



A Buddhist Well-Being Model and Its Contribution to a Society

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Abstract

This research article applies mixed methods between qualitative and quantitative approaches. At the first stage, the qualitative approach is employed in terms of documentary review of literature and the in-depth interview of twelve key informants. At the second stage, the quantitative approach is applied to survey research using the questionnaires constructed based on information from the interview and documentary research, including data analyses and inquiry of Buddhist factors for well-being on observation, $n=460$ people, from 20-59 years old. Statistics used in research include percentage, arithmetic mean (\bar{X}), standard deviation (S.D.), T-Test, F-Test, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, and Multiple Regression Analysis. The findings show that the three Buddhist factors—*sīla*, *saṃādhi*, *paññā*—can mostly explain well-being of working age people in the Bangkok Metropolis area 56 % at the level of significance of .001 ($p<.001$). A Model of Buddhist Well-Being with this Threefold Training as the Buddhist explanatory variables and the theoretical base for the development of human being spirituality and behaviour will contribute the greatest benefits to the society.

Keywords: Buddhist well-being, Contribution, Mixed methods

1. Introduction

Well-being is a positive outcome that is meaningful for people and for many sectors of society because it tells us that people perceive that their lives are going well, “What is Well-being? How does it originate? and if so, what is a most influential aspect in well-being?”.

The western idea in the modern day is a combination of psychological, physical, social, environment and economic components of thought, which are, in other words the Five Essential Elements (Dhammasami et al, 2010) These five essential elements are based on the main idea of human “material well-being” which means “monetary well-being.” The western pursuit of well-being is therefore not far different from “the pursuit of money” which is for more materialistic things than true happiness inside the mind. In other words, well-being in the West is mostly only the pursuit of material well-being, rather than true happiness and well-being.

Accordingly, this research is to attain a deeper meaning of well-being that is related to Buddhist wisdom requiring an unflinching look into the truth of things and well-being as they really are that all lives and well-being. Dhamma, particularly the Buddha’s Teaching of the thirty-eight blessings in daily life as a way of living has evolved its own approaches to attain optimum well-being or real happiness and to alleviate suffering. In addition, equanimity a deep sense of well-being and happiness, and the 38-blessings are attainable through proper knowledge and practice in everyday life (shaw 2006).

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to measure Buddhist factors and their spiritual effects on the transformation and changes in well-being of the practitioners’ in order to apply and potentiality provide a Buddhist well-being model which can be applied and used to prevent and end suffering as well as achieve real well-being and happiness.

2. The Buddhist Well-Being

The word “*Maṅgala*” (Kh 318) literally means “blessing”, “auspicious signs” and “good omen”. The Pāli commentators have derived the term “*Maṅgala*” from “mam” (woeful condition) and “ga-la” (driving away and cutting off): therefore, it means “that which is obstructive to woe.” In practice it has the positive significance “conducive to weal.” The Maṅgalasutta is one of the most widely known of the Buddha’s discourses. The term “*Maṅgala*” means something good or auspiciousness, or lucky, or a good sign or omen.

The Maṅgalautta gives the best counsel for each stage of life: It is thus that worldly felicity and spiritual bliss cease to be conflicting ideals. Every ideal that is good is “best”

in its own place. That is why each of the thirty-eight Blessings is the “highest” and the “best.” So great is the importance of the Maṅgalasutta if one had to face a situation where it was necessary to surrender all the teachings of the Buddha except a single discourse, one would do well to hold onto the Maṅgalasutta. Having this as a possession it would be possible, even quite easy to reconstruct the entire teachings of the Buddha.

Maṅgalasutta is one division of the Buddhist Scriptures, comprising “thirty-eight blessings” (Table 1) which bring about peace, happiness and prosperity to those who live in accordance with these moral instructions. In short, the *sutta* includes rules and regulations to get happiness and beatitudes of the people (Ñāṇādicca 1995, 24).

In regard to the thirty-eight blessings (*mangala*), the concepts that have direct relationships with all the thirty-eight blessings can be named as morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), or the Threefold Training (*Ti-Sikkhā*).

The teaching of Buddhism is practical. It emphasizes things that lead to insight. Also, well-being can be defined as morality, concentration, and wisdom (Payutto 2018, 519). As the supportive to human’s spiritual development, well-being, in other words, covers mainly the meaning of the thirty-eight blessings including *sāmisa-sukha* which is carnal or sensual happiness and *nirāmisa-sukha* which is happiness independent from material things or sensual desires. *Nirāmisa-sukha* or inner-well-being that is praised by the Buddha is the foundation leading humanity finally to the right Path, that is the supreme happiness or the highest blessing.

