# Development of Life Skills and Cognitive Competencies among Private* University Educators through Buddhist Practice in Thailand, India, and Nepal

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## Abstract

This study investigates the development of life skills and cognitive competencies among private university educators through engagement in Buddhist practice across the Land of Buddhism—Thailand, India, and Nepal. The research aims to (1) assess the levels of life skills and cognitive competencies attained by educators participating in a Buddhist practice program, (2) compare cognitive competencies among educators based on work experience, job position, and field of work, and (3) gather recommendations for enhancing life skills and cognitive competencies through Buddhist practice.A mixed-methods research design was employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were analyzed using One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to identify mean differences among groups, followed by Scheffé's post hoc test for pairwise comparisons. Qualitative data from open-ended responses were analyzed through content analysis to extract key themes, insights, and recommendations.The findings reveal that participation in Buddhist practice significantly contributes to the enhancement of educators' life skills—such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal communication—as well as to the strengthening of cognitive competencies including problem-solving, reflective thinking, and decision-making. Significant differences were observed across certain demographic variables, particularly job position and work experience. These results highlight the potential of Buddhist-based mindfulness practices as a holistic framework for professional development in higher education. The study offers valuable

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implications for universities seeking to integrate spiritual and mindfulness-oriented approaches into faculty development programs, fostering both personal growth and pedagogical effectiveness.

Keywords: Life Skills; Cognitive Competencies; Buddhist Practice; Private University Educators; Land of Buddhism

## Introduction

The study of learning outcomes related to life skills and cognitive competencies among private university educators participating in Buddhist practice programs in the Land of Buddhism Thailand, India, and Nepal holds substantial significance. Educators in higher education institutions play a pivotal role in nurturing intellectual and moral development, and their professional effectiveness is closely linked to their personal well-being and cognitive capacities (Smith et al., 2023; Dongling & Worapongpat, 2023).

Enhancing life skills and cognitive competencies among educators, therefore, contributes not only to individual growth but also to institutional and societal advancement (Worapongpat, 2024a). Extensive research has demonstrated that Buddhist practice fosters the cultivation of essential life skills including emotional regulation, mindfulness, and interpersonal understanding as well as cognitive competencies such as reflective thinking, problem-solving, and effective decision-making (Worapongpat, 2024b; Worapongpat et al., 2024).

These practices have also been shown to alleviate stress and improve concentration, thereby enhancing educators' ability to work efficiently and adaptively in dynamic academic environments (Worapongpat, 2025a, 2025b). Within the Land of Buddhism, home to the historical and spiritual roots of the Buddha's teachings, such practices hold particular relevance for personal transformation and professional enrichment (Worapongpat, 2025f).

Despite growing recognition of these benefits, limited research has specifically focused on private university educators who engage in structured Buddhist practice programs (Worapongpat, 2025c). Most prior studies have concentrated on students, general practitioners, or public-sector educators, leaving a research gap concerning the unique experiences and learning outcomes of educators in private institutions (Worapongpat, 2025d). Addressing this gap is vital, as private universities increasingly rely on holistic professional development programs to strengthen teaching effectiveness and emotional resilience among faculty members (Worapongpat, 2025e).

This study, therefore, investigates the development of life skills and cognitive competencies among private university educators participating in Buddhist practice programs conducted in Thailand, India, and Nepal. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the research integrates quantitative and qualitative analyses to comprehensively assess the learning outcomes derived from Buddhist practice. The findings are expected to provide insights into how mindfulness-based

and spiritually grounded practices can enhance educators' personal and professional growth, offering a foundation for developing sustainable programs that integrate Buddhist principles into faculty development in higher education.

## Objectives

1.To examine the levels of life skills and cognitive competencies acquired by private university educators who participate in Buddhist practice programs conducted in the Land of Buddhism, including Thailand, India, and Nepal.

2.To compare the cognitive competencies of educators after participation in the Buddhist practice program, categorized by work experience, job position, and field of work.

3.To collect and analyze recommendations for enhancing life skills and cognitive competencies among private university educators through Buddhist practice programs in the Land of Buddhism, including Thailand, India, and Nepal.

## Literature Reviews

1. Review Focus

This literature review examines relevant documents, academic articles, and research studies concerning the development of life skills and cognitive competencies among educators, with particular attention to Buddhist practice in the Land of Buddhism—Thailand, India, and Nepal. Both local and international studies were reviewed to identify patterns, theoretical linkages, and gaps in existing research (Worapongpat, 2025g). The review reveals a clear research gap: few studies have directly connected Buddhist practice with the enhancement of life skills and cognitive competencies among private university educators. Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive frameworks that integrate Buddhist principles into educators' professional development across different cultural contexts (Worapongpat, 2025h).

