective meaning and doctrinal context. Concurrently, debates about cultural translation and ethical fidelity (Lopez, 2002) highlight the need for contextualized, dialogical models that respect lineage knowledge and avoid simplistic secular extraction.

Emerging research priorities include development of culturally sensitive, psychometrically robust measures that more faithfully index canonical constructs; longitudinal and mechanism-focused trials that test tripartite interventions targeting attention, moral cognition, and behavior; and mixed-methods program evaluations in educational and organizational settings. Across these domains, the literature converges on a central claim: mindfulness, wisdom, and virtue are most effectively understood and applied as an integrated system. Future scholarship will benefit from sustained collaboration among philologists, contemplative practitioners, and empirical scientists to produce translational work that is both methodologically rigorous and doctrinally literate.

Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework aligns the two research objectives with the qualitative documentary-analysis methodology. It illustrates how canonical Buddhist sources (Objective 1) and contemporary academic literature (Objective 2) feed into a combined analytic process that yields an operational model for modern application.

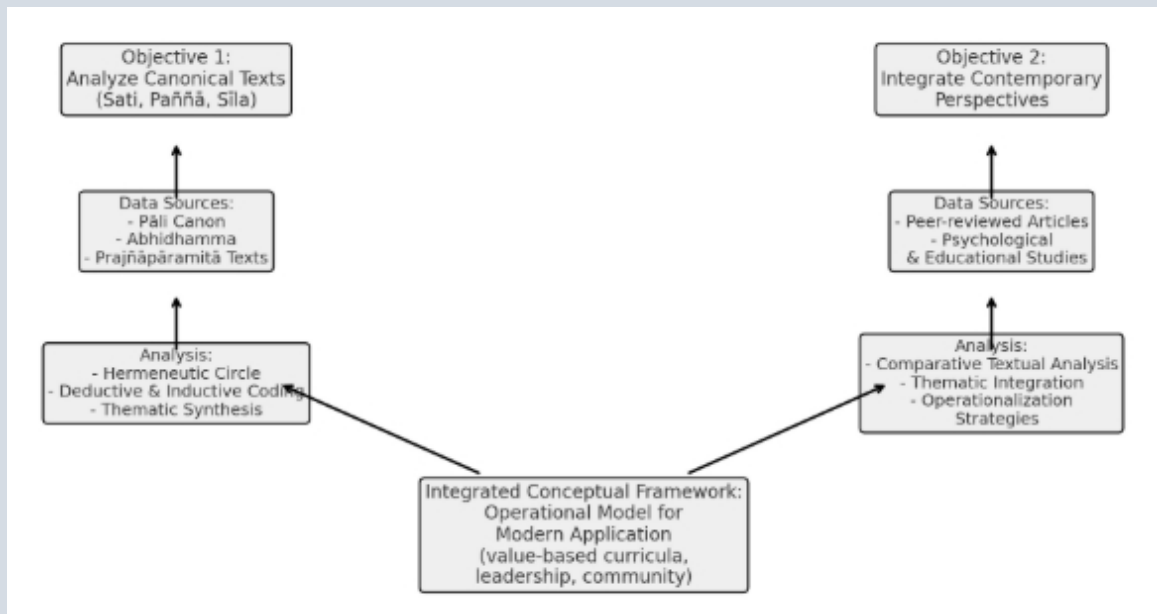


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative documentary analysis grounded in hermeneutic phenomenology, which emphasizes interpretive engagement with texts while acknowledging their historical and cultural horizons (Gadamer, 2013). By treating understanding as a dialogical process between the interpreter and the text, this approach allows for a careful analysis of Buddhist canonical sources alongside contemporary scholarship, preserving each source's original context and exploring its modern relevance.

Data Sources and Selection

- **Primary (Canonical) Texts:** Key sources include the Pāli Canon's Sutta Piṭaka (e.g., *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*) and selected Abhidhamma passages detailing mental factors (cetasikas). Inclusion criteria are: (1) explicit discussion of mindfulness (sati), wisdom (paññā), or virtue (sīla); (2) systematic treatment of these concepts within soteriological frameworks; (3) recognition as authoritative within Theravāda scholarship; and (4) availability in reliable scholarly translations. Relevant Mahāyāna works, particularly Prajñāpāramitā texts, are incorporated when they offer complementary perspectives on wisdom (prajñā).
- **Secondary (Contemporary) Sources:** Academic literature spans Buddhist studies, psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, and education (1979–present). Criteria for inclusion are: (1) peer-reviewed status; (2)

explicit engagement with Buddhist concepts of *sati*, *paññā*, or *sīla*; (3) methodological rigor (empirical or theoretical); (4) contribution to secular adaptations of these concepts; and (5) recognition as influential within their respective disciplines.

Analytical Framework

- **Hermeneutic Circle:** Analysis proceeds iteratively between parts and wholes—individual concepts and their broader doctrinal systems—allowing preliminary interpretations to be refined through sustained textual dialogue. The researcher begins with a “fore-understanding” of Buddhist concepts, remaining open to revision as deeper engagement with texts unfolds.
- **Thematic Synthesis:** Following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase approach, the study (1) familiarizes itself with texts through repeated readings; (2) generates initial codes capturing salient features of *sati*, *paññā*, and *sīla*; (3) clusters codes into themes; (4) reviews themes for coherence; (5) defines and names each theme; and (6) integrates findings into a comprehensive narrative. Deductive codes draw on established Buddhist taxonomies (e.g., Noble Eightfold Path, Four Foundations of Mindfulness), while inductive codes identify novel patterns emerging from the texts.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Parallels and divergences between canonical formulations and contemporary interpretations are systematically juxtaposed across four dimensions: definitional precision, relational complexity (interactions among concepts), practical application (translation into lived experience or intervention models), and soteriological function (contribution to human flourishing or liberation).

Validity, Reliability, and Ethics

- **Interpretive Validity:** Adopting Maxwell’s (1992) framework, the study maintains linguistic precision and contextual sensitivity, consulting multiple translations and engaging in peer debriefing with Buddhist scholars. Member checking with experienced practitioners ensures that interpretations resonate with lived practice.
- **Reliability:** Detailed analytical memos document coding decisions, reflexive observations, and alternative interpretations. The coding framework is periodically reviewed to ensure consistency and adaptability.

- **Ethical Considerations:** To mitigate cultural appropriation, the researcher acknowledges their positionality, consults Buddhist scholars from relevant backgrounds, and reflects critically on power dynamics inherent in cross-cultural interpretation (Said, 1978). Limitations, such as reliance on translations and selectivity of sources, are explicitly recognized.

Research results

Objective 1: Conceptual Foundations of Mindfulness, Wisdom, and Virtue in Canonical Buddhist Texts

Canonical Buddhist literature presents mindfulness (*sati*), wisdom (*paññā*), and virtue (*sīla*) as interdependent qualities fundamental to the path of liberation, each rooted in the Threefold Training (*tiśikkhā*). These qualities are not isolated virtues but dynamically interact as a holistic framework for ethical, meditative, and cognitive transformation.

Mindfulness is conceptualized in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (M I 55; D II 290) as more than moment-to-moment awareness. It is a disciplined recollective awareness that examines bodily sensations, emotional states, and mental phenomena with clarity and non-reactivity. Mindfulness acts as the regulating force of consciousness, keeping the practitioner grounded in the present moment while fostering insight into the impermanent and conditioned nature of experience.

Wisdom (*paññā*), according to canonical sources like *Dīgha Nikāya* and *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (D III.220; A I.229), emerges from a foundation of virtue and deep meditative concentration. It is the discerning faculty that enables practitioners to directly perceive dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), impermanence (*anicca*), non-self (*anattā*), and unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*). Importantly, wisdom is not merely intellectual but ethically charged, functioning as the transformative insight that aligns thought and behavior with the cessation of suffering.

Virtue (*sīla*) is portrayed as the behavioral manifestation of mindfulness and wisdom. The *Sigālovāda Sutta* (D III.180) articulates virtue through the lens of interpersonal responsibilities across six relational domains, underscoring the socially embedded and proactive nature of Buddhist ethics. Furthermore, in texts like the *Nibbedhika Sutta* (A III.415), moral action is rooted in intention (*cetanā*), linking ethical conduct directly to mental volition and conscious awareness.

Thus, the conceptual foundation from the canon reveals a tightly integrated framework in which sati sustains awareness, paññā provides discernment, and sīla actualizes ethical commitment. These faculties are mutually reinforcing and foundational to Buddhist soteriology.

Objective 2: Theoretical Framework Integrating Canonical and Contemporary Interpretations

This research synthesizes canonical doctrine with contemporary perspectives to develop a comprehensive framework that adapts traditional Buddhist virtues to modern psychological, educational, and therapeutic paradigms.

Modern secular mindfulness programs (e.g., Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction by Kabat-Zinn, 2003) have demonstrated significant efficacy in stress reduction and emotional regulation (Hölzel et al., 2011), but often isolate mindfulness from its ethical and soteriological roots. This research asserts that such applications, while useful, risk reducing mindfulness to a utilitarian technique unless anchored in ethical intention and reflective wisdom (Gethin, 2001).

By reintegrating mindfulness with its canonical formulation, particularly through the Four Foundations (satipaṭṭhāna) and its ethical dimensions, this framework restores its transformative potential. Mindfulness is conceptualized not merely as nonjudgmental awareness but as "wisdom in motion", fostering clarity, ethical discernment, and inner transformation (Payutto, 1994).

Similarly, wisdom is reframed beyond cognitive intelligence to include practical discernment, ethical insight, and existential awareness, aligning with contemporary ideas such as Gardner's intrapersonal intelligence (Gardner, 2011) and Jennings's contemplative education (Jennings, 2008). It emphasizes knowing as becoming, where knowledge leads to ethical transformation and compassionate engagement with the world.

Virtue, or guṇa-dhamma, is recontextualized within modern moral education and social development. Thailand's National Moral Promotion Action Plan (2023–2027) serves as an applied model that channels Buddhist virtues such as gratitude (kataññutā), integrity (sacca), and moral restraint into youth education and conflict prevention (Ministry of Culture, 2023). These virtues are presented not only as personal traits but as components of communal harmony and resilience in times of sociocultural disruption.

The interwoven structure of mindfulness illustrates how each domain fosters progressively deeper cognitive refinement and ethical maturity. This theoretical framework, grounded in canonical sources, offers a roadmap for inner transformation that is replicable and measurable in meditative practice. (Table 1)

Table.1: The Integrative Structure of Mindfulness (Sati) in Theravāda Buddhism

Domain of Contemplation	Cognitive Function	Ethical Consequence	Canonical Source
Body (<i>kāya</i>)	Anchors attention through breathing and posture awareness	Non-violence, moderation	<i>MI 56</i>
Feeling (<i>vedanā</i>)	Distinguishes between pleasant, unpleasant, neutral experiences	Detachment from craving	<i>MI 57</i>
Mind (<i>citta</i>)	Recognizes mental states (e.g., lustful, angry, distracted)	Purification of intention	<i>MI 58</i>
Mental Objects (<i>dhamma</i>)	Engages with hindrances, aggregates, truths, and factors of enlightenment	Insight into impermanence, suffering, and non-self	<i>MI 59</i>

Table 2: Functional Dimensions of Paññā (Wisdom) in Buddhist Thought

Axis of Wisdom	Description	Canonical Foundation	Practical Outcome
Analytical (<i>vibhajja</i>)	Discerns between wholesome and unwholesome, true and false	<i>Vibhanga Sutta</i> (M III 25)	Moral clarity, decision-making
Practical (<i>yoniso-manasikāra</i>)	Applies wise reflection to daily challenges and emotional states	<i>S.II.3, A.I.14</i>	Adaptability, emotional intelligence

Axis of Wisdom Description		Canonical Foundation	Practical Outcome
Liberative (<i>vipassanā</i>)	Sees the Three Marks: impermanence, suffering, and non-self	<i>Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, D.II.290</i>	Insight, non-attachment, cessation

From Table 2, the layered roles of wisdom indicate that true paññā is not static knowledge but a transformative force that integrates analysis, action, and awakening. These dimensions are not separate stages but interactive faculties that evolve together through sustained practice.

Buddhist virtue operates as an interlocking web of ethical responsibilities across life spheres, personal, relational, institutional, and ecological. These ethical attributes do not exist in isolation but function collectively to promote harmonious coexistence. (see Table 3)

Table 3: Buddhist virtue operates as an interlocking web of ethical

Virtue Domain	Core Ethical Values	Canonical Source	Societal Function
Family Ethics	Gratitude, Respect, Responsibility	<i>Sigālovāda Sutta</i> (D III.180)	Intergenerational support
Social Conduct	Honesty, Generosity, Tolerance	<i>Dhammapada, Aṅguttara Nikāya</i>	Trust-building, altruism
Economic Ethics	Sufficiency, Right Livelihood	<i>Samaññaphala Sutta</i> (D I.62)	Fair trade, sustainable living
Civic Responsibility	Integrity, Lawfulness, Volunteering	<i>Cūḷakammavibhaṅga Sutta</i> (M III.202)	Citizenship, collective cooperation
Ecological Virtue	Non-harm, Moderation	<i>Suttanipāta, Khuddakapāṭha</i>	Environmental mindfulness
Spiritual Discipline	Observance, Contemplation, Restraint	<i>Vinaya Piṭaka, Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta</i>	Self-regulation and mental purity

In conclusion, the integrated theoretical model constructed through this research positions mindfulness, wisdom, and virtue as methodologically adaptable, ethically grounded, and existentially transformative. When correctly contextualized, these canonical principles can inform and enhance contemporary practices in psychology, education, and social development, without losing their liberative essence.

Discussion

The exploration of canonical Buddhist texts and the synthesis with contemporary interpretations reveal the enduring relevance of mindfulness (*sati*), wisdom (*paññā*), and virtue (*sīla*) in both traditional and modern contexts. This study highlights not only the conceptual coherence of these qualities in early Buddhism but also their adaptability to modern psychological, educational, and ethical frameworks.

From the analysis of key texts such as the *Satipatṭhāna Sutta* and the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, it becomes evident that mindfulness in early Buddhism is far more than mere present-moment awareness. It is intricately linked with ethical and cognitive transformation (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000). Unlike modern interpretations that often emphasize mindfulness as a secular attention-regulation technique (Kabat-Zinn, 2003), the canonical framework portrays *sati* as the continuous recollection of wholesome qualities that leads to the cessation of suffering (Gethin, 2001). This deepens the understanding of mindfulness as an ethically infused practice, reinforcing the view that mindfulness should not be detached from its moral and spiritual foundations (Grossman & Van Dam, 2011).

Wisdom (*paññā*), similarly, is shown to be more than intellectual understanding; it is the direct insight into the nature of reality—characterized by impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). This aligns with the traditional Buddhist emphasis on experiential knowledge rooted in meditation and ethical conduct (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1995). Contemporary scholarship supports the integration of this wisdom framework into education and therapy, suggesting that developing discernment and ethical awareness contributes to emotional resilience and moral maturity (Monteiro, Musten, & Compson, 2015).

The virtue component (*sīla*), particularly as discussed in the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, remains highly applicable to modern moral education and character development. Buddhist ethics emphasize intentionality (*cetanā*) as the core of moral action, which aligns with cognitive-behavioral understandings of values-

based action (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 2011). Modern Thai policies, such as the National Moral Promotion Action Plan (2023–2027), actively integrate these Buddhist virtues into youth development, underlining the practical utility of canonical ethics in contemporary social contexts (Ministry of Culture, 2023).

The proposed theoretical framework that synthesizes traditional Buddhist teachings with contemporary interpretations allows for a deeper understanding of mindfulness, wisdom, and virtue as an interconnected triad. Rather than being isolated competencies, they operate in unison: mindfulness fosters present-centered awareness, wisdom cultivates discernment, and virtue directs ethical behavior. Such a holistic integration resonates with recent calls in contemplative science for more ethically grounded mindfulness programs (Purser, 2021). Piyabhani and Mahatthanadull (2022) emphasize that *yoniso-manasikāra* (wise attention) is central to developing systematic thinking in the 21st century, serving as a cognitive tool for ethical decision-making and problem-solving. They propose that this Buddhist principle functions as a “mental vaccine,” enabling individuals to navigate modern challenges with clarity, mindfulness, and wisdom. This aligns with the present study’s framework linking mindfulness, wisdom, and virtue as an integrated path of inner development.

Moreover, this integrated framework challenges the tendency of modern mindfulness programs to depersonalize or commodify Buddhist practices. By situating mindfulness within its canonical roots, alongside wisdom and virtue, this study advocates for a more authentic and transformative application of Buddhist principles in modern contexts such as psychotherapy, education, and leadership training.

In conclusion, the study reveals that the core Buddhist teachings of mindfulness, wisdom, and virtue are not static or confined to monastic settings. They possess dynamic, transformative potential that, when contextualized appropriately, can inform modern efforts to enhance mental health, moral education, and social well-being.

Knowledge from research

This study contributes the following key insights:

1. **Canonical Clarity:** Buddhist canonical texts define *mindfulness*, *wisdom*, and *virtue* not as separate practices but as *interdependent mental and ethical faculties*. Their integration leads to spiritual development and liberation from suffering.

2. Systemic Interdependence:

- *Virtue (Sīla)* provides the ethical foundation that stabilizes behavior.
- *Mindfulness (Sati)* cultivates awareness and attentiveness to thoughts, actions, and emotions.
- *Wisdom (Paññā)* arises from clear observation, leading to insight into reality and ethical discernment.

3. Modern Relevance:

The Buddhist triad aligns with modern disciplines:

- In *psychology*, it informs mindfulness-based interventions, character development, and resilience.
- In *education*, it supports holistic moral and cognitive development.
- In *therapy and leadership*, it promotes ethical decision-making, emotional intelligence, and inner well-being.

4. Theoretical Framework Development: The study builds a *comprehensive framework* that connects ancient Buddhist doctrines with contemporary academic and practical contexts, offering a tool for integration into secular settings without losing ethical depth.

Conclusion

This study has systematically examined the doctrinal architecture and contemporary relevance of mindfulness (*sati*), wisdom (*paññā*), and virtue (*sīla/guṇa-dhamma*) through documentary analysis of canonical Theravāda texts and contemporary scholarship. The findings reconceptualize mindfulness as an ethically situated cognitive discipline that cultivates sustained attention, clarity, and liberative insight via the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. *Paññā* is articulated as a multidimensional cognitive, ethical capacity, comprising analytical discernment, reflective judgment, and existential realization, that undergirds moral reasoning and supports the emancipatory aims of the path. *Sīla* is shown to function as the behavioral synthesis of these capacities, enabling self-regulation, social cohesion, and responsible engagement across personal, communal, and ecological domains.

Synthesizing these elements yields an integrated, systems-oriented model of human development that links contemplative depth with pragmatic applicability. The visual frameworks developed in this study translate complex doctrinal relationships into operationalizable constructs suitable for

interdisciplinary application in mental health, education, leadership development, and peacebuilding.

To extend and substantiate this framework, future work should prioritize empirical operationalization and validation. Recommended directions include the development of culturally sensitive, psychometrically robust measures of *sati*, *paññā*, and *sīla*; longitudinal and intervention studies to test hypothesized causal pathways; and translational research to adapt the model for curricula, therapeutic protocols, and organizational training while preserving doctrinal fidelity. Such interdisciplinary and methodologically rigorous inquiry will be indispensable for assessing the model's efficacy and for responsibly applying classical Buddhist insights to contemporary ethical and psychosocial challenges.

Suggestions for Further Study

While this research has elucidated the doctrinal foundations and practical applications of mindfulness (*sati*), wisdom (*paññā*), and virtue (*sīla*) within the Theravāda tradition, several avenues remain open for deeper exploration:

1. **Measurement and Empirical Validation.**

Priority should be given to operationalizing *sati*, *paññā*, and *sīla* into psychometrically sound instruments. Instrument development must follow best practices, item generation from canonical and contemporary sources, cognitive interviewing, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, and tests of reliability and construct, convergent, and discriminant validity. Mixed-methods longitudinal cohorts (combining standardized scales, in-depth interviews, and phenomenological reports) would permit assessment of temporal stability, developmental trajectories, and cross-cultural measurement invariance.

2. **Educational Implementation and Outcomes Research.**

Controlled trials and quasi-experimental studies are needed to evaluate curricula that explicitly integrate canonical practices (e.g., *satipaṭṭhāna* exercises, reflective inquiry on *paññā*) with secular pedagogies. Research should measure effects on academic achievement, socio-emotional competencies, ethical reasoning, and well-being across developmental

stages, and include cost-effectiveness and implementation-fidelity analyses to inform policy uptake.

3. Organizational and Leadership Studies.

Case studies, ethnographies, and action research can elucidate how institutions translate the tripartite model into leadership development and organizational practices. Comparative multi-site research across sectors (healthcare, education, technology, public administration) should investigate cultural fit, institutional barriers, and measurable changes in decision-making, team functioning, and organizational ethics.

4. Clinical Trials and Community Interventions.

Randomized controlled trials are required to evaluate integrated interventions that target attention regulation (*sati*), moral cognition (*paññā*), and behavioral self-regulation (*sīla*). Trials should assess clinical outcomes (e.g., symptom reduction), moral-behavioral indices (e.g., prosociality), and mechanisms of change, ideally using mediation analyses and pre-registered protocols.

Across these domains, interdisciplinary collaboration, cultural sensitivity, and ethical safeguards are essential to ensure that future work both rigorously tests and responsibly applies classical Buddhist insights to contemporary challenges.

Abbreviation

A	Anguttara Nikaya
D	Digha Nikaya
M	Majjhima Nikaya

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The Development of Couples' Mental Well-Being through Mindfulness, Wisdom, and Loving-Kindness (MWL) Practice in Thailand

Piyarom Bunnag

*International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University
Corresponding author email: piyarom@sevenstars.co.th*

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Abstract

This study examined the development of couples' mental well-being and relationship dynamics following a culturally adapted Mindfulness, Wisdom, and Loving-Kindness (MWL) course at the Buddhamahametta Foundation, Ayutthaya, Thailand. Objectives were to (1) assess baseline mental-health and relational challenges, (2) track changes in individual and dyadic outcomes across MWL participation, and (3) evaluate the course's overall impact. Employing a mixed-methods pre-post design, nine couples (N = 18) were grouped by level of shared mindfulness engagement and attended two MWL cycles one month apart. Quantitative data were collected at three time points using the TMHI-15 and RDAS and analyzed with mixed ANOVA; qualitative data from in-depth interviews were subjected to thematic analysis. Findings integrate statistical trends with participants' experiential accounts to assess MWL's effectiveness.

Key findings:

1. Baseline: Couples who practiced mindfulness together reported higher mental-health and relationship scores (not statistically significant), while qualitative data showed greater mindfulness awareness and emotional balance; non-practicing couples described disconnection and unresolved conflict.

2. Development: Mental health improved across sessions (significant over time, $p = 0.009$). Relationship quality was generally stable but consistently higher for co-practicing couples; group differences favored co-practicing couples at post-course 1 ($p = 0.003$) and post-course 2 ($p = 0.044$). Qualitative themes included improved communication, self-awareness, and emotional regulation, especially when partners engaged jointly.

3. Intervention impact: The MWL package (mindfulness exercises, loving-kindness, Dhamma talks, reflective practices, Dharma music) was associated with enhanced individual well-being and stronger dyadic functioning.

Implication: Culturally adapted MWL programming shows promise for promoting family mental health and merits broader testing in therapeutic and community settings.

Keywords: Mindfulness-based Practices; Couples' mental well-being; loving-kindness (metta); Relationship quality; Buddhist Psychology

Introduction

In contemporary Thailand, family relationships face significant pressures resulting from rapid social change, shifting cultural values, and increasing demands of modern life. Rising rates of marital conflict, domestic violence, and divorce reflect the fragility of familial bonds in this context. According to the Division of Family Institution Promotion, reported cases of domestic violence increased by more than 73% between 2016 and 2022, averaging five cases per day (Division of Family Institution Promotion, 2022). Similarly, data from the Department of Provincial Administration (2023) indicated that over half of registered marriages ended in divorce during the period 2019–2023. These statistics underscore a growing crisis in Thai families, driven by stressors such as economic hardship, communication breakdown, and emotional dysregulation.

Conventional family therapy models, including Structural Therapy, Narrative Therapy, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, and Emotionally Focused Therapy, have offered valuable frameworks for addressing relational dysfunction (Nichols & Davis, 2020). While effective in many contexts, these approaches often emphasize cognitive or behavioral restructuring without explicitly incorporating cultural or spiritual dimensions that may be particularly relevant in Thailand's predominantly Buddhist society. Consequently, there is a need to explore interventions that integrate indigenous wisdom and mindfulness-based practices (MBPs) as culturally congruent methods of fostering relational resilience.

A growing body of international scholarship highlights the potential of mindfulness to strengthen both individual mental well-being and relational functioning. Mindfulness practice is shown to enhance emotional regulation, empathy, and stress reduction, contributing to healthier interpersonal dynamics (Hölzel et al., 2011; Winter et al., 2021). In the domain of romantic relationships, Kimmes et al. (2020) found that relationship mindfulness is positively correlated with psychological health and relational satisfaction, while Karremans et al. (2020) demonstrated that mindfulness interventions significantly improved

emotional connectedness compared to relaxation techniques. Similarly, May et al. (2020) and Erkan et al. (2021) reported that mindfulness fosters deeper compassion, more skillful communication, and greater relational harmony among couples. These findings suggest that mindfulness, particularly when practiced jointly, can strengthen emotional awareness, mitigate conflict, and promote enduring relational bonds.

Despite this evidence, limited empirical research has examined the application of MBPs in Thai cultural settings, where Buddhist philosophy and meditation traditions form a central part of daily life. While mindfulness is deeply rooted in Thai Buddhism, its integration into structured family and couple interventions remains underdeveloped. Exploring such applications offers a dual opportunity: advancing academic understanding of culturally adapted mindfulness interventions and providing practical strategies for addressing the challenges faced by Thai families.

This study responds to that gap by investigating the effects of the Mindfulness, Wisdom, and Loving-Kindness (MWL) course on Thai couples' mental health and relationship quality. The MWL program combines mindfulness meditation, loving-kindness (metta) practices, Dhamma reflection, and contemplative music in a format that resonates with Thai cultural and spiritual traditions. The research employs a mixed-methods design to assess baseline challenges, examine the development of mental well-being through course participation, and evaluate overall relational outcomes.

By bridging contemporary MBP research with Thailand's Buddhist heritage, this study aims to illuminate how mindfulness practices can strengthen couples resilience, emotional regulation, and relational harmony. The findings are expected to provide evidence-based insights for scholars in Buddhist psychology and family therapy, practitioners designing culturally relevant interventions, and policymakers committed to promoting family well-being. Ultimately, the study aspires to contribute to both academic discourse and social application by proposing a mindfulness-informed model of family care rooted in Thai Buddhist values.

Research Objectives

1. To assess the baseline mental health and relational challenges of couples.
2. To examine the development of couples' mental health and relationship quality through participation in MWL course.

3. To evaluate the overall impact of the MWL course on couples' mental well-being and relational outcomes.

Literature Review

This literature review examines the relationship between well-being, mental health, and mindfulness-based practices (MBPs), with particular emphasis on their influence on couple relationships. It traces conceptual foundations of well-being and mental health, explores the Buddhist roots and mechanisms of MBPs, reviews empirical evidence on their role in enhancing couple well-being, and identifies knowledge gaps in the Thai cultural context.

Conceptualizing Well-being, Mental Health, and Happiness

Well-being and mental health are multifaceted concepts that are essential to both individual flourishing and relational quality. Happiness often denotes a transient affective state of joy or contentment, whereas well-being encompasses a broader, more stable condition of life satisfaction across emotional, psychological, physical, and social dimensions (Diener et al., 2018). Mental health underpins these constructs by shaping individuals' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functioning, thereby influencing their capacity to manage stress, maintain relationships, and contribute to society (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020).

Research indicates that well-being is shaped by both internal factors, such as genetic predispositions and personality traits, and external determinants, including socioeconomic conditions, social support, and health status (Lyubomirsky, 2007). From a sociological perspective, cultural norms, family structures, and collective values also profoundly influence well-being (Kanasz, 2013). Social connections and trust are particularly significant, with strong relational bonds serving as buffers against psychological distress and predictors of life satisfaction (Helliwell et al., 2020). These findings underscore the interdependence between individual well-being and relational health.

Mindfulness-Based Practices (MBPs)

Mindfulness, as both a contemplative tradition and a therapeutic intervention, derives from Buddhist teachings such as the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness). It emphasizes cultivating present-moment awareness with an attitude of openness and non-judgment (Anālayo, 2020). Core practices include focused attention on bodily sensations, awareness of feelings and thoughts, and loving-kindness meditation (mettā-

bhāvanā), all of which foster insight into impermanence (anicca) and non-reactivity.

Contemporary MBPs operationalize these principles into structured interventions, such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT). Mechanistically, MBPs enhance attention regulation, increase body awareness, foster emotional regulation, and cultivate perspective-taking (Hölzel et al., 2011). These processes contribute to reductions in stress, anxiety, and depression, while promoting resilience and self-compassion.

MBPs, Mental Health, and Couples' Well-being

Recent scholarship suggests that MBPs extend benefits beyond individual health to relational functioning. Studies demonstrate that mindfulness enhances empathy, improves conflict management, and strengthens emotional intimacy in couples (Karremans et al., 2020). Kimmes et al. (2020) found relationship mindfulness positively correlated with psychological well-being and relational satisfaction, while Winter et al. (2021) and Huxter and Pizutti (2021) highlighted the role of mindfulness in fostering emotional regulation and stress reduction.

The interdependence of partners' mental health further emphasizes the relational significance of MBPs. When one partner develops mindfulness skills, both may experience improved relational dynamics; however, evidence suggests that co-practice amplifies these benefits by fostering mutual presence, shared compassion, and resilience (McNamee et al., 2021). May et al. (2020) and Erkan et al. (2021) found that mindfulness practice improved communication, reduced reactivity, and promoted compassion in romantic partnerships. A recent study by Jiwattanasuk et al. (2025) on the MWL (Mindfulness, Wisdom, and Loving-Kindness) course found significant improvements in emotional regulation, stress reduction, and interpersonal connection among multicultural participants, underscoring the potential of integrated mindfulness programs for couples.

Cultural Context and Knowledge Gaps

Despite growing global evidence, most research on MBPs and relationships has been conducted in Western contexts, where individualistic cultural norms shape relational experiences. Applying these findings directly to collectivist societies such as Thailand risks neglecting important cultural variables, including communal values, religious traditions, and gender dynamics. In Thailand, Buddhist principles deeply inform moral frameworks and daily

practices, yet empirical studies on MBPs specifically targeting couples remain limited.

Moreover, existing research seldom distinguishes between outcomes when mindfulness is practiced individually versus jointly. Preliminary findings suggest co-practice yields synergistic effects, enhancing relational satisfaction more than individual engagement alone (McNamee et al., 2021). Yet systematic evidence, particularly within Thai cultural contexts, is lacking. Addressing this gap is essential to developing interventions that resonate culturally and leverage indigenous wisdom traditions.

Synthesis

The literature collectively demonstrates that well-being and mental health are intricately linked with relational quality and that MBPs can serve as effective tools for promoting both. Rooted in Buddhist philosophy yet validated in modern psychology, mindfulness fosters awareness, emotional regulation, and compassion that directly enhance couples' interactions. However, significant gaps remain in understanding how these practices function within Thai cultural contexts and whether joint practice yields distinct relational advantages. This study seeks to address these gaps by evaluating the MWL course as a culturally grounded intervention for Thai couples, thereby contributing to both academic scholarship and practical applications in family well-being.

Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework integrates mindfulness-based practice (MBP) theories derived from Buddhist philosophy with contemporary psychological models of mental health and relationship quality among Thai couples. As illustrated in Figure 1, the framework begins with an assessment of couples' initial conditions—including mental health, relational dynamics, and mindfulness engagement—and progresses through the implementation of a mindfulness-based course to observe psychological and relational change over time. The conceptual foundation rests on two key areas: (1) the frameworks guiding the assessment of mental health and relationship quality, and (2) the skill-based principles underpinning the Mindfulness Wisdom and Loving-Kindness (MWL) course.

1. Basic Mental Health and Relationship Assessment Concepts

A variety of methods have been developed to assess mental health and relationship quality, ranging from clinical diagnostic tools and standardized

psychological scales to culturally specific instruments. The selection of appropriate tools must consider not only psychometric reliability but also cultural relevance and alignment with the study's objectives.

- 1) *Mental Health*: Defined as an individual's psychological functioning across emotional, social, and spiritual domains. The Thai Mental Health Indicator (TMHI-15) instrument captures five dimensions—mental state, mental capacity, quality of life, mental response, and social support—reflecting holistic well-being in a Thai Buddhist context. Higher TMHI-15 scores indicate greater emotional balance, resilience, and life satisfaction.
- 2) *Relationship Quality*: Conceptualized as a dyadic construct encompassing consensus, satisfaction, and cohesion. The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale measures how well partners agree on important issues, experience relationship satisfaction, and engage in shared activities. Higher RDAS scores suggest improved communication, mutual support, and overall relationship harmony. In mindfulness research, enhanced RDAS scores suggest improved communication, conflict resolution, and mutual support.

Mindfulness Wisdom & Loving-Kindness (MWL) Skills

The MWL course is a mindfulness-based program adapted for the Thai cultural context. It incorporates four key skill domains:

- 1) *Mindfulness meditation (Vipassana)*: Cultivating present-moment awareness, clarity of perception, and insight into impermanence.
- 2) *Loving-kindness meditation (Metta)*: fostering compassion and emotional warmth.
- 3) *Reflective practices*: enhancing self-awareness and emotional regulation, and ethical contemplation.
- 4) *Mindful communication*: promoting empathy, deep listening, and conflict de-escalation in couples' interactions.

The MWL model draws on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipatthana*), emphasizing mindfulness of body, feelings, mind, and mental objects. These practices are designed to reduce stress, improve emotional clarity, and strengthen interpersonal relationships.

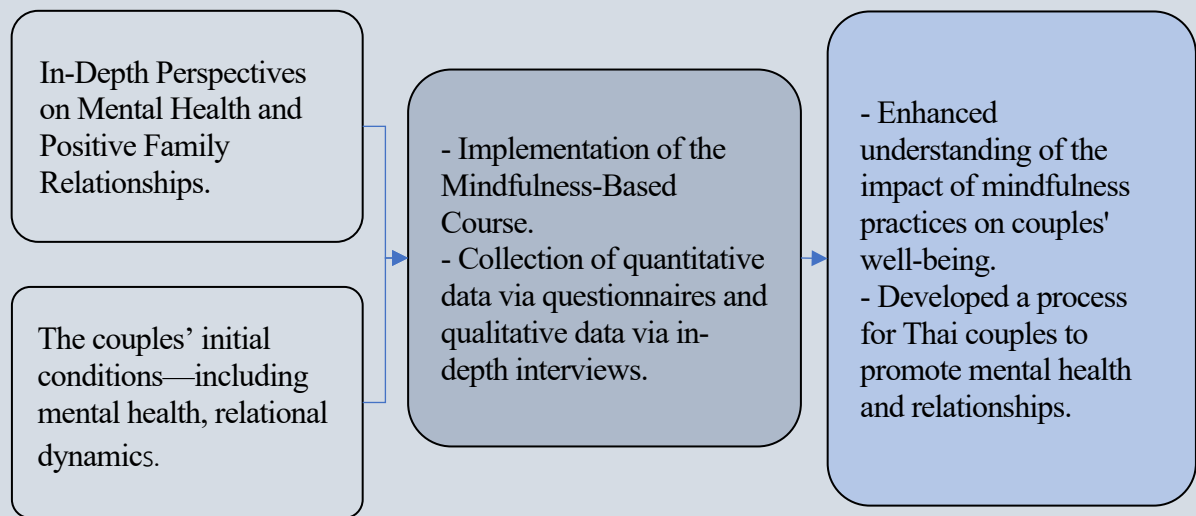


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Research Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to explore the development of couples' mental well-being and relationship quality through mindfulness-based practices. The research was conducted at the Buddhamahametta Foundation in Ayutthaya, Thailand, between January and February 2025. The methodology is structured into two phases—quantitative and qualitative—each aligned with specific research objectives.

The study involved 18 participants (9 couples), purposively selected and categorized into three groups based on their level of mindfulness engagement:

Group 1: Both partners regularly practiced mindfulness (defined as engaging in mindfulness-based practices at least once per month over the past year)

Group 2: Only one partner practiced mindfulness

Group 3: Neither partner practiced mindfulness

All participants were Thai, married, and provided informed consent. Inclusion criteria ensured cultural and relational relevance, while exclusion criteria ruled out severe mental health conditions requiring clinical intervention.

The intervention involved a 1-day Mindfulness Wisdom and Loving-Kindness (MWL) course. The course combined traditional mindfulness techniques with culturally relevant elements, such as Dhamma talks, guided activities (mindful walking, seated meditation, mindful eating), reflective exercises, and Dharma music (including “Love,” “Kiang Thor,” and

“Ho’oponopono”). This culturally tailored approach aimed to foster self-awareness, emotional regulation, and improved interpersonal understanding among participants.

Data were collected over two MWL course cycles spaced one month apart, between January and February 2025, at three time points:

Pre-course (Baseline): Before the first MWL session

Post-course 1: Immediately after the first MWL session

Post-course 2: Immediately after the second MWL session

This study was conducted in two phases:

Phase 1: Quantitative Research

The purpose of this phase was to assess and track changes in couples’ mental well-being and relationship quality using standardized instruments. Baseline data from the Thai Mental Health Indicator (TMHI-15) and the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) were collected to address Objective 1. Repeated measures examined the development of these outcomes over time, addressing Objective 2. Finally, pre- versus post-course comparisons evaluated the overall impact of the MWL course, addressing Objective 3.

Two standardized instruments were used.

- 1) *Thai Mental Health Indicator (TMHI-15):* A 15-item tool assessing mental well-being (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.70$).
- 2) *Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS):* A 14-item scale measuring relationship quality (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.90$).

Online questionnaires were administered via Google Forms. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS with descriptive statistics and mixed ANOVA, with post-hoc comparisons to compare changes over time and differences among the three groups.

Phase 2: Qualitative Research

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants’ subjective experiences with the MWL course and its impact on their mental health and relationships. Interviews were conducted in person, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was employed to identify key themes, with data triangulation and peer debriefing used to ensure trustworthiness.

The purpose of this phase was to confirm quantitative baseline findings (Objective 1), explore the process of change through the MWL course (Objective

2), and enrich the evaluation of outcomes (Objective 3) by capturing participants' lived experiences.

This integrated mixed-methods approach provided comprehensive insights into both the quantitative outcomes and the qualitative experiences, informing the overall evaluation of the MWL course.

Research Results

This section presents the findings structured by the three research objectives. Quantitative and qualitative results are integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of how mindfulness-based practices influence couples' mental health and relationship quality in the Thai context.

Objective 1: To assess the baseline mental health and relational challenges of couples.

1.1 Participant Characteristics

The study included 9 couples (18 participants), grouped based on mindfulness engagement: Group 1 (both partners practice), Group 2 (one partner practices), and Group 3 (neither partner practices). As shown in Table 1, Group 1 had the oldest participants (55.00 ± 3.03 years), and only Groups 1 and 2 reported prior meditation experience.

Table 1 Demographic overview by group.

Variable	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Participants	6 (3 couples)	6 (3 couples)	6 (3 couples)
Age (Mean $\pm$ SD)	55.00 ± 3.03	47.17 ± 10.50	42.33 ± 4.55
Family Size (Mean)	4 members	3 members	4 members
Meditation (Years)	9.67 ± 3.51	6.67 ± 2.52	0

1.2 Baseline Quantitative Assessment (Mental Health & Relationship Quality)

1.2.1 TMHI-15 (Mental Health)

At baseline, TMHI-15 scores were highest in Group 1 (47.67 ± 6.35), followed by Group 2 (43.86 ± 5.64) and Group 3 (42.17 ± 4.67). Although this pattern suggests that couples with shared mindfulness practice may have better mental well-being, the differences among groups were not statistically significant ($p = 0.249$). This means that the observed differences could be due to chance and do not provide strong enough evidence to confirm a meaningful difference

between groups at the population level. Figure 2 (left panel) illustrates these distributions, showing overlapping quartiles that further support the lack of statistical significance.

1.2.2 RDAS (Relationship Quality)

At baseline, RDAS scores were highest in Group 1 (53.33 ± 12.16), followed by Group 2 (44.67 ± 9.09), and Group 3 (42.67 ± 7.74). These results suggest that couples with greater mindfulness engagement may experience better relationship quality. However, the differences among the groups were not statistically significant ($p = 0.171$), indicating that the observed variations could be due to chance and are not strong enough to confirm a meaningful difference at the population level. As shown in the right panel of Figure 2, Group 1's boxplot is generally higher, reflecting fewer couples in distress, but the overlapping score ranges across groups further support the lack of statistical significance.

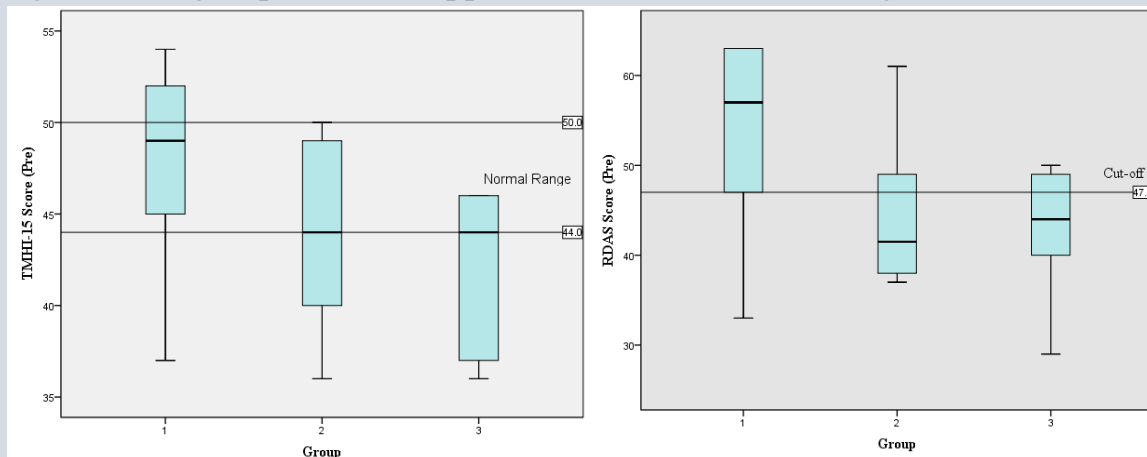


Figure 2: Boxplot of baseline TMHI-15 scores by couples' group (left) and boxplot of RDAS scores at baseline by couples' group (right).

1.3 Baseline Qualitative Assessment (Circumstances and Problems)

Common themes across all groups included the importance of mutual care, empathy, and communication. However, key distinctions emerged:

Group 1: Reported better emotional balance and constructive communication, though some partners noted stress-related challenges.

Group 2: Reflected an imbalance where the practicing partner managed emotions better than the non-practicing one.

Group 3: Described unresolved tensions, frequent misunderstandings, and occasional thoughts of separation.

These qualitative patterns are supported by the quantitative distributions shown in Tables 2 and 3. Table 2 presents the frequency of TMHI-15 interpretive levels (Above Average, Average, Below Average) across the three groups. Group

1 had the highest proportion of participants classified as “Above Average” in mental well-being, while Groups 2 and 3 had more participants in the “Average” and “Below Average” categories. This suggests that shared mindfulness practice may be associated with higher baseline mental health.

Table 2: Frequency of TMHI-15 interpretive levels by couples’ groups at baseline.

TMHI-15 Interpretation	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Total
Above Average	3 (50.0%)	- (0.0%)	- (0.0%)	3 (16.7%)
Average	2 (33.3%)	3 (50.0%)	3 (50.0%)	8 (44.4%)
Below Average	1 (16.7%)	3 (50.0%)	3 (50.0%)	7 (38.9%)

Table 3 shows the frequency of RDAS interpretive levels, distinguishing between couples experiencing “Marital Distress” and those classified as “Non-Marital Distress.” Group 1 had more couples in the non-distress category, while Groups 2 and 3 had a higher proportion of couples experiencing marital distress. These findings reinforce the qualitative observations and provide a clearer picture of the baseline relational challenges faced by couples with lower or no mindfulness engagement.

Table 3: Frequency of RDAS interpretive levels by couples’ groups at baseline.

RDAS Interpretation	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Total
Marital distress	2 (33.3%)	4 (66.7%)	4 (66.7%)	10 (55.6%)
Non-Marital distress	4 (66.7%)	2 (33.3%)	2 (33.3%)	8 (44.4%)

Objective 2: To examine the development of couples’ mental health and relationship quality through participation in MWL course.

A mixed ANOVA was performed with time (pre-course, post-course 1, post-course 2) as the within-subjects factor and group as the between-subjects factor.

2.1 Quantitative Summary

2.1.1 TMHI-15 (Mental Health) Over Time

A significant main effect of time was found for TMHI-15 scores ($p = 0.021$, adjusted using Greenhouse-Geisser), indicating that participants’ mental health

improved over the course of the study. Mean scores increased from 44.56 at baseline to 46.56 after the first MWL session, and further to 49.94 after the second session. Although the interaction between time and group was not statistically significant ($p = 0.812$), Group 1 consistently reported the highest scores at all time points. This suggests that while all participants showed improvement, those with shared mindfulness practice may have experienced greater benefits. These results suggest that the MWL course was associated with general improvements in participants' mental health, even though the differences in improvement between the groups were not strong enough to be statistically confirmed.

2.1.2 RDAS (Relationship Quality) Over Time

The time effect was not statistically significant ($p = 0.149$), meaning that relationship quality did not change significantly across the three time points. However, a significant difference was found between groups ($p = 0.022$), with Group 1 consistently reporting higher relationship quality than Groups 2 and 3. This indicates the potential relational benefit of shared mindfulness practice.

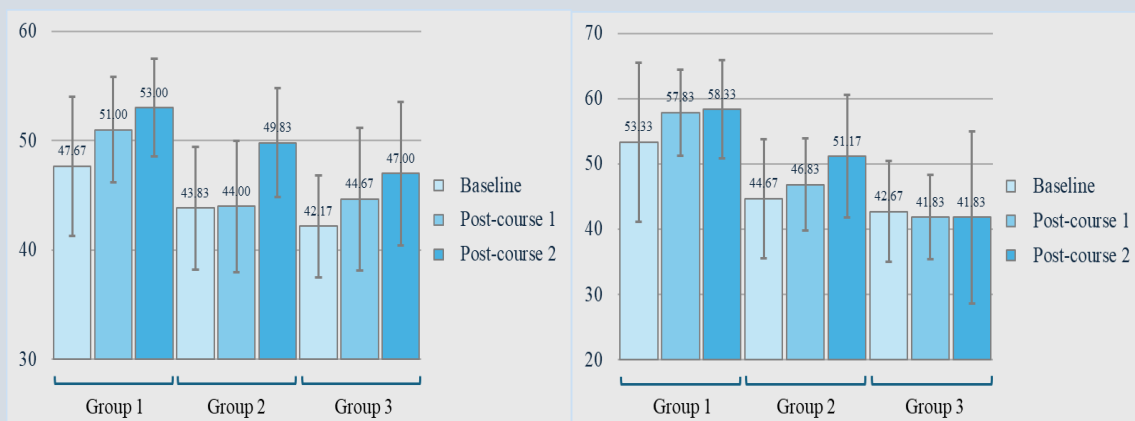


Figure 3 Changes in mean TMHI-15 score (left), RDAS score (right) following mindfulness course by group.

These change patterns of TMHI-15 and RDAS scores are visualized in Figure 3, which depicts mean TMHI-15 (left) and RDAS (right) scores over the three time points for each group. All groups improved in mental well-being with clearly upward trend. RDAS scores, while stable over time, remained higher in Group 1, suggesting a possible cumulative benefit of shared practice.

2.2 Qualitative Summary

Thematic analysis of post-course interviews revealed participants' perceptions of emotional and interpersonal changes following the MWL course. Participants described greater calmness, improved focus, and better emotion regulation. Many couples shifted from reactive behaviors to more constructive

interactions (e.g., “pause to reflect, analyze the issue, resolve peacefully”). Shared mindfulness (Group 1) was consistently linked with more noticeable improvements. . In contrast, couples where only one or neither partner participated showed more varied or limited progress, suggesting that collaborative practice may amplify overall intervention effectiveness.

In summary, while mental health improved across groups, relational outcomes were more favorable for couples with mutual mindfulness engagement, reinforcing the value of shared practice.

Objective 3: To evaluate the overall impact of the MWL course on couples’ mental well-being and relational outcomes.

3.1 Quantitative Outcomes

3.1.1 TMHI-15 (Mental Health)

Mental health significantly improved over time ($p = 0.009$), with scores rising across all groups. Group 1 and regular attendees had the highest TMHI-15 scores at every time point, suggesting that shared mindfulness practice may contribute to better mental health. However, the time-by-group interaction was not statistically significant, meaning that while all groups improved, the rate of improvement did not differ significantly between them.

3.1.2 RDAS (Relationship Quality)

The most notable improvements occurred between baseline and post-course 1, with further gains at post-course 2. Statistically significant differences between groups were found at post-course 1 ($p = 0.003$) and post-course 2 ($p = 0.044$), with Group 1 outperforming Group 3, indicating stronger relationship quality among co-practicing couples.

3.2 Qualitative Outcomes

Participants, especially in Groups 1 and 2, reported increased emotional regulation, reduced overthinking, and heightened awareness. Communication improved through mindful listening and reflection. For example, one participant shared that they learned “to recognize anger or unwholesome thoughts,” helping prevent escalation during conflicts.

Couples also reported greater mutual support, with shared practices strengthening emotional bonds. These themes matched the quantitative trends, reinforcing the connection between mindfulness engagement and relational improvement.

3.3 Integrated Interpretation

Across both data sources, the MWL course led to significant improvements in mental well-being. Although changes in relationship quality were less pronounced over the intervention period, the data indicate that couples with higher engagement, particularly those who practiced mindfulness together, consistently experienced better relationship outcomes. These results highlight the course's effectiveness and the importance of shared mindfulness as a mechanism for supporting both individual and couple-level well-being.