Moreover, who practice these thirty-eight kinds of auspiciousness, can will be achieve well-being and conducive to welfare (Myaing Gyi Ngu 2002, 7).

3. Research Methodology

The methodology of this research article uses mixed method approaches. The first stage represents the qualitative research design which aims to collect the Buddhist factors related to well-being in the conceptual framework. Then the instruments are designed to the variables determine in the quantitative research design as the second stage.

The qualitative research design is analyzed in terms as follow:

1. The in-depth interview of twelve key informants are experts who have in-depth about Buddhism. In-dept interviews are conducted for two groups of key-informants: Buddhist monks and Buddhist scholars to gain the contemporary points of views regarding well-being ideology in Buddhism.

2. Measurement design: The questions are developed by using semi-structured interview (Naipat 2005, 173) to obtain perspectives and points of view from the key-informants in the qualitative part of the research. Interview questions are primarily concerned with the meaning and definition of 'Well-being', factors in Buddhism on well-being in the Buddhist scriptures, the related and the meanings of those factors, the relationship between each factor and the ways to apply the given factors to the context of real life in working age people.

3. Data analysis: The content analysis (Cohen et al. 2007, 475) was used to analyzed raw data obtained from the in-dept interviews by using the predetermined lists, classifying, categorizing the data and ordering the data according to the guideline of questions, and interpreting the interview data (*ibid.*, 368).

The data provide a clear picture of Buddhist factors on the well-being of working age people and define well-being in terms of Buddhist aspects. The data and factors obtained from the key-informants in the qualitative research in the first stage of the study will be used as variables in quantitative research to construct a questionnaire to collect quantitative data in the later part of the research.

The quantitative research design is performed according to the following:

1. Questionnaires were used for qualitative research followed by an in-dept analysis of interview data and inquiry of Buddhist factors for well-being. The links and QR code for online questionnaires were given and shared to the places of work up to n=460 people at ages ranging from 20-59 years old.

2. T-test, F-test (One-Way ANOVA) and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficients were used to examine the statistical significance of the Buddhist factors in relation to well-being variable.

3. Multiple Regression analysis was applied to the survey data to determine coefficient of the explanatory variables and thus the model of Buddhist well-being is proposed.

4. Buddhist Factors on Well-Being

In regard to the literature review, the concept of well-being has been intercorrelated with the thirty-eight (38) blessings. These 38 blessings which are shown in Table 1 have direct relationships with Buddhist factors called as morality (*sīla*), concentration (*saṃādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), in other words, the Threefold Training (*Ti-Sikkhā*). Therefore, this research article itemizes well-being based on thirty-eight blessings into two types: physical well-being, and psychological well-being.

Table 1: The Thirty-Eight Blessing

No.	Pāli text	English translation
1	<i>Asevanā ca bālānām</i>	Not associating with fools
2	<i>Paṇḍitānañ-ca sevanā</i>	Associating with the wise
3	<i>Pūjā ca pūjanīyānām</i>	Reverencing those worthy of respect.
4	<i>Paṭirūpadesavāso</i>	Residence in a suitable locality.
5	<i>Pubbe ca katapuññatā</i>	Having made merit in the past.
6	<i>Attasammāpañidhi</i>	One's mind properly directed.
7	<i>Bāhusacca</i>	Profound learning.
8	<i>Sippa</i>	Being skillful in the technology and handicrafts
9	<i>Vinayo ca susikkhito</i>	Well-learned moral discipline
10	<i>Aubhāsitā ca yā vācā</i>	Gracious kindly speech.
11	<i>Mātāpitu-upaṭṭhānām</i>	Giving support to parents.
12	<i>Puttasangaho</i>	Cherishing wife and children.
13	<i>Dārasangaho</i>	Cherishing one's spouse
14	<i>Anākulā ca kammantā</i>	Peaceful occupations
15	<i>Dāna</i>	Acts of giving.
16	<i>Dhammacariyā</i>	Conduct according to Dhamma.
17	<i>Ñātakānañ-ca sangaho</i>	Helping one's relatives.
18	<i>Ārati pāpa</i>	Shunning evil
19	<i>Virati pāpa</i>	Abstaining from evil
20	<i>Majjapānā ca samyamo</i>	Refraining from intoxicants.
21	<i>Appamādo ca dhammesu</i>	Not recklessness in the Dhamma
22	<i>Gāravo</i>	Reverence.
23	<i>Nivāto</i>	Humility
24	<i>Santuṭṭhī</i>	Contentment
25	<i>Kataññutā</i>	Gratefulness.
26	<i>Kālena Dhammasavaṇam</i>	Timely hearing of the Dhamma
27	<i>Khanti</i>	Patience
28	<i>Sovacassatā</i>	Be easily admonished
29	<i>Samañānañ-ca dassanām</i>	Sight of a True Monk