2. Life Skills Development Through Buddhist Practice

Previous studies have highlighted the positive influence of Buddhist practice on life skills development.Previous studies have highlighted the positive influence of Buddhist practice on life skills development (Worapongpat, 2025i). Meditation and mindfulness training were found to significantly improve emotional stability, stress management, and adaptability in daily life (Worapongpat, 2025j).Similarly, interactions with nature and consistent mindfulness practice have been shown to enhance decision-making and problem-solving abilities (Worapongpat, 2025k; Worapongpat, 2025l). These findings indicate that Buddhist principles can serve as an effective foundation for developing life skills that contribute to both personal and professional well-being (Worapongpat, 2025m).

3. Cognitive Competencies and Professional Development of Educators

Research on cognitive competencies and educator development suggests that spiritual and mindfulness-based training stimulates brain functions related to memory, critical thinking, and decision-making (Worapongpat, 2025n).Buddhist practices, rooted in awareness and contemplation, promote sustained cognitive development and moral integrity—both of which are essential qualities for educators. Such practices enable educators to engage in reflective teaching, foster creativity, and maintain balance in the academic environment (Worapongpat, 2025o).4. Research Gaps and Applications in Educational Institutions Although numerous studies have explored life skills and cognitive development, limited attention has been paid to private university educators who participate in Buddhist practice programs abroad.Empirical research connecting Buddhist practice in the Land of Buddhism with educators' professional growth and cognitive enhancement remains scarce (Worapongpat, Deepimay, & Kangpheng, 2025; Worapongpat & Petnacon, 2025).Therefore, further studies are needed to bridge this gap and to establish evidence-based approaches that integrate Buddhist principles into educational development frameworks (Worapongpat & Song, 2025).This research aims to address that gap by examining how Buddhist practice contributes to the cultivation of life skills and cognitive competencies among private university educators (Worapongpat & Arunyakanon, 2025).By integrating theoretical perspectives from Buddhist studies, education, and cognitive psychology, the study advances understanding of how mindfulness-oriented training can improve both personal and professional capacities (Worapongpat, Arunyakanon, & Rianwilairat, 2025).

5. Research Conceptual Framework

This study employs a descriptive mixed-methods design guided by the Life Skills Development Theory (World Health Organization [WHO]) and Cognitive Competence Theory (Worapongpat & Boonmee, 2025).These theoretical frameworks provide the foundation for understanding the relationship between Buddhist practice and the enhancement of educators' competencies (Worapongpat & Kangpheng, 2025).Independent Variable: Buddhist practice components (e.g., mindfulness meditation, moral precepts, and reflective practice).Dependent Variable: Levels of life skills development and cognitive competencies among private university educators.The conceptual framework proposes that consistent engagement in Buddhist practice leads to the improvement of essential life skills and cognitive competencies that support educators' professional and emotional well-being.

6. Theoretical Framework

6.1 Life Skills Development Theory (World Health Organization, WHO)

The WHO Life Skills Development Theory identifies key competencies necessary for effective personal and professional functioning. Applied to educators in Buddhist practice programs, five core variables are emphasized:Self-Awareness: Understanding one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in relation to professional growth.Stress Management Skills: The ability to manage pressure and

emotional challenges using Buddhist principles.Interpersonal Relationships: Developing positive communication, empathy, and conflict resolution skills.Adaptability: Flexibility in responding to change, enhanced through mindfulness and meditation.Ethics and Moral Living: Applying Buddhist moral principles in daily and professional life.

6.2 Cognitive Competence Theory

The Cognitive Competence Theory emphasizes the enhancement of cognitive functions through structured mental training. In this research, the key variable is: Creative and Innovative Thinking: The capacity to generate new perspectives, foster innovation, and apply critical reasoning in academic and professional settings following engagement in Buddhist practice.

7. Summary of the Conceptual Framework

Based on the reviewed literature and theoretical foundations, this study conceptualizes Buddhist practice as a holistic mechanism that enhances both life skills and cognitive competencies among educators (Makjod, Worapongpat, Kangpheng, & Bhasabutr, 2025).The conceptual framework links Buddhist training components—such as mindfulness, meditation, and moral reflection—with measurable outcomes, including emotional stability, adaptability, creativity, and decision-making (Worapongpat, Kangpheng, & Bhasabutr, 2025).This relationship forms the foundation for the research hypotheses and methodological design of the study.