Discussions

At baseline, couples in which both partners practiced mindfulness (Group 1) generally showed better mental well-being (TMHI-15) and higher relationship satisfaction (RDAS) than those in which only one or neither partner practiced. Although these baseline differences were not statistically significant, qualitative interviews revealed that shared mindfulness practice fostered greater awareness and provided a positive relational foundation. These results support prior research on the importance of social connections and shared activities for overall well-being (Oishi et al., 2021; Iqbal et al., 2022). The enhanced communication, empathy, and mutual care reported by co-practicing couples suggest that mutual engagement in mindfulness can serve as a protective factor. This may be because shared practice might foster unique relational synergies, enhancing emotional resilience and stress navigation, which reinforces established links between mindfulness and improved coping mechanisms demonstrated in studies like Gutiérrez-Hernández et al. (2023).

Regarding the development process (Objective 2), the MWL course led to significant improvements in mental health as measured by TMHI-15 scores over time, especially for those engaging in the course (Groups 1 and 2). This improvement is consistent with Buddhist psychology and mindfulness-based therapy frameworks, which posit that mindfulness reduces stress, overthinking, and emotional reactivity while enhancing compassion and relational attunement (Kimmes et al., 2020; Leavitt & Karremans, 2023). These findings match the assumption that structured mindfulness training provides skills to mitigate stress and enhance positive mental states, as documented in recent MBI studies showing enhanced well-being and reduced distress (Gutiérrez-Hernández et al., 2023; Bowles et al., 2022; Englund-Helmeke, 2022). Although the control group

(Group 3) also showed some improvement, possibly due to natural emotional adaptation or placebo effects, the absence of a significant interaction effect might be attributed to sample size or variability in responses. For relationship quality (RDAS), Group 1 consistently reported significantly higher scores after the intervention compared to Group 3, supporting the idea that shared mindfulness practice benefits couple dynamics. While a significant main effect of time was not observed for RDAS, the overall trend indicates that co-practicing couples maintain better relationship quality, in line with studies linking mindfulness to positive relationship outcomes (Erkan et al., 2021; May et al., 2020).

In evaluating the MWL course's impact (Objective 3), the findings confirm that the course promotes improvements in both individual mental health and couple relationships. The course effectively integrates core mindfulness elements, deeper self-reflection, present-moment awareness, loving-kindness cultivation, and mindful communication, which together create a dual mechanism that enhances emotional regulation and interpersonal connection. This aligns with theories positing that structured mindfulness enhances couples' self-awareness, stress management, and communication, as evidenced by Erkan et al. (2021). The findings corroborate the notion of “shared mindfulness,” suggesting that joint practice fosters a positive relational feedback loop. This is likely due to the course's effective integration of core mindfulness principles (awareness, non-judgment, compassion) within relational settings, aligning with Buddhist psychology tailored to the Thai context (Suavansri et al., 2022).

This study fills literature gaps by presenting culturally relevant evidence for a Thai Buddhist context, employing an integrated mixed-methods approach, elucidating the varied effects of partner practice (McNamee et al., 2021), exploring change mechanisms, and providing guidance for future intervention designs. The results substantiate the efficacy of culturally tailored mindfulness programs, such as the MWL course, in enhancing couples' mental health and relationship quality in this particular context.

Knowledge from Research

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how mindfulness-based practices can enhance couples' mental well-being and relational harmony. The findings reveal that the development of “well-being couples” is supported by

both individual transformation and shared relational growth, cultivated through structured mindfulness engagement.

(1) Core Characteristics of Well-Being Couples

The research identified three foundational qualities that characterize well-being couples:

Empathy: The ability to understand and share a partner's emotional experience.

Effective Communication: The use of mindful listening, emotional expression, and conflict resolution strategies.

Mutual Care: A shared commitment to emotional support, patience, and relational maintenance.

These traits were most evident among couples who practiced mindfulness together, suggesting that shared contemplative practices can foster deeper emotional connection and relational resilience.

(2) Mindfulness-Based Activities that Foster Relational Well-Being

The MWL course was designed to cultivate specific skills that support both individual and couple-level well-being. Four key activities emerged as central to this process:

Deeper Self-Reflection: Encouraging non-judgmental awareness of thoughts and emotions through guided meditation and journaling.

Present-Moment Awareness: Reducing stress and overthinking by anchoring attention in the here and now.

Loving-Kindness Cultivation: Strengthening compassion and emotional warmth through metta meditation.

Mindful Communication: Enhancing interpersonal dialogue through reflective pauses and active listening.

These practices align with Buddhist psychological principles and are adaptable to both individual and relational contexts.

(3) Dual Mechanisms of Change

The research proposes a dual-process model through which mindfulness-based practices influence couples:

Internal Mechanisms (Individual Level): Improvements in emotional regulation, stress reduction, and mental clarity at the individual level, as reflected in rising TMHI-15 scores and participant narratives.

Interpersonal Mechanisms (Couple Level): Strengthening of empathy, communication, and mutual support within the couple, particularly among those who practiced together, as supported by RDAS trends and qualitative insights.

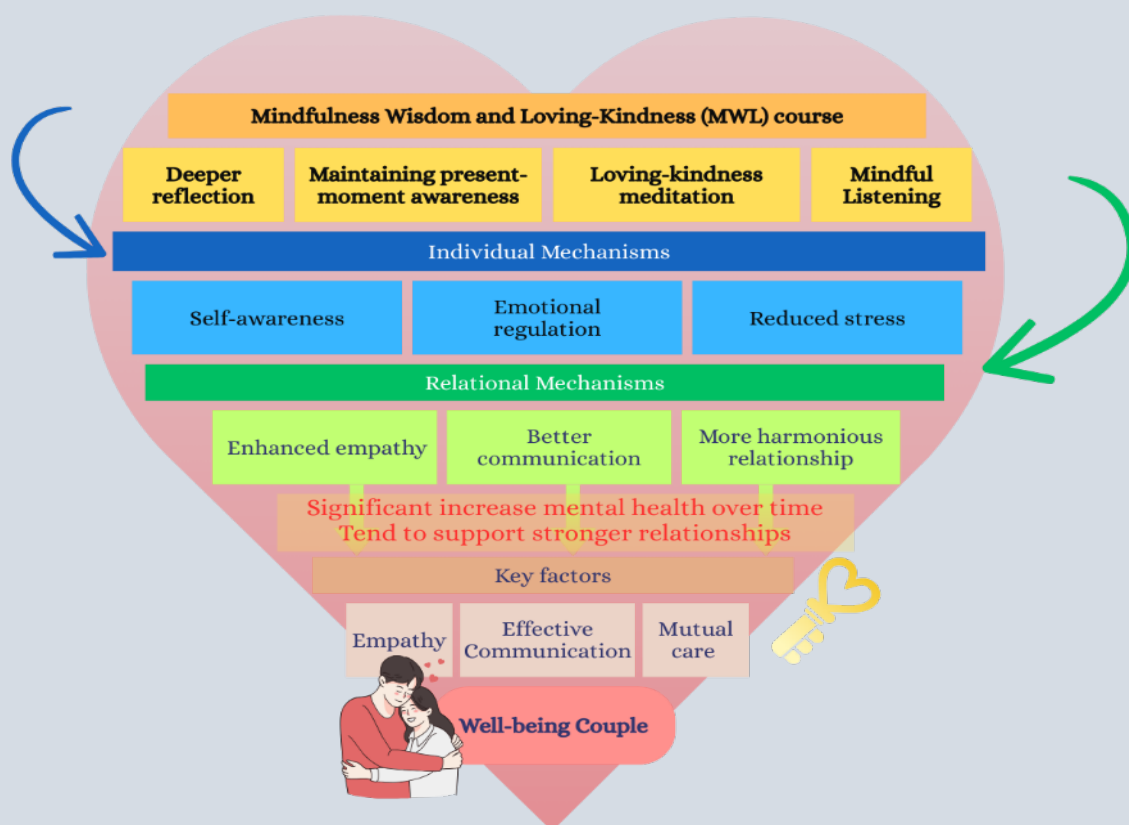


Figure 4: The Integrative Model of the MWL Course Mechanisms for Fostering Well-Being in Couples.

This integrative understanding is illustrated in Figure 4, which models how MWL course activities simultaneously promote individual well-being and relational growth. The dual mechanisms reinforce each other, suggesting that mindfulness-based interventions can be powerful tools for cultivating resilient, emotionally connected couples.

Conclusion

This study investigates the developmental trajectory of couples' mental well-being and relationship dynamics following participation in a culturally adapted Mindfulness, Wisdom, and Loving-Kindness (MWL) course at the Buddhamahametta Foundation, Ayutthaya, Thailand. The study pursued three objectives: (1) to characterize baseline mental-health status and relational challenges among participating couples; (2) to examine changes in individual mental health and dyadic adjustment across course participation; and (3) to evaluate the overall impact of the MWL intervention on mental well-being and relational outcomes. Employing a mixed-methods, pre–post design with short-term follow-up, the sample comprised nine heterosexual couples (N = 18 individuals) allocated into three groups according to their level of shared mindfulness engagement. Intervention delivery spanned two MWL cycles separated by one month, and quantitative measures were collected at three time points using the Thai Mental Health Indicator (TMHI-15) and the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS). Qualitative data were obtained via semi-structured, in-depth interviews exploring participants' experiential changes and relational processes. Quantitative analyses included descriptive statistics and mixed-model ANOVA to assess within- and between-group effects over time; qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify recurrent change mechanisms and contextual influences. This integrative design enabled triangulation of outcomes and process evidence to appraise both efficacy and culturally specific pathways through which MWL practice may support individual and couple well-being.

Suggestions

This research highlights the dual mechanisms—individual and relational—through which mindfulness-based practices enhance couples' mental well-being and relationship quality. Based on these findings, the following suggestions are proposed:

(1) Practical Recommendations for Couples

Couples are encouraged to engage in shared mindfulness practices such as loving-kindness meditation, reflective journaling, and mindful communication. These activities foster empathy, emotional regulation, and mutual support. Regular joint participation in mindfulness sessions can help transform reactive behaviors into constructive dialogue, promoting relational harmony.

(2) Policy Recommendations

Policymakers should integrate culturally adapted mindfulness programs into public health and family support services. The MWL course model, which blends traditional Buddhist practices with modern therapeutic elements, is well-suited for Thai communities. Funding should be allocated to support program development, practitioner training, and community outreach. Collaboration between government agencies, universities, and local foundations can ensure broad and sustainable implementation.

(3) Directions for Future Research

For the next research issue, studies should be conducted on the long-term effects of mindfulness-based interventions using larger and more diverse samples. Future research should also explore objective and multi-method approaches—such as physiological data, dyadic analysis, or behavioral observation—to complement self-reported outcomes. Additionally, integrating digital tools such as mobile apps, virtual reality (VR), or AI-driven support could expand access and assess the effectiveness of mindfulness training in real-world and technology-enhanced environments.

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Mindfulness Intervention to Enhance Happiness for Working People

Panizzara Pumkhem¹ Phra Medhivajarapundit² Maechee Narumon Jiwattanasuk³

International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University^{1,2,3}

Corresponding author email: panizzara@gmail.com

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Abstract

This article aimed to study (1) the key factors that enhance happiness for working people, (2) mindfulness practice for promoting those key factors, and (3) the process of mindfulness intervention to enhance happiness for working people. This study employed a qualitative research method. The instrument for collecting data was documentary research and in-depth interviews with 6 key informants. The research results were found as follows;

1. The key factors that enhance happiness for working people included emotional regulation, job satisfaction, work-life balance, supportive leadership, and mindfulness. These factors were identified through extensive documentary research, including scholarly articles and organizational psychology models. The integration of traditional Buddhist teachings and modern psychological theories provided a holistic perspective on workplace happiness.

2. The study found that mindfulness practices significantly contribute to enhancing the key happiness factors. Practices such as mindful breathing, meditation, and awareness of the present moment were shown to improve emotional resilience, focus, and job satisfaction. Documentary research and studies on Buddhist texts, especially the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, confirmed the relevance and applicability of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) in the workplace. These interventions not only reduce stress but also promote a positive emotional climate within professional settings.

3. The final phase, qualitative research through interviews, revealed real-world applications of mindfulness in professional environments. Interviews with seven professionals across various industries demonstrated how mindfulness has been successfully integrated into daily routines. Synthesizing these findings, the study proposes a practical and adaptable mindfulness intervention model that emphasizes simplicity, sustainability, and alignment with both personal development and organizational culture. This model highlights the potential of mindfulness-based approaches as effective strategies to foster happiness and well-being among working populations.

Keywords: Mindfulness; Workplace Happiness; Emotional Well-being; Mindfulness-Based Interventions; Work–life balance

Introduction

Contemporary workplaces are characterized by intensifying demands, rapid digitalization, and blurred boundaries between professional and personal life, conditions that contribute to chronic stress, burnout, and diminished well-being among employees. The World Health Organization has formally recognized burnout as an occupational phenomenon, prompting employers and policymakers to prioritize interventions that promote mental health and sustainable work practices (World Health Organization, 2019). Recent global surveys further indicate persistently low levels of employee engagement and high prevalence of daily work-related stress, underscoring the urgency of effective, scalable responses (Gallup, 2022).

Mindfulness has gained prominence as a practicable, evidence-based approach for enhancing emotional regulation, resilience, and job-related satisfaction. Originating in classical Buddhist teachings, the Satipaṭṭhāna and Ānāpānasati discourses, mindfulness has been operationalized in clinical and organizational interventions such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Meta-analytic and intervention studies report that mindfulness training increases dispositional mindfulness, reduces stress, and improves affective balance in occupational settings (Khoury et al., 2015; Quaglia et al., 2016), while workplace adaptations have yielded improvements in well-being and performance (Bartlett et al., 2020).

The theoretical rationale for mindfulness interventions in organizational contexts is strengthened by convergent frameworks from positive psychology and behavioral science. Seligman's PERMA model (2011) identifies Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment as core domains of flourishing, and Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory (1990) explains how task absorption contributes to subjective fulfillment. Complementarily, Emotional Intelligence theory highlights self-awareness and self-regulation as mechanisms that underpin constructive interpersonal dynamics at work (Goleman, 1996). Self-Determination Theory further suggests that autonomy, competence, and relatedness mediate motivational and well-being outcomes,

offering additional explanatory leverage for workplace mindfulness initiatives (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Despite accumulating evidence, notable gaps remain. Many workplace programs emphasize secularized skills while underemphasizing the ethical and contemplative scaffolding integral to classical Buddhist praxis. Moreover, questions persist about how to adapt mindfulness for diverse occupational contexts in ways that are time-efficient, culturally sensitive, and organizationally feasible. This study addresses these lacunae by synthesizing canonical Buddhist practices with established psychological models to develop a concise, culturally attuned mindfulness intervention for working adults. Conducted between May 2024 and May 2025 within a Buddhist Peace Studies framework, the research combines documentary analysis and in-depth interviews to identify key determinants of workplace happiness and to propose an accessible intervention model designed for contemporary organizational life.

Research Objectives

1. To study the key factors that enhance happiness for working people.
2. To study mindfulness practice for promoting the key factors of happiness.
3. To present the process of mindfulness practice to enhance happiness at work.

Literature Review

Mindfulness originates in canonical Buddhist texts, the Satipaṭṭhāna and Ānāpānasati suttas, and has been operationalized in contemporary psychology through interventions such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Conceptually, mindfulness denotes sustained, nonjudgmental present-moment awareness that supports attentional control, decentering, and emotion regulation. Empirical meta-analytic and experimental work indicates that formal mindfulness training increases dispositional mindfulness and enhances emotional balance (Quaglia et al., 2016), while organizational studies report gains in well-being and task performance following workplace-adapted programs (Kersemackers et al., 2018; Wolever et al., 2012).

Positive psychology offers complementary constructs for understanding workplace flourishing. Seligman's PERMA model (Positive emotion,

Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment) provides an integrative taxonomy for the domains of well-being relevant to occupational contexts, whereas Flow Theory explains how sustained engagement in optimally challenging tasks contributes to subjective satisfaction (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence framework further foregrounds self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy as mechanisms that mediate interpersonal functioning and organizational climate (Goleman, 1996). Together, these theories delineate psychological pathways through which mindfulness can influence workplace outcomes.

Applied research has translated mindfulness into workplace settings via digital and in-person formats. Controlled trials and program evaluations (Aikens et al., 2014) document reductions in perceived stress and improvements in emotional well-being, and corporate initiatives such as Google's "Search Inside Yourself" illustrate large-scale implementation. Nevertheless, many workplace programs emphasize secularized skills training and attend insufficiently to the ethical-contemplative scaffolding intrinsic to classical Buddhist approaches.

In conclusion, the extant literature demonstrates robust evidence for mindfulness as a facilitator of attentional control, emotion regulation, and well-being, and situates these processes within broader positive-psychology constructs. However, a gap persists in systematically integrating traditional Buddhist contemplative principles with contemporary workplace interventions in a culturally attuned manner. The present study addresses this gap by synthesizing Buddhist praxis with PERMA, Flow, and Emotional Intelligence to create a concise, contextually sensitive intervention model for working populations.

Conceptual Framework

This research is a qualitative study that aims to explore how mindfulness practices can enhance happiness for working people. The researcher defines the conceptual framework based on the integration of Positive Psychology theories, specifically the PERMA Model by Seligman (2011), Emotional Intelligence Theory by Goleman (1996), and Flow Theory by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), together with Buddhist teachings on mindfulness, particularly the *Satipatthana Sutta* and *Anapanasati Sutta*. These concepts inform both the theoretical foundation and the research methodology.

The framework consists of three core objectives:

1. To study the key factors that enhance happiness for working people
This objective is achieved through documentary research, which reviews

academic literature, psychological theories, and Buddhist principles related to happiness, emotional well-being, and workplace engagement.

2. To study mindfulness practice for promoting the key factors of happiness. This phase also involves documentary research, focusing specifically on mindfulness techniques from both secular and Buddhist perspectives, including scientific studies of mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and traditional practices like metta (loving-kindness) meditation.
3. To present the process of mindfulness practice to enhance happiness for working people. Synthesizing insights from the first two objectives, this phase incorporates in-depth interviews with working individuals who practice mindfulness. Their experiences inform the design of a structured mindfulness intervention model.

The conceptual flow of the research is as follows:

- Documentary research informs understanding of the key factors of happiness and the role of mindfulness in promoting these factors.
- These findings lead to a proposed process for mindfulness application, which is validated and enriched through qualitative in-depth interviews.
- The outcome is a Mindfulness Intervention Model designed to enhance workplace happiness in a structured, culturally sensitive, and evidence-based way.

This conceptual framework demonstrates the integration of theoretical and practical knowledge across disciplines. It guides the research process by connecting foundational theories with real-world applications, ensuring both academic rigor and practical relevance.

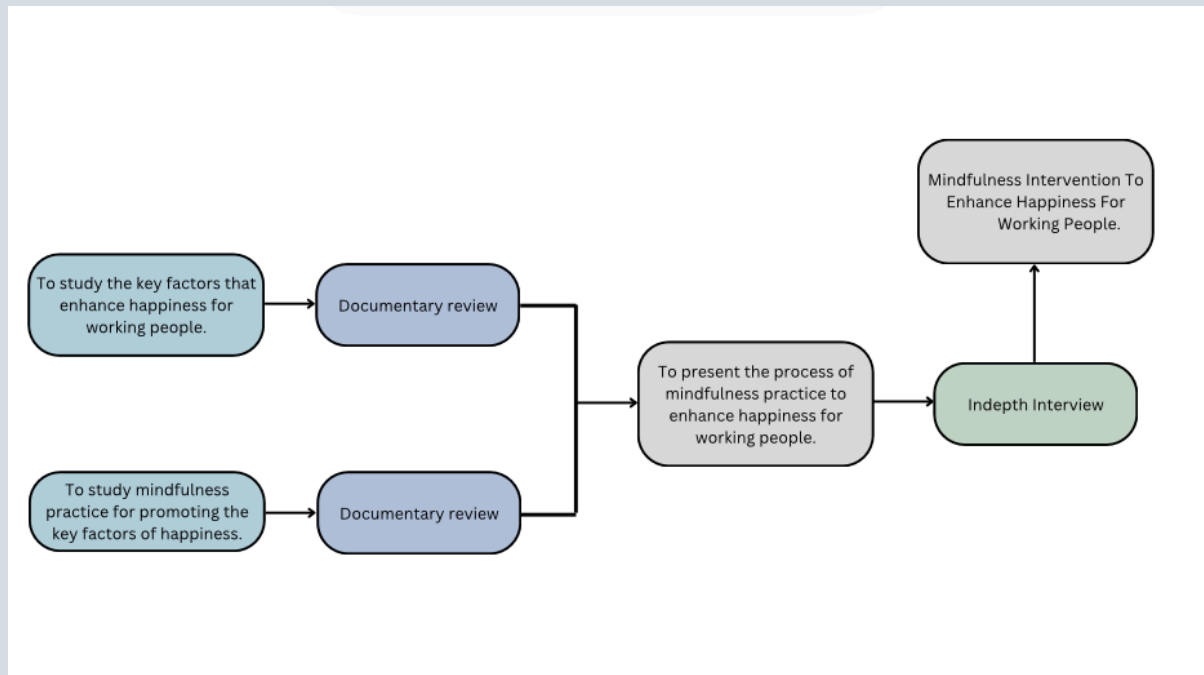


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative study that aims to explore the process and effectiveness of mindfulness interventions in enhancing happiness among working individuals. The research area focuses on working individuals in various industries in Thailand who have experience or an interest in mindfulness practices. The population consists of working individuals engaged in full-time employment, self-employment, or freelance work who are actively involved in workplace environments characterized by moderate to high levels of stress. A sample group of 7 individuals was selected using the purposive sampling method, with specific inclusion criteria: individuals who have applied mindfulness in their work or participated in mindfulness training programs. This approach ensures the participants can provide in-depth, relevant experiences related to mindfulness and workplace happiness.

The research tools are of two main types, including:

1. **Documentary Research:** Involves the analysis of academic research, Buddhist scriptures (Satipatthana Sutta, Anapanasati Sutta), and psychological frameworks such as the PERMA Model (Seligman, 2011), Flow Theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), and Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1996). This phase provided theoretical insights and supported the creation of the interview framework.
2. **In-depth Interview Form:** The interview form consists of open-ended questions designed to explore mindfulness experiences, emotional well-

being, work-life balance, and perceived changes in workplace happiness. The questions were reviewed by experts in peace studies and mindfulness practice to ensure content validity and were adjusted after pilot interviews to enhance clarity and flow.

Group discussions were not used in this research to maintain the depth of individual reflection and ensure privacy on personal mental well-being topics.

Data was collected through document review and in-depth interviews conducted between May 2024 and January 2025. The qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis and thematic synthesis, while the documentary data were analyzed through conceptual categorization and narrative synthesis. The research results were presented in a descriptive format, linking the theoretical frameworks with the participants' lived experiences to construct a practical mindfulness intervention model tailored to workplace contexts.

Research Results

Objective 1: To study the key factors that enhance happiness for working people

The results showed that the key factors enhancing happiness in the workplace are multidimensional, involving emotional, psychological, organizational, and behavioral elements. Based on extensive documentary research and analysis of theoretical models, the following components were identified as significant contributors to workplace happiness:

1. *Positive Workplace Environment*: A workplace characterized by respect, open communication, and inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging. Employees who perceive fairness, trust, and appreciation in their organization are more likely to experience emotional well-being and job satisfaction (Seligman, 2011; Gallup, 2022).
2. *Emotional Regulation and Stress Management*: The ability to regulate emotions effectively is closely tied to mindfulness practice and is essential for coping with workplace demands. Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1996) and mindfulness interventions (Kabat-Zinn, 2003) were consistently linked to improved emotional control and lower stress levels.
3. *Job Satisfaction and Meaningful Work*: Employees who feel that their work has purpose and aligns with their values report higher levels of happiness. This aligns with the PERMA Model's "Meaning" component and the concept of "ikigai" in Eastern philosophy. Research by Aikens et

- al. (2014) supports the idea that mindfulness increases meaning and engagement at work.
4. *Supportive Leadership and Management*: Leadership styles significantly influence employee morale. Transformational and empathetic leaders, who actively support employee development, were found to enhance happiness by creating a psychologically safe environment (Bass & Riggio, 2006).
 5. *Work-Life Balance*: Happiness is closely tied to one's ability to separate professional responsibilities from personal life. The rise in digital overload and “always-on” culture has challenged this balance. Organizations that implement flexible work policies and wellness programs contribute to greater life satisfaction and reduced burnout (Derks et al., 2014; WHO, 2019).
 6. *Organizational Culture and Values*: A culture that promotes compassion, mindfulness, and employee wellness fosters long-term well-being. This factor reflects Buddhist peaceful means such as Right Speech, Compassion, and Mindful Action, showing a strong linkage between spiritual values and modern organizational effectiveness.
 7. *Mindfulness as a Core Contributor*: Throughout the literature, mindfulness is repeatedly emphasized as both a direct and indirect enhancer of happiness. It helps employees remain grounded, reduces reactivity, and improves focus and resilience. Studies by Hülshager et al. (2013) and Quaglia et al. (2016) confirm that mindfulness practices reduce negative emotions and actively increase positive psychological states in the workplace.

The findings from Objective 1 suggest that enhancing happiness in the workplace requires an integrated approach that combines emotional intelligence, organizational support, meaningful work, and mindfulness practices. These factors are interconnected and reinforce one another. By identifying these key components, this research lays the groundwork for developing targeted mindfulness interventions that align with both individual and organizational goals.

Table 1 Key Factors That Enhance Happiness for Working People

No.	Key Factor	Description	Supporting Sources
1	Positive Workplace Environment	A culture of respect, recognition, and inclusivity that promotes psychological safety and employee engagement.	Seligman (2011); Gallup (2022)
2	Emotional Regulation and Stress Management	The ability to manage emotional responses to work-related stress; improved through mindfulness and EI development.	Goleman (1995); Kabat-Zinn (2003)
3	Job Satisfaction and Meaningful Work	Feeling purposeful and valued in one's work leads to higher motivation and life satisfaction.	Aikens et al. (2014); Csikszentmihalyi (1990)
4	Supportive Leadership and Management	Empathetic leadership that fosters growth, trust, and open communication.	Bass & Riggio (2006); Edmondson (2018)
5	Work-Life Balance	The ability to manage professional and personal responsibilities effectively; supported by flexible work policies.	WHO (2019); Derks et al. (2014)
6	Organizational Culture and Values	Workplaces promoting mindfulness, compassion, and ethical conduct align with Buddhist peaceful means.	Buddhist Teachings; Good et al. (2016)
7	Mindfulness	Mindfulness improves focus, emotional control, and resilience, enhancing overall well-being at work.	Hülshager et al. (2013); Quaglia et al. (2021)

The findings from Objective 1 suggest that enhancing happiness in the workplace requires an integrated approach that combines emotional intelligence, organizational support, meaningful work, and mindfulness practices. These factors are interconnected and reinforce one another. By identifying these key components, this research lays the groundwork for developing targeted mindfulness interventions that align with both individual and organizational goals.

Objective 2: To study mindfulness practice for promoting the key factors of happiness

The findings showed that mindfulness practice significantly contributes to promoting the key psychological and emotional factors that enhance happiness in working people. This is clearly demonstrated through three interconnected mechanisms: emotional regulation, stress reduction, and self-compassion, all of which are integral components of Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs).

Firstly, emotional regulation developed through mindfulness practices, such as mindful breathing and present-moment awareness, led to improved emotional stability. Participants reported being more aware of their emotional triggers and better able to respond calmly in high-pressure situations, which directly enhanced their ability to cope with work-related stress and interpersonal challenges.

Secondly, mindfulness facilitated stress reduction, with practices like body scans and mindful reflection helping participants to become less reactive and more centered. These practices resulted in lower stress levels, which is a crucial factor in preventing burnout and promoting overall well-being. This aligns with prior research by Hülshager et al. (2013) and Kabat-Zinn (2003), who established that consistent mindfulness practice lowers cortisol levels and increases subjective calmness in workplace environments.

Thirdly, the cultivation of self-compassion through practices like loving-kindness (metta) meditation led to enhanced self-kindness. Participants noted a shift in how they treated themselves during failure or pressure—moving from self-criticism to self-support. This internal transformation plays a foundational role in sustaining long-term mental wellness and emotional resilience.

Collectively, these three pathways contribute to increased happiness (well-being), as reported by participants. Furthermore, the study found that this enhanced happiness correlated with better job performance and a noticeable improvement in organizational or workplace harmony, as individuals became more empathetic, emotionally balanced, and less reactive in professional interactions.

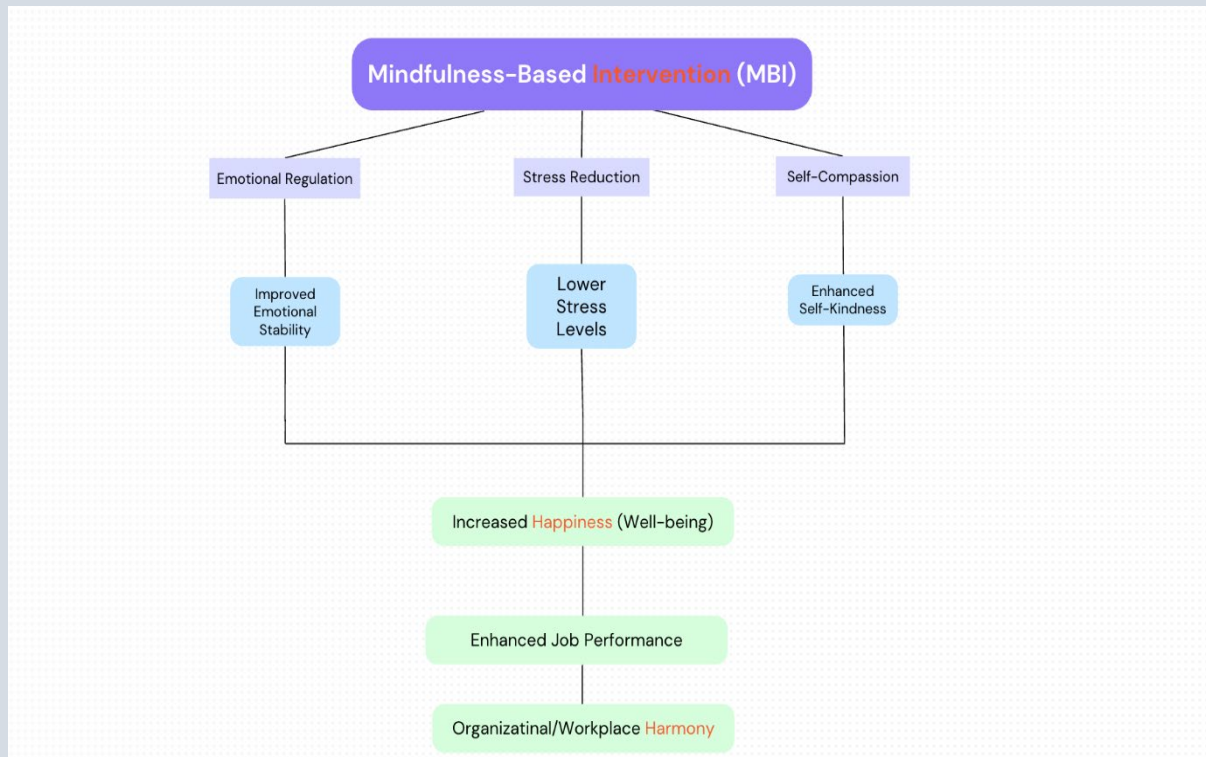


Figure 2: Mindfulness-to-Happiness Framework

These findings confirm that mindfulness practices are not only individually beneficial but also have broader organizational value. They support the theoretical frameworks of Seligman's PERMA model and Goleman's Emotional Intelligence theory while demonstrating that mindfulness is a viable and effective strategy for promoting happiness in working environments.

Objective 3: To present the process of mindfulness practice to enhance happiness for working people

The results showed that the process of mindfulness practice to enhance happiness for working people involves a structured and adaptable intervention model developed through the synthesis of documentary research and in-depth interviews with key informants. The study identified essential components and steps for applying mindfulness in professional settings to promote sustained emotional well-being, work satisfaction, and stress resilience.

1. Development of the Mindfulness Intervention Model

The model was created by integrating insights from Buddhist teachings (the Satipatthana Sutta and the Anapanasati Sutta), modern mindfulness-based practices (MBSR by Kabat-Zinn), and psychological frameworks such as the

PERMA Model and Emotional Intelligence theory. The content was tailored based on data gathered from seven professionals across various industries who shared how mindfulness impacted their work life. Their input was essential in shaping a real-world, adaptable process.

2. Core Components of the Intervention

The proposed mindfulness practice model includes the following key components:

2.1 Daily Mindfulness Activities: Short, guided practices such as mindful breathing, body scanning, and walking meditation designed to be easily incorporated into a work routine.

2.2 Mindful Reflection and Journaling: Encouraging individuals to reflect on their thoughts and emotional responses to daily work challenges, enhancing self-awareness and emotional clarity.

2.3 Compassion Practice (Metta Meditation): Based on Buddhist traditions, this component promotes emotional healing, kindness toward self and others, and harmonious workplace relationships.

2.4 Work-Life Integration Techniques: Practical tools to reduce digital overload, build boundaries, and support detachment after work hours.

2.5 Weekly Group Check-Ins or Self-Evaluation: A feedback mechanism for tracking emotional states and reinforcing the habit of mindfulness.

3. Implementation and Application in Work Settings

The mindfulness process is designed to be scalable and suitable for both individuals and organizations. Participants reported that applying mindfulness for just 10–15 minutes per day led to improvements in emotional regulation, reduced workplace anxiety, and enhanced focus. Informants also suggested that leadership support and workplace culture play a crucial role in sustaining long-term practice.

The results demonstrate that a mindfulness practice process tailored for working individuals can effectively enhance happiness by supporting emotional well-being, building resilience, and fostering a positive work environment. The final model is grounded in both classical Buddhist wisdom and contemporary

psychological insights, offering a culturally and contextually relevant framework for workplace wellness initiatives.

Discussions

This research found that a positive workplace environment, emotional regulation, job satisfaction, supportive leadership, work-life balance, and mindfulness (Objective 1) are significant factors that enhance happiness among working people. This is consistent with the PERMA model of Seligman (2011) and the Emotional Intelligence theory of Goleman (1996), which emphasize that emotional regulation, meaningful relationships, and a sense of accomplishment have a direct impact on well-being. It also aligns with the Self-Determination Theory of Deci and Ryan (1985), which highlights autonomy, competence, and relatedness as basic human needs for psychological health. This aligns with the prevailing assumption that workplace happiness is not solely determined by financial compensation, but also by internal and relational dynamics. This may be because modern employees increasingly value mental well-being, purpose, and emotional balance. As the research of Khoury et al. (2015) and Bartlett et al. (2020) supports, mindfulness and workplace design both influence job satisfaction and reduce stress. Therefore, identifying these multi-dimensional factors confirms and reinforces existing psychological frameworks in workplace studies.

As for mindfulness practice promoting the key factors of happiness (Objective 2), it was found that mindfulness enhances emotional regulation, fosters compassion, improves focus, and reduces stress, factors that are consistent with the theory of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) by Kabat-Zinn (2003). It also aligns with the Flow Theory of Csikszentmihalyi (1990), indicating that mindfulness enables individuals to achieve deep focus and engagement, ultimately leading to greater happiness. This aligns with the prevailing assumption that mindfulness is a key mechanism for enhancing workplace happiness. This may be because mindfulness shifts awareness inward, enabling individuals to respond more effectively to stressors. As research by Aikens et al. (2014) and Quaglia et al. (2016) supports, mindfulness not only reduces anxiety but also enhances positive affect and resilience. Therefore, mindfulness can serve as both a therapeutic and preventive tool for improving workplace mental well-being.

For the mindfulness intervention model (Objective 3), it was found that the structured process, including daily practice, reflection, compassion training, and organizational support, corresponds with the theory of Jon Kabat-Zinn (2003) and aligns with Buddhist teachings on mindfulness (*Satipatthana Sutta* and *Anapanasati Sutta*). It also relates to the organizational mindfulness framework presented in the research of Good et al. (2015). This corresponds with the assumption that a culturally grounded, structured intervention can be practically applied in diverse workplace settings. This may be because combining traditional spiritual insights with modern psychological tools makes the model more relatable and sustainable for working people. As Pinck & Sonnentag (2018) and Kersemaekers et al. (2018) found in their research, integrating mindfulness into organizational culture supports both individual growth and institutional well-being. Therefore, the proposed model provides a valuable and adaptable approach for enhancing happiness in professional environments.

This discussion highlights the theoretical relevance, empirical consistency, and practical contribution of mindfulness as a pathway to enhance workplace happiness, particularly for individuals facing high stress and emotional demands in their careers.

Knowledge from Research

This research integrates classical Buddhist mindfulness (*Satipatthāna* and *Ānāpānasati* suttas) with contemporary well-being frameworks (PERMA, flow theory, and emotional intelligence) to produce a coherent, practice-oriented model for enhancing happiness among working adults. The interdisciplinary synthesis foregrounds both ethical-contemplative and empirical psychological dimensions, offering a culturally grounded yet evidence-aligned approach to workplace well-being.

Core findings identify five interdependent determinants of workplace happiness: emotional regulation, meaningful work, supportive leadership, work–life balance, and an organizational culture that supports mindfulness. Empirical and textual evidence indicate that mindfulness interventions address these determinants by strengthening self-awareness, attentional control, emotional resilience, and compassionate responsiveness—capacities that reduce stress and improve performance and interpersonal functioning.

From documentary review and in-depth interviews, the study proposes a brief, four-part daily intervention tailored for time-constrained professionals. Each component is intentionally simple and mutually reinforcing:

- Morning mindful listening (5–10 minutes): brief audio reflections or calming sounds to set intention and emotional equilibrium at the start of the day.
- Mindful hand movement during meetings: subtle, slow hand gestures to anchor attention and reduce cognitive drift while maintaining professional engagement.
- Listening to Dhamma during commute: auditory reflection to facilitate emotional decompression and clear demarcation between work and personal time.
- Mindful bowing before bed: a short ritual of reflection and gratitude to promote psychological closure and better sleep.

The model emphasizes cultural resonance (drawing on Buddhist praxis and gratitude traditions) alongside empirical plausibility, making it particularly suited to Thai and broader Asian contexts while remaining adaptable to secular workplaces.

Practical and scholarly applications are direct: the model can inform curricula in psychology and organizational studies, be adopted in HR wellness programs and community workshops, and guide corporate retreat design. At a societal level, scaled implementation may reduce absenteeism and turnover while enhancing productivity. Policy implications include integrating mindfulness modules into employee assistance programs, public mental-health campaigns, and professional development for educators and public servants.

In conclusion, the intervention offers a low-burden, culturally sensitive, and evidence-informed pathway to sustain workplace happiness and resilience, warranting further evaluation through controlled and longitudinal studies.

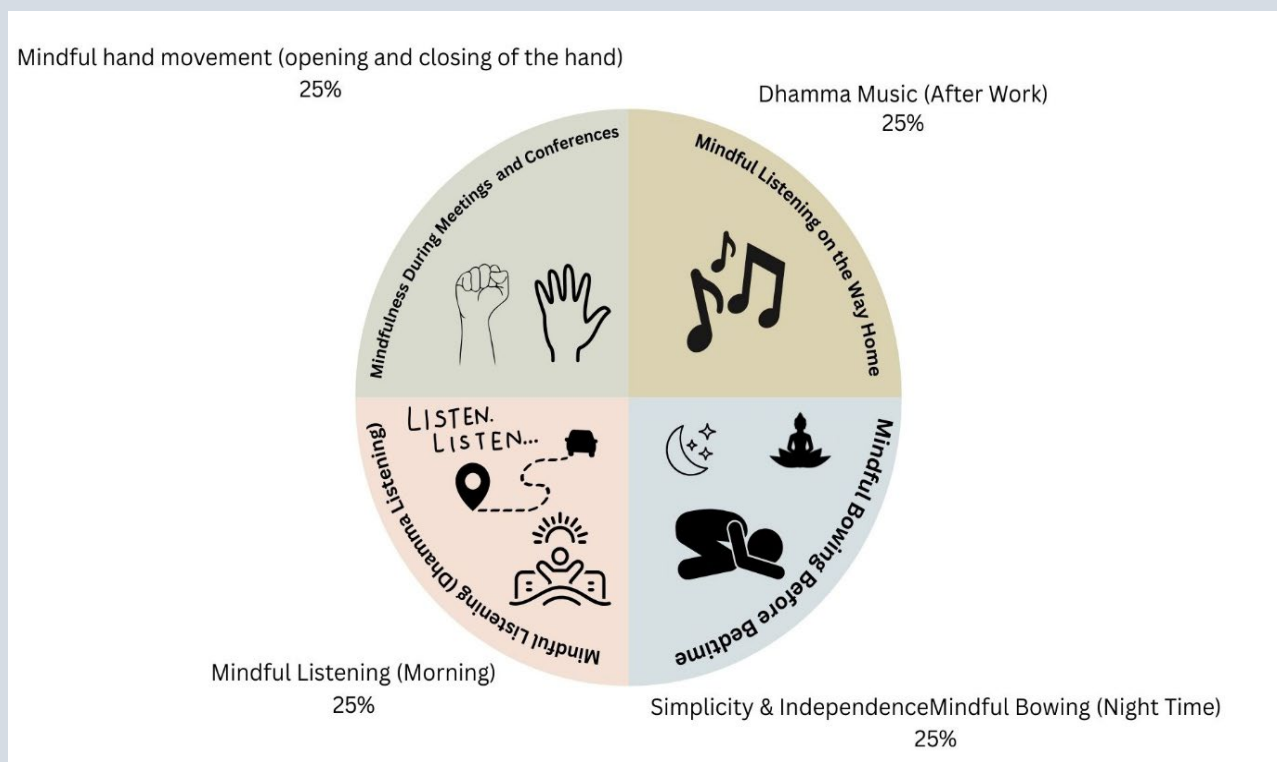


Figure 3: Daily Mindfulness Practice Model for Working People

Conclusion

This study set out to identify the principal determinants of workplace happiness, to examine how mindfulness supports those determinants, and to articulate a structured mindfulness intervention tailored for working people. Findings indicate that workplace happiness is multifactorial and interdependent, centering on emotional regulation, meaningful work, supportive leadership, positive organizational culture, and work–life balance. These elements align with extant theoretical frameworks, such as PERMA, emotional intelligence, and flow theory, thereby situating the present results within established well-being scholarship.

Mechanistically, mindfulness practice emerged as a robust facilitator of these factors. Through improvements in self-awareness, attentional control, stress reduction, and compassionate responsiveness, mindfulness practices appear to enhance emotional resilience, concentration, and job satisfaction, conditions conducive to both individual flourishing and constructive workplace dynamics. Drawing on documentary analysis and practitioner accounts, the study synthesised traditional Buddhist teachings with contemporary psychological theory to underpin these mechanisms.

The principal practical output is a concise, four-part daily intervention model designed to promote sustained, low-burden mindfulness across the workday: (1) morning mindful listening to set intentionality, (2) brief mindful hand movements during meetings to anchor attention, (3) listening to Dhamma or reflective audio during the commute to consolidate perspective, and (4) mindful bowing before sleep to foster emotional closure. Each element was selected for its simplicity, cultural resonance, and potential for integration into diverse professional contexts.

Academically, the research contributes a culturally informed bridge between Buddhist contemplative practices and workplace well-being science. Practically, it offers an accessible, scalable template for organizations seeking low-cost strategies to enhance employee happiness and resilience. Given the study's qualitative scope and modest sample, future research should evaluate the model's effectiveness using larger, controlled, and longitudinal designs, examine organizational implementation pathways, and explore cultural adaptations across industries. Overall, the proposed intervention presents a promising, evidence-informed approach for cultivating sustained well-being among working populations.

Suggestions

As a preventive intervention, it has the potential to strengthen emotional regulation, reduce burnout risk, and enhance job satisfaction and workplace engagement.

For practitioners and stakeholders, recommended actions include:

- (1) Pilot adoption within Human Resources and employee-assistance programs to assess feasibility and acceptability.
- (2) Incorporation into leadership and teacher training to promote empathetic supervision and classroom resilience.
- (3) Deployment through community health and NGO initiatives targeting working adults. Policy makers and organizational leaders should consider embedding micro-mindfulness modules in professional development portfolios and occupational health guidelines to support population-level well-being.

Future research should rigorously evaluate the model's effectiveness and generalizability. Priority studies include randomized controlled trials and longitudinal or mixed-methods designs across varied age cohorts, occupational sectors, and cultural contexts to establish causal impact and durability of effects.

Measurement should span psychological outcomes (happiness, emotional regulation, burnout), organizational indicators (absenteeism, performance, retention), and process metrics (adherence, acceptability). Finally, investigating digital delivery, mobile apps, podcasts, and blended e-learning would clarify how technology can increase accessibility, support sustained practice, and enhance scalability while preserving the model's cultural integrity. Collectively, these steps will determine the model's utility as a practical, evidence-informed approach to fostering sustained well-being among working populations.

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An Analytical Study of the Metaphor Method in Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra

Trinh Thi Thu Thao¹ Phramaha Anon Anando² Ven. Nguyen Anh Tuan³

International Buddhist Studies Colleges, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University^{1,2,3}

Corresponding author email: trinthithuthao@ibsc.mcu.ac.th¹

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Abstract

This study employs qualitative document analysis to investigate the metaphorical method in Buddhist scriptures, with particular emphasis on the Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra (Chinese version). The research pursues three objectives: (1) to examine the use of metaphor in Buddhist scriptures; (2) to explore the historical and textual background of the Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra; and (3) to analyze the application of metaphorical methods within this text.

The findings indicate that metaphors are widely employed across Theravāda, Sctarian, and Mahāyāna traditions as pedagogical tools that enhance the persuasiveness, memorability, and accessibility of Buddhist teachings. By framing abstract philosophical concepts in familiar images, metaphors function as an effective means of communication, fostering both intellectual understanding and spiritual engagement among listeners and practitioners. Regarding the Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra, the study highlights its historical and cultural context, including its transmission, linguistic background, and the intellectual exchange between Bhikṣu Nāgasena and King Milinda. This dialogue not only demonstrates the philosophical depth of Buddhist reasoning but also reveals the sūtra's reliance on metaphor as a didactic device. The analysis further shows that metaphors in the text are organized thematically and doctrinally, serving to simplify intricate doctrines, reinforce memory, and stimulate reflection. Beyond their rhetorical function, these metaphors provide insight into Buddhist hermeneutics and teaching strategies, underscoring the enduring role of metaphor in bridging philosophical abstraction with experiential understanding.

This study affirms that the metaphor method in the Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra represents a distinctive mode of Buddhist pedagogy, one that integrates

philosophical rigor with accessible communication, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on Buddhist literary and educational traditions.

Keywords: Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra, Metaphor method, Mahāyana, Theravāda, Sarvastivāda.

Introduction

The metaphor has long been recognized as a central device in religious discourse, functioning not merely as ornament but as a cognitive and pedagogical resource that renders abstract doctrines intelligible and experientially salient (Gibbs, 1994; Kövecses, 2010). In Buddhist literature, metaphorical and simile-based exposition (Pāli *upamā*, Sanskrit *upamāna*) is prominent across traditions, from early Pāli discourses to later Mahāyāna exegesis, where teachers repeatedly rely on everyday images to convey notions such as non-self (*anattā*), dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), and liberation (*Nirvāṇa*) (Hecker, 2009; Pye, 2003). This study examines that pedagogical dynamic by focusing on the Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra (NBS), the Chinese counterpart to the *Milindapañha*. Theoretical frameworks from cognitive linguistics and rhetoric inform the present inquiry. Gibbs' typology: (a) the inexpressibility function, (b) the compactness hypothesis, and (c) the vividness hypothesis, provides a useful lens for understanding why metaphors repeatedly appear in doctrinal dialogues: they allow speakers to articulate otherwise inarticulable insights, to compress complex claims into memorable formulations, and to enliven propositional content so it invites affective as well as intellectual uptake (Gibbs, 1994). Complementing this, Kövecses' account situates metaphors as entrenched conceptual mappings that structure thought and learning; from this vantage, metaphor in Buddhist teaching is not merely rhetorical flourish but a cognitive tool that shapes how adherents conceptualize and internalize doctrinal material (Kövecses, 2010). Classical treatments of metaphor (e.g., Richards' reading of Aristotle) and lexicographic definitions (Hornby, 2010) further clarify the linguistic mechanics by which metaphor affects a transfer of meaning from familiar domains to unfamiliar or abstract targets (Richards, 1965).

Textually, the *Milindapañha* tradition, both in its Indic Pāli witnesses and in the Chinese recension preserved in the Taishō Tripiṭaka, provides a paradigmatic setting for exploring metaphor-as-pedagogy because its dialogical form explicitly

stages question-and-answer exchanges in which Nāgasena repeatedly uses similes and metaphors to elucidate doctrine (Rhys Davids, 1890; Takakusu & Watanabe, 1924–1934). Recent scholarship has renewed attention to the Chinese recension: annotated translations and philological studies (Xing, 2007; Anālayo Bhikkhu, 2021) map textual variants and highlight how rhetorical strategies, including metaphor, are shaped by transmission history, linguistic choice, and audience expectations. Comparative analyses, chiefly Thích Minh Châu’s contrastive study of the Pāli and Chinese texts, demonstrate that differences in wording and metaphor deployment often reflect divergent pedagogical emphases and cultural adaptation rather than simple mistranslation (Minh Chau, 1999).

Building on these theoretical and textual foundations, this paper argues that a focused analysis of the metaphor method in the Chinese NBS contributes both to Buddhist philology and to contemporary pedagogical reflection. By (a) situating metaphors within the dialogical structure of the text, (b) classifying recurrent metaphor types, and (c) interpreting their doctrinal and pragmatic functions, the study seeks to show how Nāgasena’s image-based expositions operate as *upāya*, skillful means, that bridge doctrinal abstraction and lived experience (Pye, 2003). In doing so, the research not only illuminates a distinctive instance of Buddhist pedagogy but also supplies conceptual tools for translating these ancient teaching strategies into modern educational and therapeutic contexts where accessible, image-based instruction fosters comprehension and ethical practice.

Research Objectives

1. To study the metaphor method in Buddhist Scriptures.
2. To study the background and origin of the *Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra*.
3. To analyze the metaphor method in the *Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra*.

Literature Review

Scholarship on the Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra (NBS) and the broader Milindapañha corpus has primarily focused on four key, interrelated domains. These include: (1) the dialogical exchange between King Milinda and Nāgasena; (2) the origin and textual history of the Chinese NBS; (3) the provenance and editorial status of the Taishō Tripiṭaka witness; and (4) the rhetorical and pedagogical use of metaphor within the dialogue (Anālayo Bhikkhu, 2021; Xing, 2007). Historical and

philological studies have highlighted the Milinda material as a significant site for reconstructing cross-cultural Buddhist exchange. For example, Tarn's (1938) classic study situates the figure of Milinda within the broader Hellenistic milieu of Bactria and explores the possible historical contexts for the dialogues. In a similar vein, Rhys Davids' (1890) authoritative Pāli translations remain the principal reference for the classical Milindapañha. David's work demonstrates how Nāgasena consistently employs similes and metaphors to render abstruse doctrines, such as anattā (non-self) and karma, into concrete, everyday images.