Table 1: (Continue)

No.	Pāli text	English translation
30	<i>Kālena Dhammasākacchā</i>	Discussing the Dhamma at the proper time.
31	<i>Tapo</i>	To possess self-restraint
32	<i>Brahmacariya</i>	Practicing the Brahma-faring
33	<i>Ariyasaccāna' dassanam</i>	Seeing the Four Noble Truths
34	<i>Nibbānasacchikiriyā</i>	Realization of Nibbāna.
35	<i>Phuṭṭhassa lokadhammehi, cittam yassa na kampati</i>	A mind unshaken by the ups and downs of life.
36	<i>Asokam</i>	Freedom from sorrow.
37	<i>Virajam</i>	Freedom from defilements of passion.
38	<i>Khemam</i>	Blissful Mind

Source: Researcher's Dissertation, 2019, p. 42.

The meanings of well-being according to each key-informant perspective are similar because well-being is significantly explained by the Threelfold Training, for example, the training in morality and concentration can lead to the cultivation in wisdom. In other words, the Threelfold Training which are 1) *sīla*, 2) *samādhi*, and 3) *paññā* (M II p.272) has been integrated into one known as “*maṅgala*” or blessing which is composed of thirty-eight blessings.

Furthermore, the results showed that the Buddhist factors in the aspect of concentration is the most related factor to well-being, followed by wisdom and morality. The threefold factors are highlighted as explanatory variables having high significant relationship to the well-being of working age people in the Bangkok Metropolitan area at the level of significance of .001.

The findings demonstrate that related factors in Buddhism have influence on well-being. Therefore, the model of Buddhist well-being of working age people in the Bangkok Metropolitan area is developed. This model consists of three significant explanatory variables which can be described as follows: 1) *sīla* or morality, 2) *samādhi* or concentration, and 3) *paññā* or wisdom.

5. The Findings

The findings about relationship between the Buddhist factors, namely morality, concentration and wisdom on well-being of working age people in the Bangkok Metropolitan area are demonstrated in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2: The Multiple Regression Coefficients among Variables

Variables	Regression					t	Sig.
	r	r^2	B	SE _b	Beta		
<i>Sīla</i>	.587	.344	.196	.037	.216	5.373	.000***
<i>Samādhi</i>	.678	.460	.304	.043	.331	7.074	.000***
<i>Paññā</i>	.658	.433	.259	.037	.313	7.095	.000***
Constant			.967	.138	-	7.006	.000***

R = .746 *R*² = .557 Adjusted *R*² = .554 *F* = 191.255 Sig = .000***

In order to develop the Buddhist well-being model, the well-being of working age people in the Bangkok Metropolitan is used by regressing it on the three Buddhist factors by applying a multiple regression as a tool of analysis or estimation of those predictive variables: *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. Then, the model of Buddhist well-being of working age people in the Bangkok Metropolitan area is estimated. The overall predictive variables in the model can explain well-being approximately 56% at the level of significance = .001 (p < .001). The relationship between independent and dependent variables can be described as follows:

Morality (*sīla*), X_1 , is a predictive factor (variable) of the Buddhist well-being of working age people in the Bangkok Metropolitan area, \hat{Y} , with the coefficient of correlation, $R^2 = .344$ of variance, at the level of significance of .001 (p < .001). The rest is the influence of other factors both inside and outside this model.

Concentration (*samādhi*), X_2 , is a predictive factor (variable) of the Buddhist well-being of working age people in the Bangkok Metropolitan area, \hat{Y} , with the coefficient of correlation, $R^2 = .460$ of variance, at the level of significance of .001 (p < .001). The rest is the influence of other factors both inside and outside this model.