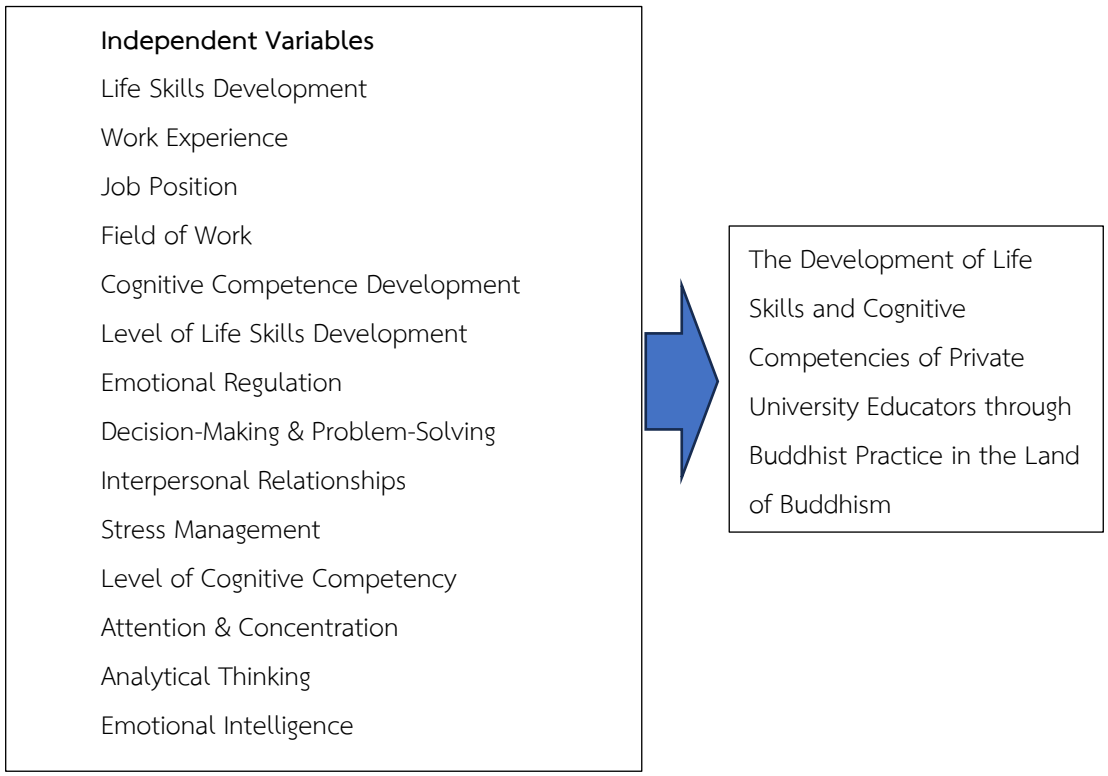



**Figure 1 Research Framework**

## Research Methods.

1. Population and Sample Group

The population of this study comprises 54,490 university educational personnel across Thailand (Source: Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation; https://info.mhesi.go.th/homestat_stf.php).

The sample group includes 128 educational personnel who participated in a Buddhist meditation and mindfulness training program. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, based on their active participation in the program as recorded in the university's participant database. This sampling method was deemed appropriate for identifying individuals with direct experience in Buddhist practice within the educational context.

2. Research Instruments

The primary research instrument was a structured questionnaire, developed with reference to relevant theories, empirical studies, and principles of life skills and cognitive competency development. The questionnaire consisted of three sections:

Section 1: General Information of Participants

This section includes checklist items regarding demographic and professional information such as work experience, job position, and field of work.

Section 2: Assessment of Life Skills Development and Cognitive Competency

This section employs a 5-point Likert scale to measure the participants' perceived development in life skills and cognitive competencies after engaging in Buddhist practice. The indicators include:

Life Skills Development: Emotional regulation, decision-making and problem-solving, interpersonal relationships, stress management.

Cognitive Competency: Attention and concentration, analytical thinking, emotional intelligence, and self-awareness.

Section 3: Open-Ended Suggestions

This section contains open-ended questions, allowing participants to express additional opinions or provide recommendations for enhancing Buddhist practice programs for educators.

3. Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected over a ten-day period from December 25, 2024, to January 3, 2025. Questionnaires were distributed to the identified participants via both physical and online formats, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality. Respondents were informed of the study's objectives and consented prior to data collection.

4. Data Analysis and Statistical Methods

Section 1: General Information of Participants

Demographic data, including work experience, job position, and field of work, were

analyzed using frequency and percentage to provide a descriptive overview of the sample.

Section 2: Life Skills and Cognitive Competency Development

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean (M) and standard deviation (SD). Interpretation of mean scores followed the rating criteria suggested

Section 3: Open-Ended Suggestions

Responses were examined using qualitative content analysis to identify recurring themes, concepts, and insights related to Buddhist practice and educator development.

Comparative Analysis

To compare differences in cognitive competencies among participants categorized by work experience, job position, and field of work, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed. In cases where statistically significant differences were detected, Scheffé's post hoc test was applied to determine specific group differences.