Comparative and annotated translations of the Chinese NBS also emphasize both continuities and divergences from the Pāli witnesses. Xing's (2007) annotated English translation of the Chinese recension elucidates textual variants and highlights recurrent metaphorical strategies. In a similar, Anālayo Bhikkhu's (2021) recent edition and commentary consolidate philological parallels and divergences, arguing that metaphor functions centrally as a means of doctrinal communication in the Chinese text. Thích Minh Châu's (1999) comparative study explicitly contrasts Pāli and Chinese renderings, drawing attention to differences in rhetorical emphasis and simile deployment that reflect cultural and linguistic adaptation.

The pedagogical significance of metaphor in Buddhist discourse, particularly in their investigations of upāya (skillful means) and the use of similes. Pye's (2003) analysis of upāya in Mahāyāna contexts shows how teachers tailor rhetorical devices to diverse audiences, which helps explain why metaphor recurs as a didactic tool across traditions. This is further supported by Hecker's (2009) survey of similes in the Pāli Canon, which underscores the role of figurative language in making doctrinal teaching affectively and cognitively salient. From a cognitive-linguistic perspective, Kövecses' (2010) model of conceptual metaphor supports this functional view by demonstrating that metaphors structure thought and learning rather than merely ornamenting speech.

Existing research on the Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra has primarily focused on the Pāli and Sanskrit versions, largely overlooking the Chinese Taishō recension as a unique text for studying teaching methods. Key gaps remain: there's no systematic classification or functional analysis of the metaphors within the Chinese version, and there's a lack of empirical research on how effective these metaphors are for teaching and learning. This study will fill these gaps by analyzing the metaphorical strategies

in the Chinese NBS to better understand how figurative language is used as a teaching tool in this important Mahayana text.

Conceptual Framework

The researcher defines the study's conceptual framework based on the theory of metaphor used as a tool in explaining the complex ideas of the Buddha's teachings in NBS. The details are as follows:

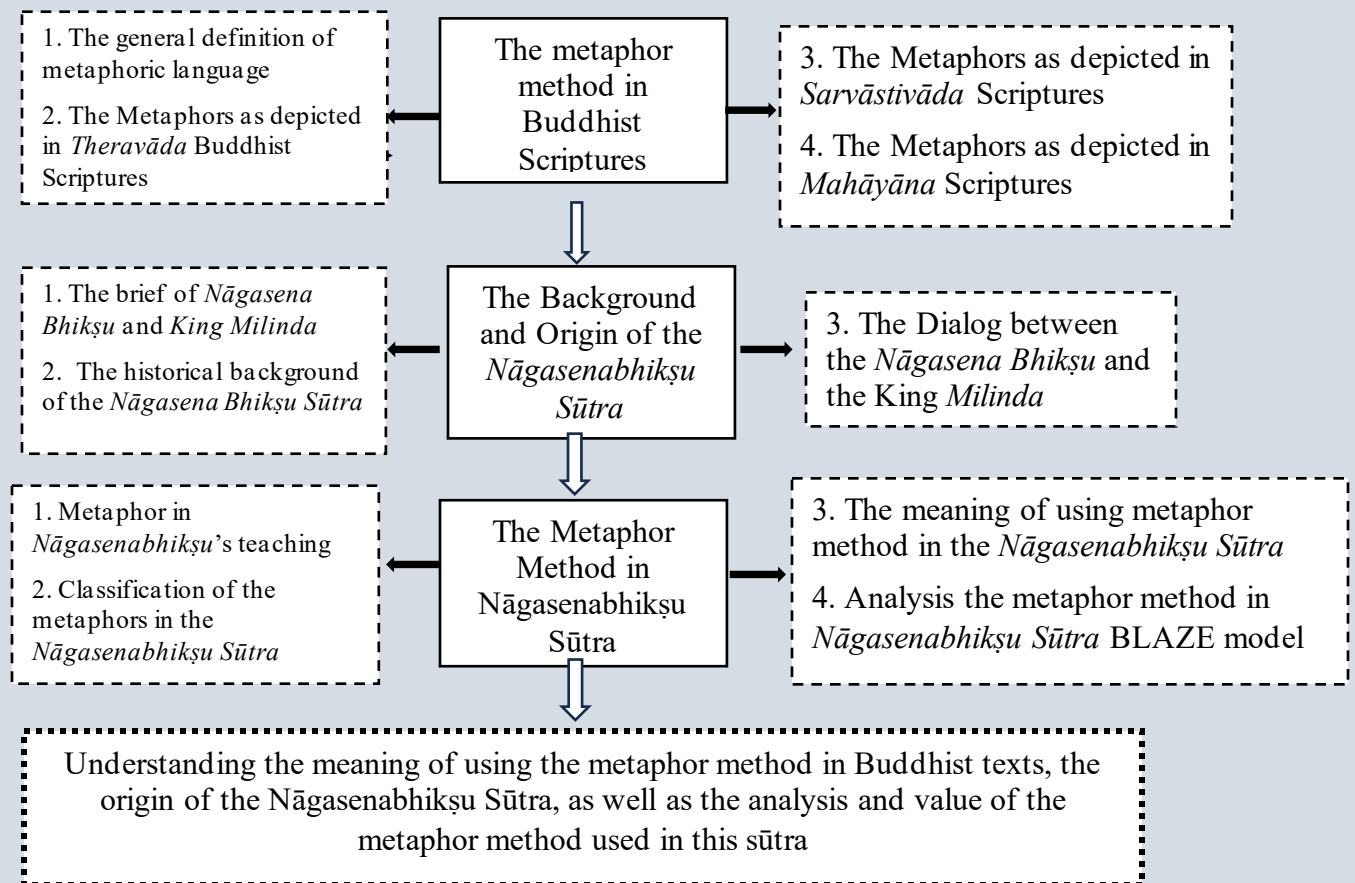


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This research is qualitative and employs documentary research to achieve the following objectives: (1) studying the metaphor method in Buddhist scriptures; (2) examining the background and origin of the *Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra*; and (3) analyzing the metaphor method in the *Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra*. The research methodology can be divided into four stages as follows:

Step 1: Data Collection and Analysis

The *Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra* (NBS) is the primary source, existing in the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (大正新脩大藏經; *Taishō Tripiṭaka*), Volume 32, text number 1670B, consisting of three fascicles. The text was accessed through the digital database of the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA). Other sources include *Theravāda* texts, *Sarvāstivāda* literature, *Mahāyāna* scriptures, commentaries, textbooks, theses, dissertations, scholarly books, journal articles, and online resources.

Step 2: Data Compilation and Organization

The process involves collecting references on the concept of metaphors from *Theravāda*, *Sarvāstivāda*, and *Mahāyāna* texts. Then, documents are gathered to present the historical and context of NBS, with a focus on the NBS from the *Taishō Tripiṭaka*. Lastly, the metaphor method in NBS is analyzed, counting all metaphors and identifying key examples.

Step 3: Analysis of the Metaphor Method in the NBS

This process analyzes how *Nāgasenabhikṣu* employs metaphor to explain the Buddhist concepts such as *karma*, *ānatta*, and impermanence, at the same time identifying and describing key metaphorical examples in the NBS, such as the “chariot” for non-self, to explore their symbolic meanings and contextual relevance. Counting the metaphors and classifying them by Buddhist doctrines and thematic groups. This study analyzes how metaphors explain the Buddhist’s teaching within the debate between *Nāgasenabhikṣu* and King *Milinda* and analyzes the dialogue structure of the NBS as a pedagogical model.

Step 4: Conclusion, Discussion, and Suggestions

The research findings are summarized, highlighted, and suggested for future research and pedagogical application of metaphors in Buddhist studies.

Research Results

Objective 1: The study demonstrates that metaphor is a vital pedagogical and rhetorical tool across Buddhist traditions. Drawing from classical theories of metaphor (Aristotle; Kövecses, 2010) and the Pāli term *upamā*, the findings show that metaphors clarify complex concepts such as *dukkha* (suffering), *anattā* (non-

self), karma, and nirvāṇa. Within Theravāda, Sectarian, and Mahāyāna Buddhism, metaphors enhance persuasiveness, relatability, and memorability, engaging both listeners and practitioners. Illustrative examples include the simile of the “dirty cloth” (Ñāṇamoli Bhikkhu & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1995) and “purifying gold” (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012), which convey mental purification, and parables in the Lotus Sūtra, which articulate Buddha-nature and upāya. However, metaphors appear less frequently in Sarvāstivāda texts, which emphasize analytical and technical exposition.

Objective 2: The background of the Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra (NBS) situates its compilation around the late 2nd to 1st century BCE, shortly after King Menander’s reign (Rhys Davids, 1890/1894; Guang, 2007; Bodhi, 2012; Bat, 1997). Traditionally linked to the Sarvāstivāda school, it was originally composed in Sanskrit before being translated into multiple languages. The Chinese canon preserves two authoritative versions, NBS-1670A and NBS-1670B, in the Taishō Tripitaka (大正新脩大藏經), with translation dated to the Eastern Jin dynasty (317–420 CE) (Bat, 1997; Nanjio, 1883; Law, 2000). Though the translator’s identity remains uncertain, the Taishō Edition records both versions, and this study employs NBS-1670B, consisting of two fascicles.

Objective 3: Metaphors identified in Fascicles I–III of the NBS reveal systematic organization by doctrinal themes. These metaphors illuminate core Buddhist teachings, including non-self (*anatta*), the Four Marks of Existence, Skillful Means (*upāya*), liberation (*vimutti*), and the Bodhisattva path, across Theravāda, Sectarian, and Mahāyāna contexts. By translating abstract doctrines into vivid imagery, they guide practitioners toward cognitive clarity, ethical transformation, and spiritual realization.

Table 1: Metaphor Counts by Buddhist Doctrines

Buddhist Doctrine	Fascicle 1	Fascicle 2	Fascicle 3	Total
Reincarnation (<i>Saṃsāra</i>)	4	4	0	8
Threefold Training	10	0	0	10
Four Marks of Existence	4	4	1	8
Four Means of Embracing Others	1	0	0	1
Four Right Efforts	5	0	0	5

Buddhist Doctrine	Fascicle 1	Fascicle 2	Fascicle 3	Total
Six <i>Pāramitās</i>	1	0	0	1
Eightfold Path	7	0	0	7
Four Noble Truths	0	1	2	3
Law of Karma and Its Results	0	15	0	15
Dependent Origination	0	14	0	14
Five Aggregates	0	2	0	2
Five Spiritual Faculties	0	2	0	2
Seven Factors of Enlightenment	0	1	1	2
The Body in Buddhism	0	0	3	3
Karma and Rebirth	0	0	10	10
<i>Anattā</i> (Non-Self)	0	0	1	1
<i>Upāya-kauśalya</i> (Skillful Means)	0	0	1	1
Liberation (<i>Vimutti</i>)	0	0	1	1
TOTAL METAPHORS	32	43	20	95
TOTAL DOCTRINES				18

This table shows the number of metaphors for each of the 18 Buddhist doctrines and the number of doctrines per fascicle

The total of 95 metaphors is concerned with 18 Buddhist doctrines. The first fascicle has 32 metaphors, emphasizing the Threefold Training and the Noble Eightfold Path. The second fascicle has 43 metaphors, focusing on the Law of Cause and Effect and Dependent Origination. The third fascicle has 20 metaphors, focusing on Karma and Rebirth, the Body in Buddhism, and Skillful Means. Besides, the 95 metaphors from three fascicles are divided into five distinct groups. The categories follow the definitions in the document: Human relates to individuals, actions, or social roles; Plant refers to flowers, seeds, or plants; Animal refers to animal behavior or characteristics; and objects related to man-made tools. Natural phenomena describe earth, fire, or water.

Table 2 shows the number of metaphors in each thematic group across fascicles. These metaphors are explored across the three fascicles in NBS in relation to activities in everyday experiences, clarifying complex doctrines and inspiring practitioners to engage deeply with the spiritual path.

Table 2: Metaphor Counts by Thematic Groups

Thematic Group	Fascicle 1	Fascicle 2	Fascicle 3	Total
Human	17	15	9	41
Plant	2	5	2	9
Animal	1	3	2	6
Object	8	14	6	28
Natural Phenomenon	4	6	1	11
TOTAL	32	43	20	95

Discussion

This analysis of metaphor in the Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra (Taishō recension) within existing philological, hermeneutical, and cognitive-linguistic scholarship clarifies the study’s novel contributions. Previous work has established the textual contours and comparative value of the Milindapañha tradition: classical Pāli treatments and English translations provide the canonical dialogical frame (Davids, 1890, 1894), while the Taishō Tripiṭaka (大正新脩大藏經; Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō) remains the standard East Asian witness for comparative work (Takakusu & Watanabe, 1924). Annotated translations and philological studies of the Chinese recension elucidate textual variants and rhetorical patterns that shape how metaphor functions in that milieu (Xing, 2007; Anālayo Bhikkhu, 2021). Comparative studies (Minh Chau, 1999) further demonstrate that shifts in wording and simile deployment often reflect deliberate pedagogical adaptation rather than mere mistranslation.

Building on these foundations, the present study advances two interlocking contributions. First, it provides a systematic typology of metaphors in the Chinese NBS, classifying recurrent image types (e.g., chariot, raft, lamp) and mapping them against doctrinal targets such as anattā, pratītyasamutpāda, and Nirvāṇa. Second, it interprets these metaphors as functional upāya (skillful means), showing how image-based exposition bridges cognitive distance, scaffolds memory, and orients ethical behavior (Pye, 2003). This pragmatic emphasis complements descriptive philology

(Rhys Davids, 1890; Xing, 2007; Anālayo Bhikkhu, 2021) and enriches rhetorical readings of simile in the Pāli corpus (Hecker, 2009) by integrating insights from cognitive metaphor theory (Gibbs, 1994; Kövecses, 2010).

Methodologically, cross-witness comparison reveals both continuity—shared metaphors that serve consistent didactic aims, and local adaptation, instances where metaphors are reworked or omitted in the Chinese text, reflecting different pedagogical priorities (Anālayo Bhikkhu, 2021). Interpreting these patterns as editorial and pedagogical signals allows the study to move beyond cataloguing toward reconstructing how communities shaped doctrinal communication.

The pedagogical implications are twofold. Textually emergent models (here described as the BLAZE sequence: questioning, image-based exposition, analysis, application) show how structured dialogue leverages metaphors to elicit inquiry, concretize doctrine, and foster practice processes resonant with embodied and experiential learning theories. Practically, this suggests viable applications in contemporary education and therapy, where metaphor-driven dialogue can promote conceptual grasp and ethical transformation.

Knowledge from the Research

The research provides a concept of metaphor that is examined from multiple scholarly perspectives, including those of Aristotle and Kövecses, as well as the notion of *upamā*, which originates from the Pāli term. These definitions are presented to provide a comprehensive understanding of this language. From this foundation, the study assesses its significant role within Buddhism in conveying the complex ideas of Buddha’s teachings through examples from the *Theravāda*, *Sarvastivada*, and *Mahāyāna* schools. They help individuals transcend dualistic thinking and focus on the experiential and transformative aspects of the Buddhist path.

Through the survey of the background and history of the NBS to gain knowledge of the date and the place and date of its compilation. Furthermore, finding and sorting metaphors in NBS to see clearly the value of using the metaphor method in Buddhist dialogue.

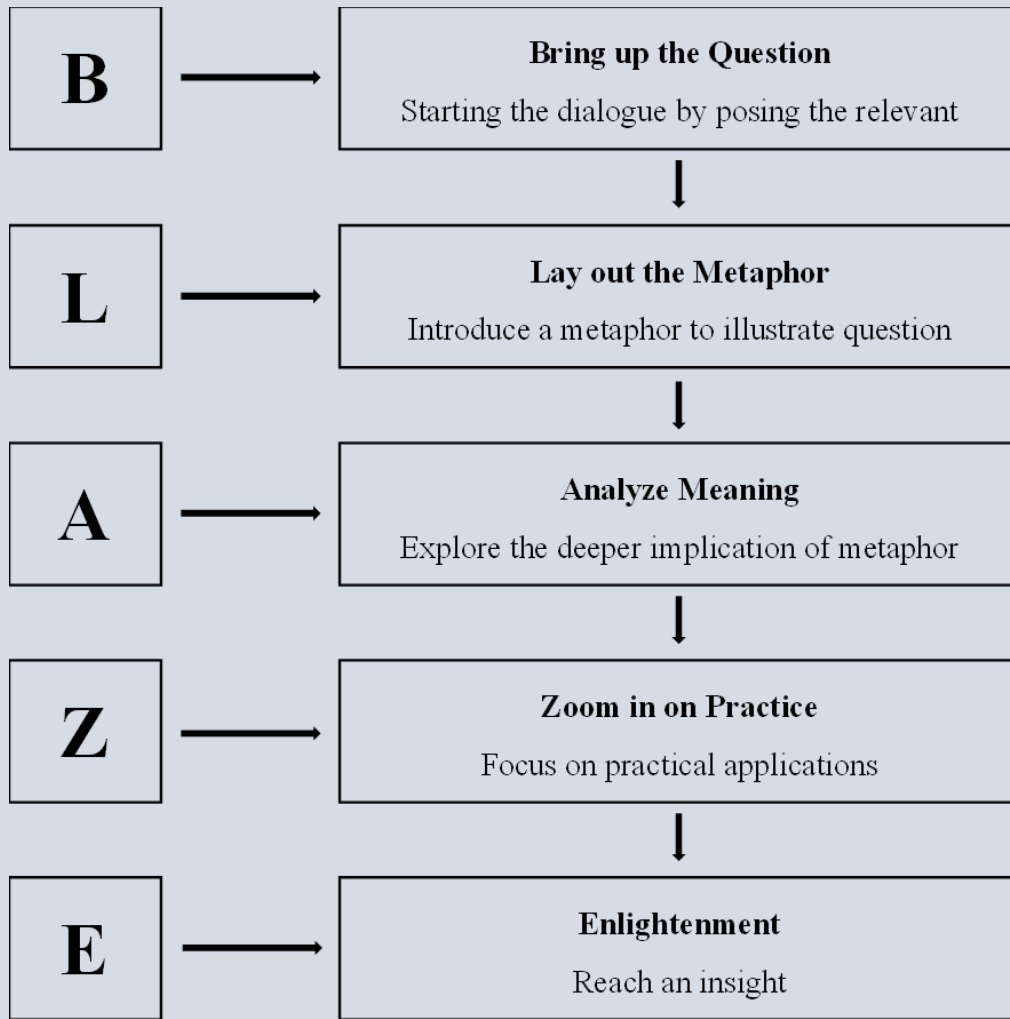


Figure 2: The BLAZE model in *Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra*

The BLAZE structure is a pedagogical dialogue analysis model specifically designed for philosophical and religious literature, where the goal ranges from simple communication of knowledge to the transformation of awareness. The dialogue cultivates knowledge, enhances mental processes, and directs the listener towards enlightenment. The term ‘BLAZE’ is a meaningful metaphor, not just an abbreviation. When taken in its literal sense, the word ‘blaze’ refers to a brilliant flame, which evokes powerful, spreading images; when interpreted figuratively, it stands for the light of knowledge, a breakthrough in vision, and deep comprehension, which are symbolized by the light of insight, the inner illumination when the truth is realized. This model reflects the process that occurs during a profound Buddhist discourse and throughout the NBS, which is an acronym representing five steps:

Bring up the Question, Lay Out the Metaphor, Analyze Meaning, Zoom in on Practice, and Enlightenment.

This theoretical model allows a process that progresses from questioning to introspection, from visualizing to contemplating, and from logical analysis to intuitive knowledge via the form of conversation.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the metaphorical method in the Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra functions as far more than rhetorical ornamentation: it is an integral pedagogical strategy that renders abstruse doctrinal content intelligible, memorable, and practically applicable. By translating abstract principles into concrete, everyday images, the sūtra's metaphors reduce cognitive distance between philosophical propositions and lived experience, thereby facilitating comprehension, recollection, and ethical enactment in daily practice.

The sūtra's dialogical structure, here characterized by the BLAZE model, operates as a staged pedagogical sequence in which critical questioning by the learner prompts expository clarification from the teacher, who employs familiar imagery to scaffold reflection and further analysis. Through iterative explication and examination of these metaphors, listeners gain not only conceptual clarity but also procedural insight into methods of introspection and mindful conduct. In this way, the BLAZE-informed dialogue cultivates capacities for inquiry, attentive listening, reflective practice, and transformative application, with mindfulness positioned as the central vehicle for attaining sustained well-being.

Practical implications extend beyond classical exegesis: the metaphor method and its dialogical enactment are readily adaptable to contemporary educational, communal, and therapeutic contexts. When incorporated into pedagogy, the model encourages students to formulate productive questions, make conceptual-experimental connections, and translate insight into ethical action. In community and therapeutic settings, the same dynamics—deep listening, evocative imagery, and guided reflection—support relational repair, moral cultivation, and collective resilience.

Suggestions

This research has discovered crucial knowledge about the metaphor method in the *Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra* (NBS) and the BLAZE model in Buddhist dialogue which is found out from NBS. The important thing is the effective use of metaphors to simplify complex Buddhist concepts, which can be applied to modern educational and therapeutic contexts.

Future research should empirically evaluate the pedagogical effectiveness of the BLAZE model across different learning environments and cultural settings, and investigate how specific classes of metaphor function cognitively and affectively in the process of moral and contemplative formation. Overall, the *Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra*'s metaphor method exemplifies a robust, tradition-informed pedagogy that bridges philosophical rigor with accessible, practice-oriented instruction.

Future studies exploring the metaphor method in Buddhist dialogue could exploit the following perspectives:

1. Comparison of the Metaphor Method Between the *Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra* and *Milindapañha*.
2. Exploring the Knowledge of the Metaphor Method in the Other Treatises of *Sarvāstivāda* Literatures.
3. Applying the Metaphor Method in *Nāgasenabhikṣu Sūtra* on Buddhist Propagation in Modern Times.

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An Analytical Study of the Relationship Between Gross National Happiness (GNH) of Bhutan and Buddhist Peaceful Means

Kinley Gyemo¹ Phramaha Weerasak Abhinandavedi² Ven. Ugyen Tshering³

International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.^{1,2,3}

Corresponding author email: Kinleygyemo37@gmail.com¹

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between Gross National Happiness (GNH) of Bhutan and Buddhist Peaceful Means through a documentary analysis approach. The research focuses on three objectives: (1) the concepts and theories of GNH, (2) the role of Buddhist Peaceful Means in fostering happiness, and (3) the interconnection between GNH and Buddhist principles. Data were collected from primary Buddhist scriptures, Bhutanese policy documents, and scholarly literature, and analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis.

Key findings:

1. GNH concept and theory. GNH frames development around four pillars: good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation, and uses nine domains to measure multidimensional well-being; the 2008 democratic transition institutionalized these principles in state policy.

2. Buddhist peaceful means. Core practices, ethical conduct, mindfulness, loving-kindness (mettā), and bodhicitta, address the Three Poisons (desire, hatred, ignorance) and foster individual and communal well-being.

3. Interconnection. GNH and Buddhist peaceful means are mutually reinforcing: policy instruments reflect Buddhist ethical priorities, while contemplative ethics support the social conditions necessary for GNH outcomes.

The study concludes that Bhutan's model exemplifies a reciprocal integration of institutional design and moral formation, suggesting that durable national well-being depends on coordinated policy instruments alongside programs that cultivate ethical and contemplative capacities. Future research should employ mixed methods and field-based inquiry to assess causal pathways from spiritual practice to measurable well-being outcomes.

Keywords: Gross National Happiness (GNH); Buddhist Peaceful Means; Holistic Development; Governance and Spirituality.

Introduction

Happiness and well-being have long occupied central positions in philosophical, psychological, and policy debates. Classical accounts, most notably Aristotle's notion of eudaimonia, connect human flourishing to virtue and purposive activity, while contemporary psychological frameworks distinguish hedonic pleasure from eudaimonic functioning and emphasize autonomy, competence, and relatedness as core needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In policy terms, however, national progress has traditionally been framed by single-dimensional economic metrics such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH) constitutes an influential counterproposal: first articulated by King Jigme Singye Wangchuck in 1972, GNH reconceptualizes development by prioritizing collective well-being and sustainability over narrow economic growth (Ura et al., 2012a).

Operationalized through four pillars, good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation, alongside nine domains and multiple indicators, GNH offers a multidimensional measurement architecture that integrates subjective and objective aspects of welfare (Ura et al., 2012). The framework's prominence has grown beyond Bhutan; international agencies and scholarly commentators increasingly cite GNH as a normative and practical alternative to GDP-centric policymaking (UNDP, 2019). Nonetheless, scholarship to date has mainly examined GNH's institutional design, measurement properties, and international diffusion, leaving under-explored the doctrinal and practical role of Buddhism in shaping the moral foundations of Bhutanese governance.

Buddhist peaceful means, understood here as ethical conduct, meditative cultivation, and the altruistic orientation of bodhicitta, constitute a significant component of the normative ecology that informs Bhutanese public life. Canonical and post-canonical texts emphasize practices such as loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), and restraint from harmful actions as dispositions that reduce suffering and foster social trust (Rinpoche, 1998; Śāntideva, 1997). Empirically, Bhutan's policy instruments, ranging from curricular reforms to environmental stewardship programs, reveal an institutional reciprocity between GNH metrics and Buddhist ethical norms (Thinley, 1999).

This study, therefore, interrogates the conceptual and practical consonances between GNH and Buddhist peaceful means. Specifically, it (1) traces the theoretical foundations and policy evolution of GNH, (2) analyzes Buddhist ethical and contemplative practices as mechanisms for individual and communal well-being, and (3) assesses the extent to which Buddhist values are operationalized within Bhutan's governance architecture. By bridging

development theory, religious ethics, and policy analysis, the research contributes to debates on alternative development paradigms and offers empirically grounded insights into how spirituality and institutional design can be integrated to promote sustainable, culturally resonant well-being. Given contemporary challenges, urbanization, youth unemployment, and cultural change, understanding this integration is both timely and policy-relevant for states seeking more holistic measures of progress (Dorji, 2021).

Research Objectives

1. To study the concept and theories of Gross National Happiness (GNH) in Bhutan
2. To study Buddhist Peaceful Means in promoting happiness and peace
3. To analyze the relationship between Gross National Happiness (GNH) and Buddhist Peaceful Means

Literature Review

The literature on Gross National Happiness (GNH) and its philosophico-ethical foundations converges on two interrelated claims: first, that GNH provides a multidimensional alternative to GDP-centred development metrics; and second, that Buddhist ethical and contemplative traditions constitute a normative substrate that both informs and legitimates GNH in practice. Foundational work by Ura, Alkire, Zangmo, and Wangdi (2012a, 2012b) frames GNH as a policy architecture designed to measure and promote collective flourishing by integrating material and spiritual dimensions of life. In *A Short Guide to the Gross National Happiness Index*, Ura et al. (2012a) argue that GNH “measures the quality of a country more holistically than Gross National Product” and operationalizes this claim through four pillars and multiple subjective and objective indicators. Their extended analysis further documents how successive political actors have invoked GNH as “development with values,” thereby codifying ethical considerations into institutional practice (Ura et al., 2012b, p. 43).

Bhutanese political actors and policy documents reinforce this intertwining of values and governance. Former Prime Minister Jigmi Y. Thinley’s public addresses emphasize the distinction between transient affective states and enduring forms of happiness grounded in service, harmony with nature, and cultivated wisdom (Thinley, 2009). Thinley’s formulation both echoes and operationalizes the claims of GNH advocates by linking ethical dispositions to concrete policy arenas such as education and environmental stewardship.

Scholarship examining the doctrinal underpinnings of GNH points to classical and modern Buddhist sources that foreground altruism, ethical discipline, and mental cultivation as prerequisites for social harmony (Patrul Rinpoche, 1998; Śāntideva, 1997). Patrul Rinpoche's instruction on boundless impartiality and loving-kindness highlights the psychological mechanisms, reduction of self-centred desire, cultivation of care, that plausibly translate into prosocial behaviours and civic trust. Such textual materials provide a moral psychology that complements the institutional measures advanced by GNH architects: whereas the index quantifies domains of welfare, and Buddhist practice addresses the dispositional causes of well-being.

Broader philosophical treatments of happiness further situate GNH within a cross-cultural discourse on virtue and self-transcendence. Popular syntheses such as *The Philosophy Book* (Buckingham, 2011) collect classical aphorisms linking happiness to ego-transcendence and self-knowledge, thereby resonating with Buddhist emphases on reducing clinging and cultivating insight. These philosophical parallels strengthen arguments that GNH is not an idiosyncratic policy fad but part of a longer intellectual lineage organizing ideas about flourishing.

Despite this convergence, the literature also reveals important gaps. Empirical evaluations of how Buddhist ethical education, monastic practice, or contemplative programs concretely affect GNH indicators remain limited. Similarly, comparative work that tests the transferability of Bhutan's value-driven model to pluralistic or secular contexts is nascent. Collectively, the reviewed sources establish a persuasive theoretical synthesis, linking institutional design and moral cultivation—but they also point to the need for mixed-methods research that can trace causal pathways from spiritual practice to measurable social outcomes.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the research article exhibits the significant research process in terms of input, process, and output, as shown in Figure 1.

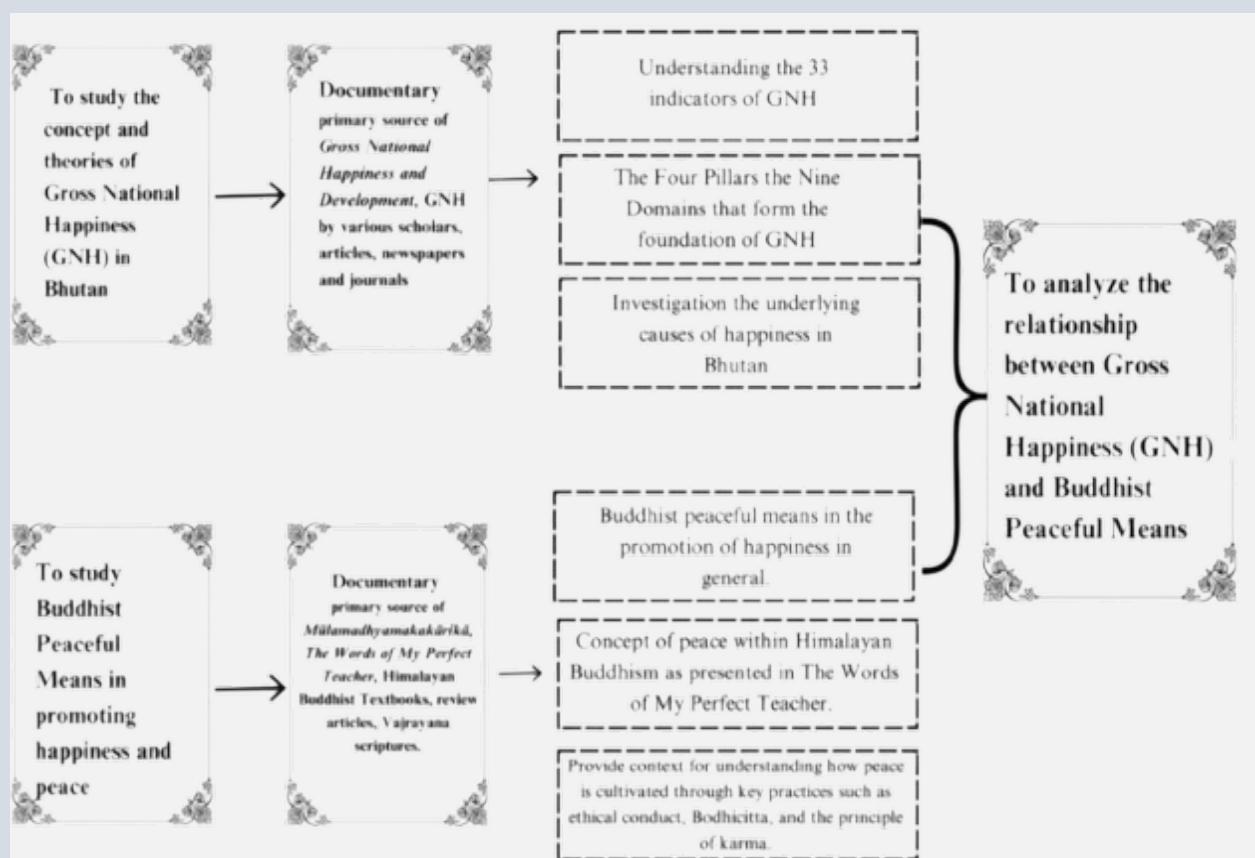


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

The researcher is going to break down the research methodology into the following three sections for simplicity of comprehension:

Research Design: This research project is a specific kind of textual investigation, and the researcher will utilize the documentary research methodology

Data Collection: Document search and data collection from the primary source of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, Commentaries and Sub-commentaries. As well as Himalayan Buddhist textbooks (review articles, online database), research works, and journals, respectively, together with the later interpretation from modern scholars, e.g., both in the Dharmic and English languages. This is to survey the viewpoint from later literature in a detailed explanation for clearer comprehension.

Study and Analysis: This section involves analyzing and synthesizing the raw and collected data to identify the most compelling insights. Through this

analysis, the research will determine the relationships, differences, and shared values between Gross National Happiness (GNH) and Buddhist peaceful means, shedding light on the broader implications for Bhutan's guiding philosophy and Buddhist practices.

Outline Construction: Developing a structured outline that aligns with the study's objectives, covering key dimensions of Buddhist peaceful means, GNH, and their interconnections for systematic analysis and synthesis.

Problem Discussion: Discussing the problems encountered according to the significance of the studies.

Conclusion and Suggestions: The research will conclude with key findings and recommendations for further research.

Research Results

Objective	Focus	Key Findings
Objective 1	Gross National Happiness (GNH)	Introduced in 1972; emphasizes holistic well-being over GDP; structured through 4 pillars and 9 domains; integrated into Bhutanese governance and internationally recognized.
Objective 2	Buddhist Peaceful Means (BPM)	Emphasizes ethical conduct, Bodhicitta, mindfulness; derived from texts like <i>The Words of My Perfect Teacher</i> ; integrated into Bhutanese culture and policies.
Objective 3	Relationship between GNH and BPM	Both share core values: ethics, well-being, sustainability; differ in methods (quantitative vs. qualitative); together form a holistic model blending governance and spirituality.

Figure 2: Objective, focus, and key finding

Objective 1: This objective examines the historical origins, conceptual architecture, and operational modalities of GNH. The analysis traces the phrase and guiding commitment to GNH to the reign of the Fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, and documents how the philosophy was formalized into an index and policy toolkit by the Centre for Bhutan Studies (Ura, Alkire, Zangmo, & Wangdi, 2012). The objective explicates the four pillars (good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation) and the nine domains used in the GNH Index, and it

interrogates the index's mixed use of subjective (self-reported) and objective indicators to capture psychological well-being, health, education, and ecological resilience (Ura et al., 2012; OPHI, n.d.). It also assesses the constitutional and institutional embedding of GNH, most notably its recognition within the post-2008 constitutional framework and related governance instruments, to evaluate how GNH has been translated from royal guidance into formal policy apparatus (Congress Research Service, 2023). Finally, this objective situates GNH within global debates on development measurement and assesses claims about its influence and transferability in international policy fora (Ura, 2015).

Objective 2: The results showed that Buddhist Peaceful Means play a crucial role in promoting happiness and peace by emphasizing ethical conduct, non-violence, and mindfulness. The study revealed that Buddhist teachings, particularly as outlined in *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, encourage practitioners to cultivate Bodhicitta (the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings) through ethical living, compassion, and wisdom.

The research identified core Buddhist ethical practices, such as avoiding the Ten Negative Actions, taking refuge in the Three Jewels, and understanding the Law of Karma, as essential for fostering personal and societal peace. It was found that Bhutan integrates Buddhist Peaceful Means into its national policies, particularly in environmental conservation and cultural preservation, reinforcing values of respect and sustainability.

Objective 3: The results showed that there is a strong relationship between GNH and Buddhist Peaceful Means. Both frameworks emphasize ethical governance, societal well-being, and sustainable development over material wealth. The research found that while GNH focuses on policy-driven well-being, Buddhist Peaceful Means emphasize personal transformation as a foundation for happiness and peace.

Although distinct in their approaches, the study revealed that these two concepts intersect in their shared values of mindfulness, ethical conduct, and collective harmony. The findings suggest that Bhutan's integration of GNH with Buddhist principles creates a balanced model of national well-being, fostering both external prosperity and internal peace.

Additionally, the study highlighted that GNH and Buddhist Peaceful Means differ in their measurement approaches. GNH uses quantitative indicators like health, education, and governance, while Buddhist Peaceful Means focuses on spiritual progress, including ethics, karma, and enlightenment.

Despite these differences, both share core values centered on ethical living and holistic well-being. Their integration in Bhutan's development model shows how governance and spirituality can work together to promote sustainable national happiness.

Objective	Focus	Summary of Results
Objective 1	Gross National Happiness (GNH)	Introduced in 1972; emphasizes holistic development via 4 pillars and 9 domains; integrated into Bhutanese governance and policy.
Objective 2	Buddhist Peaceful Means (BPM)	Rooted in ethical conduct, mindfulness, and Bodhicitta; drawn from Mahāyāna texts; reflected in Bhutan's cultural and environmental policies.
Objective 3	Relationship between GNH & BPM	Both share ethical and holistic values; differ in methodology (quantitative vs. qualitative); together form a unified development model.

Figure 3: Objective, focus, and summary of results

Discussions

This study's findings situate Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH) firmly within contemporary debates about multidimensional development and human capabilities. Consistent with Amartya Sen's capability approach, which foregrounds people's freedoms and substantive opportunities over narrow income measures, GNH reconceptualizes progress as the expansion of conditions for human flourishing rather than as an aggregate of market transactions (Sen, 1999).
Colorado Mountain College

By operationalizing four pillars and multiple domains, Bhutan's policy framework aligns subjective and objective indicators to capture a more holistic account of well-being (Ura et al., 2012).

Parallel to this institutional reorientation, the study shows that Buddhist peaceful means provide psychospiritual mechanisms that complement structural reforms. Mindfulness, ethical conduct (*sīla*), compassion (*bodhicitta*), and an emphasis on the preciousness of human life cultivate dispositions that reduce maladaptive craving and hostility, thereby strengthening social trust and civic reciprocity, outcomes that complement policy-level interventions. This

observation resonates with scholarship arguing for the inclusion of psychological and subjective well-being in policy design (Diener & Seligman, 2004).

Furthermore, classical and contemporary Buddhist texts validate the moral and practical plausibility of this integration: practices described in canonical and post-canonical sources encourage inner transformation that produces pro-social behavior and resilience, making ethical cultivation a plausible antecedent of many GNH outcomes (Hanh, 1998).

Empirically, the study's documentary evidence suggests reciprocal reinforcement: institutional commitments to equitable education, environmental stewardship, and culture are more sustainable when accompanied by cultural norms and educational programs that inculcate compassion and mindfulness.

In conclusion, the analysis supports a pluralistic conception of development in which institutional design and inner ethical cultivation are mutually constitutive. For policy, this implies that measures to enhance national well-being are likely to be more durable when economic and governance reforms are coupled with culturally rooted values, education, and mental-health or mindfulness programming. Future mixed-method research should evaluate empirically how specific contemplative and ethical interventions moderate the relationship between policy initiatives and measured well-being.

Knowledge from Research

The integration of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and Buddhist Peaceful Means represents a holistic approach to well-being that encompasses both policy-driven national development strategies and individual ethical transformation. This research underscores the interconnectedness between governance and spirituality, illustrating how the principles of GNH and Buddhist Peaceful Means contribute to achieving holistic well-being, happiness, and social harmony. The conceptual framework presented in this study highlights that sustainable development must extend beyond economic growth to incorporate ethical governance, environmental responsibility, and mindfulness-based well-being.

The diagram below visually represents the integration of these two frameworks:

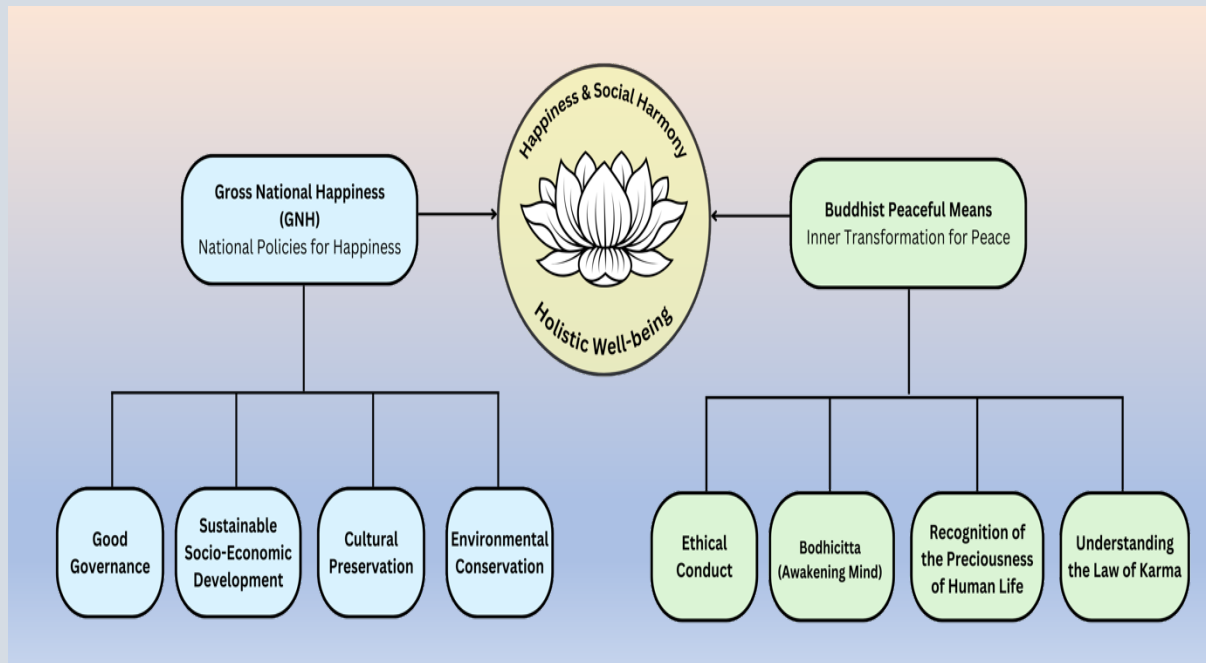


Figure 4: The Integration of GNH & Buddhist Peaceful Means

Gross National Happiness (GNH) constitutes a distinctive development paradigm that reframes national progress beyond narrowly defined economic metrics such as Gross Domestic Product. Rooted in four pillars, good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation, GNH embeds social, cultural, and ecological criteria into public policymaking. By prioritizing human flourishing, community resilience, and long-term sustainability, the GNH framework challenges development models that privilege short-term material growth over collective well-being and social cohesion.

Complementing this institutional orientation, Buddhist peaceful means emphasize interior transformation as a complement to external policy. Core Buddhist principles, *sīla* (ethical conduct), *bodhicitta* (the altruistic intention to benefit others), the recognition of the preciousness of human life, and the doctrine of karma, provide moral and psychological resources for cultivating compassion, restraint, mindfulness, and responsibility. *Sīla* undergirds civic trust and non-harmful social interactions; *bodhicitta* motivates policies that attend to vulnerable populations; a deep appreciation for life fosters gratitude and mental resilience; and karma underscores the long-term consequences of personal and collective action.

The study finds a substantive and reciprocal relationship between GNH and Buddhist peaceful means. Ethical governance is reinforced by values that encourage integrity and accountability; socio-economic strategies informed by compassion tend to promote equity in education, health, and welfare; cultural preservation supports collective identity and psychological stability; and environmental stewardship is sustained by moral commitments to future generations. In short, the convergence of governance structures and spiritual ethics creates mutually reinforcing mechanisms that facilitate both measurable policy outcomes and the less tangible cultivation of social harmony.

This research advances an interdisciplinary model in which institutional design and ethical cultivation operate in tandem to achieve sustainable well-being. For policymakers seeking holistic approaches to development, the findings recommend integrating values education, mindfulness interventions, and culturally informed programming alongside conventional economic and environmental measures. Bhutan's experience offers a transferable exemplar: enduring national happiness depends on coordinated structural reforms and sustained attention to the moral and psychological dimensions of human life.

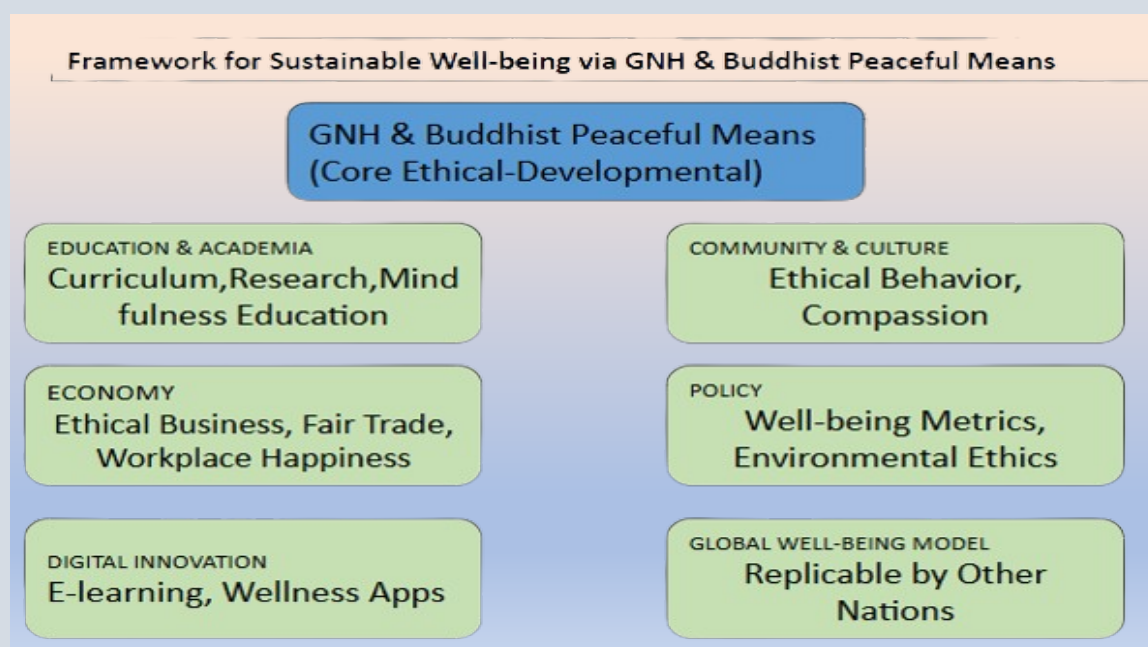


Figure 5 Framework for Sustainable Well-being via GNH & Buddhist Peaceful Means

The integration of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and Buddhist Peaceful Means (BPM) offers a practical framework for sustainable well-being

across key sectors. In academia, the findings can be incorporated into interdisciplinary curricula and published in scholarly platforms. The community can benefit through educational programs that promote mindfulness, ethics, and sustainable living.

In society, the research supports mental health initiatives, ethical leadership, and corporate responsibility. The economic sector can adopt GNH-aligned strategies, such as ethical investments and happiness-driven business models. For policy, governments can implement well-being metrics and incorporate Buddhist values into governance, while international organizations can align these concepts with global sustainability goals.

Digital tools like e-learning and mobile apps can further facilitate the application of GNH and BPM in daily life. Effective implementation depends on cross-sector collaboration, making this integration a replicable model for ethical and holistic development worldwide.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH) framework and Buddhist peaceful means through documentary analysis of primary scriptures, policy documents, and scholarly literature. Across the three research objectives, the findings consistently indicate that GNH and Buddhist ethical teachings share a common orientation toward holistic well-being, ethical living, and social harmony; they operate at different registers (policy vs. spiritual practice) and employ distinct mechanisms for achieving similar ends.

First, the analysis confirms that GNH is a comprehensive development paradigm that privileges collective well-being over narrow economic growth. Grounded in four pillars (good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation) and operationalized through nine domains and thirty-three indicators, GNH frames national progress in terms of human flourishing rather than GDP alone. This institutional architecture positions Bhutan as a distinctive case in which normative values are explicitly embedded in state metrics and policy priorities.

Second, Buddhist peaceful means, articulated through principles such as ethical conduct, non-violence, compassion, mindfulness, and the cultivation of bodhicitta, emerge as substantive pathways to individual and communal peace. These practices address the affective and dispositional roots of suffering (e.g.,

greed, hatred, ignorance) and thereby create the psycho-ethical preconditions for stable social relations and civic trust.

Third, the study demonstrates a strong, mutually reinforcing relationship between GNH and Buddhist peaceful means. Bhutan's policy choices in areas such as education, social welfare, and environmental stewardship exhibit clear consonance with Buddhist values, suggesting that spiritual commitments have informed practical governance strategies. At the same time, GNH translates moral and contemplative ideals into institutional instruments, enabling scalability and accountability in the pursuit of national well-being.

The implications of these findings are twofold. Theoretically, they underscore the viability of value-driven development models that integrate ethical and spiritual resources with policy design. Practically, they suggest that embedding principles of compassion, mindfulness, and ethical governance into public programs can strengthen social cohesion and sustainable development outcomes.

In sum, this study reinforces that Bhutan's GNH is not merely a policy innovation but a lived synthesis of governance and spiritual practice: a pragmatic example of how ethical governance, compassion, and mindfulness can inform national strategies for collective happiness.

Suggestions

This research has found that Buddhist peaceful means play a fundamental role in shaping Gross National Happiness (GNH) by integrating ethical conduct, mindfulness, and compassion into national well-being policies. The important thing is that GNH is not merely an economic or policy framework but a holistic development approach rooted in Buddhist principles. This understanding can be applied to developing governance models that balance material progress with ethical and spiritual well-being, ensuring that economic growth does not come at the cost of cultural preservation and environmental sustainability.

Limitations of this research include its reliance on documentary sources and the consequent lack of primary empirical data on the lived experiences of GNH policies. Future research should undertake mixed-methods and comparative studies, including fieldwork, interviews, and longitudinal assessments, to evaluate how Buddhist peaceful means translate into measurable improvements in well-being and to test the transferability of Bhutan's model to other socio-political contexts.

