

The Practice of Mindful Bowing Meditation with Dhamma Music for Enhancing Mental Well-Being

¹Vorani Vasuratna, ²Jermuda Manakul and ³Narumon Jiwattanasuk

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

²Bangkok University.

¹Corresponding Author's Email: Voranij1@gmail.com

Received: March 17, 2024; **Revised:** April 20, 2024; **Accepted:** April 22, 2024

Abstract

This research explored the problems when working women practiced meditation before going to bed at home and the practice of mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma music. The study was conducted with seventeen key informants. A qualitative methodology was used in this research. An in-depth interview was used to discover the problems working women had when practicing meditation at home and whether the practice could help improve their mental well-being. The results showed that the problems that seventeen Thai working women had when practicing at home were three hindrances which were sensual desire, sloth and torpor, and restlessness and anxiety. After seventeen Thai working women practiced meditation, the meditation could help enhance the mental well-being of working women. They were more mindful. They have positive feelings such as calmness, happiness, gentleness, and comfort. This mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma music can be an alternative practice for the employees at the organization to help them enhance their mental well-being.

Keywords: Mindful Bowing Meditation, Dhamma Music, Mental Well-Being

Introduction

Practicing meditation at home for working people in daily life might be challenging because nowadays it is easy to access new technologies. Social media or movie series can be accessed via mobile which can distract people from doing meditation practice. Furthermore, the working life has changed. With the use of new technologies, it is convenient for working people to continue their work from home by using their laptops to do the work and send their work via email. They do not have to go to the company to use the computer at their desk. Studies showed that using mobiles before going to bed can disturb their sleep quality (Alshobaili and AlYousefi, 2019). This can harm their mind and body. Time in the evening is important and it can be a time for meditation practice. If working people can manage their time to practice meditation before going to bed, it can benefit them in many ways. Research studies revealed that Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) benefited psychological well-being, sleep quality, and athletic performance (Jones et al., 2020). Moreover, for individuals with sleep disturbances, a meditation mobile app can help with anxiety and depression (Huberty et al., 2021).

Most Thai people who are Buddhists do the chanting and bow to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. The mindful bowing meditation with the use of music that has Dhamma content can be adapted into the meditation practice of working people easily. It would be interesting to see how the mindful bowing meditation with the Dhamma music affects the mind and whether can help enhance mental well-being. If this practice can help improve mental well-

being, employees can have more choice of practice to help them improve their mental well-being.

Well-being is a part of the third sustainable development goal of the United Nations. Positive mental health, which may be found in both the individual and the society, is the foundation of well-being (WHO, 2004). Positive mental health is the condition of mental well-being. An individual who has positive mental health can manage life's stressors, reach their full potential, study and work effectively, and give back to their community. On the other hand, an individual who has mental health issues can harm a person's self-esteem and their ability to perform efficiently. Thus, it is important to find a way that can help working people enhance their mental well-being.

The practice of mindful bowing meditation has been used in Theravada Buddhism. The meditation practitioners have to make a mental note at the moment of each movement when doing the mindful bowing. Mindfulness meditation has benefits for the mind. Research studies revealed that mindfulness meditation could help improve the mind such as reducing anxiety (Maxwell and Duff, 2016), stress (Brown and Ryan, 2003), negative thoughts (Van der Riet et al, 2015), and creating positive emotions (Lindsay et al., 2018).

Research studies showed that meditation could improve well-being. In the study by Jones et al. (2020), the findings revealed that Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) improved psychological health. Psychological well-being significantly improved in the MBSR intervention group but it did not improve in the control group. Increased mindfulness was linked to improvements in participants' well-being in MBSR. Mindfulness meditation could also help people with insomnia. In the study by Huberty et al., 2021, there were 239 adult participants with severe symptoms of sleeplessness. The intervention group's participants were instructed to download the mindfulness meditation mobile app. The app offers guided general meditations, sleep-specific meditations, and sleep stories. For eight weeks, participants were required to meditate for at least ten minutes every day. It was suggested that they begin with the "7 Days of Calm." During the intervention period, participants in the meditation group showed more improvement in their symptoms of anxiety and depression than did those in the control group.