5. Summary of Methodological Alignment

The research design aligns closely with the study's objectives:

Objective 1: Assessed using descriptive statistics (Mean, SD).

Objective 2: Examined through inferential statistics (ANOVA, Scheffé test).

Objective 3: Addressed using qualitative content analysis.

This mixed-methods design ensures both quantitative rigor and qualitative depth, enabling a comprehensive understanding of how Buddhist practice influences the development of life skills and cognitive competencies among private university educators in the Land of Buddhism.

## Research Results

Research Results (Revised and Polished Version)

1. General Information of Participants

The general characteristics of the participants were analyzed using frequency and percentage, classified by work experience and job position, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of General Information of Educational Personnel (n = 128)

| General Information | Number (People) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Work Experience | | |
| Less than 1 year | 37 | 28.90 |
| 2 - 5 years | 81 | 63.28 |
| More than 5 years | 10 | 7.82 |
| Total | 128 | 100.00 |

| General Information | Number (People) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| 2. Job Position | | |
| Supportive | 12 | 9.37 |
| Academic | 69 | 53.9 |
| Administrative | 47 | 36.73 |
| Total | 128 | 100.00 |

The results indicate that most participants (63.28%) had 2–5 years of work experience, while a smaller proportion (7.82%) had more than 5 years. In terms of job position, the majority were academic staff (53.9%), followed by administrative personnel (36.73%), and supportive staff (9.37%). This distribution suggests that the sample mainly represents early- to mid-career educators actively engaged in both teaching and administrative responsibilities, aligning well with the study's objective of exploring professional and cognitive development through Buddhist practice.

2. Overall Level of Life Skills and Cognitive Competency Development

The overall analysis of life skills and cognitive competency development among participants is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Level of Opinion on Life Skills and Cognitive Competency Development (Overall)

| Cognitive Competency Development | Mean ($\bar{x}$) | Standard Deviation (S.D.) | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level of Life Skills Development | 4.17 | 0.70 | High |
| Emotional Regulation | 4.41 | 0.68 | High |
| Decision-Making & Problem-Solving | 4.50 | 0.64 | High |
| Interpersonal Relationships | 4.32 | 0.67 | High |
| Stress Management | 4.31 | 0.71 | High |
| Level of Cognitive Competency | 4.48 | 0.67 | High |
| Attention & Concentration | 4.16 | 0.71 | High |
| Analytical Thinking | 4.09 | 0.79 | High |
| Emotional Intelligence | 4.04 | 0.69 | High |
| Self-Awareness | 3.59 | 0.68 | Moderate |

| Cognitive Competency Development | Mean ($\bar{x}$) | Standard Deviation (S.D.) | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overall | 4.20 | 0.63 | High |

Overall, the participants demonstrated a high level of life skills and cognitive competency ($\bar{x}$ = 4.20, S.D. = 0.63). Most competencies particularly decision-making, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships were rated highly, indicating that the meditation program had a strong positive impact on participants' emotional and cognitive functioning.

Interestingly, self-awareness received a moderate rating ($\bar{x}$ = 3.59), suggesting that while meditation improved general mental clarity, deeper self-reflection may require prolonged or more intensive practice.

3. Comparison by Work Experience

To assess whether differences in work experience influenced life skills and cognitive competency development, a One-Way ANOVA was conducted.

| Cognitive Competency | Work Experience | Mean ($\bar{x}$) | Standard Deviation (S.D.) | F | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Level of Life Skills Development | Less than 1 year | 4.41 | 0.29 | 4.498 | 0.012* |
| | 2 - 5 years | 4.25 | 0.66 | | |
| | More than 5 years | 4.54 | 0.56 | | |
| | Overall | 4.40 | | | |
| 2. Emotional Regulation | Less than 1 year | 4.23 | 0.10 | 2.514 | 0.084 |
| | 2 - 5 years | 4.39 | 0.58 | | |
| | More than 15 years | 4.52 | 0.64 | | |
| | Overall | 4.38 | | | |
| 3. Decision-Making & Problem-Solving | Less than 1 year | 4.55 | 0.51 | 2.288 | 0.104 |
| | 2 - 5 years | 4.44 | 0.41 | | |
| | More than 5 years | 4.62 | 0.67 | | |
| | Overall | 4.53 | | | |
| 4. Interpersonal Relationships | Less than 1 year | 4.53 | 0.40 | 4.882 | 0.009* |