Furthermore, greater importance should be given to the practical application of Buddhist peaceful means in contemporary policymaking, social conflict resolution, and mental well-being programs. Integrating Buddhist ethical teachings into education, workplace ethics, and leadership training could enhance societal harmony and sustainable development.

For the next research issue, further studies should explore how other nations can adapt the GNH model while considering cultural, political, and economic differences. Additionally, research should be conducted on the long-term impacts of GNH policies on Bhutanese youth, economic sustainability, and globalization challenges, ensuring that GNH continues to serve as an effective development model for future generations.

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The Practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Theravada Buddhism within Contemporary Society in Vietnam

Thanh Phuc Doan¹ Phramaha Nantakorn Piyabhani² Sanu Mahatthanadull³

International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University ^{1,2,3}

Corresponding author email: doanthanhphuc195@gmail.com¹

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Abstract

This study examines the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna) in Theravada Buddhism within contemporary Vietnamese society. Three objectives guided the investigation: (1) to identify problematic conditions that impede practice in Vietnam; (2) to analyze canonical articulations of the Four Foundations, with emphasis on the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta; and (3) to propose practical, context-sensitive guidelines to support sustainable practice. Qualitative data were collected via focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with practitioners, monastic teachers, and retreat organizers. Data analysis combined SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) and thematic content analysis.

Results show that mindfulness practices are increasingly adopted for mental and physical well-being but are constrained by inconsistent meditation models, scarcity of experienced mentors, and internal and external distractions, such as unsupportive environments, social obligations, and variable retreat conditions, that undermine insight (vipassanā) development. Canonical analysis corroborates the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta's integrated emphasis on samatha (tranquility) and vipassanā (insight) as mutually reinforcing dimensions of embodied practice applicable to everyday life. Based on these findings, the study proposes tiered retreat models for beginner, intermediate, and advanced practitioners, each structured around three daily sessions (morning, afternoon, evening) and tailored pedagogical content. The OMP model (Organization, Mentor, Participant) is articulated as a pragmatic framework: organizational leadership secures logistics (schedule, accommodation, food, climate), mentors provide guidance and relational support, and participants engage with appropriate discipline and relationality. The study concludes that effective adaptation of the Four Foundations in Vietnam requires coordinated institutional support, mentor development programs, and participant preparation to address identified weaknesses and threats while leveraging local opportunities for culturally rooted, sustainable mindfulness cultivation. Implications include recommendations for

standardized retreat curricula, capacity-building for mentors, and institutional partnerships to integrate satipaṭṭhāna practice into community mental health and education. Future research should evaluate the proposed models empirically across diverse Vietnamese contexts to measure outcomes in well-being and conduct.

Keywords: Mindfulness practice; Theravada Buddhism; Satipatthana; Vietnamese Society

Introduction

In contemporary Vietnam, rapid modernization and the pressures of material life have led to increasing concerns regarding mental well-being, stress, and work-related challenges (Nguyen, 2021). As individuals seek effective methods to manage these pressures, Buddhist meditation has become a prominent means of cultivating resilience and inner balance. Numerous studies have demonstrated the therapeutic value of meditation in alleviating stress, depression, chronic pain, and insomnia (Gunaratana, 2014). Within this context, mindfulness practice, particularly the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna), has garnered significant attention among Vietnamese practitioners for its potential to promote both physical and mental well-being.

Traditionally, Vietnamese Buddhism has been shaped predominantly by Mahāyāna traditions. However, in recent decades, there has been a resurgence of interest in Theravāda teachings, particularly in the systematic practices of mindfulness as preserved in the Pāli Canon (Tran, Pham, & Nguyen, 2022). The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, contemplation of the body (kāyānupassanā), feelings (vedanānupassanā), mind (cittānupassanā), and mental objects (dhammānupassanā), are central to the cultivation of insight and liberation (Gethin, 2003). This approach emphasizes not only devotion but also disciplined mental training, making it especially relevant for addressing contemporary psychological and social challenges.

Recent developments in Vietnam illustrate the growing appeal of mindfulness. For example, the Phuoc Son Zen Monastery attracted nearly a thousand participants in its initial mindfulness meditation classes in 2023 (Ngoc, 2023). Such participation reflects a rising demand for structured practices that can integrate Buddhist wisdom with modern life. Yet, despite the increasing popularity of mindfulness, challenges remain, including the lack of standardized

models for practice centers and difficulties in adapting ancient teachings to contemporary contexts (Mahatthanadull, 2019).

This study, therefore, sets out to investigate The Practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Theravāda Buddhism within Contemporary Society in Vietnam. Its objectives are threefold: (1) to examine the problematic situations surrounding the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Vietnam, (2) to study the concept of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Theravāda Buddhist scriptures, and (3) to propose practical guidelines to support successful mindfulness practice in contemporary Vietnamese society. By combining doctrinal analysis with field research, the study seeks to provide a framework for sustainable and effective application of mindfulness in Vietnam.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the problematic situations of practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Vietnamese society.
2. To study the concept of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Theravada Buddhist Scriptures.
3. To propose the practical guidelines for achieving success in the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness within contemporary society in Vietnam.

Literature Review

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) occupy a central position in Theravāda contemplative theory and practice. Contemporary scholarship emphasizes both the canonical formulation of *satipaṭṭhāna* and its practical application in modern contexts. Gethin's comprehensive account situates *satipaṭṭhāna* within the broader framework of the thirty-seven *bodhipakkhiya-dhamma* and provides a clear philological and comparative reading of key suttas, including the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (Gethin, 2003). Gethin's analysis is particularly valuable for explicating Pāli terminology and for distinguishing the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna*'s extended link to the four noble truths, an interpretive benchmark that this study uses to assess doctrinal fidelity in Vietnamese practice.

Complementing Gethin's canonical orientation, Ñāṇaponika Thera offers a systematic, practice-focused exposition of *satipaṭṭhāna* that highlights present-moment attention and the cultivation of self-reliant mental training (Ñāṇaponika Thera, 2005). His work supplies a concise pedagogical account of how the four

establishments-kāya-, vedanā-, citta-, and dhamma-nupassanā—function experientially, and thus informs this research’s criteria for evaluating practice quality in retreat and communal settings.

In terms of level of instruction and phenomenology, Mahasi Sayadaw’s classic account of vipassanā practice provides pragmatic guidance about observation methods and stages of insight (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1991). His descriptive details about common meditational experiences and teacher–student interactions have direct methodological utility: they help shape interview protocols and prompts for focus-group discussions to elicit nuanced first-person reports from practitioners and mentors.

Thitasilo’s treatment of vipassanā and its historical development in Vietnam is especially pertinent for contextualizing contemporary practice within local religious history and monastic biography (Thitasilo, 2009). By combining doctrinal exposition with descriptions of concrete stages of practice and reported benefits, Thitasilo supplies culturally sensitive material that assists in translating canonical prescriptions into feasible retreat designs and pedagogical recommendations appropriate for Vietnamese settings.

Finally, empirical and sociocultural perspectives on Theravāda revival and youth engagement in Vietnam are usefully represented in Nguyen’s analysis of young Theravāda monks (Nguyen, 2021). Nguyen’s work foregrounds the institutional and generational vectors through which satipaṭṭhāna practice is transmitted, highlighting the importance of mentor development and organizational supports—issues that this research investigates through SWOT-informed fieldwork.

Collectively, these sources provide a balanced foundation for the present study by combining textual exegesis, practical instruction, historical contextualization, and contemporary sociological insight. However, gaps remain: existing literature offers a limited systematic evaluation of standardized curricula, mentor qualifications, and retreat logistics in Vietnamese contexts. The present research, therefore, synthesizes these canonical and practical resources to (a) benchmark doctrinal fidelity, (b) design interview instruments grounded in lived practice, and (c) develop empirically informed, culturally attuned guidelines for satipaṭṭhāna practice in contemporary Vietnam.

In summary, the reviews of related literature and research work provide a comprehensive foundation for studying the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in contemporary Vietnamese society. These works offer essential insights into the theoretical underpinnings, historical development, and practical applications of

the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. They include detailed analyses of Pali terminology, comparative studies of key suttas, and reflections on the role of young Theravada monks in modern Vietnam. Together, these resources serve as critical evidence and persuasive academic perspectives, which are applied in this research to study the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in contemporary Vietnamese society.

Conceptual Framework

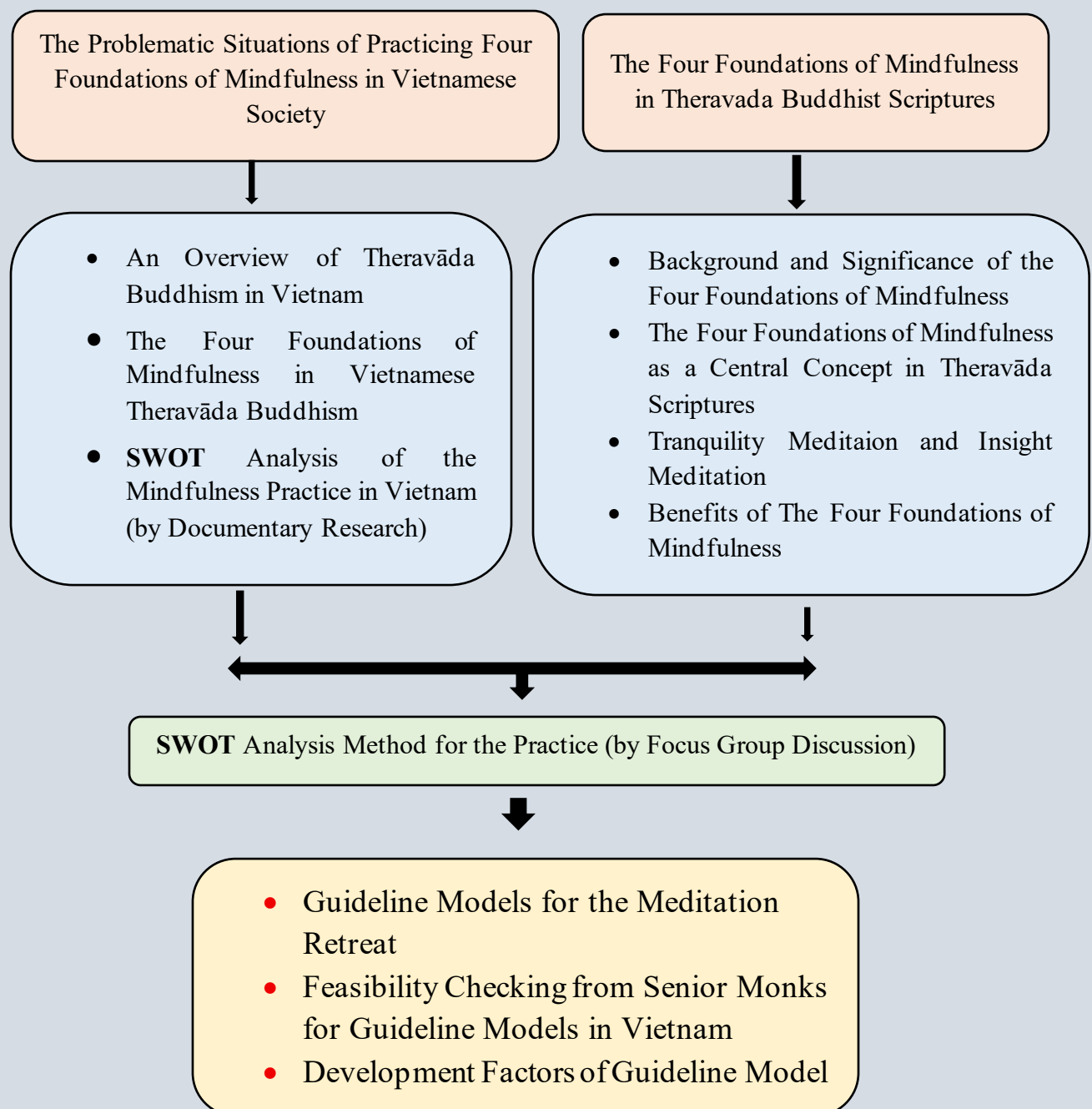


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design that combined documentary analysis, focus-group discussion, and in-depth interviews to investigate the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna) in contemporary Vietnam. The methodology was organized into three interrelated phases: data collection, data management and analysis, and model development.

Research design: A descriptive–interpretive qualitative approach guided the study, enabling an integrated examination of canonical texts and lived practice. Documentary analysis of primary Theravāda sources (Tipiṭaka, Pāli Text Society translations), classical commentaries, and contemporary secondary literature provided a doctrinal benchmark. Empirical field data were collected to identify context-specific problems and inform the development of practical guidelines.

Participants and sampling: Purposive sampling was used to recruit two categories of key informants: (1) senior monastic informants (N = 6) selected for their leadership and teaching roles in Vietnamese Theravāda communities (e.g., abbots and university lecturers); and (2) a focus group of ten lay and monastic practitioners from southern Vietnam representing novice, intermediate, and experienced meditators. Selection criteria prioritized direct experience with satipaṭṭhāna practice, involvement in retreat organization, or pedagogical responsibilities.

Data collection procedures: Documentary sources were collected and systematized to extract doctrinal prescriptions and pedagogical recommendations. Fieldwork occurred between December 2024 and April 2025 and comprised: (a) semi-structured, in-depth interviews with senior monks to elicit historical, pedagogical, and institutional perspectives; and (b) a moderated focus-group discussion with ten practitioners to surface common obstacles, practices, and contextual variables affecting retreat effectiveness. Interview and focus-group guides were developed from Gethin’s and Ñāṇaponika Thera’s canonical analyses and Mahasi Sayadaw’s practice descriptions to ensure topical relevance.

Data analysis: All audio-recorded interviews and focus-group sessions were transcribed verbatim. Analysis combined SWOT mapping (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) to organisationally situate practice issues, with thematic content analysis to identify recurrent experiential and pedagogical

themes. Documentary evidence was compared to empirical findings in a constant-comparison process to assess doctrinal fidelity and practical adaptation. Findings were synthesized to design tiered retreat curricula and the OMP (Organization–Mentor–Participant) development framework.

Trustworthiness and ethics: Credibility was strengthened through methodological triangulation (texts, interviews, focus group), member checking with select informants, and peer debriefing. Dependability was enhanced by maintaining an audit trail of coding decisions. Ethical approval and informed consent procedures were observed; participant anonymity and data confidentiality were protected in reporting.

Outcome: The methodological sequence produced an evidence-based set of practicable guidelines, organized by skill level and supported by the OMP model, intended to standardize retreat practice, strengthen mentor capacity, and inform institutional planning for sustainable satipaṭṭhāna cultivation in Vietnam.

Research Results

Objective 1. The results showed that while mindfulness practice is gaining popularity, it faces several obstacles, including inconsistent meditation models, a lack of experienced mentors, and internal and external distractions. From the opinions and perspectives gathered during focus group discussions, several prominent issues in the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in contemporary Vietnamese society have been identified. The table below presents a summary of the SWOT analysis of the current problematic situations regarding the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Vietnamese Theravada Buddhism.

Addressing these threats and weaknesses requires proactive measures to promote and safeguard the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Theravada Buddhism within contemporary Vietnamese society. These threats and weaknesses are analyzed as problematic situations of the meditation practice that should be addressed comprehensively. Through comprehensive addressing of these issues, the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness can be preserved and nurtured as a vital component of spiritual and cultural tradition in Vietnam and Vietnamese Theravada Buddhism collectively and individually.

Table 1: The Main Factors in The SWOT Analysis

SWOT Factors	Strengths	Weakness	Opportunities	Threats
(1)	Strong Faith in the Triple Gem	Inexperienced Mentors	Preservation of Theravāda Tradition	Insufficient Availability of Expert Mentors
(2)	Esteemed Scholars in Theravada Buddhism	Limited Accessibility to Tranquility Meditation Practices	Pathways to Liberation	Lack of Dedicated Meditation Centers
(3)	Engagement in Meditation Practices	Absence of Comprehensive Guidelines	Enhancing Young Monks' Responsibilities	Challenges in Establishing Unified Guidelines
(4)	Variety of Meditation Practices	Limited Knowledge Among Practitioners	Integration and Innovation	
(5)	Conducive Environment and Climate	External Distractions in Urban Centers	Improving Physical and Mental Health	

Objective 2. The results showed that central concepts in Theravada Buddhist Scriptures, particularly the Mahasatipatthana Sutta, highlight the significance of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in daily life and integrating both tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassana*) meditation for a well-rounded practice. The essential characteristics of each foundation of the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness are illustrated in the figure below.

The brief characteristics of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness begin with diligence (*atapi*), along with clearly knowing (*sampajana*) and mindfulness (*sati*) of the objectives or activities. Each foundation corresponds with a necessary factor that supports that practice: *Kayanupassana* combines reflecting on the repulsiveness of the objective related to the body (*paṭikkula-manasikara*). The Buddha often emphasized the disgust of this physical body. *Vedananupassana* combines the contemplation of *paticcasamuppada*, by which the Buddha shows the conditioned “arising of this whole mass of suffering.” Sense impression is said to be the principal condition of feeling (*phassa-paccaya vedana*). *Cittanupassana* corresponds to contemplating the origination and dissolution of things or dhamma (*samudayavayadhammanupassī*). *Dhammanupassana* is closely linked with the three characteristics (*tilakkhana*). For the practice to be effective and beneficial for those who practice the Four

Foundations of Mindfulness, it requires the right effort (*sammaviriya*) from the practitioner, which is the determining factor for whether the practice will yield benefits or not.

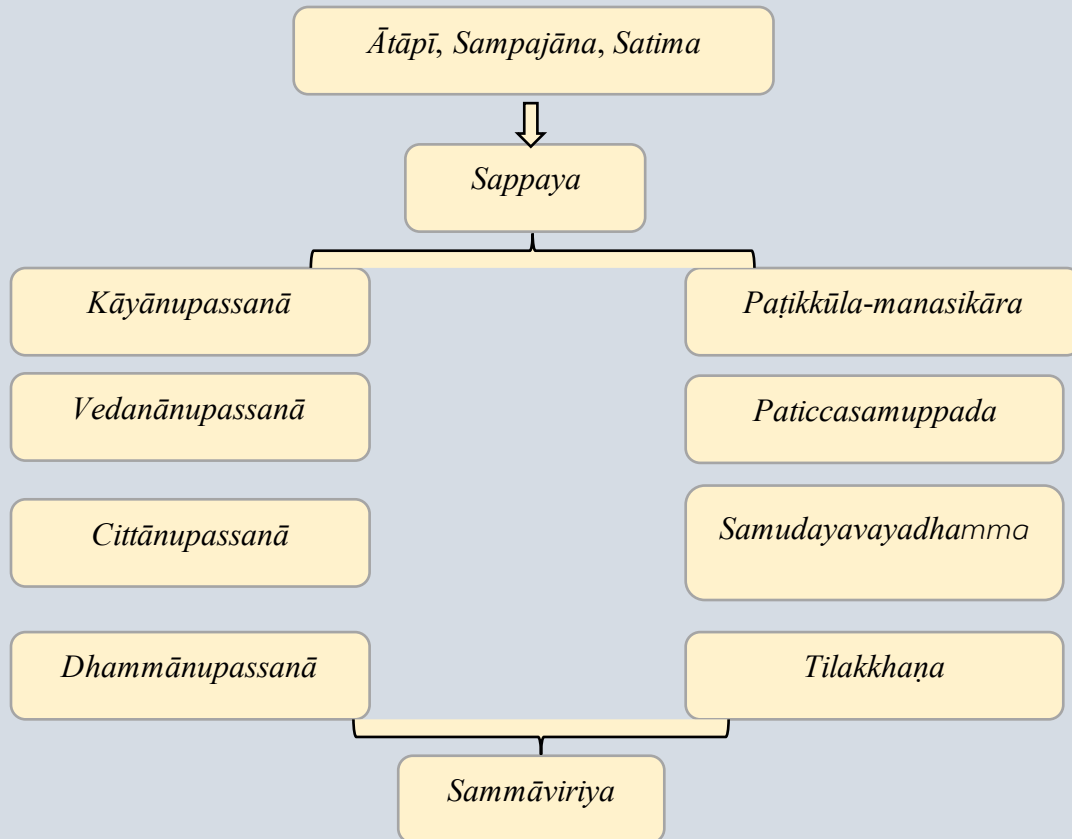


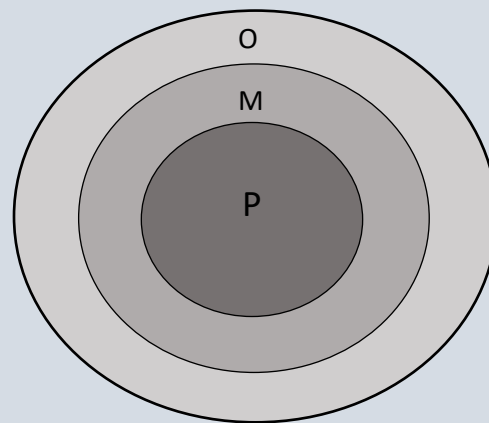
Figure 1: Characteristics of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Objective 3. Based on the above insights, the study proposes guideline models for meditation retreats with three different levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced practitioners, ensuring accessibility for all practitioners to address the aforementioned challenges. The meditation retreats at different levels help participants register according to their individual practice abilities, and the expected sermons are delivered appropriately, to the right people, at the right time, and skillfully, as the Buddha mentioned.

The beginner model lays the foundation, the intermediate model deepens understanding and practice, and the advanced model supports intensive cultivation of mindfulness and insight. Doctrine and practice mainly rely on the teachings of the Buddha by focusing on developing concentration with an object, practicing mindfulness through four postures: walking, standing, lying, and sitting, and ultimately understanding the nature of reality through the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and non-self.

At the end of the meditation retreats at different levels, participants are also evaluated on their personal qualities, identifying meditation methods that suit them without spending much time choosing the right way or getting confused between different meditation methods. This approach promotes the significance and essential importance of practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in contemporary Vietnamese society.

Additionally, the OMP model (Organization, Mentor, Participant), is identified as a development factor of practical guidelines for meditation retreats, ensuring that mindfulness practice remains deeply rooted in Theravada Buddhist traditions while being adaptable to contemporary society in Vietnam.



O: It is an organization hosting the meditation retreat, which is a key factor for a meditation model.

M: The mentor uses the core teachings of the Buddha to provide guidance rooted in theoretical knowledge and practical experience.

P: It is the participant who contributes internal effort and benefits from external support.

In the model of factors for the development of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness practice at meditation retreats, the organizational factor **O** encompasses the other two factors because the organization will determine how the meditation retreat is conducted. This includes an appropriate schedule, suitable accommodation, suitable food, and suitable climate. As a result, the effectiveness of the practice depends on the relationship and connection between the practitioner and the mentor, which can also involve appropriate friendship and appropriate speech. Therefore, the participant factor **P** is guided and protected by the instructor **M**.

Discussions

This study's findings align with and extend recent scholarship that seeks to translate canonical satipaṭṭhāna prescriptions into practical frameworks suitable for contemporary, often secularized, contexts. Both the present research and Pasri (2021) share a problem-to-practice orientation: they begin by diagnosing situational impediments (heterogeneous curricula, environmental distractions, and variable teacher capacity) and proceed to propose pragmatic methods that preserve doctrinal intent while increasing accessibility. Pasri's recommendation of deliberate, slow embodied movements as an introductory strategy for kāyānupassanā (Pasri, 2021) resonates with the present study's inclusion of structured walking and rising, falling practices in retreat guidelines, techniques long emphasized in classical vipassanā pedagogy (Mahasi Sayadaw, 1991).

Canonically, both works ground practice in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta and its commentarial tradition, stressing the complementary roles of samatha (tranquility) and vipassanā (insight) in producing stable attention and liberative insight (Gethin, 2003; Ñāṇaponika Thera, 2005). Where Gethin supplies philological and comparative clarity, especially regarding the Mahā-formulation and its linkage to the Four Noble Truths, Ñāṇaponika illuminates practical, present-moment engagement with the four establishments (Gethin, 2003; Ñāṇaponika Thera, 2005). The present research synthesizes these textual benchmarks with field data to assess fidelity: finding that many contemporary Vietnamese programs favor accessible, wellbeing-oriented outcomes (e.g., stress reduction) but sometimes attenuate the disciplined, insight-oriented sequences that the sutta prescribes (Gunaratana, 2014).

Methodologically and pedagogically, the two bodies of work complement one another. Pasri emphasizes micro-level practices for daily integration, what might be called pre-mental notation and slow-movement entry practices, whereas the present study develops a macro-level training architecture (tiered retreat curricula and the OMP: Organization–Mentor–Participant model) designed to secure the institutional, relational, and logistical supports necessary for progressive insight work. The OMP framework addresses structural gaps identified by Nguyen (2021) and Tran Thi et al. (2022), namely the need for mentor development and organizational standards for retreats in Vietnam (Nguyen, 2021; Tran Thi et al., 2022).

Despite convergence, notable differences remain. Pasri's emphasis is primarily on accessible daily practices and experiential entry-points; the present

study places greater weight on institution-building and curriculum standardization to sustain practice across skill levels. Both approaches would benefit from stronger empirical evaluation: although the therapeutic benefits of mindfulness are well documented in broader clinical literature (Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Gunaratana, 2014), there remains a paucity of longitudinal, outcome-based studies that assess whether tiered curricula and organizational interventions (such as OMP) produce durable insight and well-being gains in Vietnamese contexts.

Knowledge from Research

Research indicates that the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) are widely practiced in Vietnam, yet their efficacy is often undermined by inadequate instruction and unsuitable practice environments. Methodological misunderstandings and reductive, therapeutic framings can obscure the sutta's ultimate aim—liberation from suffering—and divert practice from its transformative intent. Uneven mentor expertise, heterogeneous retreat conditions, and diverse participant backgrounds further complicate reliable teaching and assessment, producing variable outcomes and occasional misapplication of methods.

Conceptually, *satipaṭṭhāna* comprises four interrelated domains, *kāyānupassanā* (attention to the body), *vedanānupassanā* (attention to feeling), *cittānupassanā* (attention to mind states), and *dhammānupassanā* (attention to mental phenomena), each supported by sustained diligence, clear comprehension, and continuous mindfulness. Practitioners cultivate bodily awareness to counter sensual attachment, attend to feeling as conditioned by contact, observe the arising and passing of mental states, and investigate phenomena through the three characteristics (impermanence, suffering, non-self). Consistent right effort is the decisive factor in enabling insight to emerge.

Empirical analysis suggests practical remedies: tiered retreat curricula (beginner, intermediate, advanced) that align pedagogy with practitioner capacity, and an integrated OMP framework (Organization–Mentor–Participant) that coordinates logistics, mentor development, and participant preparation. Implementing graduated training, robust mentorship, and context-sensitive retreat conditions can help preserve doctrinal coherence while increasing accessibility and sustained benefit.

Conclusion

This study examined the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna) in contemporary Vietnamese Theravada contexts, identifying both doctrinal foundations and practical obstacles to effective implementation. Empirical findings indicate that misunderstandings about method, inconsistent retreat formats, insufficient mentor expertise, and unsuitable practice environments undermine practitioners' ability to progress in insight (vipassanā). Heterogeneity in participants' backgrounds further complicates the assessment of retreat capacity and outcomes.

Textual analysis confirmed that the Four Foundations, contemplation of the body (kāya), feelings (vedanā), mind (citta), and mental objects (dhammā), remain central to the Theravada soteriological programme. The study reiterates the complementary relationship between tranquility (samatha) and insight (vipassanā): samatha cultivates one-pointedness (ekaggatā) and moderates the five hindrances, while vipassanā develops wisdom (paññā) that erodes ignorance (avijjā) and facilitates liberation (Nibbāna). Together, these modes of practice constitute a coherent pathway for cognitive transformation and ethical maturation in present-day settings.

Practically, the application of SWOT and content analysis enabled the formulation of adaptive interventions: a three-level retreat model (beginner, intermediate, advanced) with structured daily sessions, and the OMP development framework (Organization, Mentor, Participant). Organizational design secures appropriate schedules, facilities, and logistics; mentor formation ensures pedagogical consistency and relational support; participant preparation fosters disciplinary commitment and ethical conduct. These elements operate synergistically to address identified weaknesses and threats while leveraging existing strengths and opportunities.

The study recommends prioritized investment in mentor training, standardized curricula for retreat programming, institutional support for retreat infrastructure, and longitudinal evaluation of outcomes. Future research should undertake empirical testing of the proposed models across diverse Vietnamese settings and measure psychological, behavioral, and spiritual indicators of practice efficacy. Implemented together, these measures can strengthen the accessibility, fidelity, and sustainability of satipaṭṭhāna practice in contemporary Vietnamese society.

Suggestions

This research has found that while mindfulness practice is gaining popularity, it faces several obstacles, including inconsistent meditation models, a lack of experienced mentors, and internal and external distractions. Central concepts in Theravada Buddhist Scriptures, particularly the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*, highlight the significance of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in daily life and integrating both tranquility (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassana*) meditation for a well-rounded practice.

Based on these insights, the study proposes guideline models for meditation retreats with three different levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced practitioners, ensuring accessibility for all practitioners to address the aforementioned challenges. Additionally, the OMP model (Organization, Mentor, Participant) is identified as a development factor of practical guidelines for meditation retreats, ensuring that mindfulness practice remains deeply rooted in Theravada Buddhist traditions while being adaptable to contemporary society in Vietnam.

The important thing is that guideline models for meditation retreats with three different levels can be applied to meditation retreats and should be given importance to practitioners in terms of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

For the next research issue, research should be done on the issue of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness as a Therapeutic Tool in Vietnamese Buddhist Counselling. Based on the analyzed data on the importance of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in modern life, including theory and practice. (see my article)

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A Conceptual Model for Mind Management to Cultivate Mental Immunity for Life Based on the Abhidhamma Buddhist Psychology

***Phyo Pyae Sone Kyaw¹ Phramaha Nanthakorn Piyabhani²
Sanu Mahatthanadull³***

International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University^{1,2,3}

Corresponding author email: 6501106019@mcu.ac.th¹

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Abstract

This qualitative research has three main objectives, namely: 1) To examine the concept of mental immunity and its management according to psychology; 2) To study the concept of mind and its process in Abhidhamma; and 3) To develop a conceptual model for mind management to cultivate mental immunity for life based on the Abhidhamma Buddhist psychological perspective. This dissertation employs a qualitative research method, drawing on both primary and secondary sources. The field study involved in-depth interviews with subject-matter experts in both Abhidhamma and modern psychology.

The research findings reveal that the mind plays a central role in emotional experiences and can be managed to cultivate mental immunity, based on the Abhidhamma Buddhist psychological perspective. A Conceptual Model for Mind Management to Cultivate Mental Immunity for Life, based on the Abhidhamma Buddhist Psychology, would address three main purposes. First, the findings highlight how modern psychology views mind management, indicating that poor communication, negative thinking, and environmental stress contribute to emotional disturbances. Psychological methods, such as behavioural change and cognitive restructuring, are effective in managing anger and promoting mental well-being. Second, it studies the concept of the mind and its processes from the Abhidhamma viewpoint, where the mind is regarded as the source of emotions, thoughts, and actions. From this perspective, negative emotions such as anger, sadness, and depression stem from unwholesome mental states, potentially leading to social conflict, violence, and even war. Third, the study develops a conceptual model for mind management to cultivate mental immunity for life, utilising Abhidhamma-based Buddhist psychological approaches. These include behavioural change through purity in actions and speech, cognitive restructuring by identifying and replacing negative thoughts,

and wisdom-based practices such as mindfulness and wise attention to transform anger at its root. Through the integration of these approaches, individuals can develop emotional resilience, reduce anger, and cultivate a peaceful state of mind, offering a practical model for managing the mind in today's world.

Keywords: Abhidhamma; Psychology; Mental Immunity; Mind Management; Emotional Resilience

Introduction

In contemporary society, mental distress has emerged as one of the most significant challenges to human well-being. Conditions such as anxiety, stress, depression, anger, and emotional instability affect individuals across all ages and cultures, disrupting not only personal health but also family cohesion and social harmony (American Psychological Association, 2020; Patel et al., 2018). Modern psychology has advanced considerably in understanding and managing these conditions through empirical research, cognitive-behavioural therapies, and mindfulness-based interventions. Strategies such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) have demonstrated efficacy in enhancing attention regulation, emotional resilience, and adaptive coping (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002). However, these approaches often focus on isolated components of cognition, emotion, or behaviour, and may lack a comprehensive framework that integrates the full spectrum of mental processes and ethical development. This highlights a need for complementary perspectives that can provide a more holistic understanding of the mind and its regulation.

Buddhist Abhidhamma offers such a framework, providing a systematic and ethically grounded analysis of consciousness (citta) and mental factors (cetasikas). Far more than an ancient text, the Abhidhamma represents a sophisticated map of the mind, detailing the arising, interrelation, and ethical quality of mental states (Harvey, 2000; Nyanaponika Thera, 1962). While modern psychology can be likened to a user manual explaining the discrete functions of the mind, the Abhidhamma functions as a comprehensive schematic, elucidating how mental components interact and how they can be trained and transformed for ethical and psychological growth (Gethin, 1992; Wallace, 2007). Its emphasis on impermanence, conditionality, and non-self offers a foundation for cultivating mental resilience, ethical discernment, and sustained well-being.

This study addresses three interrelated objectives. The first objective examines the concept of mental immunity and its management within modern psychology, emphasising evidence-based strategies to enhance cognitive and emotional resilience. The second objective explores the Abhidhamma perspective, analysing the structure and processes of the mind and mental factors, and highlighting their role in ethical cultivation and insight. The third objective integrates these perspectives to develop a conceptual model for mind management, aiming to cultivate mental immunity for life. By combining empirical psychological insights with Abhidhamma-based ethical and meditative principles, the proposed model seeks to provide a holistic framework for managing mental challenges, fostering psychological well-being, and supporting emotional and social harmony (Mahatthanadull & Mahatthanadull, 2021; De Silva, 2014).

Research Objectives

1. To examine the concept of mental immunity and its management according to Psychology.
2. To examine the concept of mind and its process in Abhidhamma.
3. To develop a conceptual model for mind management to cultivate mental immunity for life based on the Abhidhamma Buddhist Psychological Perspective.

Literature Review

This research draws on both classical Abhidhamma sources and contemporary psychological perspectives to develop a comprehensive framework for mind management aimed at cultivating mental immunity. The literature can be organised into three thematic strands: (1) Abhidhamma and Buddhist psychology, (2) Abhidhamma in dialogue with modern psychology and neuroscience, and (3) mind management and conceptual models.

Abhidhamma and Buddhist Psychology

Foundational Abhidhamma texts provide the basis for Buddhist psychological analysis of the mind. Narada Maha Thera's *A Manual of Abhidhamma* offers a systematic exposition of consciousness (*citta*) and mental factors (*cetasikas*), serving as one of the clearest introductions to the Abhidhamma framework (Narada, 1987). Bhikkhu Bodhi's *A Comprehensive*

Manual of Abhidhamma presents an authoritative translation of the Abhidhammattha Sangaha with explanatory notes and diagrams that clarify complex doctrinal concepts such as dependent arising, mental processes, and meditation stages (Barendregt, 2006; Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000). Similarly, Mehm Tin Mon's *The Essence of Buddha Abhidhamma* expands on these foundations by linking traditional psychological analysis with contemporary concerns about human well-being (Mehm Tin Mon, 2015). Collectively, these works demonstrate the Abhidhamma's enduring relevance as a comprehensive classification of consciousness and mental processes.

Abhidhamma and Modern Psychology/Neuroscience

A second strand of literature explores intersections between Abhidhamma and modern psychology. De Silva's *An Introduction to Buddhist Psychology and Counselling* highlights how Buddhist concepts of mind, ethics, and contemplative practice can inform therapeutic interventions, particularly mindfulness-based approaches (De Silva, 2014). Kusaladhamma's (2017) work on the *Mind-Body Relationship Based on Neuroscience Research and Buddhist Meditation* illustrates convergences between Abhidhamma theory, meditation practice, and neuroscientific findings in areas such as sensory processing, cognition, and emotional regulation. These perspectives illustrate how Buddhist psychological insights can complement modern science, enhancing understanding of the dynamic relationship between mental and physical processes.

Mind Management and Conceptual Models

The final body of literature emphasises mind management and its implications for well-being. Kalupahana's *The Principles of Buddhist Psychology* situates Abhidhamma reflections within philosophical and psychological discourse, highlighting their value for ethical and mental training (Kalupahana, 1987). More recent contributions examine applied contexts: Mahatthanadull and Mahatthanadull (2021) analyse human behaviour and family balance from a Buddhist psychology perspective, while Piyabhani and Mahatthanadull (2022) explore systematic thinking as a foundation for psychological resilience. Together, these studies demonstrate how Buddhist psychology can inform conceptual models that integrate ethical development, emotional regulation, and social harmony.

In summary, the literature demonstrates three key contributions. First, classical Abhidhamma texts establish a detailed taxonomy of mind and mental factors, forming the doctrinal foundation for Buddhist psychology. Second, contemporary interpretations bridge Abhidhamma insights with modern psychology and neuroscience, showing their practical relevance to mental health. Third, emerging conceptual models highlight the application of Buddhist principles for mind management, resilience, and social well-being. However, scholarship has yet to fully articulate a comprehensive model of “mental immunity” grounded in Abhidhamma Buddhist psychology. Addressing this gap, the present study seeks to integrate classical and modern perspectives into a holistic framework for cultivating sustainable mental well-being.

Conceptual Framework

This research is a qualitative research study. This qualitative research study aims to deeply explore and infer participants' experiences and social backgrounds. It follows a conceptual framework composed of three main components: input, process, and output. The conceptual framework of this research displays an important research procedure based on the process, input and output are as follows:

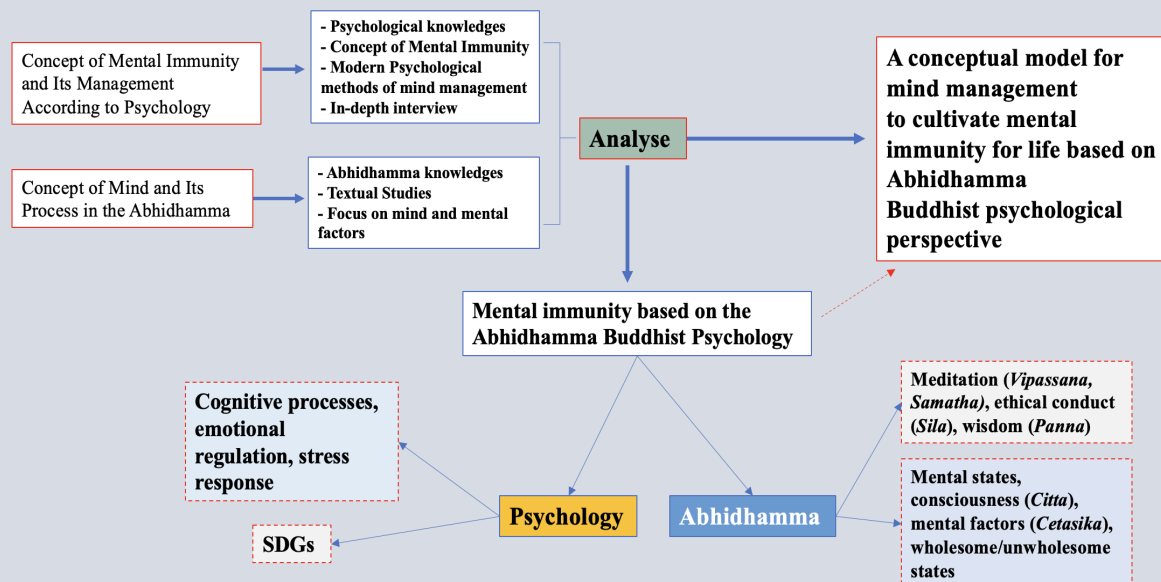


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This dissertation employs a qualitative research design, which is suitable for exploring complex concepts such as mental immunity, the Abhidhamma understanding of the mind, and developing a conceptual model for mind management. The study integrates documentary analysis and expert interviews to provide a rich, triangulated understanding of the research topic.

1. Research Design

This study uses a qualitative exploratory approach, allowing in-depth investigation of abstract and nuanced concepts. Documentary analysis and in-depth interviews provide complementary perspectives: texts offer theoretical foundations, while expert insights help interpret and validate concepts and their practical implications.

2. Data Sources

Primary Sources:

Semi-structured interviews with selected experts:

- Five Buddhist scholars specialising in Abhidhamma.
- Three psychologists focusing on mindfulness-based therapies.
- Experts were selected based on academic publications, reputation, and practical experience.

Classical Buddhist texts, including the Tipiṭaka, commentaries, and sub-commentaries relevant to mind processes and management.

Secondary Sources:

- Academic books, theses, dissertations, and scholarly articles.
- Peer-reviewed journals and online research works relevant to psychology, mindfulness, and Buddhist psychology.

3. Research Instruments

- Interview protocol: Semi-structured with open-ended questions tailored to each expert's field. Duration: 60–90 minutes. Note-taking templates for documenting important concepts, patterns, and interpretations. Voice recorder to capture the interviews for accurate transcription.

Research Results

Objective 1: To examine the concept of mental immunity and its management according to Psychology.

A. Foundations of Mind Management in Modern Psychology

The analysis of contemporary psychological literature, complemented by interviews with mental health professionals, confirmed that modern psychology emphasises structured mind management strategies aimed at enhancing emotional regulation, cognitive performance, and overall well-being. A central finding of this study is that the concept of mental immunity aligns with the psychological immune system framework, which highlights the mind's capacity to cope with stress, adversity, and negative influences. Experts consistently noted that cultivating resilience, cognitive flexibility, and self-regulation is essential for sustaining mental health and preventing maladaptive behavioural patterns.

B. Core Strategies: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs)

The research identified Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) as the primary methods employed in modern mind management. CBT was widely acknowledged by professionals as highly effective in modifying dysfunctional thought patterns, fostering adaptive behaviors, and enhancing emotional control. Similarly, MBIs, including secular meditation, Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), were reported to improve attention, reduce rumination, and increase psychological flexibility. The findings indicated that regular engagement in these practices leads to measurable improvements in self-awareness, emotional regulation, and overall mental resilience.

C. Neuroscientific Basis of Mind Management

Interviews with neuroscience specialists and literature analysis revealed robust evidence supporting the neurobiological underpinnings of these interventions. Participants emphasised that consistent practice of CBT and MBIs induces functional and structural changes in brain regions associated with emotional regulation and executive control, particularly the prefrontal cortex and amygdala. These neurological adaptations were identified as critical mechanisms

by which individuals develop sustainable mental immunity, supporting the research’s central proposition that cognitive and mindfulness strategies enhance both mental stability and resilience.

D. Broader Applications and Societal Impact

The study also highlighted the broader applications of mind management strategies in educational, organisational, and clinical settings. Findings indicate that structured interventions not only enhance individual well-being but also promote interpersonal harmony, ethical behaviour, and social cohesion. Experts linked these outcomes directly to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 “Good Health and Well-Being” and SDG 16 “Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions,” noting that effective mind management contributes to reduced mental illness prevalence, improved emotional regulation, and constructive social interaction.

Table 1: The concept of mental immunity and its management according to Psychology

Aspect	Findings / Insights	Implications
Foundations	Psychology emphasises mind management to enhance well-being, resilience, and self-regulation.	Supports mental stability and prevents maladaptive behaviours.
Core Strategies	CBT modifies thoughts and behaviour; MBIs (MBSR, MBCT, meditation) improve attention, reduce rumination, and increase flexibility.	Enhances self-awareness, emotional control, and mental resilience.
Neuroscientific Basis	CBT and MBIs change brain regions (prefrontal cortex, amygdala) linked to emotional regulation.	Biological support for sustainable mental immunity.
Societal Impact	Strategies applied in education, workplaces, and clinics promote harmony and ethical behaviour.	Supports SDG 3 (health) and SDG 16 (peace, justice).
Conclusion	CBT and MBIs effectively build mental immunity.	Promotes individual and societal well-being.

In summary, the research findings underscore the significant role of modern psychological strategies in fostering mental stability, resilience, and well-being. The study confirms that CBT and mindfulness-based interventions are particularly effective in promoting mental immunity, supported by both psychological and neuroscientific evidence. Integrating these strategies into

broader societal contexts has the potential to address global mental health challenges and advance the achievement of sustainable development goals, highlighting the relevance of structured mind management for both individual and collective flourishing.

Objective 2: To examine the concept of the mind and its process in Abhidhamma.

A. The Holistic View of Mind and Body

The study's analysis of classical Abhidhamma texts (e.g., *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, *Dhammasangani*) alongside interviews with contemporary *Theravāda* scholars revealed a consistent perspective on the interdependence of mind and body. Human existence is conceptualised as the composite of *rūpa* (physical form) and *nāma* (mental phenomena), which together constitute the five aggregates (*khandhas*). Scholars emphasised that this dual constitution is not a strict mind-body dualism but a functional interrelation, where physical and mental processes co-arise and influence each other.

Complementary scientific perspectives, drawn from contemporary physiology and cellular biology, corroborated this interconnectedness. The human body, composed of chemical elements, molecular structures, tissues, and cellular systems, provides the necessary conditions for the arising of consciousness. Elements such as lipids and trace minerals maintain homeostasis, which is essential for the functional integrity of both physiological and cognitive processes. Thus, findings indicate a convergent view: mental phenomena cannot be fully understood without reference to bodily conditions, and vice versa.

B. The Nature and Function of Citta

The research demonstrated that *citta*, or mind, functions as the primary cognitive agent within the stream of consciousness. Textual analysis indicated that *citta* is momentary, arising and ceasing in rapid succession, and serves as the “forerunner” in the cognitive process. Interviews highlighted that while *citta* represents bare awareness of an object, it is the interplay with mental factors (*cetasikas*) that confers qualitative and ethical characteristics to experience.

Experts consistently described *citta* as morally and experientially neutral on its own but dynamically shaped by accompanying *cetasikas* into wholesome,

unwholesome, or neutral states. This aligns with the *Abhidhammic* classification of consciousness into sensuous, form, formless, and supramundane spheres, and its engagement through the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*). The study found that *citta*'s primacy lies not only in cognition but also in initiating ethical and meditative processes, linking momentary mental events to long-term psychological and spiritual development.

C. The Nature and Classification of Cetasikas

Cetasikas, the mental concomitants of *citta*, were consistently described by both textual sources and interviewed scholars as the differentiating factors that shape consciousness. Analysis of canonical texts identified 52 *cetasikas*, categorized as universal, occasional, or unwholesome. The study revealed that *cetasikas* determine the ethical valence of *citta* and facilitate the arising of specific mental qualities such as mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.

Interview findings emphasized that *cetasikas* are crucial for practical applications of meditation and ethical conduct. For instance, cultivating wholesome *cetasikas* like loving-kindness (*mettā*) or equanimity (*upekkhā*) systematically transforms the quality of consciousness, promoting what the study terms “mental immunity”, resilience against unwholesome impulses and emotional disturbances.

D. The Doctrine of Anatta and Non-Self

Finally, both textual analysis and expert interviews confirmed the centrality of the non-self (*anatta*) doctrine in understanding *citta* and its processes. A person (*puggala*) is conventionally designated as the aggregation of the five *khandhas*, but ultimate analysis reveals no permanent or independent self. *Citta*, while continuously arising, is impermanent and devoid of inherent identity. This understanding was repeatedly highlighted by scholars as foundational for ethical practice, insight meditation, and the development of detachment from craving and aversion.

The integration of textual and empirical findings suggests that mental processes, though experientially real, are conditional and interdependent. Recognising this dynamic fosters mental clarity, emotional balance, and liberation (*Nibbāna*), bridging classical Abhidhamma analysis with practical and scientific approaches to mind-body well-being.

Table 2: The concept of mind and its process in Abhidhamma

Aspect	Key Findings	Implications
Mind-Body	Body (<i>rūpa</i>) and mind (<i>nāma/citta</i>) are interdependent.	Supports a holistic understanding of human experience.
Citta	Moment-to-moment consciousness; neutral awareness.	Central to meditation and ethical cultivation.
Cetasikas	52 mental factors; determine quality of consciousness (wholesome/unwholesome).	Guides mental training and resilience.
Consciousness Spheres	Sensuous, form, formless, supramundane; linked to six sense bases.	Explains the mind's interaction with experience.
Anatta (non-self)	Aggregates are impermanent; no permanent self.	Promotes insight, detachment, and liberation.
Scientific Perspective	Body composed of elements, cells, tissues; physiological balance affects mind.	Reinforces mind-body interdependence and holistic health.

Objective 3: To develop a conceptual model for mind management to cultivate mental immunity for life based on the Abhidhamma Buddhist psychological perspective.

Based on the synthesis of Abhidhamma principles and mind management strategies from modern psychology, this study proposes a Conceptual Model for Mind Management to Cultivate Mental Immunity. This model integrates a foundational understanding of the mind, practical mindfulness-based interventions, and the cultivation of wholesome mental factors, aiming to develop a resilient, ethically grounded, and mentally clear state. Mental immunity is conceptualised not merely as the absence of mental illness but as the active cultivation of qualities that enhance resilience, ethical awareness, cognitive clarity, and the ability to respond skillfully to life's challenges. The model is represented as a dynamic, cyclical process in which understanding, practice, and cultivation reinforce one another.

The first component of the model, foundational understanding, draws directly from Abhidhamma analysis. According to Abhidhamma, the mind (*citta*)

is a dynamic process shaped by mental factors (*cetasikas*), and mental events are momentary, arising and ceasing rapidly. Recognising unwholesome tendencies such as greed, hatred, and delusion enables practitioners to cultivate mindfulness (*sati*) and insight (*vipassanā*), which, in turn, foster wisdom (*paññā*) and equanimity. Understanding the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and non-self, nature of phenomena (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*) provides the theoretical groundwork for mental immunity. Wholesome mental factors, including mindfulness, compassion, loving-kindness, equanimity, and wisdom (*sobhaṇa cetasikas*), are emphasized as the building blocks of psychological resilience, forming the foundation for applying the model in practice.

The second component, practical application, operationalizes Abhidhamma principles through modern mindfulness-based practices. Mindfulness meditation, particularly as framed in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*), serves as a bridge between classical Buddhist psychology and contemporary psychological methods such as MBSR and MBCT. By fostering present-moment, nonjudgmental awareness of the body, feelings, mind, and mental objects, practitioners enhance attention regulation, emotional control, and self-awareness. The systematic practice of concentration (*samatha*) develops steadiness and one-pointedness of mind, creating the conditions for insight (*vipassanā*) meditation, which cultivates wisdom and detachment from unwholesome mental states. Through these practices, unwholesome tendencies such as greed, anger, and delusion can be transformed into wholesome qualities, reinforcing resilience and balanced mental functioning.