Furthermore, the research also showed that music can improve mental health. Blood pressure, pulse rate, and stress hormones can be lowered by listening to music (De Witte et al., 2019). In the study by Osmanoglu and YilmazI (2019), anxiety levels were reduced in college students who listened to classical music every day for two months. Another research study (Seinfeld et al., 2016) examined the relationship between anxiety and music by examining persons who suffer from a fear of heights. In a virtual reality simulation, participants rode an elevator up nine levels. During the experiment, one group listened to music while the other did not. Researchers discovered that those who listened to music recovered from the experience's stress more quickly than people who didn't.

Moreover, Mindfulness meditation with Dhamma music could help improve mental well-being (Ladpli, 2023; Vasuratna, 2023). Dhamma music which are the songs that have Dhamma contents in the lyrics were used. However, there is a lack of research on mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma music. This study can gain a deep understanding of mindful bowing with Dhamma music. For the abovementioned reasons, it is vital to study this matter in depth. If this practice can help improve mental well-being, this practice can be introduced to the organization to arrange a workshop for employees. Moreover, the knowledge from this study can give a new insight into many fields such as well-being, music therapy, and mindfulness. This study can give knowledge about the problems that working women had when practicing meditation at home, how the practice of mindful bowing meditation affects the mind, and whether the practice can help improve their mental well-being. Therefore, it is important to do this research study.

Objectives

1. To study the problems that working women have when doing meditation at home.
2. To study the practice of mindful bowing meditation for enhancing the mental well-being of working women.

Methodology

The protocol for this study was approved by The protocol for this study was approved by Bangkok University Research Ethics Committee. The reference number is 416705012. The date of approval was 6 March 2024.

There were seven steps as follows.

Step 1: Documentary study: Study the Tipitaka, books and research articles about the practice of mindful bowing meditation and Dhamma music.

Step 2: Key Informants: Ask the key informants about their meditation practice before going to bed.

Step 3: Qualitative research: Do the in-depth interviews. The key informants were interviewed individually after participating in their seven-day mindful bowing meditation practice with Dhamma music.

Step 4: Data collection: The key informants were interviewed via zoom application and the interview recording were transcribed and translated into English.

Step 5: Data Analysis: The interview transcriptions were analyzed by using thematic analysis. via zoom application and the interview recording were transcribed and translated into English. After all the data are collected, the interview recordings will be transcribed and translated. Thematic analysis will be used. Thematic analysis is “a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into, patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset. Through focusing on meaning across a dataset, TA allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences”(Braun and Clarke, 2012).

Step 6: The Conclusion of the research results: The themes were created. They also concluded and presented the main findings.

A qualitative methodology was used in this study which was an individual interview with seventeen key informants. The key informants were contacted via line application. They were asked about their meditation practices before going to bed and whether they were interested in participating in this research. The working women practiced the mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma music for one week before going to bed. The Dhamma music was a song which is called ‘The Buddha’.

The purpose of this research study is to find out the problems that working women had when doing meditation at home and whether the practice of mindful bowing meditation can help enhance the mental well-being of working women. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the problems that working women have when doing meditation at home?
2. Does the practice of mindful bowing meditation can help enhance the mental well-being of working women? If yes, how?

The key informants were recruited by asking a question via line application. They were asked whether they were interested in participating in this research. The messages were sent via line to participants. The key informants were seventeen Thai working women who have taken meditation courses at Buddhamahametta Foundation at Chiang Rak Noi, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya and practiced mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma music for more than three meditation courses.

For content validation, three experts were invited to examine the content validity of the interview questions using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence or IOC. The content validity score of the interview questions were 1.00. Moreover, the protocol for this study was approved by University Research Ethics Committee.