| Cognitive Competency | Work Experience | Mean ($\bar{x}$) | Standard Deviation (S.D.) | F | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2 - 5 years | 4.10 | 0.52 | | |
| | More than 5 years | 4.41 | 0.64 | | |
| | Overall | 4.34 | | | |
| 5. Stress Management | Less than 1 year | 4.51 | 0.42 | 8.283 | 0.000* |
| | 2 - 5 years | 4.13 | 0.72 | | |
| | More than 5 years | 4.51 | 0.68 | | |
| | Overall | 4.38 | | | |
| 6. Level of Cognitive Competency | Less than 1 year | 4.48 | 0.44 | 3.016 | 0.052 |
| | 2 - 5 years | 4.31 | 0.46 | | |
| | More than 5 years | 4.62 | 0.69 | | |
| | Overall | 4.47 | | | |
| 7. Attention & Concentration | Less than 1 year | 4.71 | 0.67 | 3.116 | 0.463 |
| | 2 - 5 years | 4.68 | 0.58 | | |
| | More than 5 years | 4.12 | 0.69 | | |
| | Overall | 4.50 | | | |
| 8. Analytical Thinking | Less than 1 year | 4.21 | 0.87 | 3.491 | 0.631 |
| | 2 - 5 years | 4.35 | 0.79 | | |
| | More than 5 years | 4.68 | 0.82 | | |
| | Overall | 4.41 | | | |
| 9. Emotional Intelligence | Less than 1 year | 4.15 | 0.74 | 3.534 | 0.541 |
| | 2 - 5 years | 4.23 | 0.76 | | |
| | More than 5 years | 4.35 | 0.71 | | |
| | Overall | 4.24 | | | |
| 10. Self-Awareness | Less than 1 year | 3.59 | 0.68 | 3.671 | 0.678 |
| | 2 - 5 years | 3.79 | 0.64 | | |
| | More than 5 years | 3.89 | 0.63 | | |
| | Overall | 3.75 | | | |

| Cognitive Competency | Work Experience | Mean ($\bar{x}$) | Standard Deviation (S.D.) | F | Sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Overall | Less than 1 year | 4.33 | 0.33 | 4.376 | 0.014* |
| | 2 - 5 years | 4.26 | 0.44 | | |
| | More than 5 years | 4.42 | 0.62 | | |
| | Overall | 4.34 | 0.51 | | |

Significant differences ($p < 0.05$) were found in:

Level of Life Skills Development ($p = 0.012$)

Interpersonal Relationships ($p = 0.009$)

Stress Management ($p = 0.000$)

Overall Cognitive Competency ($p = 0.014$)

Participants with more than 5 years of experience demonstrated the highest overall competency levels, especially in life skills development.

Conversely, those with less than 1 year of experience scored highest in interpersonal relationships and stress management, possibly due to greater openness to experiential learning and adaptation during early career stages.

No significant differences were observed for emotional regulation, decision-making, analytical thinking, or self-awareness, indicating consistent development across experience groups in these areas.

These findings suggest that work experience plays a moderate yet meaningful role in developing certain cognitive and interpersonal dimensions. The influence of Buddhist practice appears to enhance adaptability and stress resilience across all groups, with more seasoned participants integrating such practices more effectively into professional life.

Table 4: Comparison by Job Position and Work Area

A further comparison based on job position (support, academic, administrative) revealed additional insights.

| Cognitive Competency of Educational Personnel in Private Higher Education | Job Position and Work Area | Mean ($\bar{x}$) | Standard Deviation (S.D.) | F-value | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Level of Life Skills Development | Support | 4.41 | 0.29 | 4.498 | .012* |
| | Academic | 4.25 | 0.66 | | |

| Cognitive Competency of Educational Personnel in Private Higher Education | Job Position and Work Area | Mean ($\bar{x}$) | Standard Deviation (S.D.) | F-value | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Administrative | 4.54 | 0.56 | | |
| | Overall | 4.37 | 0.60 | | |
| 2. Emotional Regulation | Support | 4.23 | 0.10 | 2.514 | .084 |
| | Academic | 4.39 | 0.58 | | |
| | Administrative | 4.52 | 0.64 | | |
| | Overall | 4.41 | 0.57 | | |
| 3. Decision-Making & Problem-Solving | Support | 4.55 | 0.51 | 2.288 | .104 |
| | Academic | 4.44 | 0.41 | | |
| | Administrative | 4.62 | 0.67 | | |
| | Overall | 4.51 | 0.53 | | |
| 4. Interpersonal Relationships | Support | 4.53 | 0.40 | 4.882 | .009* |
| | Academic | 4.10 | 0.52 | | |
| | Administrative | 4.41 | 0.64 | | |
| | Overall | 4.32 | 0.56 | | |
| 5. Stress Management | Support | 4.51 | 0.42 | 8.283 | .000* |
| | Academic | 4.13 | 0.72 | | |
| | Administrative | 4.51 | 0.68 | | |
| | Overall | 4.32 | 0.70 | | |
| 6. Level of Cognitive Competency | Support | 4.48 | 0.44 | 3.016 | .052 |
| | Academic | 4.31 | 0.46 | | |
| | Administrative | 4.62 | 0.69 | | |
| | Overall | 4.48 | 0.55 | | |
| 7. Attention & Concentration | Support | 4.71 | 0.67 | 3.116 | 0.463 |
| | Academic | 4.68 | 0.58 | | |
| | Administrative | 4.12 | 0.69 | | |
| 8. Analytical Thinking | Support | 4.21 | 0.87 | 3.491 | 0.631 |
| | Academic | 4.35 | 0.79 | | |
| | Administrative | 4.68 | 0.82 | | |
| 9. Emotional Intelligence | Support | 4.15 | 0.74 | 3.534 | 0.541 |