The third component, the resulting state of mental immunity, represents the outcome of integrating understanding and practice. Mental immunity is manifested as the capacity to observe thoughts and emotions without attachment or aversion, maintain emotional balance, respond skillfully to challenges, and engage ethically with the world. The model emphasises that mindfulness, understanding, and cultivation of wholesome qualities operate synergistically: foundational knowledge informs mindfulness, mindfulness strengthens wholesome factors, and these factors deepen insight and ethical behaviour. Consistent and sustained practice ensures that insight becomes practical and transformative rather than purely intellectual, supporting enduring mental immunity and inner peace.

Table 3: A conceptual model for mind management to cultivate mental immunity for life based on the Abhidhamma Buddhist psychological perspective

Component	Description	Key Practices / Tools	Outcome
Foundational Understanding	Knowledge of the mind (<i>citta</i>) and mental factors (<i>cetasikas</i>), recognition of unwholesome tendencies, understanding impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self (<i>anicca, dukkha, anatta</i>)	Study of Abhidhamma principles, reflection on <i>sobhaṇa cetasikas</i>	Insight into mental processes, awareness of wholesome vs. unwholesome states
Practical Application (Mind Management)	Applying understanding through mindfulness and meditation to regulate attention, emotion, and behavior	Mindfulness meditation (<i>Satipaṭṭhāna</i>), concentration (<i>samatha</i>), insight (<i>vipassanā</i>), modern interventions (MBSR, MBCT)	Emotional regulation, attention control, and transformation of unwholesome states into wholesome qualities
Cultivation of Wholesome Mental Factors	Developing positive mental qualities to reinforce resilience and ethical behavior	Loving-kindness (<i>mettā</i>), compassion (<i>karuṇā</i>), equanimity (<i>upekkhā</i>), wisdom (<i>paññā</i>)	Strengthened resilience, ethical awareness, balanced and stable mind
Mental Immunity (Resulting State)	Integrated outcome of understanding, practice, and cultivation	Consistent, sustained practice of mindfulness and wholesome mental factors	Ability to respond skilfully to life's challenges, inner peace, cognitive clarity, and ethical behavior

In conclusion, the proposed Conceptual Model for Mind Management to Cultivate Mental Immunity provides a structured, integrative approach to developing a resilient, clear, and ethically grounded mind. By combining Abhidhamma insights, modern mindfulness-based practices, and the cultivation of wholesome mental factors, the model equips individuals to navigate life's challenges with skilful awareness, emotional regulation, and ethical integrity, resulting in sustainable mental immunity and overall well-being.

Discussion

The findings from the first objective indicate that in modern psychology, mental immunity is understood as the capacity of the mind to resist and recover from disruptive thoughts, emotions, and cognitive distortions. Empirical evidence demonstrates that mindfulness-based interventions such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) enhance attention regulation, emotional resilience, and adaptive coping (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002). These approaches are consistent with the biopsychosocial model of health (Engel, 1977) and align with global mental health initiatives (Patel et al., 2018; World Health Organisation, 2022), showing that structured practices can cultivate sustainable psychological well-being through resilience, emotional balance, and effective coping mechanisms.

The second objective highlights the Abhidhamma as a comprehensive and ethically grounded framework for understanding consciousness and mental processes. Consciousness (*citta*) is described as momentary awareness, always accompanied by mental factors (*cetasikas*) that shape ethical and psychological qualities of experience (Nyanaponika Thera, 1962; Analayo Bhikkhu, 2003). These factors are classified as universal, occasional, wholesome, unwholesome, and beautiful (Māha Thera, 1987), providing a nuanced map of mental life. This framework underscores the central role of ethical discernment in psychological functioning, emphasising the cultivation of mindfulness, wisdom, and insight as pathways toward mental stability and immunity (Gethin, 1992; Harvey, 2000).

The third objective synthesises insights from modern psychology and Abhidhamma teachings into a conceptual model of mind management aimed at cultivating mental immunity. The model integrates three key components: systematic understanding of the mind, continuous mindfulness practice, and cultivation of wholesome qualities such as compassion, loving-kindness, equanimity, and wisdom (De Silva, 2014; Sugunasiri, 2014). Mindfulness acts as the bridge between theory and practice, allowing individuals to observe phenomena without attachment, discern impermanence, and reduce the influence of unwholesome states (Wallace, 2007; Analayo Bhikkhu, 2003). Concentration and insight meditation further strengthen this process by transforming greed, anger, and delusion into wholesome mental states, thereby fostering resilience, emotional regulation, and ethical conduct (Kalupahana, 1987; Kusaladhamma, 2017).

By integrating evidence-based psychological strategies with Abhidhamma's ethical and meditative principles, the proposed model offers a holistic pathway to cultivating mental immunity. Modern psychology provides empirically validated methods for managing cognition and emotion, while the Abhidhamma enriches these approaches with an ethical orientation and a detailed taxonomy of consciousness. This integration addresses both daily psychological challenges and the cultivation of deeper spiritual qualities, promoting sustainable well-being and resilience (Mahatthanadull & Mahatthanadull, 2021; Piyabhani & Mahatthanadull, 2022).

The broader implications of this research suggest that mind management rooted in Abhidhamma Buddhist psychology, supported by modern psychological practices, contributes not only to mental health but also to ethical development and spiritual transformation. In line with global mental health priorities (World Health Organization, 2022), the model underscores that genuine mental immunity extends beyond coping with stress to include the cultivation of virtuous qualities that support long-term resilience, personal flourishing, and ultimately, liberation.

Knowledge from Research

This model illustrates an integrated framework for cultivating mental immunity through the cooperation of Abhidhamma teachings, mind management techniques, and psychological constructs. It highlights the development of mental resilience by understanding and regulating mental states, cultivating wholesome mental factors, and practising mindfulness, concentration, and insight. These components work together to support practical applications in daily life, promoting sustained mental health, emotional balance, and inner strength through consistent meditative practice and ethical conduct. To foster such immunity, the conceptual model proposes three core components of mind management. First is cognitive awareness (*sati*), which involves mindfulness, the ability to monitor one's mental states non-reactively. Second is right understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), or the insight into the true nature of reality, which enables the practitioner to loosen attachment and aversion. Third is mental discipline (*samādhi*), developed through meditative concentration, which strengthens mental focus and reduces distraction. Together, these three pillars form the foundation of a resilient and well-managed mind. A key element of this model is the recognition of mental states as either wholesome (*kusala*) or unwholesome (*akusala*). Mental immunity

grows as one consistently cultivates wholesome states such as compassion, equanimity, and wisdom, while reducing the presence of unwholesome states. This is closely tied to the role of *cetasika*, or mental factors. In Abhidhamma psychology, 52 mental factors shape one's experience. These include universal factors (like contact and feeling), beautiful factors (like mindfulness and non-greed), and unwholesome ones. Mind training aims to cultivate the beautiful factors while weakening the unwholesome ones.

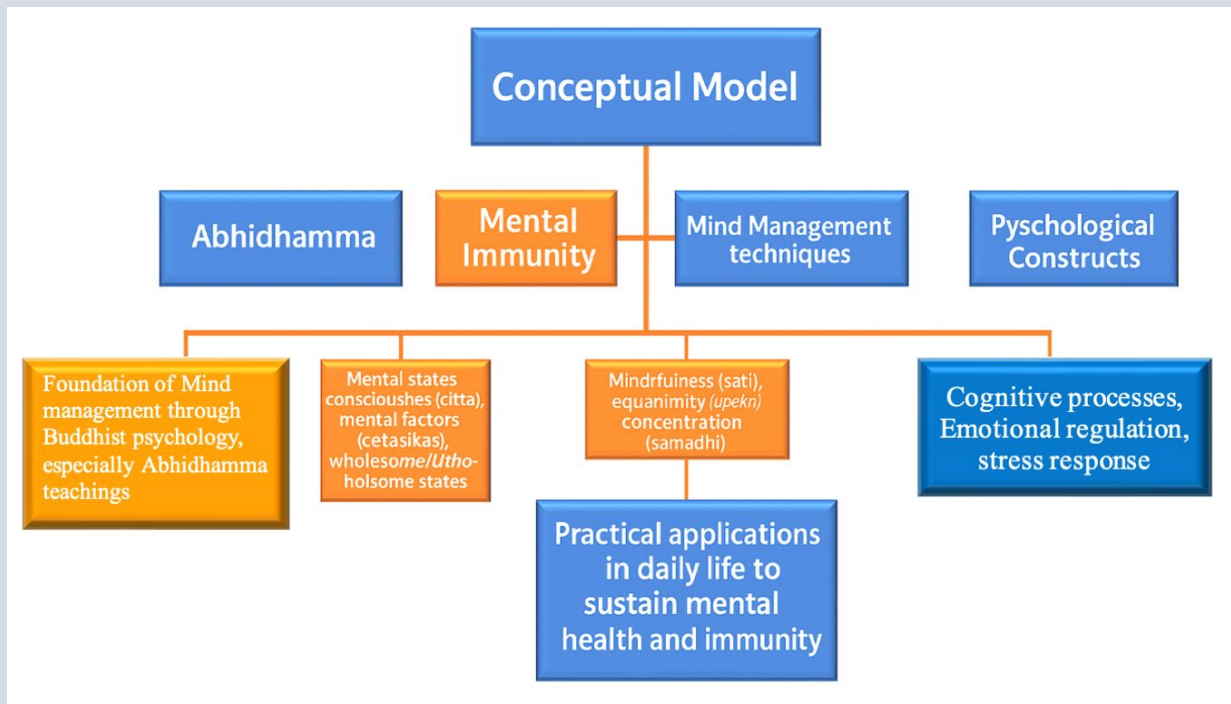


Figure. 2: Framework for Mind Management Based on Abhidhamma and Psychology

The primary tools for implementing this training are mindfulness-based meditation practices. Vipassanā (insight meditation) and Samatha (tranquillity meditation) enable the practitioner to observe and understand the functioning of the mind, identify defilements, and gradually uproot them. Importantly, the process of developing mental immunity is gradual and requires habitual reconditioning. Just as the physical immune system is strengthened over time through healthy habits, the mind builds resilience through consistent practice, mindfulness, and ethical conduct.

Conclusion

This study develops a conceptual understanding of the mind and its management for cultivating mental immunity, grounded in the psychological insights of Abhidhamma Buddhism. While well-known among advanced scholars, the transformative potential of Abhidhamma for managing and purifying the mind is often overlooked. This research highlights how its principles can guide individuals toward stability, peace, and resilience.

Abhidhamma provides a systematic analysis of consciousness (*citta*) and mental factors (*cetasika*), offering tools to identify and overcome defilements such as anger, jealousy, and delusion, which perpetuate suffering. Applied in daily life, these teachings enable transformation through mindfulness, ethical conduct, and introspection, fostering emotional regulation and clarity.

Mental immunity, as presented here, is both a practical and ethical necessity for well-being. By integrating classical Abhidhamma psychology with relevant modern perspectives, this study outlines a holistic model for cultivating wholesome states and resilience. Central practices, mindfulness, morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), strengthen self-purification, compassion, and inner balance.

Ultimately, mental immunity emerges as essential for happiness and harmony, both individually and collectively. Through the diligent practice of tranquillity and insight meditation, individuals can uproot greed, hatred, and delusion, moving toward Nibbāna, the end of suffering. By embracing Abhidhamma teachings alongside modern insights, one can nurture a resilient, compassionate mind capable of sustaining peace and well-being in everyday life.

Suggestions

This research results highlight the construction of a practical and theoretical model of the mind stranded in Abhidhamma Buddhist psychology, and it is essential to begin by recognising the foundational principle that the mind (*citta*) is not an extraordinary, static entity, but rather a torrent of momentary mental events. Each of these events is accompanied by mental factors (*cetasika*) that determine its ethical quality, clarity, and strength. A conceptual model aiming to enhance mental immunity should integrate this dynamic structure, emphasizing the role of wholesome mental factors (*kusala cetasika*) in fostering resilience and inner stability. One effective strategy for mind management, rooted

in Abhidhamma, is the cultivation of *sati* (mindfulness), *panna* (wisdom), and *metta* (loving-kindness). These mental factors can serve as psychological antibodies, actively countering the arising of unwholesome states such as greed, hatred, and delusion. Through mindfulness, individuals gain the capacity to observe mental states non-reactively, allowing for early recognition and regulation of toxic thoughts before they crystallise into action. Wisdom helps in reframing experiences, reducing cognitive distortions and enhancing emotional clarity. Loving-kindness, on the other hand, builds emotional resilience and dissolves antagonistic mental patterns.

To operationalise this, a layered model can be anticipated, beginning with awareness and identification of mental states, followed by conscious cultivation of wholesome mental habits, and finally, stabilisation through meditative practice. Educational tools, reflective journaling, and meditation components based on Abhidhamma insights can support long-term internalisation and application. In inference, participating in the analytical depth of Abhidhamma with practical psychological tools offers a vigorous framework for cultivating lifelong mental immunity, where immunity is not the absence of suffering, but the presence of a trained, resilient, and awakened mind.

While addressing the core objectives, the research also brought to light new and significant understandings. These discoveries open up promising directions for continued study in the following fields:

1. Wholesome and Unwholesome *Cetasikas* as Predictors of Emotional Intelligence: A Cross-Disciplinary Inquiry between Abhidhamma and Contemporary Psychology.
2. Momentary Consciousness and Neural Correlates: Bridging the Abhidhamma's Theory of *Citta* with Contemporary Cognitive Neuroscience.
3. Toward a Buddhist Psychology Intervention Model: Applying Abhidhamma-Based Mind Management to Emotional Dysregulation and Stress.

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The Learning Management Model for Higher Education Students for Learning Outcomes with Integrated Buddhism

Malinee Wigran¹ Suvin Ruksat² Eakachat Joneurairatana³

*Graduate School, Mahamakut Buddhist University^{1,2}
Faculty of Decorative Arts, Silpakorn University³*

*Corresponding author email: wigran.malinee@gmail.com¹
puzinnian@gmail.com² ejeaka9@gmail.com³*

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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the context of outcome-based education (OBE), identify relevant Buddhadhamma principles, and ultimately develop and propose the WOCA (Wisdom, Origination, Conscience, Agility) Model, a Buddhadhamma-integrated pedagogical framework for enhancing learning outcomes in Thai higher education. A qualitative methodology was employed, gathering data through in-depth interviews with 20 key informants and a focus group discussion with 5 purposively selected experts. Data were analysed using thematic content analysis. The research identified three core Buddhadhamma principles suitable for integration: Paṭisambhidā 4 (Four Analytical Knowledge), Pubbanimitta 7 (Seven Preconditions), and Hiri-ottappa (Moral Shame and Fear). The integration of these principles with the four KSEC domains (Knowledge, Skills, Ethics, Character) revealed that: (K) Knowledge aligned with Paṭisambhidā 4; (S) Skills aligned with Pubbanimitta 7 and Niruttipatisambhidā; (E) Ethics aligned with Hiri-ottappa (moral shame and moral fear); and (C) Character with Paṭibhāṇapaṭisambhidā and Yonisomanasikārasampadā. The WOCA Model operationalises these alignments into a systematic pedagogical approach that cultivates cognitive competence, applied skill, ethical awareness, and adaptive character, thereby reframing higher education as a process of holistic life development. Implications for curriculum design, teacher development, and assessment practices are discussed, and recommendations are provided for piloting and evaluating the model in diverse higher education contexts.

Keywords: Learning Management; Higher Education Students; Outcome-based Education (OBE); Integrated Buddhism; Buddhadhamma

Introduction

The rapid transformations of the 21st century have posed significant challenges to higher education systems worldwide. The digital revolution, increased mobility of human capital, and borderless economic competition compel universities to cultivate graduates who possess not only contemporary knowledge and multifaceted skills but also a firm ethical foundation. In response, pedagogical frameworks like outcome-based education (OBE) have been widely adopted. This approach, underscored by global initiatives like UNESCO's Four Pillars of Education, emphasizes measurable learning outcomes across key domains: Knowledge (K), Skills (S), Ethics (E), and Character (C), collectively known as KSEC.

Thailand has formally embraced the OBE paradigm through its Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (2022) (Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, 2022). The implementation of outcome-based learning within the Thai higher education system originates from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research, and Innovation, which has mandated that universities are required to develop an OBE curriculum to meet national standards and ensure the quality of higher education (Sihotang et al., 2025). The Ministry established the philosophy and framework for Thai higher education, providing a policy that requires higher education institutions to define learner outcomes in accordance with the standards for postgraduate curricula at each level (Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, 2019, 7).

However, quality assurance evaluations of numerous programmes reveal a crucial deficiency. While learners often demonstrate proficiency in acquiring technical skills (Knowledge) and practical competencies (Skills), they frequently show a corresponding lack of development in the domains of moral virtue, self-discipline, and personal accountability (Ethics and Character). This phenomenon is evident even in advanced curricula, such as the Doctor of Philosophy programme in Design Arts at Silpakorn University, where, despite the implementation of active learning and creative output, the cultivation of students' inner lives remains a challenge. This challenge highlights a systemic problem: the prevailing pedagogical models, though effective in imparting external competencies, are often insufficient for fostering the internal realms of conscience, resilience, and wisdom.

This research posits that this pedagogical gap can be addressed by drawing upon the rich heritage of Buddhist thought, which is, in essence, a comprehensive system for human development. Principles within the Tipiṭaka offer sophisticated frameworks for cultivating both intellect and character. The impetus for this research, therefore, is rooted in the objective of investigating and designing ‘A Buddhadhamma-integrated Pedagogical Model for Learning Outcomes in Higher Education’. This study aims to provide a tangible model for developing high-calibre graduates, distinguished by their capacity for knowledge, higher wisdom (vijjā), ethical conduct, and profound intellectual and spiritual depth. The ultimate goal is to cultivate individuals who are capable of navigating the modern world with inner resilience, while making sustainable contributions to themselves, their communities, and the wider society.

This study proposes addressing this gap through the integration of Buddhist principles, which offer a comprehensive framework for intellectual, ethical, and spiritual development. By developing the WOCA (Wisdom, Origination, Conscience, Agility) model, the research aims to provide a Buddhadhamma-integrated pedagogy that cultivates not only external competencies but also the inner resilience and ethical depth necessary for sustainable contributions to society.

Research Objectives

1. Study the context of outcome-based education for higher education students.
2. Study the principles of Buddhadhamma relevant to learning outcomes;
3. Integrate these Buddhist principles into pedagogy to enhance learning outcomes.
4. Propose a Buddhadhamma-integrated pedagogical model for higher education learning outcomes.

Literature Review

Thailand’s higher education policy has progressively reoriented programmes around clearly articulated graduate outcomes. National directives require institutions to specify learning outcomes appropriate to award levels: master’s curricula emphasise the creation and application of new knowledge for professional and social development, while doctoral programmes prioritise original research and innovations that serve the profession, society, the nation,

and the global community (Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, 2019; Office of the Council of State, 2022). The Higher Education Qualifications Framework B.E. 2565 (2022) formalises four outcome domains, Knowledge, Skills, Ethics, and Character (KSEC), which serve as the organising taxonomy for this study's pedagogical inquiry (Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, 2022). At the programme level, instructional sequences and feedback cycles described in the case study (see Figure 1) demonstrate how active, student-centred strategies have been used to operationalise KSEC outcomes in practice.

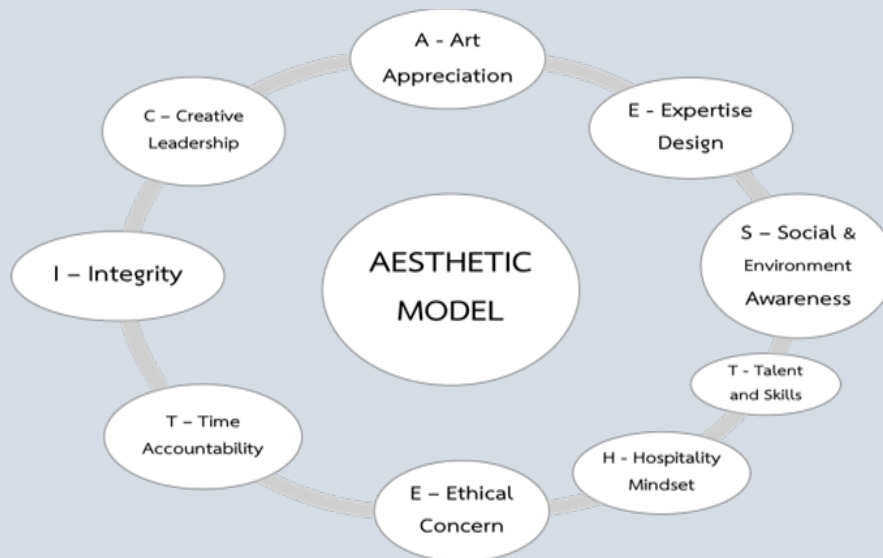


Figure 1: Learning Outcomes of the Ph.D. in Design Arts (International Programme), Faculty of Decorative Arts, Silpakorn University: The AESTHETIC Identity.

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) emphasises backward design: curricula and assessments are planned from desired outcomes to instructional activities (Spady, 1994). John Biggs's constructive alignment operationalises OBE by ensuring that intended outcomes drive teaching activities and assessment tasks, thereby making cognitive demand overt and measurable (Biggs, 2014). The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) further clarifies cognitive process levels and integrates metacognitive knowledge as essential for higher-order learning. Experiential learning cycles (Kolb, 1984) complement these frameworks by showing how reflection on practice, conceptualisation, and active experimentation translate declarative knowledge into applied competence, a process that is centrally represented in the programme's activity flowchart (Figure 1).

In the 2023 academic year, the programme adopted an active, student-centred model that reconfigured compulsory courses into research-support activities to strengthen knowledge and skills outcomes. Students undertook autonomous theoretical and practical research, followed by small-group synthesis and targeted support such as advanced research seminars, literature review, and academic-writing workshops, presentation and progress-review practice, language enhancement, collaborative skills training, and iThesis/citation instruction. Teaching was developed in partnership with national and international experts and partner institutions, and semester outcomes and student feedback were used to inform formative feedback and annual curriculum cycles (see Figure 1). Instruction on ethics centred on research integrity, and the programme aims to graduate creative leaders who demonstrate the programme’s “AESTHETIC” identity, producing socially beneficial, internationally relevant research and modelling lifelong learning.

Metacognition and self-regulation mediate successful attainment of KSEC outcomes, particularly for doctoral-level knowledge and transferable skills. Empirical studies indicate that explicit instruction in metacognitive strategies improves critical thinking and independent research capability (Rivas, Saiz, & Ossa, 2022). In addition, affective readiness, resilience, attention regulation, and emotional stability predict persistence in complex research tasks; contemplative practices adapted from Buddhist traditions have been shown to enhance these capacities among students (Sensiper, 2023). These insights support integrating cognitive and affective scaffolds within OBE designs, as reflected in the program’s student support and formative feedback systems (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. A Conceptual Diagram Relating Learning Management to Learning Outcomes in Higher Education

The procedural steps for implementing OBE (Outcome-Based Education) have been explored by numerous scholars. Key contributions include William G. Spady's (1994) foundational OBE curriculum and Biggs' (2014) influential 'Constructive Alignment' framework, which ensures that teaching activities and assessment tasks are directly aligned with the intended learning outcomes. In essence, a student-centred approach is emphasized, incorporating real-life scenarios where learning tools and activities are organized to ensure learners achieve practical proficiency. This is then assessed, with opportunities for collaborative feedback to enable the construction of new, applicable knowledge (Gallagher 2017).

A primary tool used within the OBE framework to measure the levels of learning outcomes is the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Developed from Bloom's original cognitive theory (1956), it was revised to include the process of self-knowledge and understanding, known as Metacognitive Knowledge, whilst maintaining the focus on achieving sustainable changes in behavior. The framework allows curricula to specify which level of practice learners must engage in to achieve the desired outcomes. It is divided into six hierarchical levels: Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analysing, Evaluating, and Creating.

Complementing these frameworks is the concept of Active Learning (AL), a prevalent pedagogical model in the 21st century. Its core principles are a student-centred approach, an emphasis on practical application, and a corresponding reduction in lecture time. Key theories such as Kolb's (1984) Learning Cycle emphasize a process where learners engage directly with concrete experiences, reflect on them, form abstract concepts, and actively experiment. This approach, as confirmed by research (Kamol Phothiyen, 2021), positions the instructor as a facilitator rather than a lecturer. The prominent advantage is that knowledge acquired through active participation becomes profound and enduring, as it is constructed by the learners themselves and refined through feedback and collaboration (Bloom, 1956)

The prominent advantage of this approach is that the knowledge acquired through Active Learning becomes a form of profound and enduring understanding. It is knowledge that remains with the learner permanently because they have constructed it themselves. This self-constructed knowledge is then verified and refined through instructor feedback and collaborative exchange until a shared, robust understanding is achieved.

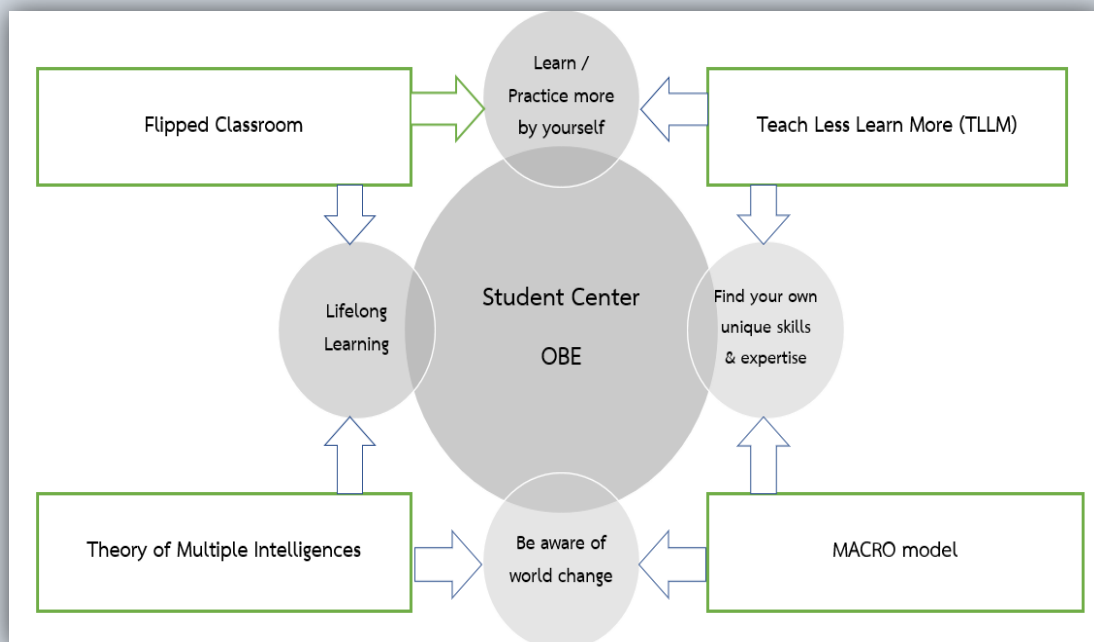


Figure 3: Conceptual Summary of Theories on Higher Learning Management for 21st-Century Learning Outcomes

Theravāda teachings offer pedagogically salient principles that closely map onto KSEC. Paṭisambhidā-4 (the four analytical knowledges) emphasises refined analytic capacities, distinguishing meaning, doctrinal principles, language, and expressive ingenuity, and aligns directly with the Knowledge domain (Paṭisambhidāmagga). Pubbanimitta-7 (the seven preconditions, such as good friendship, aspiration, and effort) functions as indicators of learner readiness and supports disciplined skill development (Saṃyutta Nikāya). Hiri-ottappa (moral shame and moral dread), described as “guardians of the world,” operate as internal ethical regulators that align with the Ethics domain (Aṅguttara Nikāya). Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P. A. Payutto) (2008) and other scholars interpret the Buddha’s differentiated instruction as analogous to contemporary theories of learner readiness and multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983), supporting the case for culturally situated pedagogy.

Mapping Paṭisambhidā-4, Pubbanimitta-7, and Hiri-ottappa onto KSEC produces an actionable blueprint: cultivate analytic knowledges (K) through scaffolded inquiry, textual and methodological analysis, and analytic writing; develop disciplined preconditions and practice regimes (S) through structured mentorship, apprenticeship, and iterative skills workshops; and nurture internalised ethical commitments (E) through contemplative ethics, case-based

reflection, and integrity training. Character (C) is fostered by embedding aesthetic, service-oriented projects and leadership placements that require long-term responsibility and public engagement (as portrayed in Figure 2). Cross-cutting pedagogical techniques, metacognitive instruction, experiential cycles, and constructive alignment ensure assessment tasks measure cognitive, ethical, and dispositional outcomes rather than only factual recall.

In conclusion, the Buddhadhamma-integrated OBE model offers a culturally coherent route to achieving KSEC aims in Thai doctoral education. The model invites empirical pilot studies that combine outcome measures (performance tasks, knowledge artefacts, ethical scenario responses) with process indicators (metacognitive logs, contemplative practice engagement). Figures 1 and 2 provide implementation and monitoring schemata that programme leaders can adapt when operationalising the model across diverse disciplinary contexts.

Conceptual Framework

This research is a research study. a Buddhadhamma-integrated pedagogical model for higher education. learning outcomes. The researcher defines the research conceptual framework based on the concept/theory of Outcome-Based Education in the Higher Education Institutions, Outcome-Based Pedagogy in the 21st Century, together with Principles of Buddhadhamma Relevant to Outcome-Based Pedagogy. The details are as follows:

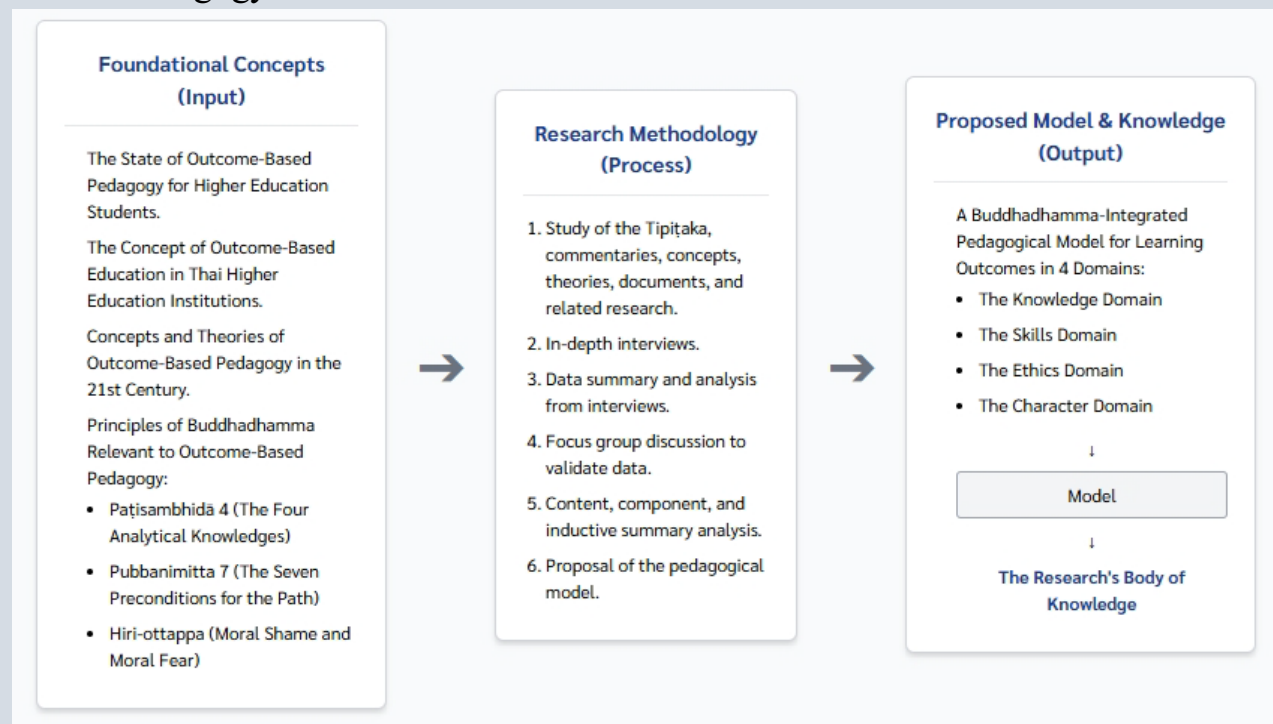


Figure 4: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative, fieldwork-based research methodology. The researcher first conducted a documentary study of relevant concepts, theories, and existing research. For the fieldwork component, a semi-structured interview guide was developed based on the research objectives and a comprehensive literature review. The protocol, upon approval by the dissertation advisor, was submitted to a panel of five experts for a final review of its content validity.

Following this, the validated protocol was used to conduct in-depth interviews with 20 key informants selected via purposive sampling. After the interviews, a focus group discussion was organised with five different experts to validate and refine the emergent themes. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, data were triangulated between the in-depth interviews and the expert focus group. Furthermore, member checking was employed by presenting a summary of findings to select informants for validation. Data from all sources were transcribed and analysed using a thematic analysis approach, involving systematic coding and theme identification. Ethical approval for this study was obtained, and all participants provided informed consent before data collection.

Research Results

The Research results found that:

1) Findings on the State of Pedagogy for Outcome-based Learning (KSEC): The study investigated the state of pedagogy across the four learning outcome domains stipulated in the Higher Education Qualifications Framework. The findings for each domain were as follows: Knowledge (K): A clear development in teaching methods was observed, with a reduction in lecture time and an increase in opportunities for autonomous learning. Instructors designed a variety of activities to provide learners with enriching experiences. Knowledge was generated through practical application and the practice of exchanging ideas, analysing work, and providing peer-to-peer feedback. Learners understood how to evaluate their own work and how their developmental process contributed to new knowledge in their academic field. Skills (S): The programme was found to implement an Active Learning approach, allowing learners to engage in self-training and learn from direct experience at each stage. This involved practicing physical skills through group activities in real-world settings, developing effective teamwork, sharing knowledge after conducting research, and organising

seminars in collaboration with international experts. Ethics (E): Moral principles were applied to regulate against plagiarism, while the code of research ethics was used as a formal set of rules to ensure discipline in citation and the use of others' work. The overarching goal was to ensure the successful and ethical completion of the students' education. Character (C): The desired character attribute was found to be that of an individual who possesses analytical thinking skills, understands the interconnectedness of knowledge, and is prepared to use this knowledge to create work that benefits society, while respecting collective rules and social order.

2) Results of the Study on Buddhist Principles for Learning Management: The investigation into the state of Outcome-based Education (OBE) for higher education students revealed that three specific principles of Buddhaddhamma were exceptionally suitable for integration. These were: 1) Paṭisambhidā 4, the four analytical knowledges, which were the attributes of a proficient individual (comprising atthapaṭisambhidā, dhammapaṭisambhidā, niruttipatisambhidā, and paṭibhāṇapaṭisambhidā); 2) Pubbanimitta 7, the seven preconditions, which were the qualities of one who is ready to achieve success (comprising kalyāṇamittatā, sīlasampadā, chandasampadā, attasampadā, diṭṭhisampadā, appamādasampadā, and yonisomanasikārasampadā); and 3) Hiri-ottappa, moral shame and moral fear, which is the noble wealth of an individual.

These three principles contained the substantive content appropriate to serve as tools for an integrated, outcome-based pedagogy. They helped to foster genuine knowledge and understanding, enhance skills and expertise through experiential cultivation of the arts and sciences, and build readiness for continuous and diligent self-training. They also develop the ability to interact with diverse groups and build the confidence necessary for an aesthetic and virtuous character, both in personal life and in society.

Through this integrated approach, students will not only acquire academic skills but will also develop positive moral and ethical characteristics and the capacity for bold, creative, and analytical thought. This prepares them to become valuable and responsible leaders in society. The principle of Paṭisambhidā 4, in particular, serves as an indicator for the Character domain, as it cultivates a sense of conviction and faith in what one communicates, thereby inspiring trust and concordance in others—a quality that aligns with the Buddha's own pedagogical methods.

3) Results of the Integration of Buddhadhamma with Pedagogy: The integration of the three Buddhist principles, Paṭisambhidā 4, Pubbanimitta 7, and Hiri-ottappa, with the 21st-century learning outcomes specified in the OBE curriculum for doctoral studies was analysed. The findings for each of the four KSEC domains were as follows:

Knowledge (K) with Buddhadhamma Integration: The research found that students acquired authentic knowledge and genuine understanding, enabling them to deconstruct and connect concepts to answer questions articulately, with credible reasoning. This aligned with the integration of Paṭisambhidā 4 (Vibh. 35/718-731/459-465 (Thai, MCU)), specifically Atthapaṭisambhidā (analysis of meaning), Dhammapaṭisambhidā (analysis of doctrine/principles), and Paṭibhāṇapaṭisambhidā (analysis of ingenuity). These principles provide a framework that enhances the learning outcomes for Knowledge and Character. A learner with this developed wisdom can grasp the essence of a concise teaching and elaborate upon it in detail; see a single cause and analytically connect it to its manifold effects; and classify details, categorize content, and draw comprehensive conclusions. This aligns with Dhammapaṭisambhidā. Furthermore, they can apply this knowledge resourcefully to solve problems, explain concepts with persuasive reasoning, and demonstrate the benefits of its application to others. This aligns with Paṭibhāṇapaṭisambhidā.

Skills (S) with Buddhadhamma Integration: It was found that principles within Pubbanimitta 7 (SN. Mv. 19/49-90/43-57 (Thai, MCU)), namely Kalyāṇamittatā (good friendship) and Chandasampadā (aspiration), serve as key motivators for entering the educational process. Personal readiness, including a desire to learn and the learner's maturity, is supported by Attasampadā (self-realisation), Diṭṭhisampadā (right view), Appamādasampadā (diligence), and Sīlasampadā (virtuous discipline). In addition, the study found a connection to Niruttipatisambhidā (analysis of language), which develops the skill of translating knowledge (dhamma) into language that an audience can understand and apply. This is supported by a discourse in the Suriya Peyyālavagga of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, where the Buddha states that just as the dawn's light precedes the rising sun, so too are there preconditions for the arising of the noble path. Thus, these seven preconditions bring about success in a person's life.

Ethics (E) with Buddhadhamma Integration: The research found that Hiri-ottappa (AN. 20/8-9/63 (Thai, MCU)), combined with mindfulness and diligence

(appamādasampadā), is central to this domain. The pedagogical method involves instilling virtue in one's work. This requires integrity, having good role models (kalyāṇamitta), and using the ingenuity (paṭibhāṇa) gained from learning to engage in reasoned, ethical discourse, transforming complex issues into clear ones. Hiri-ottappa, the virtue of good people, also fosters honesty, originality (discouraging plagiarism), and a sense of social responsibility in one's work. This leads to the development of exemplary leadership that society can depend upon, characterised by integrity in all actions, both public and private.

Character (C) with Buddhadhamma Integration: The findings show that through dedicated self-training, learners develop an expertise that becomes their unique identity. This cultivation of deep understanding gives rise to an embedded wisdom (paññā) and a versatile ingenuity (paṭibhāṇa) that allows the graduate to adapt to any situation and confidently address queries on any issue. This, in turn, builds the self-assurance needed to become an expert creative leader, producing virtuous work for the benefit of humanity at the local, national, and international levels. The focus group experts concluded that Paṭibhāṇapaṭisambhidā and Yonisomanasikārasampadā (wise attention) are key Buddhist principles for achieving the learning outcome for Character, serving as indicators of an agile and resourceful leader who inspires faith.

4) Summary of the Integration of Buddhadhamma with Pedagogy: The results of integrating the principles of Buddhadhamma with the pedagogy for learning outcomes can be summarised as follows: Knowledge (K): This domain is integrated with Paṭisambhidā 4, primarily using Atthapaṭisambhidā (analysis of meaning) and Dhammapaṭisambhidā (analysis of doctrine). This is supplemented by Kalyāṇamittatā (good friendship) from the Pubbanimitta 7, along with other doctrinal points that reinforce the cultivation of wisdom, enabling a learner to become an expert in their desired field and proceed to subsequent stages of success. Skills (S): This domain is integrated with Pubbanimitta 7 and Niruttipatisambhidā (analysis of language), which together serve as the foundation for the 'dawn of education'. This provides the path to success for an individual who prepares themselves for self-development towards a meaningful life goal and a unique personal identity. Ethics (E): This domain is integrated with the principle of Hiri-ottappa (moral shame and moral fear). The conscious abhorrence of evil and fear of its consequences acts as an internal control mechanism, reminding one to refrain from dishonesty and plagiarism, and reinforcing a profound respect for the code of research ethics. Character (C): This

domain is integrated with Paṭibhāṇapaṭisambhidā (analysis of ingenuity) and Yonisomanasikārasampadā (the endowment of wise attention). These serve as key indicators of successful leadership, demonstrated by an individual who makes swift decisions, is adaptable to all situations, and acts as an exemplary role model for society.

The precise mapping of these three Buddhadhamma principles to the four KSEC domains forms the core of the proposed pedagogical model. The suitability of these principles is supported by the research findings, where expert informants consistently validated their applicability. To illustrate, in a design arts seminar (Skills domain), a student's readiness is cultivated through Kalyāṇamittatā (good friendship) in group critiques. Their presentation skills are honed by applying Niruttipatisambhidā (analysis of language) to clearly articulate their creative process, thereby achieving the desired learning outcome. This direct alignment is detailed systematically in the matrix below.

Table 1. Matrix Mapping KSEC Domains to Buddhadhamma Principles

<i>Component</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Principles of Buddhadhamma</i>	<i>Relevant Context</i>	<i>Buddhadhamma-integrated OBE</i>
K - Knowledge	Thinks conceptually, analyses, differentiates, connects, and summarises.	Attha- and Dhammapaṭisambhidā; Yonisomanasikāra	The Fourfold Analytical Method of Discourse (Vibhatti desanā)	Possesses wisdom, understands quickly, and can differentiate and integrate disciplines.
S - Skills	Prepares oneself, trains with endurance, acts genuinely, and disseminates knowledge	Pubbanimitta 7; Niruttipatisambhidā	Sīla Sutta; Mahāsāropana Sutta	Possesses diligence (<i>virīya</i>) in self-training, enhances creative and expert competencies, develops a unique identity, and disseminates knowledge

<i>Component</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Principles of Buddhadham ma</i>	<i>Relevant Context</i>	<i>Buddhadhamma -integrated OBE</i>
E - Ethics	Knows the Dhamma, knows good, and knows evil	Hiri-ottappa	Assaddha Sutta	Possesses a good conscience, is responsible, and honest
C - Character	Possesses sharp wisdom; is agile and swift	Paṭibhāṇapaṭi sambhidā; Kalyāṇamittat ā	Sāriputta Sutta; Mahāve dalla Sutta	Demonstrates the qualities of a creative leader who upholds virtue and applies wisdom to address challenges with accuracy and agility in all circumstances.

The three categories of Buddhadhamma are interconnected, forming a learning cycle that arises from sequential development. This cycle cultivates an individual who possesses analytical wisdom, is self-aware and personally accountable, and remains diligent. They train themselves to be eager to learn and create, and learn to disseminate knowledge and communicate with fluent, articulate, and swift proficiency.

This process leads one to become a creative leader who understands the Dhamma, shuns evil, and cultivates the wholesome; who possesses both wisdom and artistic sensibility; and who acts as a professional creative leader committed to lifelong learning. This progression is in accordance with the sequence of the Threefold Training (Trisikkhā) in Buddhism.

The body of knowledge concerning 'The Learning Management Model on Learning Outcomes for Higher Education Students with Integrated Buddhism' originates from the synthesis of several frameworks. It is the result of the interconnection between Outcome-Based Education (OBE), the KSEC domains, and the learning theory of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy, all of which are integrated with the relevant principles of Paṭisambhidā 4, Pubbanimitta 7, and Hiri-ottappa. This is illustrated in the diagram showing the results of integrating Buddhadhamma with outcome-based pedagogy.

Discussions

The findings on the integration of Buddhadhamma with the state of outcome-based pedagogy reveal that the 21st-century learning process for developing knowledge, skills, and ethics through active learning depends significantly on learner readiness (i.e., maturity, health, and emotional state). An instructor can use the principles of Pubbanimitta 7 to foster this readiness and Paṭisambhidā 4 to impart knowledge. This aligns with the doctoral dissertation by Phakaphol (2022), which developed a teaching model based on connectivism theory and phenomenon-based learning. That study found that students' development of active citizenship and media literacy skills continuously improved to an important level as a result of the learning outcomes from connecting knowledge with real-world phenomena. Furthermore, this also aligns with contemporary research suggesting that metacognitive strategies are crucial for developing critical thinking in higher education. The WOCA model, by integrating principles like Yonisomanasikāra (wise attention), implicitly cultivates metacognition, which is the ability to be aware of and regulate one's own thinking processes. Such self-regulation and planning are essential for learners to effectively solve problems and make decisions, which are core tenets of critical thinking (Rivas, Saiz, & Ossa, 2022).

The principles of Buddhadhamma that promote pedagogical development, particularly Paṭisambhidā 4, provide a framework for learners to research and understand lessons autonomously. This resonates with the associative theory of creativity, which argues that a rich, flexible knowledge structure—a well-developed semantic memory—facilitates the ability to form novel connections between remote concepts (Kenett, 2025). The analytical skills fostered by Paṭisambhidā 4 can be seen as a way of building this "richer semantic memory structure," which is a hallmark of higher creative individuals. By developing deep analytical knowledge, students are better equipped for the creative thinking required at the doctoral level. This is consistent with the findings of the doctoral dissertation by Phra Khru Sutrattanopas (2018).

Furthermore, the emphasis on mindfulness and inner development within the WOCA model is supported by studies on contemplative practices in universities. Research indicates that teaching meditation within an academic context helps students improve focus, manage stress, and enhance emotional control. One qualitative study found that students who practiced meditation reported an improvement in overall well-being and a greater ability to handle

difficult interpersonal situations (Sensiper, 2023). This suggests that the integration of practices that cultivate conscience (C) and agility (A) in the WOCA model directly addresses the "inner dimensions" that are often lacking in traditional curricula, leading to more holistic student development.

Knowledge from Research

The origin of this body of knowledge lies in the interconnection of the principles of Buddhaddhamma and Western learning theories with the four domains of **Knowledge, Skills, Ethics, and Character (KSEC)**. This framework connects directly to outcome-based educational pedagogy, aiming to transform the learner from possessing foundational knowledge, skills, ethics, and character into an individual endowed with erudite wisdom.

This model was synthesised from documentary data, fieldwork research, and the conceptual framework of Outcome-Based Education (OBE). It "integrates" principles of Buddhaddhamma to serve as the core pedagogical structure, aimed at the holistic development of students. The components of the model and their correlation with the research outcomes (KSEC) are detailed below.

Table 2. The Origin of the Body of Knowledge

<i>Component</i>	<i>Meaning and Relevant Principles</i>	<i>Links to KSEC</i>
W – Wisdom	This encompasses knowledge, memory, understanding, analytical thinking, and creative wisdom. It utilises the principles of Paṭisambhidā 4 (specifically Atthapaṭisambhidā and Dhammapaṭisambhidā) to enable learners to think analytically, establish a cause-and-effect understanding to gain authentic knowledge, and be prepared to use that knowledge for self-development and creative work.	Knowledge (K): Possessing critical wisdom; the ability to think, connect, analyse, critique, and synthesise.
O – Origination	This involves preparing oneself for success through an eagerness to learn and to create beneficial outcomes. It requires the practice of	Skills (S): Possessing internal discipline; valuing intrinsic

Component	Meaning and Relevant Principles	Links to KSEC
	mindfulness and right reflection based on causes and conditions, leading to the development of a unique personal identity. This is guided by <i>Pubbanimitta</i> 7 and <i>Niruttipatisambhidā</i> (the skill of transmitting knowledge with professional artistry so others may understand and apply it), thereby fostering an awareness of one's goals that translates into permanent, positive action.	learning; being ready to accept wholesome knowledge for the public good.
C – Consciences	This refers to being accomplished in the practice of mindfulness and right reflection through <i>Yonisomanasikāra</i> and <i>Hiri-ottappa</i> . The objective is to foster an awareness of one's goals that translates into ethical action. This includes being diligent (<i>appamāda</i>), considering the public good, and being ready to select wholesome knowledge for creating beneficial work and a unique personal identity.	Ethics (E): Possessing a conscious good character; being virtuous (<i>sīla</i>), shunning evil and fearing its consequences, knowing the Dhamma, and perpetually refining the mind as the path to a successful and good life.
A – Agility	The ultimate goal of Buddhist-based education is the development of the 'complete human person'. This is achieved by training mindfulness and wisdom through <i>Yonisomanasikārasampadā</i> , which fosters swift thinking, and <i>Paṭibhāṇapaṭisambhidā</i> , which enables problem-solving with ingenuity. This agility leads to the ability to be a refuge for others through <i>Kalyāṇamittatā</i> .	Character (C): Embodying creative leadership that encompasses all four KSEC domains; a graduate who is complete in knowledge (<i>vijjā</i>), conduct (<i>caraṇa</i>), and wisdom (<i>paññā</i>).

The body of knowledge concerning A Buddhadhamma-integrated Pedagogical Model for Learning Outcomes in Higher Education results from the connection between the three core Buddhist principles, relevant learning theories,

and data from fieldwork. This synthesis has produced an integrated pedagogy for outcome-based learning (OBE) focused on Knowledge, Skills, Ethics, and Character, achieved through the application of the Buddhist principles of Paṭisambhidā 4, Pubbanimitta 7, and Hiri-ottappa. This process has yielded a formulaic body of knowledge, termed:

W: *WISDOM* (*Buddhacakkhu*): Refers to insight wisdom.

O: *ORINATION* (*Hatthakarunā*): Refers to an expertise that constitutes a unique identity.

C: *CONSCIENCES* (*Citta*): Refers to the possession of wholesome mindfulness and full awareness in every moment.

A: *AGILITY* (Resilience): Refers to the ability to adapt to any situation with the ingenuity and acumen of a leader.

The blue colour associated with the WOCA model symbolizes stability, faith, order, truth, prudence, reliability, serenity, harmony, unity, and inspiration.



Figure 5: The WOCA Model: A Buddhadhamma-integrated Pedagogical Model for Holistic Outcomes.

Connection to the Research Findings

The analysis of documentary and fieldwork data revealed the following connections:

1) Finding: Higher education institutions lack a systematic approach for integrating Buddhadhamma with OBE.

WOCA Model's Contribution: The WOCA Model fills this gap by providing a structured process that corresponds to the development of life skills at a psychological and spiritual level, not merely a technical one.