Wisdom (*paññā*), X_3 , is a predictive factor (variable) of the Buddhist well-being of working age people in the Bangkok Metropolitan area, \hat{Y} , with the coefficient of correlation,

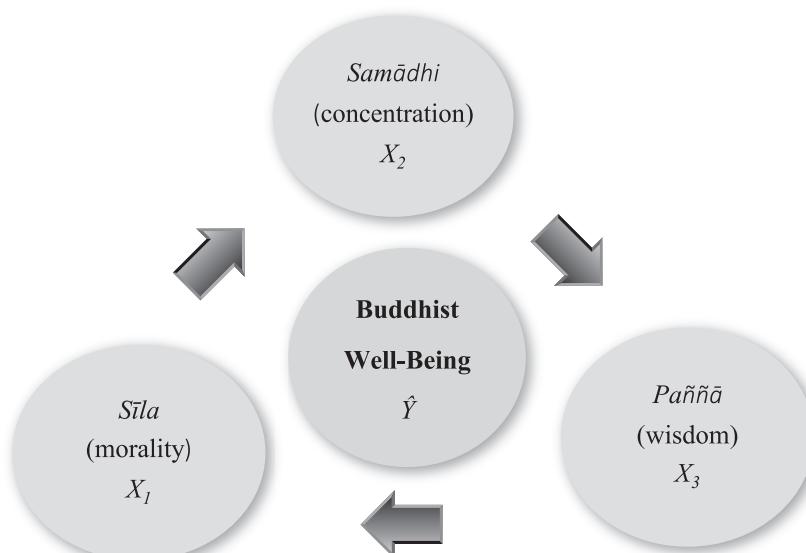
$R^2 = .433$ of variance, at the level of significance of .001 ($p < .001$). The rest is the influence of other factors both inside and outside this model.

Table 2 also shows that Concentration (*samādhi*) has highest relationship with well-being of working age people in the Bangkok Metropolitan area, followed by Wisdom (*paññā*), and Morality (*sīla*) with levels of explanation of well-being at approximately 46.00%, 43.30%, and 34.40% of variances ($p < .001$), respectively.

The results of hypothesis testing are as follows:

1. There is no difference in level of well-being between the two genders and between career of working age people in the Bangkok Metropolitan area with the level of significance of .05.
2. There is significant difference in the mean-scores of well-being's between age groups, levels of education, and income intervals of working age people in the Bangkok Metropolitan area at the level of significance of .05.
3. Those three related factors: 1) *sīla* (morality), 2) *samādhi* (concentration), and 3) *paññā* (wisdom) are highlighted as predictive factors that have significant relationship with well-being of working age people in the Bangkok Metropolitan area at the level of significance of .01.

6. Buddhist Well-Being: A Model of and Its Contribution to the Society



A model of Buddhist well-being which is based on mixed methods approach demonstrates that well-being is influenced by three Buddhist factors—1) morality (*sīla*), X_1 , 2) concentration (*samādhi*), X_2 and 3) wisdom (*paññā*), X_3 . The influence is represented by the degree of correlations or relationships of independent variables on well-being, \hat{Y} . In order to promote well-being of working age people in the Bangkok Metropolitan area, the model displays these three Buddhist factors as the influential and direct factors to be promoted on well-being.

For examples, to increase the human's well-being through Morality of people, we can make it through the encouragement of the awareness of some fundamental rules such as 'not associating with the fool and associating with the wise, or of some essential trainings of the senses, body, mind, and speech, or of the foundation of the domestic order such as attending on one's own parents, generosity, cherishing one's spouse and so on, or of the protection against evil things.

To promote well-being through the encouragement of Concentration of people, we can make it through the promotion of listening to regularly Dhamma teaching, or being easily admonished, seeing a true monk, or having discussion on the application of Dhamma and so forth.

Lastly, to promote well-being through the development of Wisdom of people, we can make it through the cultivation of possessing self-restraint, practicing the Brahma-faring, seeing the Four Noble Truths, and so forth.

Thus, the model of well-being in terms of *maṅgala-bhāva* or the blessing state based on morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) has crucial contribution to the human development to reach sustainable well-being and become good human resource of the society. Apart from this, the model is not only the encouragement for people to follow the Threefold Training which is the path to the purification of minds, but also the social development for sustainable well-being which can be obtained only by the encouragement of people's consciousness of wholistic development among the internal and external factors of the life of mankind as stated by this model of Buddhist Well-Being of Working Age People in the Bangkok Metropolitan.

7. Conclusion

The concept of well-being in Buddhism shows that it is an ethical issue and has been mindful since the time the Buddha has urged his sixty *arhant* disciples to teach his Dhamma to people. Since then, well-being or happiness has become the final goal and the

way of life of the Buddhists. In this paper, well-being according to the doctrinal idea and in-depth interview for the Buddhist perspectives refers to the state of living well or living a good life known as *maṅgala bhava* or the auspicious states.

All in all, the Buddhist perspective of well-being according to this article is stemmed from morality, concentration and wisdom. The three elements are the fundamental form of beneficial factors leading to the “Threefold Training”. Although they are Buddhist factors for lay people, they can be a base or a path leading to well-being of individuals and the society.

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