| Cognitive Competency of Educational Personnel in Private Higher Education | Job Position and Work Area | Mean ($\bar{x}$) | Standard Deviation (S.D.) | F-value | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Academic | 4.23 | 0.76 | | |
| | Administrative | 4.35 | 0.71 | | |
| 10. Self-Awareness | Support | 3.59 | 0.68 | 3.671 | 0.678 |
| | Academic | 3.79 | 0.64 | | |
| | Administrative | 3.89 | 0.63 | | |
| | Overall | 3.75 | 0.62 | | |
| Total | Support | 4.33 | 0.33 | 4.376 | .014* |
| | Academic | 4.26 | 0.44 | | |
| | Administrative | 4.42 | 0.62 | | |
| | Overall | 4.34 | 0.51 | | |

Statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) emerged in life skills development, interpersonal relationships, and stress management.

Administrative staff scored the highest in overall cognitive competency, reflecting their frequent engagement in decision-making and problem-solving activities.

No significant differences were found in attention, emotional intelligence, or analytical thinking, implying that the meditation program had a uniform cognitive benefit across roles.

The results underscore that Buddhist meditation programs benefit educators across professional levels, though administrative personnel may experience a slightly greater boost in competencies requiring emotional balance and strategic thinking due to the nature of their responsibilities.

5. Summary of Qualitative Findings and Recommendations

Based on open-ended responses, participants proposed several strategies for enhancing both life skills and cognitive competency through Buddhist practice:

1. Emotional Regulation and Self-Awareness
    - *Recommendation:* Integrate consistent mindfulness and self-awareness sessions to foster emotional stability and resilience.
    - *Analysis:* Regular meditation enhances clarity and self-control, improving decision-making and reducing reactivity under stress.

2. Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Skills
    - *Recommendation:* Use case-based learning and situational analysis during training.
    - *Analysis:* Practical exercises strengthen analytical reasoning and reflective judgment essential for educational leadership.
3. Interpersonal Relationships
    - *Recommendation:* Encourage group meditation and peer-sharing sessions to cultivate empathy and cooperation.
    - *Analysis:* Improved communication and emotional connection support a positive organizational culture.
4. Stress Management
    - *Recommendation:* Provide ongoing stress-relief workshops using breathing and mindfulness techniques.
    - *Analysis:* Effective stress management leads to greater productivity and sustained mental wellness.
5. Work–Life Balance
    - *Recommendation:* Implement wellness programs and flexible work schedules.
    - *Analysis:* Balance between personal and professional life enhances motivation and cognitive vitality.
6. Enhancing Cognitive Competencies
    - *Recommendation:* Offer continuous professional training in analytical thinking and innovative problem-solving grounded in mindfulness.
    - *Analysis:* Strengthening cognitive flexibility and creativity promotes long-term academic excellence and adaptability.

The integration of Buddhist mindfulness into professional development effectively nurtures both personal well-being and organizational performance. By fostering emotional balance, cognitive clarity, and interpersonal harmony, educators become better equipped to meet the complex challenges of modern higher education.

## Discussion of Results

1. Discussion of Research Objective 1 The findings related to Research Objective 1 demonstrate that participation in the Dharma practice program significantly enhanced the life skills

of educators, particularly in emotional regulation, stress management, and interpersonal relationships. Participants reported increased competence in managing emotions and coping with workplace stress, indicating that Buddhist mindfulness practices effectively strengthen essential life skills for both personal and professional growth.This improvement can be attributed to the self-awareness and mindfulness components of Buddhist practice, which cultivate conscious attention to one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Through meditation and reflective observation, individuals learn to regulate their emotional responses and maintain composure under pressure. Such findings are consistent with Bentzen (2021), who found that mindfulness-based meditation improves emotional regulation and decision-making by enhancing individuals' ability to observe and manage internal experiences.

Furthermore, the results of this study align with the Life Skills Development Theory proposed by Filipe et al. (2021), which highlights emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and coping mechanisms as essential competencies for effective functioning.Thus, Dharma practice provides both a practical and spiritual framework for developing these foundational life skills, promoting personal resilience and professional adaptability among educators.