2) Finding: Students require a learning process that fosters inner states, such as self-knowledge, mindfulness, and ethics. →

WOCA Model's Contribution: The WOCA Model begins with 'learner readiness' through the principle of *Pubbanimitta* 7 and an appreciation of inner values through *Hiri-ottappa*. This directly addresses the students expressed need for a more value-based educational experience.

3) Finding: The four KSEC learning outcomes cannot be sustainably achieved without cultivating conscience, reflective thinking, and meditative practice (*bhāvanā*).

WOCA Model's Contribution: This model answers this challenge by applying the principles of Buddhadhamma at every stage of the learning process.

Conclusion

The WOCA Model offers a Buddhadhamma-integrated pedagogical framework that responds to the limitations of outcome-based education (OBE) in Thai higher education. While OBE effectively promotes the acquisition of knowledge and skills, it often neglects the inner dimensions of ethical values and personal character. The WOCA Model addresses this imbalance by systematically aligning key Buddhist principles, *Paṭisambhidā* 4 (Four Analytical Knowledges), *Pubbanimitta* 7 (Seven Preconditions), and *Hiri-ottappa* (moral shame and moral fear), with the four KSEC domains of Knowledge, Skills, Ethics, and Character. This integration ensures that learners develop both external competencies and internal virtues. More than a pedagogical method, the WOCA Model reframes education as a process of holistic life development. It nurtures intellectual growth, ethical responsibility, and resilient character, fostering graduates who embody wisdom (*vijjā*), moral conduct (*caraṇa*), and discernment (*paññā*). In doing so, the model equips individuals to engage with contemporary challenges while upholding integrity and contributing positively to society. Ultimately, the WOCA Model demonstrates how the timeless insights of Buddhism can be innovatively applied to modern higher education, ensuring that graduates are not only capable professionals but also virtuous and creative leaders who act responsibly in both personal and societal contexts.

Suggestions for Future Research

As a qualitative study based on a specific context, the findings' generalisability is limited. The proposed WOCA model is, at this stage, a conceptual framework derived from theoretical synthesis and expert validation; it requires further empirical testing to evaluate its practical effectiveness in diverse classroom settings.

Future research should focus on the practical implementation and evaluation of the WOCA model. A pilot study could be conducted in a higher education course, employing a mixed-methods approach to quantitatively and qualitatively measure its impact on student outcomes across the KSEC domains. Further studies could also explore the model's adaptability across different academic disciplines beyond the arts and humanities.

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Development and Validation of the Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire: Evidence from Thai Adults and Application to Organizational Leaders

*Maechee Narumon Jiwattanasuk¹, Sanu Mahatthanadull²
Phra Bhavanavajirasundon Vi. (Kittiched Siri wattago)³
Maechee Supaporn Tongsupachok⁴Tararat Khaokhiew⁵*

*International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University¹²,
Buddhamahametta Foundation, Phranakorn Si Ayutthaya³⁴,
Faculty of Medical Technology, Mahidol University⁵*

Corresponding author email: tuktta44@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study aimed to develop and validate the Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire (EWBQ) for application in the Thai context, with specific attention to cultural adaptation, psychometric rigor, and practical use in organizational leadership. The objectives were threefold: first, to construct the EWBQ through an extensive review of existing international instruments, cultural contextualization, and expert evaluation; second, to examine the reliability and validity of the instrument with Thai adults; and third, to apply and validate its use among organizational leaders to assess its utility in leadership development and mental health promotion.

1. The development process integrated established measures such as the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS), the WHO-5 Well-Being Index, and Ryff’s Psychological Well-Being Scales with Buddhist-informed constructs, including mindfulness (sati) and loving-kindness (mettā). Rigorous translation and back-translation procedures were conducted, and expert review using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) confirmed the content validity of all items. Pilot testing with Thai adults demonstrated both linguistic clarity and cultural resonance, ensuring the instrument reflected not only global frameworks but also distinct Thai sociocultural values of compassion, social harmony, and spiritual meaning.

2. Psychometric testing yielded strong evidence of reliability and validity. Cronbach’s alpha values consistently exceeded .96, indicating excellent internal consistency. Factor analysis confirmed a multidimensional structure across six domains: positive emotion, emotional regulation, social support, meaning, accomplishment, and engagement, establishing construct validity. Criterion validity was supported through correlations with existing well-being indicators,

underscoring the robustness of the EWBQ in measuring emotional well-being among Thai adults.

3. Application of the EWBQ with organizational leaders further demonstrated its practical value. Following a structured mindfulness and loving-kindness intervention, leaders showed significant improvement in emotional well-being, with pretest mean scores ($M = 50.73$, $SD = 12.41$) rising to posttest scores ($M = 66.23$, $SD = 8.17$). Paired-sample t-test results indicated a highly significant effect ($t(39) = 9.47$, $p < .001$), while reduced variability in posttest scores reflected consistent gains across participants. These findings highlight the sensitivity of the EWBQ to capture changes in well-being and its applicability in leadership contexts, supporting resilience, compassion, and ethical decision-making.

The EWBQ represents a culturally grounded, psychometrically validated instrument that bridges international frameworks with Thai cultural and spiritual values. It contributes to both academic scholarship and applied practice by offering a reliable tool for research, organizational development, and policy design. Beyond measurement, the EWBQ serves as a foundation for initiatives aimed at promoting mental health, enhancing leadership capacities, and advancing sustainable well-being in Thai society.

Keywords: Emotional Well-Being; Thai Adults; Organizational Leaders; Mindfulness

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Introduction

Emotional well-being has become a central outcome of interest across psychology, organizational behavior, and public health (Park et al., 2022). In Thailand, rising rates of anxiety and stress among working-age adults have been highlighted by national media and policy commentators, prompting calls for culturally sensitive measurement and intervention (ThaiPBS Policy Watch, 2025). Simultaneously, Thai empirical work has emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence and resilience for both students and professionals: recent studies report strong associations between emotional intelligence and psychological resilience in university populations (Anusaksathien, 2025) and document the effectiveness of pedagogical interventions, grounded in growth-mindset principles, to strengthen positive psychological capital (Boonsathirakul,

Pholpasee, & Boonsupa, 2025). These findings indicate the relevance of robust tools to assess emotional well-being across community and organizational settings in Thailand.

Despite these advances, important measurement gaps remain. Widely used instruments such as the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS), WHO-5 Well-Being Index, and Ryff’s Psychological Well-Being Scales were developed and validated primarily in Western contexts and may insufficiently capture culturally specific dimensions of well-being salient to Thai adults (Ryff, 1989; Tennant et al., 2007; World Health Organization, 1998). In particular, constructs tied to relational harmony, compassionate duty, and spiritual meaning, dimensions frequently emphasized in Thai sociocultural and Buddhist moral discourse, are underrepresented in many existing scales. Moreover, there is limited validated instrumentation tailored to assess leaders’ emotional well-being, a critical omission given that organizational leaders’ affective regulation and interpersonal comportment influence organizational climate, employee mental health, and ethical decision-making.

Buddhist contemplative practices, especially mindfulness (*sati*) and loving-kindness (*mettā*), offer culturally consonant frameworks for understanding and cultivating emotional balance in Thai settings. Classical canonical sources and contemporary translations situate mindfulness and *mettā* as foundational supports for ethical conduct, emotional regulation, and prosocial motivation (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1995; Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2005). Experimental and quasi-experimental research has linked loving-kindness and mindfulness practices to increased social connectedness, compassion, and emotion regulation, mechanisms that are particularly relevant for leadership development (Hutcherson et al., 2008). Embedding these culturally salient constructs into measurement, therefore, strengthens both ecological validity and practical relevance.

The present study addresses these gaps by developing and validating the Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire (EWBQ) for Thai adults and by testing its applicability among organizational leaders. Following a multi-stage protocol, the EWBQ integrates conceptual anchors from established instruments (WEMWBS, WHO-5, Ryff) with items adapted to reflect Thai cultural values and Buddhist-informed domains. The instrument underwent expert review, cognitive interviewing, pilot testing, and psychometric evaluation to ensure reliability and construct and criterion validity. Finally, the EWBQ was applied in a leadership sample to evaluate sensitivity to change following mindfulness and loving-kindness programming.

This research paper presents the development and validation process of the Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire, its application to both general Thai adults and organizational leaders, and the academic and practical contributions that arise from this work. Academically, it offers a culturally sensitive measurement tool that bridges gaps in existing research. Practically, it provides organizations, educators, and policymakers with evidence-based insights into leaders' emotional well-being, thereby supporting interventions to cultivate more resilient, mindful, and compassionate leadership in Thai society.

Research Objectives

1. To develop an Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire (EWBQ) grounded in literature review, cultural adaptation, and expert evaluation for use in the Thai context.
2. To evaluate the psychometric properties of the EWBQ, including reliability, construct validity, and criterion validity, through initial testing with Thai adults.
3. To apply and validate the EWBQ among organizational leaders in Thailand, assessing its applicability for leadership development and mental health promotion.

Literature Review

Emotional well-being is a multidimensional construct that encompasses people's subjective evaluations of their affective states, the capacity to recognize and regulate emotions, and broader judgments of life satisfaction (Pecherkina, Katkalo, & Borisov, 2023). Contemporary frameworks in positive psychology emphasize resilience, adaptive emotion regulation, and the search for meaning as central mechanisms supporting stable well-being across personal and professional domains (Kaur & Singh, 2022; Park et al., 2022). Empirical work, therefore, treats emotional well-being not as a simple affective snapshot but as a dynamic, regulative capacity that sustains functioning under stress.

Beyond psychology, ancient Indian traditions, including *āyurveda* and the *yoga sutras*, provide additional perspectives through concepts such as *Śānta* (peace) and *bhāvanā* (the conscious cultivation of affective states), highlighting the cultural foundations of emotional regulation and mental balance. These traditions align with contemporary frameworks by offering holistic methods for restoring equilibrium and enhancing well-being. In parallel, modern qualitative

research portrays emotional well-being as a dynamic continuum that fluctuates with individuals' capacity to engage in daily routines, practice self-care, and sustain meaningful interpersonal connections (Ross et al., 2023).

Empirical studies further illuminate the interrelationships between spirituality, health behaviors, and psychological functioning. For example, Bozek, Nowak, and Blukacz (2020) found that spirituality has a positive influence on health-related behaviors, which in turn mediate improvements in psychological well-being. Their study of 595 university students suggested that educational contexts emphasizing humanistic and spiritual perspectives may foster stronger connections between spirituality and subjective well-being. This highlights the importance of integrating lifestyle and spiritual dimensions into well-being frameworks.

The role of emotional regulation has also been studied extensively in adolescents, a population undergoing rapid developmental transitions. Smith et al. (2018) demonstrated that digital interventions grounded in emotion theories can enhance emotional regulation and mental health outcomes, offering promising tools for youth well-being promotion. Similarly, Lennarz et al. (2018) identified emotion differentiation, the ability to distinguish one's emotional states, as a protective factor against anxiety and depression. Adolescents with higher emotion differentiation reported reduced intensity of negative emotions and greater confidence in their ability to regulate affect, reinforcing the importance of emotional awareness in psychological health.

The connection between spirituality, happiness, and mental health is also evident in childhood contexts. Eaude (2009) emphasized that spirituality, conceptualized as a sense of connection to a greater whole, supports children's resilience and coping abilities. Rather than framing happiness and emotional well-being as mere hedonic states, he argued that they are outcomes of supportive relationships, purposeful activities, and resilience-building. This perspective highlights that emotional well-being is not only an individual trait but also a relational and developmental process. And Jiwattanasuk et al. (2025) researched that mindfulness helps practitioners to achieve happiness.

Emotional well-being has also been examined in relation to chronic illness, such as diabetes mellitus. Research demonstrates that the constant demands of disease management often generate emotional distress, which can exacerbate

physical symptoms and complicate treatment adherence (Božek, Nowak & Blukacz, 2020). Such findings underscore the need for integrated care models addressing both physical and psychological health.

Social connection consistently emerges as a robust determinant of emotional well-being: meta-analytic evidence links stronger social ties with reduced morbidity and mortality and with enhanced psychological resilience (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010). Emotional intelligence (EI) complements these social resources; defined as the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions, EI is reliably associated with superior stress management and interpersonal functioning (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004), with meta-analytic studies corroborating its positive relationship to health outcomes (Schutte et al., 2007).

Taken together, the literature underscores that emotional well-being is not a static state but a multifaceted and contextually embedded phenomenon. It integrates emotional regulation, resilience, spirituality, physical health, social connection, and emotional intelligence as interdependent dimensions. This multidimensional perspective suggests that fostering emotional well-being requires holistic approaches that address both internal psychological processes and external relational, cultural, and health-related factors.

Conceptual Framework

This research is a quantitative study designed to develop and validate the Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire (EWBQ) for Thai adults and to assess its application among organizational leaders. The conceptual framework is defined based on the concepts and theories of emotional well-being (Keyes, 2002; Ryff, 2014) together with existing instruments of emotional well-being questionnaires (e.g., WEMWBS, WHO-5, and Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scales). These foundations guided the process of item generation, cultural adaptation, and validation to ensure the tool's relevance to the Thai sociocultural context.

The framework involves a systematic process: (1) literature review and content development, (2) back-translation for linguistic clarity, (3) expert validation using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC), (4) a try-out test with 30 participants, (5) revision, and (6) final implementation with the target group of organizational leaders. The details are as follows.

1. Independent Variables: Concepts and theories of emotional well-being; existing standardized instruments (WEMWBS, WHO-5, Ryff's Scales); cultural and contextual adaptations.

2. Process/Tools/Area/Target Audience: Development of the Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire (EWBQ) through item generation, expert review, back-translation, and pilot testing with Thai adults, followed by administration to organizational leaders.

3. Dependent Variable: Emotional well-being scores of Thai adults and organizational leaders, as measured through the validated EWBQ.

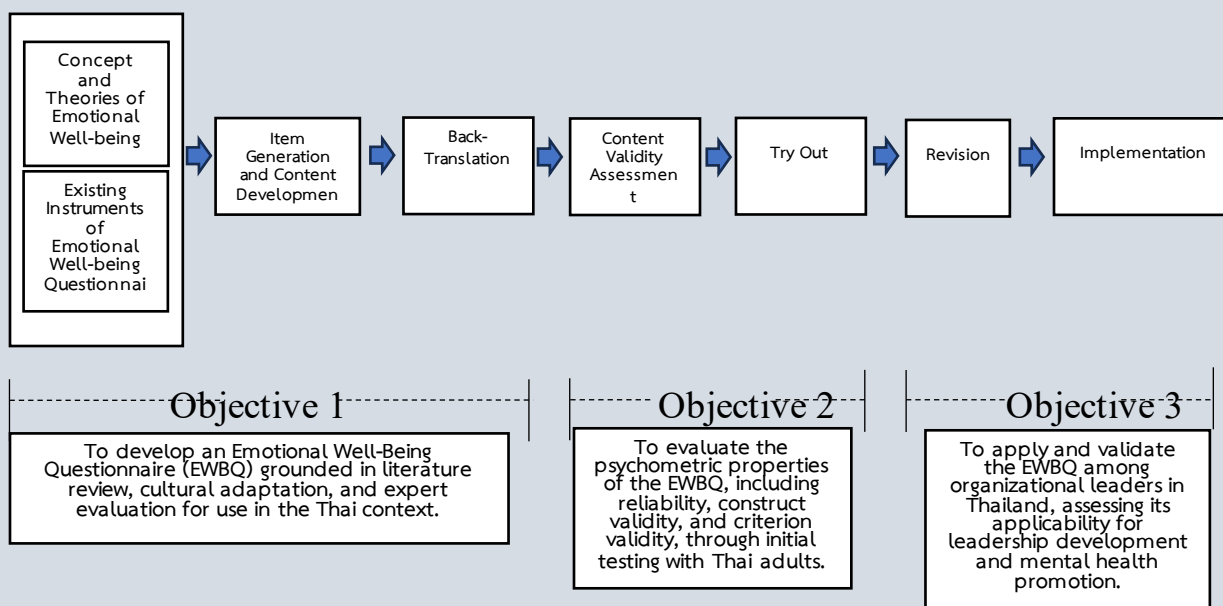


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This research is quantitative research conducted at the Buddhahammetta Foundation, Ayutthaya Province. The population comprised organizational leaders who participated in the Mindfulness, Wisdom, and Loving-Kindness (MWL) meditation program organized by the foundation, totaling approximately 150 people (Foundation records, 2025). The sample group consisted of 30 organizational leaders for the pilot testing stage and 120 organizational leaders for the validation stage. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, as they were required to have completed the MWL meditation program and to hold leadership positions within their organizations. This ensured that the questionnaire was tested with individuals who could reflect both personal and leadership-related aspects of emotional well-being.

The research tool is the Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire, was developed from a literature review and adaptation of concepts from Diener's well-being framework, PERMA (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), and the WHO-5 Well-Being Index. The tool contained 17 items across four domains: (1) Emotional Awareness and Positivity, (2) Social Connection and Support, (3) Meaningful Engagement, and (4) Accomplishment and Growth. It used a 5-point Likert scale. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed with Cronbach's alpha at .89 for the overall scale and between .78 and .85 for subscales. It was used in the study of the development of Emotional Well-being. The quantitative data were analyzed using basic statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) and Cronbach's alpha reliability to validate the questionnaire.

Reference Instruments

To inform item construction and support content validity, three widely used and psychometrically established instruments were selected as references:

Table 2 Item Generation and Content Development to support content validity

<i>Emotional Well-being Category</i>	<i>WHO-5 Items</i>	<i>PERMA Items</i>	<i>PANAS Items</i>	<i>Researcher Category</i>
Positive Emotion & Vitality	1. Felt cheerful and in good spirits; 2. Felt calm and relaxed; 3. Felt active and vigorous	P1: How often do you feel joyful? P2: How often do you feel positive? P3: How contented do you feel?	Excited, Enthusiastic , Active, Alert, Inspired	Emotional Awareness & Positivity
Emotion Regulation & Emotional Intelligence	4. Woke up feeling fresh and rested	A3: Able to handle responsibilities N1: How often do you feel anxious? N2: Angry N3: Sad	Distressed, Upset, Nervous, Ashamed, Scared, Irritable, Jittery	Emotional Awareness & Positivity
Social Connection & Support	5. Life has been filled with things that interest me,	R1: Receive help/support R2: Feel loved R3: Satisfied with personal	Attentive, Interested, Guilty, Hostile	Social Connection & Support

<i>Emotional Well-being Category</i>	<i>WHO-5 Items</i>	<i>PERMA Items</i>	<i>PANAS Items</i>	<i>Researcher Category</i>
	interpreted as social engagement	relationships Lon: How lonely do you feel?		
Meaning & Purpose	5. Life has been filled with things that interest me (interpreted as purpose)	M1: Lead a purposeful life M2: Life is worthwhile M3: Sense of direction	Proud, Inspired, Determined	Meaningful Engagement
Accomplishment & Growth		A1: Making progress toward goals A2: Achieve important goals	Proud, Strong, Determined	Accomplishment & Growth
Engagement & Presence		E1: Absorbed in what you are doing E2: Feel excited/interested E3: Lose track of time while doing something you enjoy	Interested, Attentive	Meaningful Engagement

1. **WHO-5 Well-being Index** (World Health Organization, 1998) – a brief measure assessing general well-being based on positive mood, vitality, and interest.

2. **PERMA-Profiler** (Butler & Kern, 2016) – a multidimensional tool measuring Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment.

3. **PANAS** (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) – a scale assessing the frequency of positive and negative affective states.

Items from these instruments were reviewed and conceptually mapped to the six emotional well-being domains identified for this study. These mappings informed the wording, structure, and focus of the new questionnaire items.

Research Results

Objective 1: To develop an Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire (EWBQ) grounded in literature review, cultural adaptation, and expert evaluation for use in the Thai context. The results showed that the Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire (EWBQ) was systematically developed from existing international well-being instruments such as the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), WHO-5 Well-Being Index, and Ryff’s Psychological Well-Being Scales, integrated with Buddhist-informed perspectives on mindfulness and compassion. Following item generation, the instrument was subjected to translation and back-translation to ensure linguistic and cultural clarity. Five experts in psychology, Buddhist studies, and organizational leadership evaluated the items using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC). All items achieved acceptable IOC scores (> 0.50), indicating strong content validity. A pilot test with 30 Thai adults confirmed the clarity and cultural appropriateness of the instrument, leading to minor revisions before finalization.

Objective 2: To evaluate the psychometric properties of the EWBQ, including reliability, construct validity, and criterion validity, through initial testing with Thai adults. The results showed that the initial testing demonstrated that the EWBQ had strong psychometric properties. Reliability analysis indicated high internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha exceeding .80 across all domains. The internal consistency of the Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire was examined using Cronbach’s alpha. Results indicated excellent reliability at both measurement points. For the pretest, Cronbach’s alpha was .967, while for the posttest it was .961. Both values exceed the recommended threshold of .70 for acceptable reliability (Taber, 2018), demonstrating that the instrument consistently measured emotional well-being across time. The slight decrease in alpha from pretest to posttest is minimal and likely reflects reduced response variance due to more uniformly elevated scores following the intervention, rather than a decline in scale quality. Overall, these findings confirm that the Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire is a reliable tool for assessing participants’ emotional well-being in this context.

Objective 3: To apply and validate the EWBQ among organizational leaders in Thailand, assessing its applicability for leadership development and mental health promotion. The results showed that the EWBQ was administered to 40 organizational leaders from various sectors, most of whom were business owners or managers (77.5%), female (75.0%), and highly educated, with the majority holding a master’s degree (42.5%). Pre-test and post-test comparisons

showed a significant increase in emotional well-being following participation in a mindfulness and loving-kindness intervention. The mean pre-test score was 50.73 (SD = 12.41), while the mean post-test score rose to 66.23 (SD = 8.17). A paired-samples *t*-test revealed that this improvement was statistically significant, $t(39) = 9.47, p < .001$. Furthermore, the reduction in standard deviation between pre- and post-test scores suggests that improvements were consistent across participants. These results confirm that the EWBQ is not only an effective measurement tool but also sensitive to changes in emotional well-being among organizational leaders, highlighting its practical utility in leadership development and mental health promotion.

Table 3 shows the general data of the sampling group of 40 organization leaders

Topics	Details	Percentage
Gender	Female	75.0%
	Male	25.0%
Age	30–39 years	22.5%
	40–49 years	25.0%
	50–59 years	20.0%
	60 years up	32.5%
Education Level	Lower than a bachelor's degree	12.5%
	Bachelor's degree	35.0%
	Master's degree	42.5%
	PhD/Doctorate degree	10.0%
Occupation	Business Owner/Management	77.5%
	Private Sector Employee	22.5%
No. of Subordinates	10-100 persons	72.5%
	101-500 persons	17.5%
	501-1000 persons	5.0%
	1001-3000 persons	5.0%

The sample consisted of 40 organizational leaders, the majority of whom were female (75.0%), while males accounted for 25.0%. In terms of age distribution, 22.5% were between 30–39 years, 25.0% were 40–49 years, 20.0% were 50–59 years, and 32.5% were aged 60 years and above. Regarding education level, 12.5% held qualifications lower than a bachelor's degree, 35.0% had a bachelor's degree, 42.5% a master's degree, and 10.0% a doctoral degree. Most

participants were engaged in business ownership or management roles (77.5%), while 22.5% were employed in the private sector.

Table 4 t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means (Score of Emotional Well-being of Organization Leaders).

	Post-test Score	Pre-test Score
Mean	66.225	50.725
Variance	66.74294872	153.8967949
Observations	40	40
Pearson Correlation	0.5600058085	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	39	
t Stat	9.4713	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.0000	
t Critical one-tail	1.6849	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.00000000	
t Critical two-tail	2.0227	

Comparison	Pre-test		Post-test		t	P
	X-Bar	S.D.	X-Bar	S.D.		
Score	50.73	12.4055	66.23	8.1696	9.47130	0.000

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the effect of the intervention program on the emotional well-being of organizational leaders (N = 40). The results revealed a substantial increase from pre-test (M = 50.73, SD = 12.41) to post-test (M = 66.23, SD = 8.17). The mean difference of 15.50 points was statistically significant, $t(39) = 9.47$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed). The observed correlation between pre- and post-test scores was moderate ($r = .56$), indicating that higher pre-test scores tended to be associated with higher post-test scores.

Interpretation

These findings indicate that the intervention had a significant positive impact on participants' emotional well-being. The substantial increase in mean scores suggests that the program effectively enhanced overall well-being, while the reduction in standard deviation from pre-test to post-test demonstrates that improvements were more consistent across participants. Given the large t value

and very small p -value, it is unlikely that these results occurred by chance. Thus, the intervention can be considered both statistically and practically effective in improving emotional well-being among organizational leaders.

Discussions

This research found that the development of the Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire (EWBQ), grounded in literature review, cultural adaptation, and expert evaluation for the Thai context, is consistent with the theoretical foundations of emotional well-being from positive psychology, which emphasizes resilience, emotion regulation, and meaning in life (Seligman, 2011). It is also consistent with Buddhist perspectives on mindfulness (*sati*) and loving-kindness (*mettā*), which serve as bases for cultivating inner peace and emotional stability (MN 10; AN 4.125, PTS). This matches the set assumption that culturally grounded constructs of emotional well-being can be developed for Thai organizational leaders. This may be because existing Western tools, such as the WEMWBS or WHO-5, while reliable, do not fully capture culturally nuanced values such as compassion, interconnectedness, and spiritual meaning. As the research of Karunamuni & Weerasekera (2019) has shown, mindfulness frameworks need cultural contextualization, while the research of Don, Van Cappellen, and Fredrickson (2022) highlights that loving-kindness practices enhance social connection and emotional health. Therefore, the EWBQ aligns with both global theories and Buddhist frameworks to produce a reliable Thai-context tool.

As for the second objective, it was found that the psychometric properties of the EWBQ—including reliability, construct validity, and criterion validity—through initial testing with Thai adults, demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha > .96$), which is consistent with Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) reliability benchmarks and more recent psychometric research emphasizing multidimensional validation (Taber, 2018). It is also consistent with the theory of emotional regulation and emotional intelligence (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004), which suggests that well-being measures must capture the ability to recognize and regulate emotions. This matches the assumption that the instrument would show strong internal consistency. This may be because the six theoretical domains, positive emotion, emotional regulation, social support, meaning, accomplishment, and engagement, were carefully synthesized from both canonical Buddhist principles (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*; *Visuddhimagga*) and contemporary psychology (Fredrickson et al., 2017). In addition, the findings also

resonate with the growing body of research on *loving-kindness meditation (LKM)*, which demonstrates its effectiveness in cultivating compassion, enhancing positive emotions, and reducing psychological distress (Hutcherson, Seppala, & Gross, 2008; Kirby, 2017). By integrating both mindfulness and loving-kindness practices, the EWBQ reflects a culturally grounded framework that captures the multidimensional nature of emotional well-being in Thai leaders. As the research of Musil et al. (2021) on mindfulness, resilience, and resourcefulness showed, multidimensional tools yield stronger reliability. Therefore, the EWBQ can be regarded as a psychometrically sound measure that is theoretically and practically aligned with both Buddhist traditions and modern psychology.

For the third objective, it was found that applying and validating the EWBQ among organizational leaders in Thailand confirmed its applicability for leadership development and mental health promotion. This corresponds with theories of transformational leadership (Faizah & Djawoto, 2024), which emphasize the importance of emotional stability and compassion in leadership effectiveness. It is also consistent with Buddhist teachings on the *Dasavidha-rājadhamma* (Ten Royal Virtues), which highlight patience, generosity, and ethical conduct as emotional qualities of good leaders. This matches the assumption that organizational leaders require strong emotional well-being for sustainable leadership. This may be because leaders with higher emotional well-being are better able to manage stress, build harmonious relationships, and make ethical decisions. As the research of Zhou, Wang, and Sin (2022) on leader mindfulness and Kirby et al. (2017) on loving-kindness meditation indicate, these practices strengthen both leader and organizational health. Therefore, the validated EWBQ offers a culturally grounded and scientifically robust tool for leadership development and well-being enhancement in Thailand.

Knowledge from Research

This research has contributed significant new knowledge to the study and practice of emotional well-being in Thailand, with a particular focus on organizational leadership. The development of the Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire (EWBQ) demonstrates that it is possible to design a culturally adapted tool that integrates international psychological frameworks with

Buddhist-informed concepts such as mindfulness (*sati*) and loving-kindness (*mettā*). Unlike existing instruments developed in Western contexts, the EWBQ is sensitive to cultural values such as compassion, interconnectedness, and spiritual meaning, making it a unique and contextually appropriate tool for the Thai setting.

The validation of the EWBQ revealed excellent psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha values above .96, demonstrating its reliability and robustness. These findings confirm that emotional well-being is a multidimensional construct composed of six domains: positive emotion, emotional regulation, social support, meaning, accomplishment, and engagement. By reliably capturing these interrelated dimensions, the EWBQ contributes not only to academic theory but also to practical application in leadership training and organizational development.

The application of the EWBQ among organizational leaders further underscores its practical significance. The results revealed a significant increase in emotional well-being scores after leaders participated in mindfulness and loving-kindness interventions. This indicates that emotional well-being can be cultivated, monitored, and improved within leadership contexts. Leaders who demonstrate high levels of emotional well-being are more resilient, compassionate, and ethical, thereby fostering positive organizational culture and long-term sustainability.

In conclusion, the knowledge derived from this research can be summarized as follows: emotional well-being is not only a theoretical construct but a practical foundation for strengthening organizational leadership. The EWBQ provides a scientifically validated, culturally sensitive tool that organizations can employ to assess and enhance leader well-being. Moreover, the integration of mindfulness and loving-kindness practices ensures that leaders are equipped with the emotional resilience and compassion necessary for ethical and sustainable leadership. This research therefore bridges theory and practice, providing both the academic community and organizational stakeholders with knowledge and innovation that can be directly applied to promote healthier leadership and more harmonious organizations.

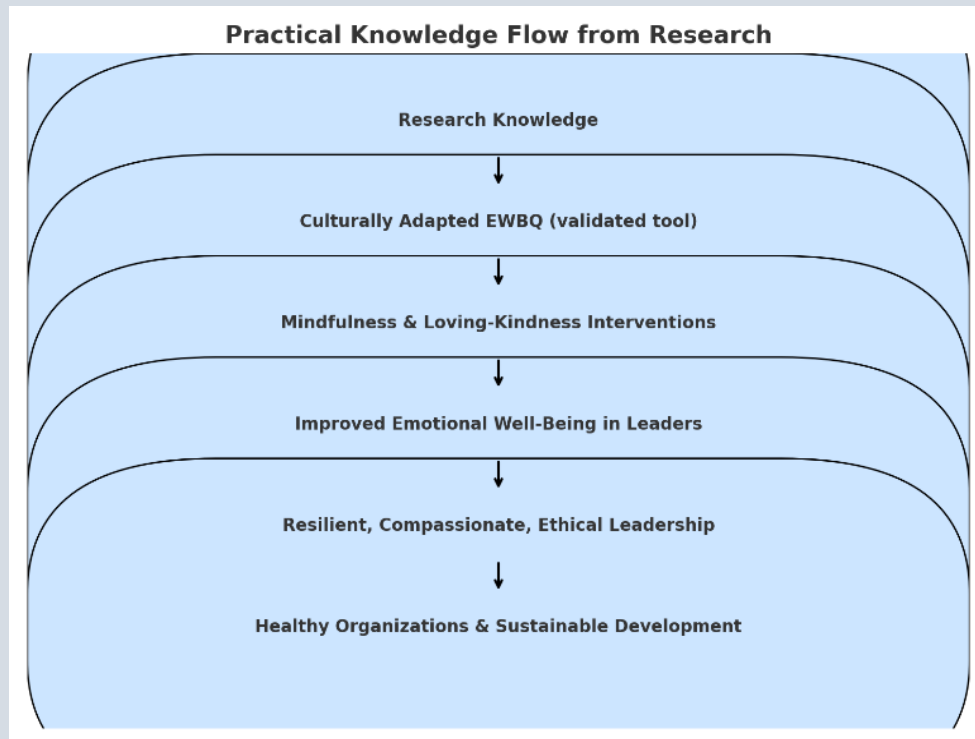


Figure 3: Practical knowledge model from research

Transferring and Utilizing:

The knowledge generated from this research, particularly the development and validation of the Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire (EWBQ) and its application among organizational leaders, can be transferred and utilized across multiple domains to maximize its academic and societal impact.

1. Academia

- The EWBQ can be adopted as a validated research instrument in universities for studies on emotional well-being, leadership, and mindfulness.
- It can be integrated into academic curricula on psychology, organizational behavior, leadership, and Buddhist studies, providing students with a culturally grounded tool for both learning and research.
- Research findings can serve as a foundation for future dissertations, theses, and scholarly publications that further examine the intersection of emotional well-being, leadership, and cultural adaptation.

2. Communities

- Community organizations and foundations (e.g., Buddhist centers, local NGOs) can use the EWBQ as a diagnostic and evaluative tool to assess the emotional well-being of community leaders and volunteers.

- Training programs in mindfulness and loving-kindness can be developed and scaled at the community level to promote resilience, compassion, and social harmony.

- Results can support capacity-building initiatives for local leaders, encouraging sustainable leadership development in grassroots contexts.

3. Society

- The EWBQ offers a means to monitor broader patterns of emotional well-being within society, supporting public health initiatives aimed at stress reduction, mental health promotion, and happiness enhancement.

- Findings can be used to design campaigns and workshops to cultivate emotional resilience and well-being in diverse occupational groups, thereby improving workplace harmony and productivity.

- Non-profit and faith-based organizations can employ the findings to design inclusive interventions that emphasize compassion and interconnectedness as social values.

4. Economy

- Organizations can apply the EWBQ to evaluate and enhance leaders' emotional well-being, which directly influences employee satisfaction, workplace productivity, and organizational sustainability.

- Human resource development programs can incorporate the tool into leadership training modules, linking emotional well-being with performance outcomes and corporate social responsibility.

- By improving leaders' emotional health, organizations may reduce burnout, turnover, and healthcare costs, yielding economic benefits in both public and private sectors.

5. Policy Proposals

- The Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education, and related government agencies can adopt the EWBQ as a standard tool for measuring emotional well-being in workplace and educational contexts.

- Research findings support policy recommendations to integrate mindfulness and loving-kindness practices into leadership development programs at the national level.

- Evidence from this study can inform policy frameworks for national mental health strategies, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

Conclusion

This study has advanced the understanding and practice of emotional well-being in Thailand by developing, validating, and applying the Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire (EWBQ). The first core contribution is the creation of a culturally adapted tool that integrates established international frameworks of well-being with Buddhist-informed perspectives, particularly mindfulness (*sati*) and loving-kindness (*mettā*). This ensures that the EWBQ not only reflects global standards but also resonates with Thai cultural values such as compassion, social harmony, and spiritual meaning. The second contribution lies in the robust psychometric properties of the EWBQ. Reliability testing yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding .96, while construct and criterion validity were confirmed through initial testing with Thai adults. These results demonstrate that emotional well-being is a multidimensional construct encompassing positive emotions, regulation, social support, meaning, accomplishment, and engagement, and that these dimensions can be measured reliably in the Thai context. The third contribution highlights the practical application of the EWBQ among organizational leaders. Pretest–posttest analysis showed a significant increase in leaders' emotional well-being following mindfulness and loving-kindness interventions. This outcome emphasizes that emotional well-being is not only a theoretical construct but also a practical and improvable capacity. Leaders with enhanced emotional well-being demonstrated resilience, compassion, and ethical grounding, reinforcing their ability to foster healthier organizational cultures and contribute to sustainable development. In summary, the core knowledge arising from this research is that emotional well-being constitutes a practical foundation for effective and compassionate organizational leadership. The validated EWBQ provides a scientifically rigorous and culturally sensitive instrument that can be applied across academic, organizational, and policy contexts. By bridging theory with practice, this research contributes to advancing leadership development, promoting mental health, and supporting broader societal goals of resilience and harmony.

Suggestions

This research has found that the Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire (EWBQ) is a reliable and culturally sensitive tool for Thai adults and

organizational leaders. Based on the findings, the following suggestions are proposed:

1. Application in Leadership Development

- The EWBQ should be applied in leadership training programs and human resource development to strengthen resilience, compassion, and ethical decision-making among organizational leaders.

2. Integration in Organizational Practice

- Organizations should prioritize emotional well-being assessments as part of workplace culture and performance evaluation, ensuring healthier and more harmonious environments.

3. Policy and Community Engagement

- Government agencies, community organizations, and non-profits should give importance to emotional well-being as a foundation for sustainable leadership, community resilience, and social harmony.

4. Future Research Directions

- Further research should investigate the long-term effects of EWBQ use in diverse professional and community contexts.
- Comparative studies across different cultural settings are recommended to test the universality and adaptability of the tool.
- Exploration of digital technology, such as mobile applications or AI-based interventions, should be pursued to expand accessibility and scalability of emotional well-being programs.

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Buddhist Teachings for Achieving Success in Volunteer Work

Suchada Sattanawuth¹ Phra Medhivajjarapundit²,

Maechee Narumon Jiwattanasuk³

International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University^{1,2,3}

Corresponding author email: ploy.sattanawuth@gmail.com

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Abstract

This qualitative study investigates how Buddhist teachings can foster success in volunteer work. The research had three objectives: (1) to define the key dimensions of success in volunteering, (2) to examine relevant Buddhist “peaceful means” that support successful volunteering, and (3) to propose a model that integrates those teachings into volunteer practice. Data were collected through documentary analysis and in-depth interviews with six key informants (experienced volunteers and Buddhist scholars). Using thematic content analysis, the study identified patterns that link inner development, ethical conduct, and sustained community engagement.

Findings indicate that success in volunteer work is a holistic construct encompassing personal growth, meaningful social contribution, and congruence with ethical values, rather than solely organizational metrics or external recognition. Buddhist peaceful means, especially mindfulness (sati), the Four Brahmavihāras (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity), and the Sangahavatthu (four bases of social harmony), emerge as both moral foundations and practical techniques that enhance emotional balance, compassionate action, and interpersonal harmony among volunteers. The study further proposes an integrative model that maps these Buddhist teachings onto Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, suggesting that addressing both psychological and ethical needs strengthens volunteer effectiveness, retention, and community impact.

Implications for practice include incorporating mindfulness and brahmavihāra training into volunteer preparation, designing organizational cultures that support ethical development, and adopting policies that nurture volunteer well-being. The paper concludes by recommending empirical testing of the proposed model across diverse volunteer settings.

Keywords: Volunteer Success; Buddhist Peaceful Means; Mindfulness; Brahmaviharas; Sangahavatthu; Volunteer Retention

Introduction

Volunteer work plays a crucial role in promoting social development, fostering civic engagement, and building cohesive communities. It serves as an essential bridge between individual altruistic intentions and collective societal needs, addressing diverse humanitarian issues while creating a sense of shared responsibility. Despite its importance, sustaining volunteer commitment remains a significant challenge. Volunteers often face burnout, emotional exhaustion, and a lack of recognition, which can lead to high turnover rates and a diminished organizational impact. Psychological factors, such as intrinsic motivation, personal fulfillment, and alignment with organizational values, are crucial in determining long-term volunteer engagement. Research suggests that when volunteers experience a sense of belonging, purpose, and recognition, they are more likely to maintain active and sustained participation (Wilson, 2012; Einolf, 2018). However, many organizations still rely heavily on operational incentives and overlook the deeper ethical and spiritual dimensions necessary for fostering resilient and motivated volunteer communities.

While frameworks such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provide valuable insights into volunteer motivation by addressing both basic and psychological needs, they often fall short in integrating ethical and spiritual components essential for holistic development. The absence of such frameworks risks reducing volunteer work to transactional exchanges, neglecting the cultivation of compassion, ethical integrity, and emotional resilience. This highlights a significant gap in existing research and practice: the need for a comprehensive approach that combines psychological theories with spiritual teachings to support volunteer success.

Buddhist teachings offer a profound foundation for addressing these gaps. If these teachings are not incorporated, volunteer programs may fail to nurture the inner development necessary for sustaining engagement and fostering compassionate service. Buddhist principles, particularly Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmaviharas (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity), and the Four Sangahavatthu (Generosity, Kind Speech, Beneficial Action, and Impartiality), provide a holistic ethical framework that complements psychological needs and strengthens volunteer motivation and resilience. Mindfulness enhances self-awareness and emotional stability, enabling volunteers to manage stress and avoid burnout. The Four Brahmaviharas promote

unconditional goodwill and empathetic connections, fostering inclusive and supportive volunteer environments. The Four Saṅgahavatthu encourage ethical social interactions and cooperation, essential for building cohesive teams and sustaining long-term engagement.

The selection of these specific teachings is grounded in a thorough literature review. Scholars such as Nakarit (2022) and Karunadasa (2013) emphasize that Mindfulness fosters inner calm and ethical decision-making, while the Brahmaviharas develop emotional intelligence and moral integrity. The Saṅgahavatthu principles guide individuals toward social harmony and collective well-being, aligning with the deeper objectives of volunteer service. By integrating these teachings, volunteers can transcend superficial motivations and cultivate a deeper commitment rooted in ethical values and compassion.

The selection of these specific teachings is grounded in a thorough literature review. Scholars such as Nakarit (2022) and Karunadasa (2013) emphasize that Mindfulness fosters inner calm and ethical decision-making, while the Brahmaviharas develop emotional intelligence and moral integrity. Additionally, Somboon (2018) highlights that the Four Brahmaviharas are fundamental principles for fostering altruism and harmonious relationships in social contexts, making them particularly suitable for volunteer work. Payutto (1997) further supports the application of the Four Saṅgahavatthu, noting their effectiveness in promoting social unity, generosity, and mutual support, which are essential for sustaining volunteer organizations and community engagement. By integrating these teachings, volunteers can transcend superficial motivations and cultivate a deeper commitment rooted in ethical values and compassion.

This research addresses the critical problem of how to support and sustain volunteer success through an integrated ethical and spiritual framework. By demonstrating how Buddhist teachings can fulfill both basic and higher-level needs of volunteers, the study offers a holistic strategy for cultivating compassionate, resilient, and ethically grounded volunteer communities. Ultimately, this approach aims to advance both theoretical understanding and practical applications, contributing to more inclusive, effective, and sustainable volunteer programs that benefit individuals and society as a whole.

Research Objectives

1. To study the key concept of success in volunteer work.
2. To examine the Buddhist peaceful means related to become success.
3. To propose Buddhist peaceful means teaching for achieving success in volunteer work.

Literature Review

The success of volunteer work has been explored through various theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and Buddhist teachings. While significant research has been conducted on volunteer motivation, retention, and management, there remains a knowledge gap in understanding how Buddhist peaceful means can be systematically integrated into volunteer work to enhance both individual fulfillment and organizational effectiveness. This research aims to fill that gap by examining the intersection of Buddhist teachings and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for Volunteer Success to develop a sustainable and ethical volunteer model.

1. Key Concepts of Volunteer Work and Success

Volunteerism has been widely studied in social sciences, focusing on its role in community engagement, individual well-being, and societal transformation. Research highlights that success in volunteer work is a multidimensional concept, involving personal satisfaction, organizational stability, and broader societal impact (David, 2024). Scholars define success in volunteer work through various indicators such as motivation, leadership opportunities, skill development, and long-term engagement (Springer eBooks, 2022). The study by Zainea, Toma, and Tohănean (2019) emphasized that volunteer work also plays a significant role in preparing individuals for the workforce by developing transferable skills and social networks. However, gaps remain in understanding how spiritual and ethical frameworks contribute to volunteer effectiveness and sustainability.

Buddhist teachings provide a holistic framework that addresses these gaps. Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmaviharas, and Sangahavatthu emphasize self-awareness, ethical engagement, and compassion, which align with modern theories of volunteer motivation. Integrating these principles can create a value-driven, resilient, and ethically grounded volunteer culture. While studies on Buddhist teachings and organizational ethics exist, limited research has

systematically linked Buddhist principles to volunteer success using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a structural foundation.

2. Buddhist Teachings and Volunteer Success

Existing literature on Buddhist teachings demonstrates their effectiveness in promoting personal growth, ethical leadership, and sustainable social change (Nakarit, 2022). Mindfulness has been widely recognized as a tool for reducing stress, increasing self-awareness, and improving emotional resilience among volunteers. Additionally, the Four Brahmaviharas, Loving-kindness (Metta), Compassion (Karuna), Sympathetic Joy (Mudita), and Equanimity (Upekkha), provide an ethical foundation for volunteers, ensuring that they engage in service with sincerity, patience, and emotional balance.

Studies on Buddhist economics and ethical leadership (Springer eBooks, 2022) have also shown that integrating generosity, fair treatment, and selflessness into organizations improves team dynamics, reduces burnout, and fosters long-term commitment. However, while Buddhist teachings have been studied in workplace settings, research on their application in volunteer organizations remains scarce. This research will bridge that gap by demonstrating how Buddhist peaceful means can systematically address volunteer challenges while aligning with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

3. Challenges and Knowledge Gaps

While existing research on volunteerism and Buddhism provides valuable insights, there remains a significant gap in studies that systematically apply Buddhist teachings to enhance volunteer success. Buddhist principles such as mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmaviharas (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity), and the Four Sangahavathu (generosity, kind speech, beneficial action, and impartiality) have been widely recognized for their role in ethical leadership and harmonious social interactions. However, their structured integration into volunteer training programs and organizational management has yet to be fully explored. While some research has discussed the moral and spiritual benefits of Buddhist teachings in fostering altruism and community service, there is still a need to demonstrate how these principles can be systematically applied to support and sustain volunteer engagement.

At the same time, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has been extensively used to analyze workplace motivation and human behavior in professional settings, but its application in the context of volunteer success remains underexamined. Unlike traditional employment, where financial incentives and career growth play a central role in motivation, volunteerism is largely driven by intrinsic factors such

as fulfillment, purpose, and ethical alignment with organizational values. Understanding how volunteers progress through Maslow's motivational stages—from ensuring basic physiological needs to achieving self-actualization—can provide deeper insights into how organizations can better support, retain, and empower their volunteers.

This study seeks to address these gaps by integrating Buddhist peaceful means into volunteer training and management structures while using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a framework to analyze volunteer success. By demonstrating how Buddhist teachings can fulfill both basic and higher-level needs of volunteers, this research provides a holistic approach to enhancing engagement, fostering ethical leadership, and ensuring long-term sustainability in volunteer organizations. Furthermore, the study offers practical recommendations for organizations seeking to cultivate a compassionate, inclusive, and effective volunteer environment that aligns with both spiritual and psychological well-being. Through this approach, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of how Buddhist teachings and motivational theories intersect to create a meaningful and transformative volunteer experience.

This research draws from prior studies on volunteer motivation, Buddhist teachings, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to propose a structured framework for Buddhist-based volunteer success. It expands existing knowledge by linking Buddhist peaceful means with modern psychological theories, demonstrating how organizations can cultivate ethical, resilient, and highly motivated volunteer teams. By filling the gap in research, this study contributes to both academic discourse and practical applications for enhancing volunteer success through Buddhist teachings.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research integrates Buddhist peaceful means with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to analyze and promote success in volunteer work. Buddhist peaceful means, specifically Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmaviharas (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity), and the Four Bases of Social Harmony (Sangahavatthu: Generosity, Kind Speech, Beneficial Conduct, and Impartiality), are central to cultivating ethical awareness, emotional balance, and compassionate engagement among volunteers. These teachings support the development of intrinsic motivation, foster strong interpersonal relationships, and enhance the sense of purpose and fulfillment in volunteer activities.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs offers a psychological perspective on volunteer motivation, explaining how addressing basic physiological and safety needs paves the way for social connection, esteem, and self-actualization. By aligning these psychological needs with Buddhist ethical and spiritual principles, this framework provides a comprehensive approach to sustaining volunteer commitment and enhancing well-being.

Through this integration, the conceptual framework highlights the importance of addressing both external and internal dimensions of volunteer work, ensuring not only operational effectiveness but also ethical integrity and personal growth. It offers a holistic path for creating resilient, motivated, and compassionate volunteer communities that contribute meaningfully to societal well-being.

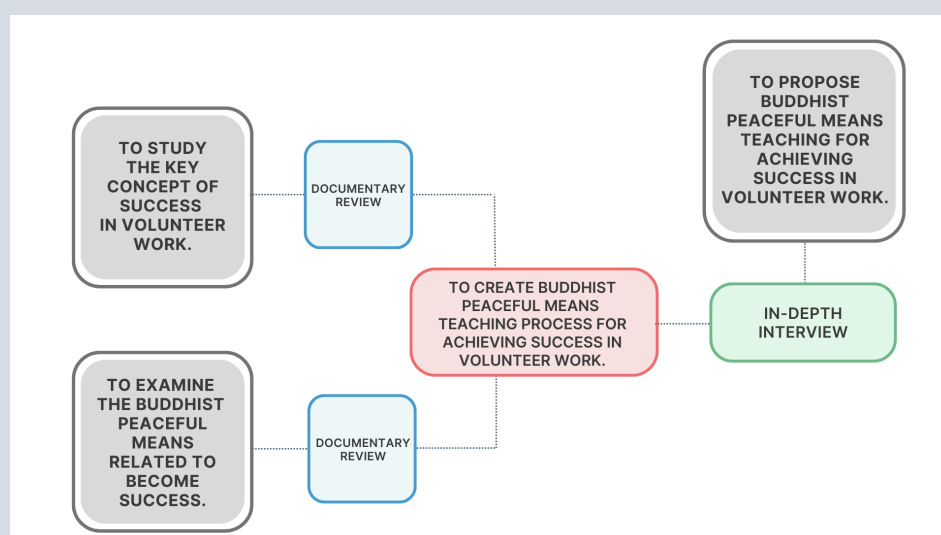


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach aimed at analyzing Buddhist teachings and their application to achieving success in volunteer work. The research area focused on Buddhist organizations, volunteer networks, and individuals with in-depth knowledge of Buddhist principles and volunteer experiences. The research process was divided into three main steps as follows:

Step 1: Documentary Research on the Key Concepts of Success in Volunteer Work

The initial phase involved reviewing and analyzing documents, academic studies, and theoretical frameworks related to success in volunteer work.

Important sources included literature on volunteer motivation, psychological theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and previous research on volunteer retention and satisfaction. Data collection centered on synthesizing core concepts and extracting key themes related to personal fulfillment, organizational impact, and social contribution as measures of volunteer success. Content analysis was used to systematically identify patterns and definitions that inform the concept of success in volunteer work.