2. Discussion of Research Objective 2 Regarding Research Objective 2, the study revealed that participants exhibited notable improvement in cognitive competencies, particularly in decision-making, problem-solving, attention, and analytical thinking. This enhancement is likely a result of the program's emphasis on sustained mindfulness and concentration training, which improves cognitive control and mental clarity. Mindfulness meditation enhances the prefrontal cortex's cognitive functions, fostering better focus, cognitive flexibility, and working memory (Thompson, 2022). Participants' increased decision-making ability and problem-solving skills suggest that the program strengthened their capacity to evaluate information, analyze alternatives, and make reasoned judgments. This is further supported by the Cognitive Competence Theory, which posits that systematic cognitive training such as reflective and mindful thinking leads to improved analytical reasoning and decision-making capabilities. These findings indicate that Buddhist practice does not merely promote relaxation but also functions as a cognitive training mechanism, reinforcing attention regulation, awareness, and intellectual clarity. Hence, the Dharma practice program effectively contributes to developing educators' higher-order cognitive functions essential for academic and administrative performance.

Discussion of Research Objective 3

The results related to Research Objective 3 indicate that Dharma practice positively influenced participants' emotional intelligence, particularly in self-awareness, empathy, and social skills. Participants demonstrated a greater capacity for understanding and managing their own emotions, as well as empathizing with others—key elements of effective interpersonal and professional relationships.

This outcome can be attributed to the compassion-based dimension of Buddhist practice, which emphasizes empathy, loving-kindness (metta), and mindful interaction. Engaging in regular meditation and reflection promotes greater awareness of individuals' inner emotional states and facilitates an understanding of others' perspectives.

According to Uopasai et al. (2022), in their model of emotional intelligence, self-awareness and empathy form the foundation of social and emotional competence, which aligns with the improvements observed in this study. These findings reaffirm that mindfulness-based Dharma practice enhances emotional intelligence, enabling educators to communicate effectively, foster empathy, and strengthen interpersonal relationships within their professional environments.The findings therefore reaffirm that mindfulness-based Dharma practice enhances emotional intelligence, enabling educators to communicate effectively, foster positive relationships, and manage conflicts with emotional balance. These skills are crucial in the context of higher education, where interpersonal collaboration, leadership, and emotional regulation are integral to academic success and institutional harmony. Collectively, the results from all three research objectives provide empirical support for the proposition that Buddhist Dharma practice fosters both life skills and cognitive competencies among educators. The integration of mindfulness, ethical reflection, and meditative training not only enhances emotional and cognitive functioning but also promotes holistic well-being. These findings bridge a crucial gap in current educational research by demonstrating that Buddhist principles can be systematically applied to professional development frameworks for educators. The program's impact extends beyond spiritual benefits showing measurable improvements in emotional intelligence, cognitive control, and adaptive functioning, all of which are essential for effective performance in the dynamic educational environment.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that participation in the Dharma practice program has a significant positive impact on the development of life skills and cognitive competencies among higher education personnel. The findings indicate notable improvements in emotional regulation, stress management, interpersonal relationships, decision-making, cognitive flexibility, and emotional intelligence. These outcomes suggest that integrating mindfulness-based practices, rooted in Buddhist principles, can enhance both the personal well-being and professional effectiveness of educators and academic staff.

The results align with previous research on mindfulness and emotional-cognitive development confirming that meditative and reflective practices can strengthen cognitive control, self-awareness, and emotional balance. Furthermore, this study extends existing literature by

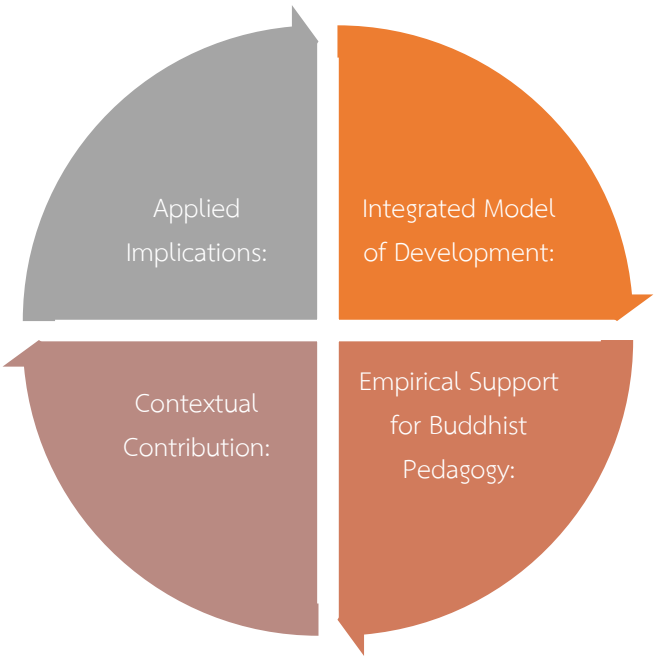
demonstrating how Dharma practice in Buddhist sacred sites Thailand, India, and Nepal provides a transformative experiential context that supports holistic development.

The findings have practical implications for higher education institutions. Integrating structured Dharma-based mindfulness programs into professional development frameworks can help foster educators' psychological resilience, focus, and interpersonal harmony, ultimately improving institutional productivity and morale. Beyond its spiritual dimension, Dharma practice serves as a pedagogical tool for developing essential 21st-century competencies such as emotional intelligence, adaptability, and reflective decision-making.

Future research may explore the long-term sustainability of these improvements, cross-cultural comparisons of Dharma practice in different institutional contexts, and the use of longitudinal or experimental designs to examine causal relationships. Investigating how mindfulness-based interventions can be embedded within academic leadership and curriculum development would also enrich the broader discourse on education and human flourishing.

## New Knowledge from Research

From the study on the development of life skills and cognitive competencies of higher education personnel through Dharma practice in Buddhist sacred sites, several key insights and contributions to knowledge emerged:



The conceptual diagram (Figure 4) below visually represents the interrelationships identified in this study, illustrating how participation in Dharma practice influences the development of life skills and cognitive competencies across various domains:

Figure 2: Development of Life Skills and Cognitive Competencies of Higher Education Personnel through Dharma Practice in Buddhist Sacred Sites Integrated Model of Development: The research establishes a conceptual model linking Buddhist mindfulness practices (meditation, reflection, compassion training) with measurable improvements in life skills (emotional regulation, stress management, interpersonal relationships) and cognitive competencies (decision-making, problem-solving, attention, and emotional intelligence)The findings provide empirical evidence that Buddhist-based mindfulness programs can function as an evidence-informed framework for professional development, enhancing both emotional well-being and cognitive functioning among educators.This study highlights the unique value of Dharma practice conducted in sacred Buddhist sites (Thailand, India, Nepal), where the authentic environment deepens mindfulness experiences and reinforces inner transformation—an underexplored aspect in prior research.The study contributes a practical foundation for educational administrators and policymakers to design mindfulness-based professional development programs that integrate spiritual growth with cognitive and emotional skill enhancement.

## Suggestions

1. Suggestions for Applying Research Results

1.1 Based on Research Objective 1

The first research objective identified significant improvements in emotional regulation, stress management, and decision-making as a result of the Dharma practice program. These findings imply that mindfulness practices can directly enhance both professional and personal effectiveness. Recommendations:

- Integrate mindfulness and emotional regulation training into professional development programs for higher education personnel.
- Encourage staff to apply these competencies in daily work practices to cultivate a more balanced, emotionally intelligent, and productive organizational culture.

1.2 Based on Research Objective 2

The second objective revealed that participants with over five years of work experience or those in managerial roles demonstrated stronger cognitive and emotional competencies. This suggests that leadership experience influences the effectiveness of Dharma-based learning. Recommendations:

- Customize the Dharma practice program to address the developmental needs of both new and experienced staff, emphasizing leadership and reflective decision-making for managerial personnel.
- Adopt a phased training approach, providing advanced mindfulness modules for leaders to apply these competencies in managing teams and organizational strategies.

1.3 Based on Research Objective 3

The third objective found that interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, and stress management improved most notably among support staff. This underscores the importance of fostering communication, empathy, and resilience across all levels of employment. Recommendations:

- Implement training programs that enhance interpersonal communication, empathy, and self-awareness for all personnel, including leadership levels.
- Develop institutional stress management strategies, such as mindfulness workshops or peer support initiatives, particularly for staff in high-pressure or student-facing roles.

2. Suggestions for Future Research

This research provides foundational evidence of the benefits of Dharma practice for enhancing life skills and cognitive competencies in higher education contexts. To deepen understanding and application, the following directions are recommended:

1. Expand the participant base to include personnel from diverse universities and educational institutions—both public and private—to ensure generalizability of results.
2. Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term impact of Dharma practice on employee well-being, productivity, and organizational culture.
3. Investigate the role of mindfulness in leadership development, focusing on how cognitive awareness and emotional intelligence contribute to effective educational leadership.
4. Explore adaptation models of Dharma-based programs for different educational levels and cultural settings, ensuring flexibility and inclusivity in implementation.
5. Examine the potential integration of mindfulness-based interventions into higher education policy frameworks to promote sustainable professional growth and mental health support systems.

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Figure 5: Development of Life Skills and Cognitive Competencies among Private University Educators through Buddhist Practice in Thailand, India, and Nepal
(Source: Ntapat Worapongpat, 2025)