Step 2: Documentary Research on Buddhist Peaceful Means Related to Volunteer Success

In the second phase, the focus shifted to analyzing Buddhist teachings relevant to volunteer engagement and success. Key teachings, including Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmaviharas (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity), and the Four Bases of Social Harmony (Sangahavatthu), were studied through Buddhist scriptures, commentaries, and academic interpretations. This analysis aimed to understand how these teachings support volunteer motivation, emotional resilience, and ethical service. Data was categorized to show the application of these teachings at personal, interpersonal, and organizational levels in volunteer settings.

Step 3: In-Depth Interviews Combined with Documentary Research

The third phase integrated findings from documentary research with qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews. Six key informants—including Buddhist scholars, experienced volunteers, and leaders within volunteer organizations—were selected through purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews explored their insights on the integration of Buddhist teachings in volunteer work, emphasizing practical experiences and ethical considerations. Thematic analysis was applied to identify shared patterns, insights, and recommendations. The findings from interviews and documents were synthesized to develop a Buddhist-based model for volunteer success, aligned with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

This comprehensive methodology ensured an in-depth exploration that combined theoretical perspectives, textual evidence, and empirical insights. It provided a holistic understanding of how Buddhist teachings can enhance volunteer engagement, foster ethical leadership, and promote long-term sustainability in volunteer work.

Research Results

Objective 1. The research results for Objective 1 were derived through comprehensive documentary analysis and synthesis, based on primary and secondary sources, including academic articles, research reports, and theoretical frameworks on volunteerism. According to Zainea et al. (2021), success in volunteer work involves achieving a positive social impact and fostering both personal and community-level development. Volunteers who perceive their contributions as meaningful experience higher levels of satisfaction and are more likely to continue serving. Springer (2015) highlights that a sense of belonging and alignment with organizational values is critical for retaining volunteers, while Wilson (2012) emphasizes that intrinsic motivation is a fundamental factor for sustained volunteer engagement.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) provides a psychological foundation for understanding volunteer success, outlining how volunteers' needs range from basic physiological and safety needs to higher-level needs such as belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. When these needs are fulfilled, volunteers develop a deeper sense of purpose and commitment. Einolf (2018) further underscores the importance of ethical leadership, structured support systems, and emotional recognition in preventing volunteer burnout and promoting long-term participation.

Through an in-depth analysis and synthesis of these various sources, it is evident that the key components of success in volunteer work include personal fulfillment, social contribution, organizational support, and ethical engagement. Personal fulfillment refers to the sense of self-worth and personal development that volunteers gain through service (Springer, 2015; Wilson, 2012). Social contribution emphasizes the importance of making meaningful contributions to society, which strengthens a volunteer's sense of impact and value (Zainea et al., 2021). Organizational support highlights the role of supportive environments, clear communication, and recognition systems in creating a sense of belonging and increasing volunteer retention (Einolf, 2018). Lastly, ethical engagement involves aligning with ethical and moral values, which enhances long-term motivation and reduces the risk of disengagement (Maslow, 1943; Jinadasa & Lanka, 2014).

To further illustrate these findings, the researcher created a visual representation based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for Volunteer Success. This diagram organizes volunteer needs into five hierarchical levels:

physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization. The bottom levels emphasize basic support—such as providing meals, accommodations, and a structured environment—to reduce stress and enable focus on service. The middle levels highlight the importance of community bonds, teamwork, recognition, and opportunities for skill development. At the highest level, the focus shifts to leadership, mindfulness, mentorship, and ethical awareness, empowering volunteers to create meaningful societal change. This visual model (as shown in the accompanying figure) was designed by the researcher to clearly convey the integrated psychological and ethical factors essential for volunteer success, serving as a practical tool for organizations to better understand and address the diverse needs of volunteers, thereby fostering sustained engagement and holistic development.



Figure 2: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for Volunteer Success

In conclusion, this study defines success in volunteer work as the holistic integration of personal growth, social contribution, and ethical alignment, supported by psychological needs and organizational structures. This comprehensive understanding provides a strong foundation for exploring the application of Buddhist teachings to volunteer motivation and sustainability in the following research objectives.

Objective 2. The research results for Objective 2 were derived through in-depth documentary analysis of Buddhist teachings, focusing on Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmaviharas, and the Four Sangahavatthu, and examining their connection to psychological frameworks and volunteer success concepts. According to Payutto (1997) and Karunadasa (2013), Mindfulness (Sati) cultivates self-awareness and emotional stability, enabling volunteers to manage stress, reduce burnout, and maintain consistent engagement. This practice directly supports the psychological needs of volunteers at the personal level by enhancing inner calm and resilience, aligning with Maslow's safety and self-actualization needs.

The Four Brahmaviharas—Loving-kindness (Metta), Compassion (Karuna), Sympathetic Joy (Mudita), and Equanimity (Upekkha)—strengthen emotional intelligence and promote ethical relationships among volunteers. As noted by Somboon (2018) and Nakarit (2022), these principles encourage empathy, forgiveness, and inclusivity, which are vital for fostering a supportive community environment. At the organizational level, these teachings help build cohesive teams, enhance volunteer satisfaction, and contribute to the creation of a nurturing atmosphere that increases retention and reduces conflict.

The Four Sangahavatthu, Generosity (Dana), Kind Speech (Piyavaca), Beneficial Conduct (Atthacariya), and Impartiality (Samanattata), guide ethical social interactions and strengthen collective bonds. As explained by Cholvijarn (2019) and Payutto (1997), these principles facilitate open communication, mutual respect, and cooperation within volunteer organizations. On a societal level, the Sangahavatthu support the extension of volunteer impact beyond organizational boundaries, fostering public trust and encouraging broader community participation in volunteer initiatives.

Through text analysis and categorization, it becomes clear that Buddhist peaceful means influence volunteer success across three levels: personal, organizational, and societal. On a personal level, they promote inner growth, self-mastery, and emotional balance, directly addressing psychological needs and supporting sustained engagement. At the organizational level, these teachings cultivate ethical leadership, inclusive environments, and strong interpersonal relationships, thereby enhancing team dynamics and organizational sustainability. Finally, on the societal level, Buddhist peaceful means inspire a spirit of altruism and social harmony, expanding the impact of volunteer programs to the wider community and contributing to long-term societal development.

In conclusion, the integration of Buddhist peaceful means with psychological needs provides a comprehensive ethical-spiritual framework for volunteer success. This synthesis demonstrates that Buddhist teachings not only complement psychological theories like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs but also enrich volunteer programs by promoting compassion, resilience, and shared social responsibility. These findings establish a solid foundation for proposing an integrated model of volunteer success in the next research objective.

Objective 3. The research results for Objective 3 focus on developing a Buddhist-Based Volunteer Success Model by integrating Buddhist teachings with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, using both documentary research and in-depth interviews. This integration was essential in transforming conceptual insights into a practical model for fostering ethical engagement, resilience, and long-term volunteer commitment.

Documentary analysis established that Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmaviharas, and the Four Sangahavattu cultivate motivation, ethical leadership, and emotional well-being. These teachings align with Maslow's framework, addressing basic needs such as safety and belongingness, as well as higher-level needs like esteem and self-actualization.

The qualitative interview data reinforced and deepened this understanding. The analysis involved identifying key themes from the interviews with six key informants, categorizing these themes, and then comparing and integrating them with the documentary findings. For example, as shown in Table KI1 (Key Informant 1), the informant emphasized that mindfulness helps volunteers develop patience and manage stress, enabling them to handle challenges calmly and maintain clarity. This perspective aligns with documentary sources, including Payutto (1997), who discusses mindfulness as a foundation for mental stability and ethical awareness.

In Table KI4 (Key Informant 4), the informant highlighted that loving-kindness (metta) and compassion (karuna) promote inclusivity, teamwork, and a sense of mutual support, which motivates volunteers to continue serving. These themes support documentary evidence from Somboon (2018) and Nakarit (2022), who note that the Brahmaviharas enhance interpersonal relationships and foster inclusive, harmonious environments. By integrating these insights, the model incorporates practical applications of loving-kindness and compassion into organizational practices, such as creating team-building activities and recognition programs grounded in empathy and inclusivity.

Other tables, such as KI2, KI3, KI5, and KI6, similarly contributed additional themes, including the importance of generosity (dana), kind speech (piyavaca), and impartiality (samanattata), which support the development of a positive and ethical volunteer culture. These informants emphasized that Sangahavattu principles promote ethical communication, mutual respect, and strong community bonds, reinforcing the documentary findings from Cholvijarn (2019) and Karunadasa (2013).

Figures 3 and 4 (from the thesis) visually represent the integration process, showing how themes derived from interviews were synthesized with Buddhist teachings and Maslow's framework to build the final model. The Buddhist Peaceful Means (BPMs) highlighted in the model include Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmavihāras (Loving-kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity), and the Four Saṅgahavattu (Generosity, Kind Speech, Beneficial Conduct, and Impartiality). These BPMs provide the ethical and spiritual foundation for fostering emotional resilience, promoting inclusive teamwork, and cultivating ethical leadership among volunteers. Through this rigorous analysis and integration, the study developed a holistic volunteer success model emphasizing psychological needs, ethical alignment, and spiritual development.

Integration of BMPs, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Their Contribution to Volunteer Success from In-Depth Interview (Part 1)			
KI	BPMS	MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS FOR VOLUNTEER SUCCESS	KEY CONTRIBUTIONS TO VOLUNTEER SUCCESS
KI 1	- MINDFULNESS (SATI) FOR EMOTIONAL STABILITY. - LOVING-KINDNESS (METTĀ) FOR TEAMWORK AND SINCERITY.	- SAFETY NEEDS: EMOTIONAL STABILITY THROUGH MINDFULNESS. - BELONGINGNESS NEEDS: SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT. - ESTEEM NEEDS: RECOGNITION AND FULFILLMENT THROUGH HELPING OTHERS.	- MINDFULNESS (SATI) FOR EMOTIONAL STABILITY. - LOVING-KINDNESS (METTĀ) FOR TEAMWORK AND SINCERITY.
KI 2	- LOVING-KINDNESS (METTĀ) FOR KINDNESS AND SHARED GOALS. - EQUANIMITY (UPEKKHĀ) FOR EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE.	- BELONGINGNESS NEEDS: FOSTERING COMMUNITY AND TEAMWORK. - ESTEEM NEEDS: RECOGNITION FOR EFFORTS AND SHARED VALUES.	- STRENGTHENS COLLABORATION AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING. - HELPS MANAGE GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN TEAMS. - ENCOURAGES FAITH AND MOTIVATION IN SERVICE.
KI 3	- COMPASSION (KARUṆĀ) FOR ETHICAL ENGAGEMENT. - MINDFULNESS (SATI) FOR BALANCE AND EMOTIONAL CLARITY.	- SAFETY NEEDS: STABILITY THROUGH ETHICAL ENGAGEMENT. - ESTEEM NEEDS: RECOGNITION THROUGH MEANINGFUL SERVICE. - SELF-ACTUALIZATION: ALIGNMENT WITH CORE VALUES.	- ENCOURAGES SELF-GROWTH AND TRANSPARENCY. - HELPS VOLUNTEERS ALIGN SERVICE WITH PERSONAL VALUES. - ENHANCES ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION.

Figure 3: Integration of Buddhist Peaceful Means, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Their Contribution to Volunteer Success (Part 1)

Integration of BMPs, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Their Contribution to Volunteer Success from In-Depth Interview (Part 2)			
KI	BPMS	MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS FOR VOLUNTEER SUCCESS	KEY CONTRIBUTIONS TO VOLUNTEER SUCCESS
KI 4	- EQUANIMITY (UPEKKHĀ) FOR OVERCOMING CHALLENGES. - SYMPATHETIC JOY (MUDITĀ) FOR TEAM COHESION.	- BELONGINGNESS NEEDS: STRENGTHENS UNITY AND PURPOSE. - ESTEEM NEEDS: RECOGNITION THROUGH HARMONY AND TEAMWORK.	- HELPS VOLUNTEERS MAINTAIN EMOTIONAL BALANCE. - ENHANCES COMMUNICATION AND PREVENTS CONFLICTS. - STRENGTHENS GROUP COHESION AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT.
KI 5	- SĀNGAHAVATTHU (DĀNA, PIYAVĀCĀ) FOR ETHICAL COMMUNICATION. - LOVING-KINDNESS (METTĀ) FOR GRATITUDE AND FAITH.	- ESTEEM NEEDS: SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH. - SELF-ACTUALIZATION: STRENGTHENED FAITH AND PURPOSE.	- FOSTERS FAITH-DRIVEN MOTIVATION. - STRENGTHENS VOLUNTEER RETENTION THROUGH ETHICAL LEADERSHIP. - PROVIDES EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE FOR LONG-TERM SERVICE.
KI 6	- FAITH AND GENEROSITY (DĀNA) AS CORE VALUES. - IMPARTIALITY (SAMĀNATTATĀ) FOR FAIRNESS AND ETHICAL LEADERSHIP.	- ESTEEM NEEDS: RECOGNITION THROUGH FAITH-BASED SERVICE. - SELF-ACTUALIZATION: LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO SELFLESS SERVICE.	- ENCOURAGES SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH ETHICAL LEADERSHIP. - STRENGTHENS LONG-TERM DEDICATION TO VOLUNTEERING. - ENHANCES COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION.

Figure 4: Integration of Buddhist Peaceful Means, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Their Contribution to Volunteer Success (Part 2)

In conclusion, this integrated framework demonstrates that Buddhist peaceful means serve as a powerful tool for structuring ethical, impactful, and sustainable volunteer programs. By effectively addressing all five levels of Maslow's Hierarchy, providing safety and security, fostering belongingness, promoting esteem, facilitating growth, and enabling self-actualization, volunteers develop long-term commitment and a profound sense of purpose. This approach not only strengthens individual and organizational outcomes but also contributes to broader societal transformation through compassionate and sustained volunteer service.

Discussions

The research results demonstrate that the success of volunteer work is a multidimensional concept involving personal fulfillment, social contribution, organizational support, and ethical engagement. This aligns with the principles outlined in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which states that individuals are motivated to fulfill basic needs before progressing to higher-level psychological and self-fulfillment needs (Maslow, 1943). When volunteers' foundational needs, such as safety and belonging, are addressed, they are more likely to develop

esteem and achieve self-actualization through their service (Springer, 2015; Wilson, 2012). The findings also support Einolf (2018), who emphasizes that a sense of purpose and value alignment significantly impacts volunteer retention and long-term commitment.

The integration of Buddhist peaceful means further strengthens this framework. Mindfulness (Sati) is crucial in helping volunteers develop self-awareness, patience, and emotional resilience, enabling them to manage stress and avoid burnout (Payutto, 1997; Karunadasa, 2013). The study's interview data confirm that volunteers practicing mindfulness are better equipped to maintain clarity and inner peace during challenging tasks. This is consistent with research by Nakarit (2022), which found that mindfulness enhances mental stability and ethical decision-making among community workers.

The Four Brahmaviharas, Loving-kindness (Metta), Compassion (Karuna), Sympathetic Joy (Mudita), and Equanimity (Upekkha), play a pivotal role in fostering positive interpersonal relationships and emotional intelligence among volunteers. According to Somboon (2018), these teachings cultivate empathy, forgiveness, and inclusive attitudes, which help maintain harmonious volunteer communities. The interviews further reveal that practices based on Metta and Karuna encourage teamwork and ensure that volunteers feel valued and supported. These insights align with Cholvijarn (2019), who asserts that the Brahmaviharas are essential in developing altruistic behavior and ethical service mindsets.

The Four Sangahavathu, Generosity (Dana), Kind Speech (Piyavaca), Beneficial Conduct (Atthacariya), and Impartiality (Samanattata), serve as practical guidelines for promoting ethical communication and strong organizational cultures (Payutto, 1997). The findings show that when organizations apply these principles, they foster an environment of mutual respect and trust, enhancing volunteer motivation and retention. This is consistent with Karunadasa (2013), who notes that the Sangahavathu strengthen social bonds and collective harmony, which are critical for sustainable volunteer programs.

Moreover, integrating Buddhist teachings with Maslow's framework creates a comprehensive approach that fulfills both psychological and ethical needs. This dual emphasis addresses not only external motivators but also the intrinsic values that inspire volunteers to continue their service despite challenges. The study highlights that volunteers who internalize Buddhist

peaceful means experience personal growth and a profound sense of purpose, leading to higher levels of satisfaction and sustained engagement. Similar findings were reported by Springer (2015), who emphasized the importance of ethical alignment in volunteer retention and satisfaction.

In conclusion, the discussion supports that the combination of Buddhist peaceful means and psychological frameworks offers a holistic model for volunteer success. By addressing needs from basic security to self-actualization and incorporating ethical-spiritual development, organizations can foster resilient, compassionate, and ethically driven volunteer communities. This approach not only benefits individual volunteers but also enhances the collective impact on society, contributing to sustainable community development and social harmony.

Knowledge from Research

This research explores the integration of Buddhist peaceful means into volunteer work, aiming to enhance volunteer success and long-term commitment. The study synthesizes theoretical insights from Buddhist teachings, particularly mindfulness (*sati*), the *Brahmaviharas* (Four Sublime States), and the *Sangahavatthu* (Four Bases of Sympathy), alongside empirical findings from qualitative interviews. The results demonstrate that Buddhist principles provide a structured framework for fostering ethical leadership, emotional resilience, and volunteer engagement. When aligned with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for Volunteer Success, these teachings ensure that volunteers receive both psychological and self-fulfillment support, reinforcing long-term motivation and organizational sustainability.

A key contribution of this study is the development of a Buddhist-Based Volunteer Success Model. This model illustrates how Buddhist teachings align with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to address the well-being and motivation of volunteers at different levels:

Physiological and Safety Needs: Organizations must provide volunteers with a stable environment, structured roles, and emotional security, ensuring their basic needs are met.

Belongingness and Social Needs: Compassion, ethical communication, and supportive teamwork create a sense of belonging and connectedness among volunteers.

Esteem Needs: Recognition, leadership opportunities, and moral integrity enhance volunteer motivation and reinforce their sense of purpose.

Self-Actualization: Mindfulness, equanimity, and selfless service enable volunteers to reach the highest level of personal and social fulfillment, driving long-term engagement and meaningful contributions.

The study concludes that organizations that integrate Buddhist teachings into their volunteer programs can establish sustainable, ethical, and impactful initiatives. By addressing all five levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, they foster an environment where volunteers feel supported, valued, and empowered, leading to successful and sustainable community development.

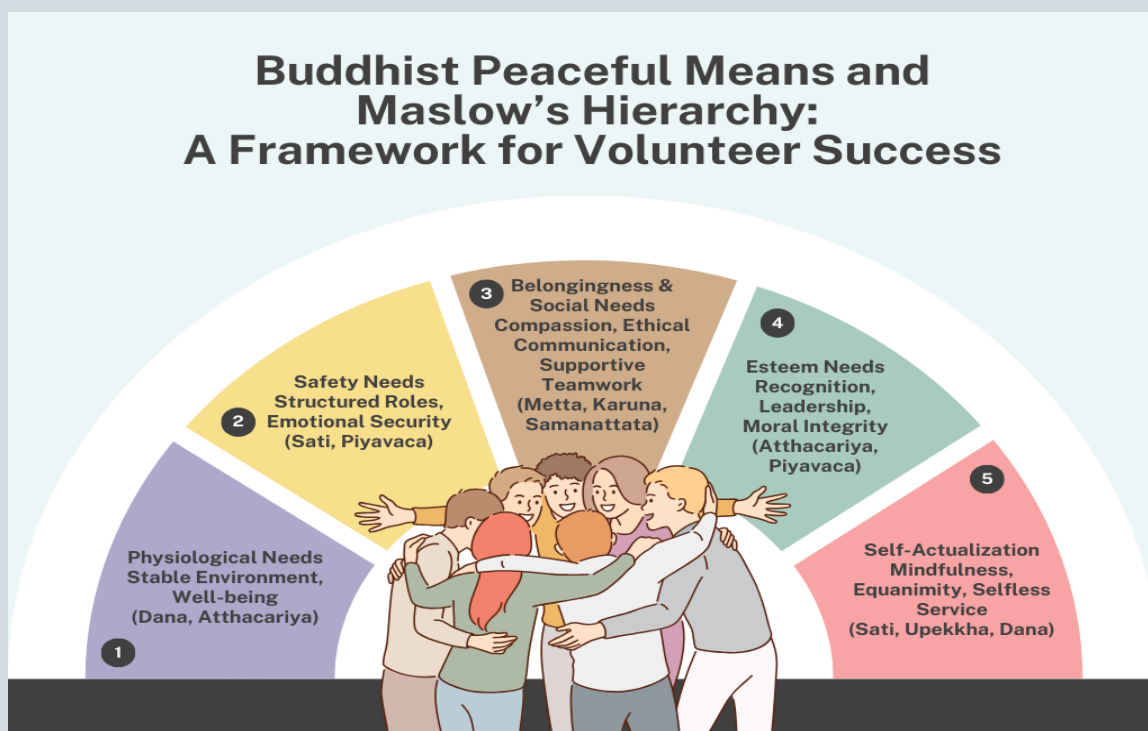


Figure 5: Buddhist Peaceful Means and Maslow's Hierarchy: A Framework for Volunteer Success

The diagram illustrates how Buddhist Peaceful Means align with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to foster volunteer success. It shows that meeting basic needs (stability and security) supports well-being, while ethical communication,

teamwork, and leadership enhance commitment. At the highest level, mindfulness and selfless service drive meaningful contributions and lasting community impact.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that success in volunteer work is a multidimensional, holistic phenomenon that combines personal growth, meaningful social contribution, and alignment with ethical values. In relation to Objective 1, the research identifies four interlocking drivers of volunteer success: intrinsic fulfilment (a felt sense of purpose), measurable social impact, sustained organisational support, and ethical engagement. Volunteers who experience purpose, belonging, and value congruence are more likely to sustain long-term commitment and report higher satisfaction.

Addressing Objective 2, the analysis shows that Buddhist peaceful means, particularly mindfulness (*sati*), the Four Brahmavihāras (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity), and the Saṅgahavatthu (four bases of social harmony), function both as ethical frameworks and practical technologies for human flourishing in volunteering contexts. These practices cultivate emotional regulation, empathetic responsiveness, and cooperative relations, thereby strengthening individual resilience and group cohesion.

For Objective 3, the study advances a Buddhist-Based Volunteer Success Model that overlays these teachings onto Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The model illustrates how meeting volunteers' basic and psychological needs while intentionally cultivating ethical and spiritual capacities produces greater effectiveness, retention, and community impact. Practically, the model implies that volunteer programmes should combine needs-sensitive policies (e.g., clear role design, supportive supervision, development opportunities) with training in mindfulness and brahmavihāra practices to nurture compassionate, resilient volunteers.

Integrating Buddhist peaceful means into volunteer development offers a coherent pathway to enhance individual well-being, organisational performance, and sustainable community benefit. Future research should empirically validate the proposed model across diverse cultural and organisational settings and examine implementation strategies that balance ethical cultivation with operational demands.

Suggestions

Based on the research findings, the researcher proposes suggestions for practical application as well as future research to further enhance the development of volunteer work grounded in Buddhist peaceful means. On the practical side, it is recommended that government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) incorporate Buddhist peaceful means, including Mindfulness (Sati), the Four Brahmavihāras, and the Four Saṅgahavatthu, into their volunteer development policies and training programs. By formally integrating these teachings, policies can promote ethical leadership, emotional resilience, and long-term volunteer commitment, ultimately contributing to sustainable social development and stronger civic engagement. In terms of organizational practice, volunteer organizations should adopt the Buddhist-Based Volunteer Success Model developed in this study to design activities and support systems that address both the psychological and spiritual needs of volunteers. This could include mindfulness training sessions, compassion-focused workshops, and ethical communication practices, which help build cohesive, motivated, and resilient volunteer teams. Furthermore, establishing recognition programs that emphasize ethical contributions and personal growth can enhance volunteer satisfaction and retention, ensuring ongoing engagement and community impact.

For future research, it is suggested that studies expand the sample size and include a broader range of volunteer organizations to validate and further refine the proposed model. Comparative research examining differences between organizations that implement Buddhist frameworks and those utilizing secular approaches could provide deeper insights into the effectiveness of integrating spiritual teachings into volunteer development. Additionally, future studies could employ quantitative methods to measure the impact of Buddhist peaceful means on volunteer retention rates, psychological well-being, and social outcomes. These insights would offer valuable evidence to support wider implementation of this integrated model and contribute to the advancement of ethical and sustainable volunteer practices.

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Practical Guidelines to Develop the Quality of Life Based on Bālapaṇḍita Sutta

Ven. Indacara¹ Phramaha Nantakorn Piyabhani² Ven. Ashin Neminda³
International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University^{1,2,3}

Corresponding author email: indacara522@gmail.com
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Abstract

This study presents practical guidelines for enhancing quality of life grounded in the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta, a formative discourse within the Theravāda tradition. Three objectives guide the research: (1) to study the concept of life and its development according to the Theravāda Buddhist scriptures and general views of perspective, (2) to analyze the teachings on the quality of life in the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta, and (3) to suggest practical guidelines to develop the quality of life based on Bālapaṇḍita Sutta and its applications in daily life. Using documentary and interpretative analysis of primary Pāli texts and relevant secondary literature, the study synthesises doctrinal exegesis with an applied ethical framework.

The findings reveal that the cultivation of sīla (moral discipline), samādhi (mental concentration), and paññā (wisdom) constitutes the sutta's core pathway to a flourishing life. These three trainings operate through bodily, verbal, and mental conduct: ethical restraint reduces harm and social discord; concentrated attention stabilises cognition and emotional regulation; and wisdom informs prudent decision-making that shapes future outcomes (kamma). The Bālapaṇḍita Sutta's contrast between the foolish (bāla) and the wise (paṇḍita) clarifies how habitual patterns of speech, action, and intention predispose individuals to suffering or well-being.

This analysis, the paper formulates a set of pragmatic guidelines for practice in right speech, deliberate moral restraints, mindfulness routines to strengthen samādhi, and reflective exercises to cultivate paññā, framed for application in educational, organisational, and personal contexts. By integrating classical Buddhist insights with contemporary notions of human flourishing, the study demonstrates the sutta's continuing relevance for ethical formation, mental health, and communal harmony in modern settings.

Keywords: Practical guidelines; Quality of Life; Bālapaṇḍita Sutta; Morality; Concentration; Wisdom

Introduction

Life unfolds as a dynamic continuum of birth, growth, challenge, and renewal, shaped by both material circumstances and ethical-intellectual dispositions. In the Theravāda tradition, human existence is regarded as a rare and valuable opportunity for moral and cognitive development; being born human affords specific capacities for reflection and ethical choice that other forms of life do not (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000). The Bālapaṇḍita Sutta (Majjhima Nikāya) offers a compact, psychologically attuned framework for understanding how habitual patterns of bodily, verbal, and mental conduct give rise to either flourishing or suffering by distinguishing the ways of the foolish (bāla) from the ways of the wise (paṇḍita). Its emphasis on practical discernment (paññā), moral restraint (sīla), and focused attention (samādhi) makes the sutta particularly relevant for applied ethics and wellbeing studies (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2001).

Although scholarship on Buddhist ethics and contemplative psychology is substantial, comparatively few studies have investigated how canonical passages such as the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta can be translated into concrete, everyday guidelines for improving quality of life. Existing literature tends to treat sīla, samādhi, and paññā as doctrinal categories or phenomenological states rather than as mutually reinforcing practices that shape decision-making, emotional regulation, and social relations (Gethin, 1998). At the same time, contemporary pressures, ethical ambiguity in professional settings, rapid socio-technological change, and growing mental-health concerns underscore the need for time-tested frameworks that map moral choices to practical outcomes (Harvey, 2013).

This study addresses that gap by offering an interpretive and applied reading of the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta, complemented by pertinent suttas and normative narratives (e.g., Jātaka material and the Mahāmangala Sutta) that reinforce the social and pedagogical dimensions of wise conduct (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1997). The research examines how bodily, verbal, and mental actions operate causally within the doctrine of kamma to produce long-term consequences for individual and communal well-being. Drawing on textual exegesis and comparative analysis, the study seeks to derive pragmatic guidelines, adaptable to educational, organisational, and personal contexts, that foster sustained moral discipline, concentrated awareness, and discerning wisdom.

By reframing canonical teachings as practice-oriented strategies for contemporary life, this research contributes to scholarly dialogues on applied Buddhist ethics and offers practitioners actionable pathways to cultivate resilient, ethically grounded forms of human flourishing.

Research Objectives

1. To study the concept of life and its development according to the Theravāda Buddhist Scriptures and the general perspective.
2. To analyze the teachings on the quality of life in *Bālapaṇḍita Sutta*.
3. To suggest practical guidelines to develop the quality of life based on *Bālapaṇḍita Sutta* and its applications in daily life.

Literature Review

A broad and interdisciplinary literature addresses the determinants and cultivation of human well-being; within Theravāda Buddhism, this inquiry is organised around ethical, attentional, and cognitive trainings that shape the moral quality of action and its consequences. Foundational secondary scholarship situates these trainings within a larger doctrinal and historical frame. Gethin (1998) provides an accessible account of how *sīla*, *saṃādhi*, and *paññā* interrelate to transform habit patterns and orient agents toward long-term flourishing. Harvey's (2013) overview further locates these practices in contemporary concerns about mental health and social ethics, showing their practical applicability beyond monastic settings.

1. The concept of life and its development in Theravāda sources

Canonical and modern exegeses emphasize that human life is a distinctive opportunity for ethical and cognitive development. Early commentarial and modern treatments of blessing literature (e.g., the *Maṅgala Sutta*) highlight personal conduct and wise association as central to a meaningful life (Soni, 1987; Lee, 2008). Expositions such as Nyanissara's analysis of the *Maṅgala Sutta* amplify this pedagogical emphasis by describing behavioural dispositions that differentiate wholesome from unwholesome living (Nyanissara, 2008). Contemporary theses and studies focusing on the *paṇḍita* (wise person) identify attributes, learning, inquiry, mindfulness, and resilience that operationalise how life may be developed ethically and psychologically (Ven. Ratanak Keo, Leeka & Thongpan, 2018; Shraman, 2022).

2. *The Bālapaṇḍita Sutta and the moral-psychological contrast of wise and foolish conduct*

Textual scholarship and translations of the Majjhima Nikāya foreground the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta as a compact ethical psychology that contrasts bodily, verbal, and mental patterns of fools and the wise (Horner, 1990; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2001). Close readings demonstrate that the sutta frames wisdom as practical discernment—an ability to foresee consequences and restrain harmful impulses—which, when combined with moral discipline and concentrated attention, produces durable well-being in line with the doctrine of kamma.

3. *Interdisciplinary and applied perspectives on quality of life*

Quality-of-life (QOL) scholarship supplies useful conceptual tools for translating canonical insights into measurable domains of flourishing. Sirgy et al.'s (2006) review maps QOL research across psychology, economics, and health, offering constructs that can receive Buddhist inputs (e.g., ethical behaviour as a determinant of social well-being; attention training as a route to emotional regulation). Integrating this literature with textual exegesis allows for the formulation of practical guidelines, rooted in sīla, samādhi, and paññā, that are both doctrinally faithful and responsive to contemporary educational and organisational needs.

The reviewed literature supports the theoretical plausibility that ethical discipline, attentional training, and wisdom cultivation foster a durable quality of life. However, there remains limited research that (a) systematically translates the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta's prescriptions into practicable interventions, and (b) evaluates how bodily, verbal, and mental training can be operationalised within education, leadership development, or community wellbeing programs. The present study addresses these lacunae by developing practice-oriented guidelines grounded in close textual exegesis and interdisciplinary QOL theory.

Conceptual Framework

This research employs a documentary method, analyzing Buddhist scriptures and scholarly interpretations. The framework is based on the threefold training (Sīla, Samādhi, Pannā), which serves as the foundation for ethical conduct, mental development, and wisdom cultivation.

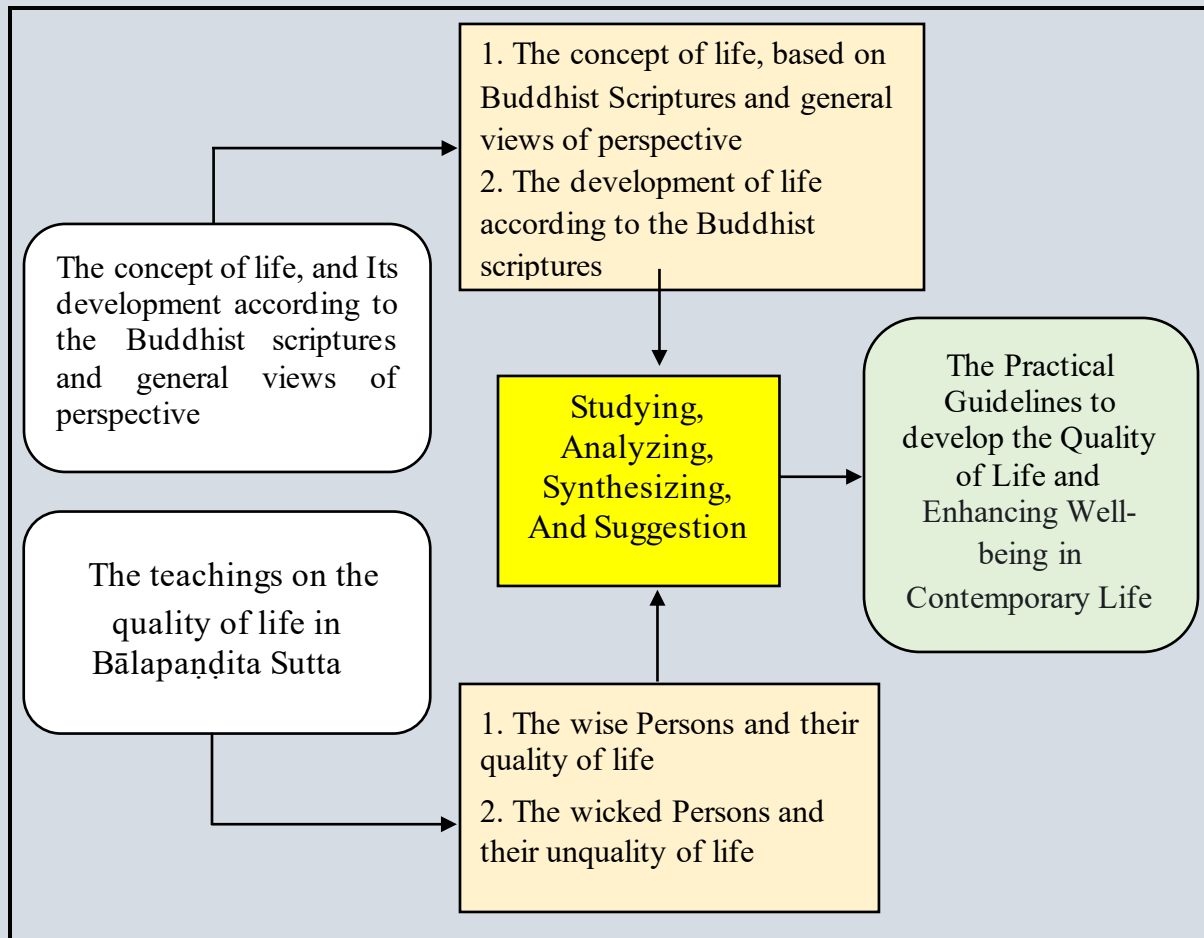


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This study is documentary research. The research methodology can be divided into three stages as follows;

Step 1: Collecting Data

Collecting data from the primary source of *Pāli* Canonical Texts, its Commentaries, and Sub Commentaries to explore the development of the quality of life and the discourses related to Life, *Bāla*, and *Paṇḍita* expounded by the Buddha in *Theravāda* Buddhism. As well as the secondary source of *Theravāda* Buddhist literature, research works, thesis, some academic documents related to this subject, and Buddhist journals together with the concepts discussed by famous Buddhist scholars.

Step 2: Analyzing and Synthesizing Data

Analysing and synthesising the data and systematising the collected data to describe the development of the quality of life in *Theravāda* Buddhist scripture,

and also the ways to apply to daily life preached by the Buddha in *Theravāda* Buddhism.

Step 3: Conclusion and Suggestion

Facilitating and formulating conclusions, identifying significant research findings from the study relevant to the research process from the data collection and data analysis, as well as suggesting useful information for further research.

Research Results

Objective 1: To Study the Concept of Life and Its Development According to the Theravāda Buddhist Scriptures and General Perspectives

This study examines the concept of life and its development based on Buddhist scriptures and general perspectives, emphasising fundamental aspects of existence, moral responsibility, and the conditions shaping human experiences. Buddhist scriptures define life as a continuous cycle of birth, existence, and rebirth, influenced by past and present actions (kamma). Life comprises both material and mental components, where the physical body (rūpa) interacts with the mind (nāma) in an interdependent existence. The Bhava Sutta describes how craving (taṇhā) and attachment lead to rebirth, highlighting the role of wisdom in breaking this cycle (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000).

Life is shaped by kamma, the principle of moral causation, where intentional actions produce corresponding results. This principle governs human experiences, distinguishing between virtuous and unwholesome lives. The Dīghajānu Sutta provides guidelines for a prosperous life by emphasising faith, virtue, charity, and wisdom (Walshe, 1995). Conversely, the Parābhava Sutta warns against unwholesome actions that lead to personal and societal decline (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2005). The earliest teachings recorded in the Sutta Piṭaka emphasise the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path as the framework for understanding and transforming life. Life is defined as conditioned existence marked by dukkha (suffering), and the goal is to transcend it through right view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and concentration (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1995).

Buddhism promotes ethical living as the foundation for life development. Key virtues such as generosity (dāna), morality (sīla), and wisdom (paññā) contribute to personal and communal well-being. The Parābhava Sutta

underscores the negative consequences of unethical behaviour, reinforcing the necessity of moral discipline (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2005). Practising these virtues aligns with Buddhist teachings on achieving a meaningful and fulfilling life.

Beyond Buddhist teachings, general perspectives emphasise personal growth through education, social responsibility, and mindfulness. Integrating Buddhist principles with modern self-development approaches can enhance overall well-being. Research in quality-of-life studies suggests that ethical and psychological well-being significantly impact human fulfilment (Sirgy et al., 2006). According to Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta (SN 56.11), the Buddha's first sermon outlines four truths that define the condition and direction of life:

- (1) Dukkha – Life is characterised by suffering or unsatisfactoriness.
- (2) Samudaya – This suffering arises from craving (taṇhā), especially craving for existence, sensual pleasures, and non-existence.
- (3) Nirodha – There is a cessation of suffering, which is the fading away of craving.
- (4) Magga – The way to cessation is the Noble Eightfold Path (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1995).

These truths reflect a cyclical process: life begins in ignorance, suffers from craving, and can be transformed by insight and discipline.

The Eightfold Path serves as a comprehensive system for developing life in three dimensions: 1) Morality (sīla): Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood. 2) Concentration (samādhi): Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. 3) Wisdom (paññā): Right View, Right Intention. Through this path, a person's life progresses from unwholesome habits to ethical refinement, mental clarity, and eventually wisdom (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000).

In conclusion, life's development relies on moral conduct, wisdom, and conscious efforts to cultivate wholesome qualities, aligning Buddhist teachings with contemporary perspectives on well-being.

Objective 2: To Analyze the Teachings on the Quality of Life in the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta

Defining the quality of life varies from individual to individual, shaped by personal values and cultural influences. Despite these variations, quality-of-life assessments have led to extensive research utilising indicators and structured methodologies. The Bālapaṇḍita Sutta, the ninth sutta in the Sunnata Vagga of Uparipannasa in the Majjhima Nikāya, explores the contrast between foolishness (Bāla) and wisdom (Paṇḍita). The Buddha illustrates how the actions, speech, and

thoughts of these two categories influence their quality of life (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2001).

The Bālappaṇḍita Sutta defines a wise person (Paṇḍita) as one who engages in wholesome thoughts, speech, and actions. The Buddha stated, “Bhikkhus, there are three characteristics of a wise man: thinking good thoughts, speaking good words, and performing good deeds” (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2001, p. 525). A wise person refrains from harming living beings, stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, lying, and consuming intoxicants. By adhering to these moral precepts, they cultivate a life of inner peace and joy (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2017).

Quality of life is a subjective and multidimensional construct. While Buddhist teachings associate it with ethical living, general perspectives highlight its social, psychological, and economic aspects (Sirgy et al., 2006). Sociology defines quality of life as an individual's perception of well-being, influenced by cultural and environmental factors. In medicine and economics, it is often measured through health and financial stability. However, Buddhist thought prioritizes ethical conduct, mental clarity, and spiritual well-being as the key determinants of a fulfilling life (Gethin, 1998). The Wise Persons in Buddhist Scriptures The Saṃyutta Nikāya describes wisdom as the ability to transcend ignorance and craving. The Buddha taught that true wisdom obstructs the cycle of rebirth by eradicating delusion and attachment (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000). The Maṅgala Sutta emphasizes the importance of associating with the wise (Paṇḍitānacca sevanā), highlighting ten beneficial actions, including abstaining from killing, stealing, and false speech (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2017). Additionally, the Dhammapada presents wisdom as self-control and inner resilience. Verse 81 states, “Just as a solid rock is not shaken by the storm, even so, the wise are not affected by praise or blame” (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1997). This illustrates the equanimity of the wise in the face of external circumstances.

Wise individuals exhibit discernment and moral integrity. They avoid hasty judgments and cultivate beneficial thoughts, speech, and actions (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2001). The Sunnakatha Vaṇṇanā commentary identifies three attributes of wisdom: 1) always thinking beneficial thoughts (sacintitacintī), 2) always speaking beneficial speech (subhāsitaḥāsī), and 3) always engaging in beneficial actions (sukatakkammakārī). These qualities enable wise individuals to foster personal well-being and contribute positively to society (Harvey, 2013).

The Impacts of the Wise Persons, The Atthasālinī commentary identifies four qualities that define the impact of wise individuals: 1) clarity in understanding phenomena, 2) mental stability, 3) sound decision-making, and 4) right concentration. These characteristics enable wise individuals to navigate challenges effectively and inspire others to cultivate wisdom and virtue (Gethin, 1998). The Atthakapaññā Sutta outlines eight factors conducive to the development of liberating wisdom, including association with wise teachers, deep learning, and ethical conduct. These factors highlight how wisdom fosters moral and intellectual growth, ultimately leading to enlightenment (Nibbāna) (Bodhi, 2000).

Furthermore, the term Bāla refers to a wicked or foolish person characterised by a lack of wisdom, discernment, and an immature understanding of life's complexities. In Buddhism, foolishness is not merely the absence of intelligence but signifies deep ignorance about existence and suffering (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2001). A foolish person often acts impulsively without considering the consequences, leading to repeated suffering (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2017). The Nature of Wickedness in Buddhist Thought The term Bāla originates from Bā (two) and La (harm), signifying a person who causes twofold harm: to themselves and others. Such individuals engage in unethical actions under the illusion of personal benefit, only to suffer the consequences. The Buddha compared this to picking up excrement to throw at another, only to soil one's own hands first (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2017).

A wicked person lacks ethical principles and is driven by three mental defilements: greed (lobha), hatred (dosa), and delusion (moha). The Suppabuddhakuttivattu in the Dhammapada (Verse 66) states, "The fool who knows his foolishness is wise at least so far, but a fool who thinks himself wise is called a fool indeed" (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1997). This verse highlights the dangers of arrogance and ignorance in perpetuating suffering. The Consequences of Wickedness: A wicked person experiences inner turmoil due to their harmful actions. The Buddha taught that unethical behavior leads to mental agitation, preventing peace and happiness. Individuals who engage in deceit, violence, or exploitation may appear successful externally but suffer from inner fear and guilt (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000). Additionally, wicked individuals face social rejection. The Mangala Sutta emphasizes avoiding association with fools as a great blessing (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2017). Since their actions disrupt communal harmony, they struggle to form meaningful relationships, leading to isolation and loneliness. Karma plays a crucial role in shaping one's future. Unwholesome actions

generate negative kamma, leading to suffering in this life and future rebirths. However, Buddhism offers a path to transformation through wisdom, ethical conduct, and mental discipline (Gethin, 1998).

The Wicked Persons in Buddhist Scriptures According to the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta, there are three types of foolish individuals: those who commit evil deeds, those who engage in harmful speech, and those who cultivate destructive thoughts. The ten unwholesome actions associated with wickedness include: Killing living beings, Stealing, Sexual misconduct, Lying Slandering, Harsh speech, Frivolous talk, Covetousness, Ill-will, Wrong view (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2001). Foolish individuals disregard moral discipline, making decisions based on immediate gratification rather than long-term well-being. Their influence on others can obstruct both material and spiritual progress (Harvey, 2013).

The Bālapaṇḍita Sutta explains that a fool experiences suffering in three ways: by witnessing others discuss virtuous matters, by realising their own immoral behaviour, and by facing the consequences of their actions.

The Impacts of Wicked Persons: Wicked behaviour disrupts societal harmony. Foolish individuals create conflict, strain relationships, and contribute to social instability. Furthermore, the psychological toll of wickedness is profound. Manipulation, abuse, and dishonesty result in long-term emotional damage for both perpetrators and victims. Corruption, injustice, and abuse of power are societal consequences of unchecked wickedness (Sirgy et al., 2006).

In conclusion, the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta highlights the profound impact of wisdom and foolishness on one's quality of life. Wise individuals cultivate moral integrity, mental clarity, and ethical conduct, fostering inner peace and societal harmony. In contrast, foolishness leads to suffering and instability. Thus, wisdom remains a vital foundation for a fulfilling life.

Objective 3: To Suggest Practical Guidelines to Develop the Quality of Life Based on Buddhist Principles and Their Applications in Daily Life

This study suggests practical guidelines based on the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta and Buddhist Principles and Their Applications in Daily Life to develop a quality of life applying bodily action, verbal action, and mental action by contacting morality, concentration, and wisdom in daily life.

In the complexity of modern life, the pursuit of a higher quality of life remains a universal goal. Buddhism provides a profound framework for achieving

this through bodily actions, emphasising the interconnection between body, mind, and spirit. According to the Sammāditṭhi Sutta, three types of wholesome bodily actions contribute to ethical living:

- 1) Pānātipātā-viratī sucarita (Abstaining from killing living beings)
- 2) Adinnādānā-viratī sucarita (Abstaining from taking what is not given)
- 3) Kāmesu micchācārā-viratī sucarita (Abstaining from sexual misconduct) (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2001).

Practising these bodily actions in daily life cultivates morality (sīla), concentration (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā), which collectively promote personal well-being and social harmony. Engaging in ethical bodily actions, such as acts of generosity (dāna) and refraining from harm, cultivates a peaceful existence. Concentration strengthens mindfulness in physical activities, promoting presence in daily tasks. Wisdom enables individuals to act with compassion and intentionality, leading to meaningful interactions (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2017).

Then, verbal actions play a crucial role in shaping relationships, communities, and inner well-being. From a Buddhist perspective, the right speech is a powerful tool for creating harmony and understanding. The Sammāditṭhi Sutta identifies four types of wholesome verbal actions:

- 1) Musāvādā-viratī sucarita (Abstaining from telling lies)
- 2) Pisuṇavācā-viratī sucarita (Abstaining from slander)
- 3) Pharusavācā-viratī sucarita (Abstaining from harsh speech)
- 4) Samphappalāpavācā-viratī sucarita (Abstaining from idle chatter) (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2001).

Practising right speech fosters morality by ensuring communication aligns with ethical values, creating an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect. Through concentration, speech becomes mindful and deliberate, avoiding harmful impulses and promoting meaningful discourse. Wisdom guides communication with truthfulness, compassion, and consideration for others' well-being (Harvey, 2013).

Furthermore, Buddhism teaches that mental actions shape perceptions, influence emotions, and determine life experiences. The cultivation of wholesome mental actions is essential for achieving inner peace and fulfilment.

According to the Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta, three types of wholesome mental actions contribute to personal growth:

- 1) Anabhijjhā-viratī sucarita (Abstaining from covetousness)
- 2) Avyāpāda-viratī sucarita (Abstaining from ill will)
- 3) Sammādiṭṭhi-viratī sucarita (Possessing the right understanding of the Dhamma) (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2001).

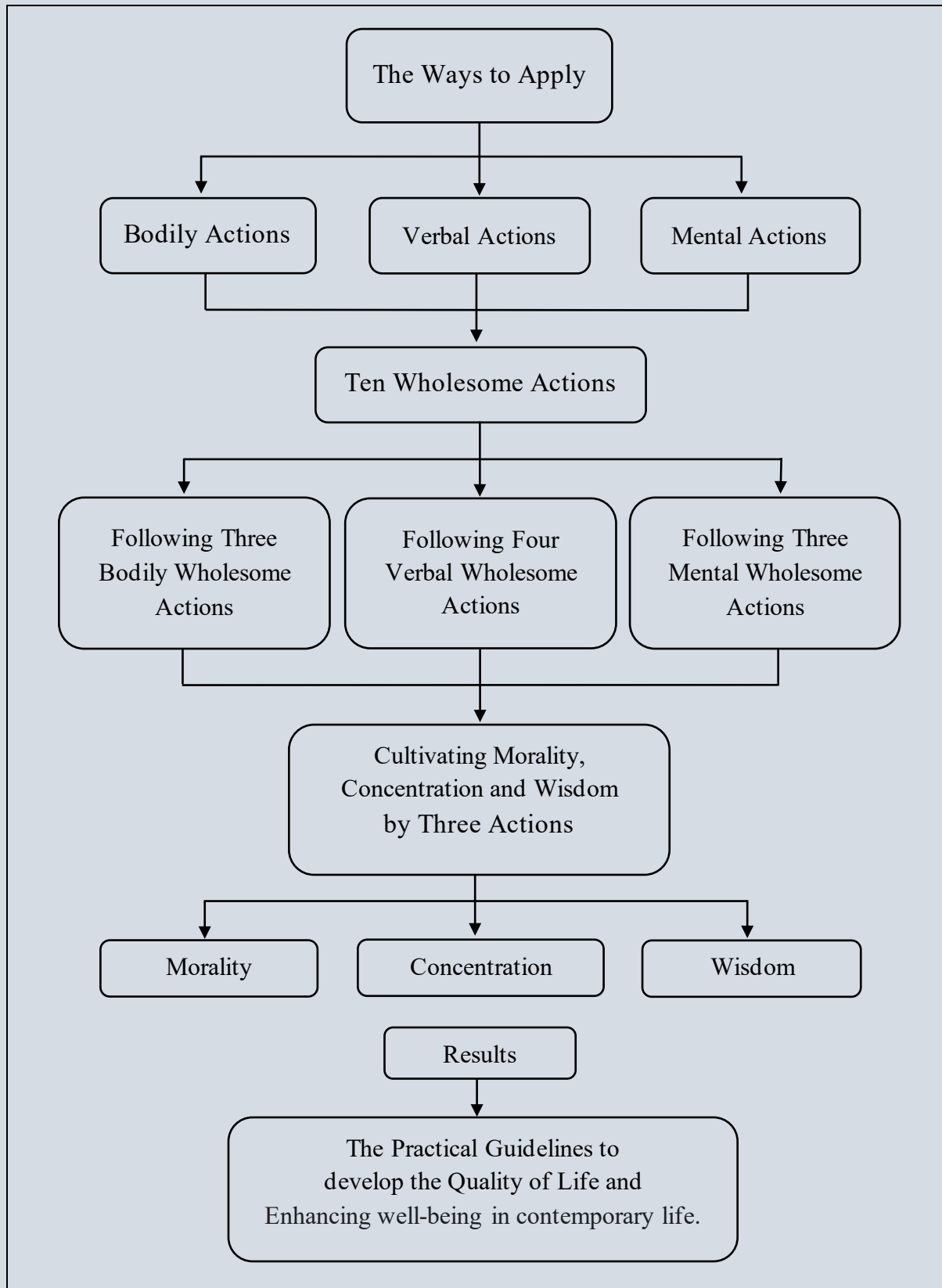


Figure 2: Three Applications to Develop the Quality of Life

Mental actions serve as the foundation for moral, verbal, and bodily actions. Practising morality restrains unwholesome thoughts, leading to mental

clarity. Concentration stabilises the mind, preventing distractions and fostering mindfulness. Wisdom allows individuals to recognise impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*), leading to a more compassionate and harmonious approach to life (Gethin, 1998).

In Conclusion, the application of bodily, verbal, and mental actions plays a transformative role in developing the quality of life from a Buddhist perspective. Through morality, concentration, and wisdom, individuals can cultivate ethical conduct, mindfulness, and insight, ultimately fostering inner peace and societal harmony. By integrating these practices into daily life, one embarks on a path toward well-being and develops the quality of life.

Discussion

The findings corroborate classical Theravāda accounts that locate human flourishing within the dynamics of *samsāra*, *kamma*, and the possibility of liberation (*nibbāna*), and they show how *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* function as the operative factors that shape individual and social wellbeing.

The findings of this study confirm that classical Theravāda frameworks, *samsāra*, *kamma*, and *nibbana*, remain analytically useful for understanding life and its development. Canonical and interpretive sources depict life as a process shaped by prior and present intentional actions, a view consistent with dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) and related suttas (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2001; Gethin, 1998). This causal perspective foregrounds agency: moral and mental dispositions orient future states of experience and social conditions (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2000). Contemporary scholarship and recent theses reiterate these emphases by identifying qualities, mindfulness, inquiry, restraint, and discernment associated with the “wise” person, thereby linking doctrinal accounts to personal flourishing (Shraman, 2022; Ven. Ratanak Keo, Leeka, & Thongpan, 2018). Collectively, these sources support the study’s premise that quality of life is co-constituted by embodied conduct (*bōdily*), communication (*verbal*), and mindedness (*mental*).

Analysis of the *Bālapaṇḍita Sutta* corroborates that wisdom (*paññā*) combined with ethical conduct (*sīla*) and attentional steadiness (*samādhi*) constitutes the sutta’s core prescription for flourishing (Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli & Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2001). The sutta’s binary portrait of the *bāla* (fool) and *paṇḍita* (wise) functions diagnostically: it identifies cognitive-affective-behavioural

patterns that generate suffering versus those that conduce to well-being. This interpretation aligns with broader canonical teachings such as the Maṅgala Sutta and Dhammapada maxims, which likewise privilege wholesome action and right speech as foundations of happiness (Soni, 1987; Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1997). Textual commentators and translations reinforce the practical thrust of the sutta: discernment guides ethical choices, which in turn modulate kamma and future conditions (Horner, 1990; Nyanissara, 2008).

Empirically and conceptually, the study shows that translating sutta-instruction into bodily, verbal, and mental practices is plausible and potentially beneficial. The sutta's prescriptions map neatly onto applied strategies: (a) moral restraints and right speech reduce interpersonal harm and social friction, (b) short, repeatable mindfulness and concentration exercises stabilise attention and affect regulation, and (c) reflective exercises cultivate practical wisdom for decision-making. These practice-oriented recommendations resonate with other normative suttas that prescribe virtues for well-being (e.g., teachings summarised in the Dīghajāṇu and Parabhava material) and with contemporary QOL research that calls for integrating psychological and ethical dimensions into well-being models (Harvey, 2013; Sirgy et al., 2006; Lee, 2008). By combining textual exegesis with interdisciplinary QOL frameworks, the study offers a theoretically coherent pathway for operationalising Buddhist ethics in education, leadership training, and mental-health programs.

The research supports the conclusion that *sīla–samādhi–paññā* operates as an interdependent triad that shapes life quality through concrete bodily, verbal, and mental habits. However, the study is primarily interpretive and doctrinal; it does not provide empirical outcome data demonstrating efficacy across cultural contexts. Future work should implement and evaluate curriculum- or workplace-based interventions derived from the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta to measure effects on psychological well-being, social cohesion, and behavioural indicators. Doing so will test the practical recommendations proposed here and extend the dialogue between classical Buddhist ethics and contemporary wellbeing science.

Knowledge from Research

This research provides significant contributions to the study of life development and the quality of life based on the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta. The findings integrate Buddhist teachings with contemporary perspectives, offering practical

guidelines for both personal and societal well-being. The key insights are summarised within the following conceptual framework:

The Bālapaṇḍita Sutta highlights the distinction between the wise (paṇḍita) and the foolish (bāla), presenting a clear framework for ethical and mental development. Quality of life is cultivated through three fundamental aspects: morality (sīla), concentration (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā). Ethical conduct in bodily, verbal, and mental actions contributes to personal well-being and social harmony. Ignorance and unethical actions result in suffering, aligning with Buddhist teachings on kamma and samsāra.

Applying these applications in daily life enhances emotional resilience, ethical decision-making, and overall fulfilment. This research provides a structured approach to understanding life development in Buddhist studies, offering valuable insights for scholars examining ethical and spiritual well-being.

By integrating the teachings of the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta into daily life, individuals can cultivate morality, concentration, and wisdom, fostering stronger and more ethical communities. Moreover, the study's findings can inform ethical leadership training, counselling practices, and social development programs, aligning with Buddhist ethical principles. Incorporating Buddhist wisdom into curricula on ethics, leadership, and personal development. Applying Buddhist ethical teachings in conflict resolution and community well-being initiatives.

This research affirms that the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta offers enduring wisdom that remains highly relevant in contemporary life. By integrating these principles, individuals, and societies can enhance their overall quality of life through ethical behavior, mental discipline, and wisdom-driven decision-making.

Conclusion

This research reaffirms the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta as a concise yet robust ethical psychology for improving quality of life. The study shows that flourishing is not reducible to material gain but rests on the sustained interplay of sīla, samādhi, and paññā, enacted through bodily, verbal, and mental conduct. Ethical discipline curtails harmful behaviours; concentration fosters stable attention and emotional balance; and wisdom enables foresight and morally informed choices. These trainings modify habit patterns that generate either wholesome or unwholesome consequences in accord with the doctrine of kamma.

Practically, the paper offers implementable recommendations: integrate brief daily practices for moral reflection and right speech into curricula and workplace ethics programs; adopt structured mindfulness exercises to strengthen attention and impulse control; and incorporate reflective case discussions to develop practical judgment. These measures, tailored to educational and organisational environments, can promote individual well-being and social cohesion.

Finally, by translating the sutta's precepts into practical, accessible strategies, the study makes a significant contribution to both applied Buddhist ethics and contemporary debates on human flourishing. Future empirical research could evaluate the effectiveness of these guidelines across cultural and institutional contexts to refine their design and assess measurable outcomes for personal and communal quality of life.

Suggestions

This research has found that the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta provides essential practical guidelines for developing the quality of life through morality (sīla), concentration (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā). The important finding is that these principles can be applied to daily life, fostering ethical behaviour, mental clarity, and wisdom-driven decision-making. Future research should explore the application of similar Buddhist teachings to enhance well-being in contemporary society.

For the next research issue, studies should be conducted on practical guidelines for quality of life based on the Cakka Sutta, which provides further insight into moral and ethical development.

A comparative study of the lives of wise (paṇḍita) and foolish (bāla) individuals based on the Bālapaṇḍita Sutta would deepen the understanding of moral choices and their consequences.

Additionally, an analytical study on the development of the quality of life from a broader Theravāda Buddhist perspective could provide further insights into the integration of Buddhist principles into modern life. Future research in these areas will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Buddhist teachings and their practical applications for personal and societal growth.

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A Model of Cultivation of the Buddhist Way of Life in a Cultural Approach to Foreign Tourists

Chatreudee Wilkie¹ Suvin Ruksat²

Graduate School, Mahamakut Buddhist University^{1,2}

Corresponding author email: Chatreudee.Wilkie@gmail.com¹ Puzinnian@gmail.com²

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Abstract

This study aims to: (1) explore theoretical concepts related to cultural tourism, (2) study the cultivation of the Buddhist way of life, (3) develop a culture-based model for such cultivation, and (4) present new knowledge with practical applications. Addressing a significant research gap, the study proposes and validates a systematic framework for transmitting Buddhist values to foreign tourists through cultural engagement. A qualitative, phenomenological approach was employed, involving 45 key informants, comprising training organisers, foreign tourists, and subject experts. Data were collected through documentary analysis, participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions, with all procedures conducted in accordance with ethical standards for human research. Thematic content analysis, inductive reasoning, and trustworthiness verification were used to ensure rigour, and findings are presented descriptively alongside a proposed model.

The results indicate that cultural tourism fosters deeper engagement with local values and traditions. In Thailand, Buddhist culture motivates tourists to explore and internalise the beliefs, practices, and aesthetic elements of Buddhist spaces. Monasteries provide structured and supportive environments for learning, particularly through the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, while monks act as facilitators who transmit essential teachings in English. The proposed culture-based model consists of four dimensions: (1) residing in peaceful environments, (2) cultivating ethical conduct through loving-kindness and role models, (3) engaging in ritual practices with meaningful explanations, and (4) reflecting on Buddhist principles such as karma, samsara, impermanence, and Nirvana. From these findings emerges the *SMVIT model*, *Serenity*, *Masterpiece*, *Voice*, and *Immersion* through meditation and reflection, which collectively lead to the *Transformation* of Worldview. This framework contributes both to cultural tourism and Buddhist education, offering temples and retreat centres practical

strategies for engaging foreign tourists and fostering sustainable spiritual transformation as a form of Buddhist soft power.

Keywords: Cultural tourism; Buddhist Way of Life; Buddhist Cultivation; Transformative Learning; SMVIT model

Introduction

Global tourism rebounded strongly in 2024, with international arrivals returning to pre-pandemic scale, an outcome that renewed scholarly and managerial interest in the cultural dimensions of travel and exchange (UNWTO, 2025). Thailand remains one of the world's leading destinations, registering over 35 million international visitors in 2024 and generating more than 1.8 trillion baht in tourism receipts, trends that position the country as a critical site for studying culturally grounded tourist experiences (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2024).

Cultural tourism is commonly defined as travel that foregrounds engagement with a destination's tangible and intangible heritage, its sites, practices, beliefs, and everyday living traditions, and is frequently positioned as a vehicle for mutual learning between hosts and visitors (UNWTO, 2017). In Thailand, cultural tourism often manifests as temple visits, participation in meditation programs, and attendance at Dhamma retreats; these forms of engagement provide foreigners with structured contact points for encountering Theravāda Buddhist practice and worldview (UNWTO, 2017).

Thailand's monasteries and meditation centres have long attracted international participants. Centres associated with Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu, founder of Suan Mokkh, and well-known forest monasteries have been recognised internationally for their contribution to practice and learning; Suan Mokkh and related institutions are frequently listed among prominent global meditation centres, and Buddhādāsa has been widely acknowledged for his influence on modern Thai Buddhism. Such recognition has helped make Thailand a focal point for foreigners seeking immersive Buddhist experiences (CNN Travel, 2017).

From a pedagogical standpoint, immersive temple stays and retreats resonate with Transformative Learning theory, which locates adult perspective change in disorienting or unfamiliar experiences that prompt critical reflection and meaning reconstruction (Mezirow, 1991). Recent empirical work links immersive tourism experiences with perspective transformation and demonstrates that intentionally designed cultural encounters can function as educational interventions that reshape visitors' beliefs and practices (Amaro,

Caldeira & Seabra, 2024). Drawing on Thailand's enduring cultural taxonomy, the moral, legal, social, and tangible dimensions articulated by the Ministry of Interior, this study examines how selected temples and meditation centres actively cultivate Buddhist ways of life among foreign tourists (Ministry of Interior, Thailand, 2008).

Despite these developments, there remains a gap: few studies have systematically identified the institutional practices, pedagogical sequences, and cultural dimensions that reliably foster the cultivation of a Buddhist way of life among foreign tourists. This study responds to that gap by examining selected Thai temples and meditation centres to develop a culturally grounded, transferable model, framed around moral, social, legal, and tangible cultural dimensions, that temples and retreat centres can use to engage foreign visitors intentionally. By linking empirical fieldwork with theory on transformative learning and soft power, the research aims to offer practical guidance for cultural tourism stakeholders and to clarify how Buddhist cultural engagement may function as a form of attraction and influence in the international arena (Phramaha Danai Srichan et al., 2024; Chaipatanapruck, 2021).

Research Objectives

- 1) to explore the theoretical concepts related to tourism culture
- 2) to study the cultivation of the Buddhist way of life
- 3) to develop a culture-based model for such cultivation
- 4) to present new knowledge and its practical application

Literature Review

Theoretical concepts in tourism culture

Cultural tourism is defined as travel motivated primarily by the desire to learn about, experience, and participate in a destination's tangible and intangible heritage, arts, customs, beliefs, rituals, and social practices, which positions tourism as a vehicle for cultural exchange and learning (UNWTO, 2017). Cultural tourism scholarship emphasises motivations, authenticity, host–guest interactions, and the educational potential of immersive experiences. Recent work also reframes certain tourism encounters as designed “transformative experiences,” suggesting that tourism can be intentionally managed to foster lasting cognitive and affective change among visitors (Amaro, Caldeira & Seabra, 2024).

Cultivation of the Buddhist way of life in tourism contexts

In Thailand, Buddhist cultural tourism commonly includes temple visits, meditation retreats, ritual participation, and Dhamma study, forms of engagement that combine sensory, moral, and pedagogical elements (Schedneck, 2015). Ethnographic studies of international meditation centres demonstrate how these sites commodify and mediate religious practice for non-Thai visitors while also creating spaces for genuine spiritual learning; instructors, monastic routines, language accessibility, and ritual framing influence the depth of visitor engagement (Schedneck, 2015). Such findings indicate that Buddhist sites function both as cultural attractions and as informal educational settings where values, practices, and worldviews are transmitted.

Transformative learning as a conceptual lens

Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) provides a robust theoretical frame for explaining how immersion in Buddhist settings might reshape tourists' frames of reference. Mezirow describes perspective transformation as the outcome of critical reflection following a "disorienting dilemma," dialogic discourse, and supportive learning environments—conditions that mirror many retreat or monastic contexts where visitors encounter unfamiliar social rules and contemplative practices (Mezirow, 1991). Recent tourism research confirms that immersive, emotionally engaged experiences—when scaffolded by facilitators and reflective practices—are especially likely to generate durable shifts in values and behaviour (Wolf, 2022; Amaro, Caldeira & Seabra, 2024).

Toward a culture-based model for cultivation

Cultural frameworks developed by Thai authorities (moral, legal, social, tangible) remain useful for analysing how Buddhist life is both embodied and taught to foreigners (Ministry of Interior, Thailand, 2008). Combining these four cultural dimensions with TLT suggests a multi-layered model in which (a) tangible immersion (temple spaces, ritual forms) creates the context for (b) social learning (monastic etiquette, communal practice), (c) moral modelling (ethical teachings, merit-making practices), and (d) reflective pedagogy (guided meditation, Dhamma instruction). Empirical work on international meditation centres indicates variability across sites in the presence and quality of these elements, accounting for differences in outcomes for foreign participants (Schedneck, 2015).

Practical applications and gaps in knowledge

While scholars document the conditions under which tourism can foster transformation, there is limited systematic research identifying the specific institutional practices, pedagogical sequences, and cultural cues that reliably cultivate a Buddhist way of life among diverse foreign visitors. This gap calls for research that integrates theory (TLT, cultural tourism), field evidence from temples/retreats, and a transferable model that administrators can adopt to design intentional learning pathways, thereby operationalising Buddhist cultural engagement as both education and soft power. (Phramaha Danai Srichan et al., 2024).

Buddhist principles constitute the core teachings that have profoundly shaped the Thai way of life and served as the authoritative guide for practitioners following the Buddha's passing. Instead of appointing a successor, the Buddha famously declared that the Dhamma and Vinaya, comprising his teachings and monastic discipline, would collectively serve as the teacher (DN 16).

Living in harmony with the Dhamma is believed to bring deep insight into life and promote right view, personal well-being, and social harmony. These benefits are understood to manifest on three distinct levels:

1) *Immediate Benefit* (Ditṭhadhammikattha): Well-being attainable in this life, which includes access to basic needs, financial stability, social respect, a harmonious family life, and good companionship.

2) *Future Benefit* (Samparāyikattha): Attaining a favourable rebirth, inner peace, a virtuous character, and continued spiritual progress.

3) *Highest Benefit* (Paramattha): The ultimate goal of Nibbāna, freedom from suffering, defilements (kilesa), and attachment, characterised by radiant joy (Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacarya [P.A. Payutto] 1984).

Given that many of these principles are deeply integrated into Thai culture, this study focuses on several key teachings that inform both belief and practice:

1) *The Four Principles of Faith* (Saddhā): These principles centre on faith in the Buddha's enlightenment, the law of karma, and the consequences of actions, thereby forming the foundation of Buddhist ethical life (MN 70).

2) *The Six Principles of Reverence* (Gārava): These involve respect for the Buddha, Dhamma, Saṅgha, the training (sikkhā), earnest effort (appamāda), and hospitality (paṭisanthāra), fostering moral integrity and communal harmony (AN 6.32).

3) *The Six Directions of Social Conduct* (Siṅgālovāda Sutta): These outline the ethical duties in six key social relationships—parents/children,

teachers/students, spouses, friends, employers/employees, and monastics/laypeople, promoting social stability (DN 31).

4) *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna)*: Contemplation of body, feelings, mind, and mental objects, forming the basis of insight meditation (Vipassanā), leading to Nibbāna (DN 22).

Cultural tourism in Thailand, centred on temple visits, meditation retreats, and Dhamma study, offers foreigners immersive opportunities for meaningful engagement. Transformative Learning Theory explains how scaffolded monastic experiences can trigger critical reflection and lasting shifts in perspective. However, few studies systematically identify the institutional practices and pedagogical sequences that reliably cultivate a Buddhist way of life among foreign visitors.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, the researcher examines the Buddhist way of life in Thailand based on the enduring cultural framework established by the Ministry of Culture in 1952 (B.E. 2495), still featured in Thai educational materials today, in order to ensure cultural relevance within the Thai context. The study also explores the transformation of conceptual paradigms by integrating Western academic thought from Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory, which is a key framework for adult learning and personal change. Furthermore, the research investigates core Buddhist principles that encompass both theoretical understanding and practical application, namely: the Four Principles of Faith, the Six Principles of Reverence, the Six Directions of Social Conduct, and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. These are the heart of the root Thai culture and form the basis of the study's conceptual framework.

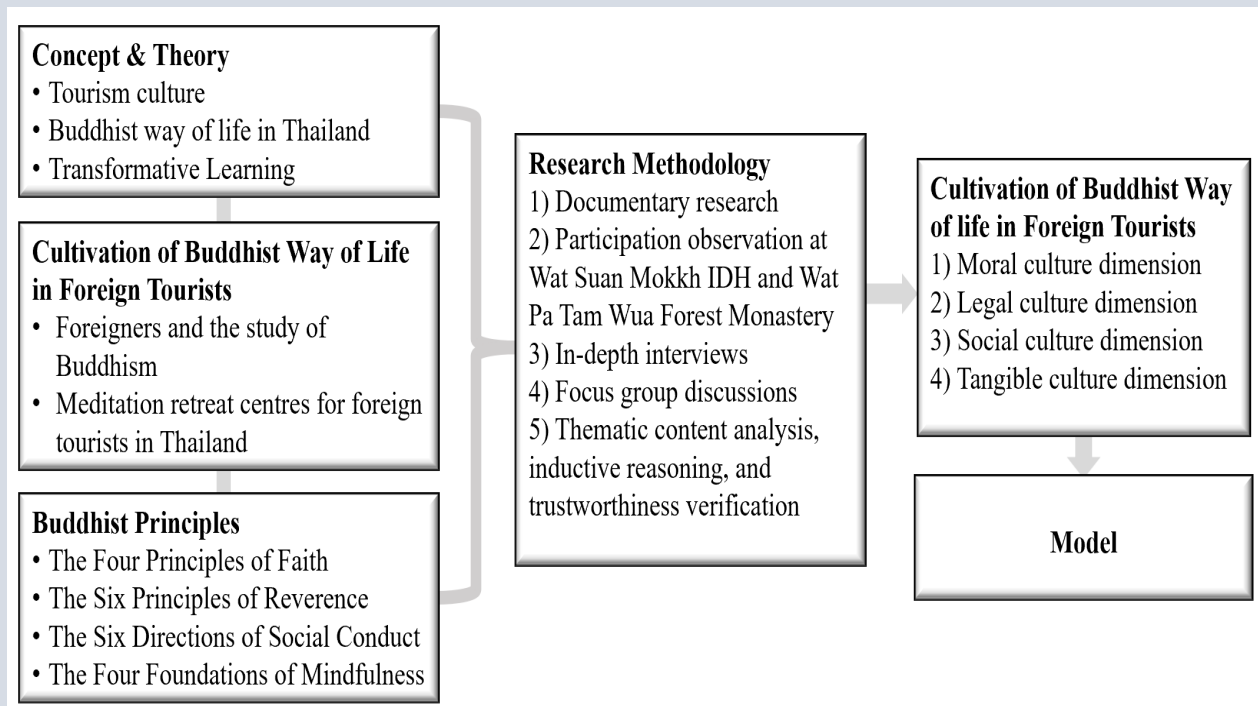


Figure 1: A Conceptual Framework for Cultivating the Buddhist Way of Life among Foreign Tourists through A Cultural Approach

Research Methodology

This study employed qualitative phenomenological field research methods to investigate how the tourism context, Buddhist principles, and transformative learning culturally emerge within Dhamma retreats in Thailand. The research process is divided into 3 steps as follows.

1) A comprehensive documentary review of related concepts and theories, the specific contexts of Wat Suan Mokkh IDH and Wat Pa Tam Wua Forest Monastery, and core Buddhist principles. Insights from this review constructed a framework that guided the fieldwork.

2) Data collection employed three primary methods: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. The selection of the 45 key informants was conducted through purposive sampling, targeting individuals with rich, direct experience relevant to the research questions. In-depth interview and focus group discussion protocols were designed with open-ended questions to explore lived experiences deeply, with data collection continuing until theoretical saturation was reached, indicating that no new themes were emerging from the data. The full observation and interview protocols were submitted to the Human Research Ethics Committee of Mahamakut Buddhist

University and received approval on September 24, 2024. All research activities were conducted in accordance with established ethical guidelines for human subjects.

Table 1: Key Informants

<i>Key Informants Site/ Group</i>	<i>Training Organizers</i>	<i>Foreign Tourists</i>	<i>Experts</i>
Wat Suan Mokkh IDH (in-depth interviews)	7	11	-
Wat Pa Tam Sua Forest Monastery (in-depth interviews)	7	11	-
Experts (individual in-depth interview)	-	-	3
Focus group discussion participants			6
Total	14	22	9
Grand Total	45		

3) The resulting data were analysed using a thematic analysis coding scheme. This involved a multi-stage process of data familiarisation, initial code generation, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness were employed, including data triangulation and member checking (presenting findings to participants for validation). This analytical process aimed to identify patterns and themes related to the cultivation of a Buddhist way of life among foreign tourists through culturally embedded approaches.

Research Results

Objective 1. This study defines tourism culture as the socially learned values, norms, and practices that shape tourist-host interactions and mediate cultural transmission (UNWTO, 2017). Historically, travel evolved from commerce, pilgrimage, and health journeys to leisure, experiential, and sustainable tourism; in Thailand, modern tourism expanded from elite and missionary movements during the reign of King Rama III into a major state-supported industry (Manophatthana, 2004; Ministry of Interior, Thailand, 2008).

Empirical evidence from interviews, observations, and document analysis shows that Buddhist cultural tourism in Thailand is organised into three principal modalities:

1. Appreciation of Buddhist material culture, visits oriented to monuments, temple architecture, iconography, and museum collections. These encounters are primarily aesthetic and heritage-driven but often open pathways to interpretive learning when mediated by guides or interpretive materials (Phrasuthiratanabundit, Jinabuddhisiri Congboonwasana, & Puccantasenoet, 2017).
2. Participation in faith-based ceremonies, attendance at rituals, merit-making events, and seasonal observances. Such participation exposes visitors to social norms, monk–layperson relations, and ritual scripts that convey moral and cosmological meanings embedded in everyday Thai life (Ministry of Interior, Thailand, 2008).
3. Engagement in Buddhist practice for personal growth, structured retreats, meditation courses, and dhamma study aimed at inner development. These experiences are characterised by extended embodied practice, guided reflection, and pedagogical scaffolding that can produce cognitive and affective change in tourists (Schedneck, 2015).

Fieldwork further reveals that while natural beauty and heritage remain key attraction drivers, visitors increasingly value (a) accessible, low-cost living conditions and (b) the interpersonal warmth and hospitality of Thai hosts, factors that facilitate longer stays and deeper engagement. Cultural tourists frequently express motivations beyond sightseeing: expanding worldview, pursuing contemplative practice, and seeking ethical or psychological resources not readily available at home. These motivations interact with site-level factors (language accessibility, teacher competence, accommodation quality) to shape the depth and durability of cultural learning.

In sum, Objective 1 confirms that tourism culture in Thailand is multi-dimensional, encompassing historical trajectories, institutional arrangements, material expressions, ritual practices, and pedagogical processes and that Buddhist cultural tourism functions both as heritage consumption and as a potential channel for value transmission and personal transformation.

Objective 2. The results showed that historical evidence corroborates that foreigners have travelled to Asia to study Buddhism for over seven centuries. This phenomenon is often driven by a recognition of suffering and the desire to transcend it, along with a quest for life’s deeper truths. Thai people are known for their kindness, and Thai monastics are often regarded as admirable spiritual models. In recent years, increasing numbers of foreign visitors have come to Thailand for Buddhist retreats. In response, more Dhamma practice centres have emerged, each with distinct methods and formats.

One participant noted, “I came to attend the training specifically to deepen my meditation practice to cultivate wisdom. I enjoy studying Buddhism because it provides a clear, systematic path of learning.” (Field Notes, November 11, 2024).

Ethnographic observation at two prominent sites reveals contrasting institutional models. Wat Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage (IDH) delivers Ānāpānasati within a regimented, school-like retreat framework, fixed schedules, explicit curricula, and spaces set apart from routine temple life, whereas Wat Pa Tam Wua Forest Monastery emphasises a more open, nature-integrated monastic rhythm that imitates traditional forest-dwelling practice. A comparative synthesis of these approaches is provided in the table below, highlighting how institutional design shapes pedagogical aims, participant experience, and potential outcomes for transformational learning.

Table 2: Comparative Synthesis of Wat Suan Mokkh IDH and Wat Pa Tam Wua Forest Monastery

Feature	Wat Suan Mokkh IDH	Wat Pa Tam Wua Forest Monastery
Format	Highly structured, 10-day retreat with a fixed curriculum and schedule	Flexible, immersive experience; visitors join ongoing monastic life
Entry Rules	Fixed start dates; must register for the full 10-day program	Can join on any day; maximum 10-day stay due to high demand
Fees	Fixed fee of THB 2,000 for the 10-day retreat (covers lodging/meals)	Free of charge; lodging and meals are provided, donations are voluntary
Dress Code	Modest dress required; white clothing is optional	White clothing is mandatory (provided by the monastery)
English Resources	Structured teachings with audio guidance in English	Monks teach and guide in English; English-speaking volunteers assist

A comparative analysis of Wat Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage and Wat Pa Tam Wua Forest Monastery highlights shared success factors: visionary leadership, supportive teams, English-language resources, and exemplary monastic role models (Schedneck, 2015; Seeger, 2018). Participants consistently emphasised the monks' selflessness, hospitality, and dedication to daily training (Phrakru Vimolbhavanausas, personal communication, November 3, 2024). Both centres also feature designated practice areas, simple facilities, clear dress codes, teachings rooted in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, and the practice of noble silence. Volunteer service and non-profit operations reinforce authenticity and sustainability (Norman, 2017).

Immersive residency in serene, natural, and secluded environments proved to be a crucial factor in enabling participants to cultivate mindfulness, engage in deep self-reflection, and experience authentic cultural immersion (Amaro et al., 2024). These settings, characterised by simplicity, beauty, and tranquillity, create conditions conducive to inner calm, allowing individuals to temporarily step away from the distractions of modern life. The natural surroundings, coupled with structured daily routines, foster a heightened awareness of both inner states and external environments, reinforcing the integrative relationship between Buddhism, nature, and personal well-being.

Most participants were under the age of 30 and came predominantly from European countries, with Germany frequently noted as a place of origin. Their pathways to participation were informal and community-driven, relying largely on word of mouth, online platforms, and personal recommendations rather than formal tourism channels. Such organic discovery reflects the trust-based networks and perceived authenticity associated with Buddhist retreats.

The reported outcomes extended beyond temporary well-being. Participants consistently highlighted a deeper understanding of Buddhist teachings, increased mindfulness and emotional regulation, renewed appreciation for simplicity and nature, and opportunities for engaging in meaningful, purposeful activities unavailable in their home environments (Chen et al., 2025; Wolf, 2022). Many also described forming enduring friendships and supportive spiritual networks, which sustained their motivation to continue practice after returning home. In this way, the retreats function not only as short-term experiences but as catalysts for long-term personal transformation and cultural exchange.

Objective 3. The result shows 4 dimensions for cultivating a Buddhist way of life in foreign tourists as follows:

Cultivating a Buddhist Way of Life in Foreign Tourists: The Moral Culture Dimension:

Effective training programmes should incorporate core Buddhist beliefs such as karma, realms of existence, the cycle of rebirth (Saṃsāra), the Three Characteristics (Tilakkhaṇa), and Nibbāna. These doctrines form the basis of the Buddhist way of life and help foreign visitors understand foundational Thai cultural values. It is crucial not to teach only what may be immediately appealing to tourists, as this risks presenting a distorted or “whitewashed” version of Buddhism. Furthermore, introducing the concept of Nibbāna is essential, as it sets Buddhism apart from other religions and highlights its profound influence on Thai life. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna), regarded as the direct path to Nibbāna, are widely taught in Thai meditation centres.

Because these beliefs are abstract, clear and effective communication is paramount. Recommended methods include:

1) *Explaining the Dhamma in simple English* and using varied explanations suitable for a culturally diverse audience of non-native speakers;

2) *Applying scientific reasoning* and utilising relatable real-world examples or local case studies, while simultaneously promoting critical thinking and personal reflection over blind belief or forced conversion;

3) *Facilitating questions and discussion* to ensure deeper understanding;

4) *Allowing adequate time for reflection*, as internalising beliefs is a gradual process. Noble silence and contemplative practice are key tools for reviewing learned material and exploring one’s own inner landscape of thoughts and emotions.

Cultivating the Buddhist Way of Life in Foreign Tourists: The Legal Culture Dimension

The cultivation of legal culture in the Buddhist context encompasses the social customs and rituals that govern relationships in Thai society, such as those between teachers and students, or between monastics and laypeople. It also involves practices associated with other realms of existence, such as merit dedication and the practice of extending loving-kindness (mettā). A final aspect is direct participation in Buddhist ceremonies such as almsgiving, chanting, and activities on holy days. Foreign tourists can encounter and participate in these customs directly at monasteries or meditation centres.

To facilitate this cultural integration, the study identified three primary approaches:

1) *Conducting an orientation* session to establish a shared understanding of rituals, clarify expectations, and explain customary behaviours. Both Wat Suan Mokkh IDH and Wat Pa Tam Wua Forest Monastery utilise fluent English-speaking volunteers (notably, often German nationals) to perform this crucial task, effectively bridging the cultural gap on the day of arrival.

2) *Facilitating repeated exposure to real-life contexts*. For instance, observing monks on alms rounds, or bowing to the teacher in the Dhamma hall, allows tourists to absorb local customs organically.

3) *Encouraging consistent hands-on practice*, such as chanting, food offering, or practising loving-kindness meditation, deepens internal engagement. Over time, this process enables tourists to adopt these behaviours not merely by imitation but through sincere understanding and appreciation.

Cultivating the Buddhist Way of Life in Foreign Tourists: The Social Culture Dimension

The cultivation of social culture focuses on appropriate etiquette within the temple context, which includes demonstrating respect for the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, and promoting harmonious communal living. These are inherently embedded in the daily routines of Dhamma centres in Thailand. The study identified several key methods:

1) *Fostering Group Unity*: This is achieved through shared practices, such as the uniform wearing of simple white clothing and engaging in synchronised activities like group walking meditation or chanting. Such practices help to cultivate a sense of belonging and collective discipline.

2) *Practising Cultural Sensitivity*: This involves recognising that foreign participants may unintentionally violate norms due to unfamiliarity. It is recommended that trainers offer gentle corrections with patience and avoid harsh criticism.

3) *Extending Unconditional Hospitality*: This principle, akin to treating guests as family, involves extending loving-kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) to people of all nationalities and religions. The aim is to create a supportive environment that helps alleviate their personal struggles and support their journey toward inner peace. A key manifestation of this giving without expectation of return, for example, is by offering training programs free of charge

or on a non-profit basis. This approach was found to foster profound appreciation and respect from the tourists.

Cultivating the Buddhist Way of Life in Foreign Tourists: The Tangible Culture Dimension

The cultivation of tangible culture pertains to the material aspects of Buddhist practice, such as temples, daily-use structures, and Buddha images. The study identified three key methods:

1) *Promoting Immersive Living*: This involves inviting foreign tourists to reside within the peaceful and natural monastery settings. This approach allows them to experience the physical environment and sacred objects as part of their daily life, thereby fostering a sense of harmony with the Buddhist way of life.

2) *Providing Guided Interaction with Sacred Spaces and Objects*: This method involves Thai hosts or volunteers demonstrating and explaining the proper use of various items, such as striking the large temple bell to signal mealtime or mark the beginning of a group activity, ensuring that their meaning and function are clearly understood.

3) *Reflecting Inner Values through External Symbols and Role Models*: The presence of cross-cultural role models, particularly Western volunteers who live and serve within these monasteries, helps bridge cultural gaps and encourages openness among new participants. Furthermore, observing authentic Thai devotion, such as silent reverence within temple grounds or heartfelt prostrations before Buddha images, viewed not as enforced rituals but as genuine expressions of faith, leaves a profound impression on foreign visitors. This fosters a deeper appreciation for the spiritual and cultural significance embedded within the material aspects of Thai Buddhism.

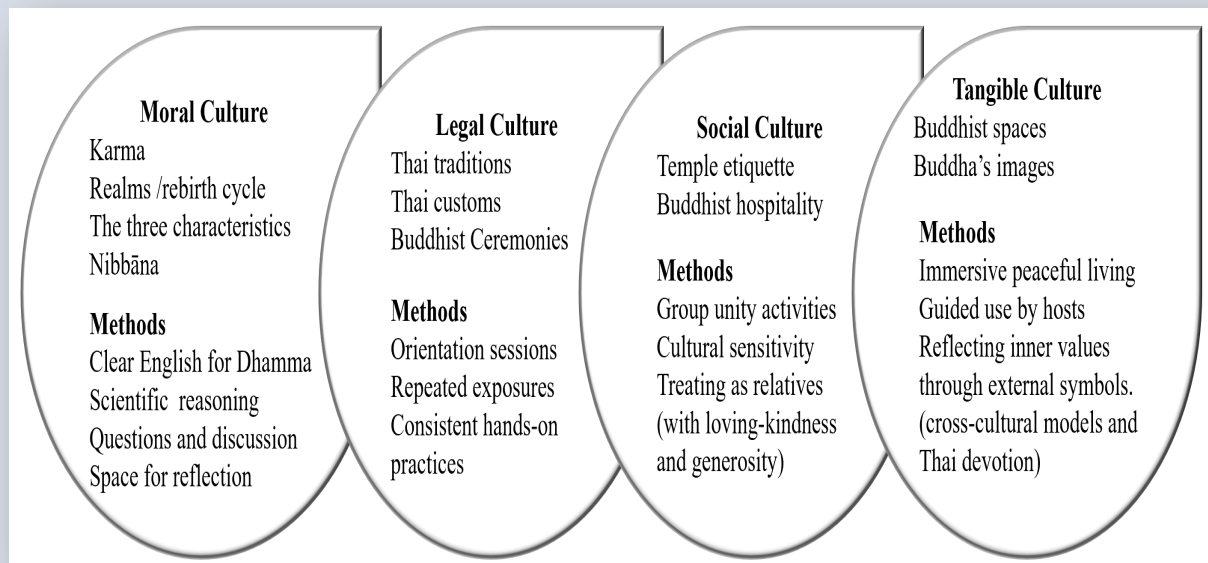


Figure 2: A Summary of Contents and Methods of Cultivating a Buddhist Way of Life among Foreign Tourists through A Cultural Approach

In summary, the content (what) and methods (how) of cultivating a Buddhist way of life, as identified in this study across four cultural dimensions, are illustrated in the diagram below.

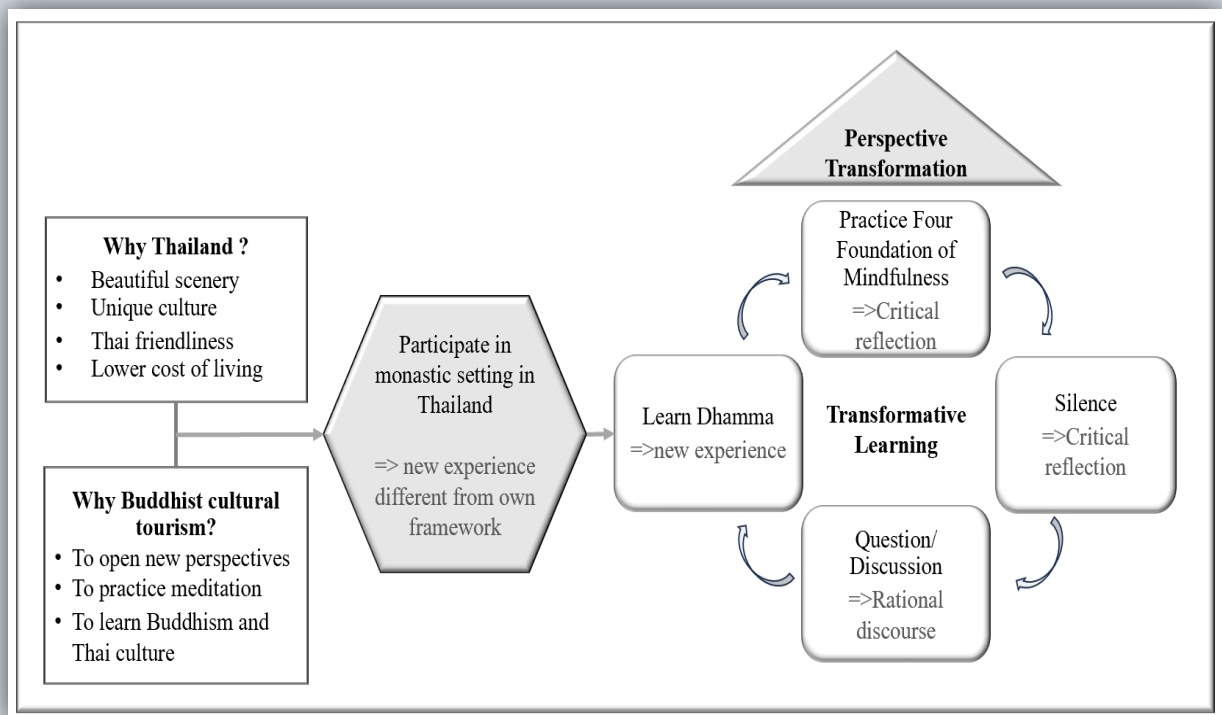


Figure 3: The Intersection of Buddhist Cultural Tourism and Transformative Learning in Thailand

Overall, entering a monastic setting can create a significant cultural dissonance for most foreign tourists, which prompts profound reflection through the practice of noble silence and meditation. Inquiry and dialogue then serve as essential tools for facilitating rational discourse, ultimately leading to a transformation of the tourists' meaning perspectives. Participants' testimonies confirm that they gained a deeper understanding of Buddhist teachings applicable to their daily lives. These findings align closely with the transformative tools outlined in Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. The concluding diagram illustrates this study's synthesised model of the relationship between Buddhist cultural tourism and transformative learning.

Discussions

The study highlights that Thailand's appeal for international tourists extends beyond its natural beauty and cultural uniqueness, long celebrated since the reign of King Rama III, to include opportunities for transformative experiences rooted in spiritual development. For many visitors, meditation retreats, Buddhist teachings, and immersion in monastic environments offer

activities unavailable in their home countries. These practices allow participants to combine cultural exploration with personal growth, reinforcing the increasing importance of spiritual and wellness tourism in global travel (Norman, 2017; DSouza & Shetty, 2024). Thailand's Buddhist heritage thus positions the country as a significant site where cultural tourism and transformative learning intersect.

The SMVIT Model in Relation to Cultural Dimensions and Prior Frameworks

Although prior models of spiritual or wellness tourism exist, the SMVIT model distinguishes itself through its integration of Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1991) with the four cultural dimensions defined by the Ministry of Culture of Thailand: moral, legal, social, and tangible. This synthesis creates a culturally grounded and pedagogically coherent framework, aligning universal principles of adult learning with Thailand's unique cultural identity (Phrasuthiratanabundit, Jinabuddhisiri Congboonwasana & Puccantasenoet, 2017). In doing so, the model advances previous research by operationalising cultural values into practical components for tourism and religious education.

The findings further suggest that the ideal context for implementing the SMVIT model involves retreat settings that are both accessible and secluded, situated in natural, serene, and clean environments. Nonetheless, its application may vary depending on institutional resources. Smaller urban temples, for example, may face challenges in fully realising the Serenity dimension due to environmental constraints. In such cases, the model allows for adaptive emphasis on other components, such as Masterpiece (the quality and inspiration of teachers) and Voice (clarity of instruction and intercultural communication).

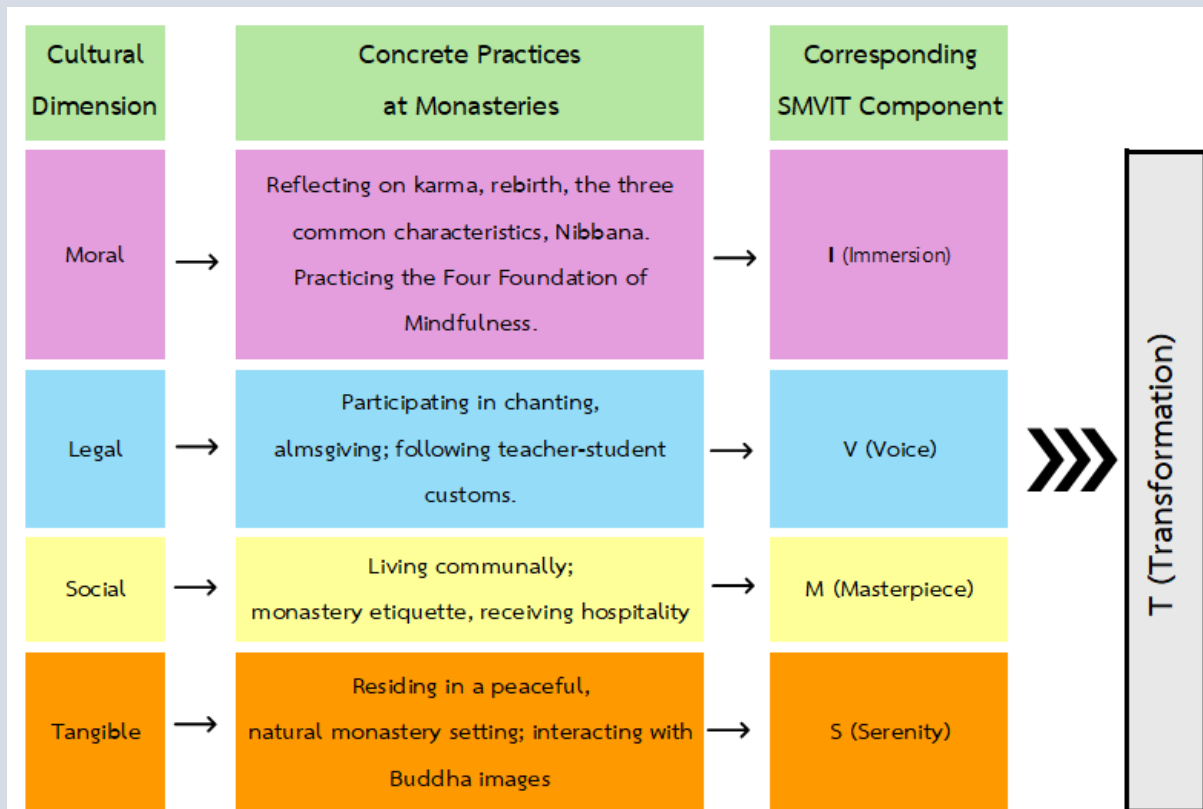


Figure 4: Mapping Cultural Dimensions, Practices, and the SMVIT Model

The study acknowledges that the model's effectiveness is influenced by boundary conditions, including tourists' prior meditation experience, initial motivations, and length of stay. These factors underscore the need for flexibility in program design and point toward avenues for further research on tailoring Buddhist cultural tourism to diverse audiences (Wolf, 2022; Christou, Pericleous & Singleton, 2023).

Knowledge from Research

The study demonstrates that cultivating the Buddhist way of life through an integrated, culture-based approach produces a substantive transformation of worldview, shifting participants from ordinary, self-centred perspectives toward ethically informed, liberative orientations. This process is enacted through four interdependent elements. *Serenity* provides a tranquil, minimally material setting conducive to reflection and communal support. *Masterpiece* denotes exemplary teachers and a pedagogical intention rooted in loving-kindness rather than commercial gain. *Voice* emphasises clear, accessible instruction and opportunities for dialogue that enable intellectual understanding to become

embodied practice. *Immersion* comprises sustained mindfulness practice and Dhamma reflection, wherein deep meditative experience consolidates cognitive and affective change. Together, these components form a practical framework for designing programs that cultivate enduring spiritual growth and cross-cultural ethical formation among foreign visitors.

A model illustrating the cultivation of a Buddhist way of life in foreign tourists has been developed through a cultural approach, as shown below.



Figure 5: The SMVIT Model for Cultivating the Buddhist Way of Life in Foreign Tourists through a Cultural Approach

The SMVIT model represents a transformative learning cycle designed to cultivate a Buddhist way of life within foreign tourists through four cultural dimensions. It consists of four interrelated elements that nurture the journey toward a transformative worldview regarding the nature of life.

S = Serenity: Entering into a peaceful and supportive environment.

M = Masterpiece: Learning through exemplary role models.

V = Voice: The power of impactful communication.

I = Immersion: Deep meditative experiences and Dhamma reflection.

T = Transformation: A fundamental shift in one's worldview regarding the nature of life.

This cycle integrates external practices with internal realisation, capturing the essence of Buddhist transformative learning.

Application of New Knowledge

The “SMVIT Model” can be applied in two main ways:

1) *As a guideline for training programs:* Temples or meditation centres that are beginning to welcome foreign tourists can use the components of the SMVIT Model as a foundational framework. This includes selecting or developing the qualities of facilitators, designing course content and activities, methods of Dhamma transmission, schedules for meditation practice, and creating an environment and setting that best support the cultivation of the Buddhist way among international visitors.

2) *As a tool for assessment and development:* For temples or centres already receiving foreign tourists, the SMVIT Model can serve as a “quality assessment framework” to evaluate current operations and improve each component to align with the genuine goal of cultivating the Buddhist path.

3) *As a framework for curriculum development:* The model can be used to design courses or training modules in fields such as Buddhist studies, intercultural communication, or spiritual tourism, providing a structured approach to teaching transformative cultural experiences.

The SMVIT Model offers not only a clear conceptual framework but also a practical, evidence-based tool, validated for its alignment with core Buddhist principles, its foundation in transformative learning theory, and its adaptability to international contexts, as demonstrated by the two successful temples studied in the field research.

Conclusion

This study fills a clear gap by presenting the SMVIT model, an evidence-based framework for cultivating the Buddhist way of life among foreign tourists through a cultural approach. Integrating core Buddhist teachings with principles of transformative adult learning, the model identifies four mutually reinforcing dimensions: Serenity (a calm, supportive environment), Masterpiece (meaningful ritual and aesthetic encounters), Voice (clear, compassionate instruction and role modelling), and Immersion (sustained meditative practice and guided reflection), that together facilitate deep cognitive and affective shifts.

Findings show that successful cultivation requires more than exposure to rituals or monuments: it depends on intentionally designed experiences that scaffold reflection, ethical practice, and embodied contemplative methods. When these elements are present, visitors transition from external appreciation to the internalisation of Buddhist perspectives, resulting in changes in values,

behaviour, and life orientation. The SMVIT model thus translates abstract doctrinal elements into practical program components that temples, retreat centres, and cultural tourism managers can adopt and adapt.

Practically, the model guides program design (space, schedule, pedagogy), staff training (communication, intercultural facilitation), and assessment (outcome indicators for wellbeing and worldview change). It also frames cultural tourism as an educational and ethical enterprise that can foster cross-cultural understanding and sustainable engagement rather than commodified consumption.

The SMVIT model advances scholarship by offering a replicable pathway to cultivate spiritual growth through tourism and provides practitioners with actionable strategies to create meaningful, transformative experiences for international visitors. Future work should test the model across diverse sites and populations to refine implementation practices and measure longer-term impacts on personal development and community wellbeing.

Abbreviations

AN	Anguttara Nikaya
DN	Digha Nikaya
MN	Majjhima Nikaya

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