After the participants practiced the mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma song for 7 days, they were interviewed and asked about how they felt and whether the practice affected their mind and their mental well-being. Then, the interview recordings were transcribed and translated. Thematic analysis was utilized. Thematic analysis is “a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into, patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset. Through focusing on meaning across a dataset, TA allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences” (Braun and Clarke, 2012).

The intervention of this practice of mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma music which was approved by 3 experts in the field such as a meditation master, a meditation practitioner, and a researcher contained the following steps:

Step 1: Before going to bed, play the song which is the Dhamma song called ‘The Buddha’.

Step 2: Sit properly in a posture to prepare to do the mindful bowing meditation, then, slowly bow to the Buddha, be mindful, know your body and mind.

Step 3: Do a least three mindful bowing before going to bed.

Results

The data from interviewing the seventeen working women who completed the 7-day meditation practices were analyzed.

1. The problems that working women have when doing meditation at home were three hindrances which were sensual desire, sloth and torpor, and restlessness and anxiety. The explanations are as follows:

Sensual desire

Key informant#2 said “I don’t usually fall asleep before going to bed. There is a bit of playing games on mobile phones that are fun. After playing, I fall asleep”.

Sloth and torpor

Key informant#10 said “On days when I’m tired, sick, I couldn’t do that, and I simply fall asleep”.

Key informant#11 said “I felt very sleepy, I went to sleep with no praying or not doing anything”. She explained that if she felt sleepy and didn’t care to do anything, only wanted to sleep.

Key informant#16 said “My major obstacle is sleepiness; I lack mindfulness and can fall asleep straight away”.

Key informant#17 said “My obstacle is laziness. I always go to sleep straight away after chanting, as I am exhausted from the whole day”.

Restlessness and anxiety

Key informant#4 said “I fall asleep due to fatigue or distractions, such as playing on my mobile phone, or scrolling through Instagram. I end up sleeping with a muddled mind.”

Key informant#6 said “There were mental formations and thoughts as usual”.

Key informant#8 said “Daily life during this period involves hard work, minimal rest, and stressful tasks. I feel stressed at work due to the heavy workload, although it’s not anything critical. Additionally, I’m experiencing health issues such as neck and shoulder pain, resembling office syndrome. My life feels extremely busy with no time to spare”.

Key informant#12 said “I find myself contemplating the tasks for the next day and worrying about what might happen”.

Sensual desire, sloth and torpor, and restlessness and anxiety are the hindrances that could obstruct the meditation practice of working women.

2. The practice of mindful bowing meditation can help enhance the mental well-being of working women.

From the interview, all participants stated that the practice of mindful bowing meditation could help enhance the mental well-being of working women. They were more mindful. They have positive feelings such as calmness, happiness, gentleness, and comfort.

The explanations are as follows:

Key informant#3 said “It has a great effect on the mind. I am more mindful. I feel that whatever my mind engages in, it becomes calm and comfortable”. Before taking any action that would affect others, she tended to think more. She thought before taking action. Her mind became gentler and kinder to others.

Key informant#5 said “Recently, I lost a family member. Some nights, it feels like I sleep with sadness, and my dreams aren’t particularly pleasant. However, during this week, there was one night when I had a good dream; it was probably about bowing the Buddha before sleeping. This practice helps me sleep comfortably, feel happy, and brings tears of appreciation from within me. I realize that Buddha is grateful because every bowing reminds me of his teaching”. She explained that she was happy and she also had a chance to ask for forgiveness, worship, and express gratitude to Buddha. This mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma music could help her sleep with happiness and gratitude. On her last bow, she was thankful that she could be a Buddhist, thankful that she was not alone, thanks for life, for every event that happened, and for her life to go on.

Key informant#7 said “Calm, appreciative, my mind is cool, and happy. I feel that my mind is happy and full. This calm emotion becomes coolness and happiness without thinking of anything. I keep staying in these emotions and I find that it’s very happy. Another emotion is *metta* (loving-kindness) and kindness, which have increased”. She explained that when she was doing *Buddhanusati*, loving-kindness and feelings of sympathy towards others arose.

The mental well-being of working women could benefit from practicing mindful bowing meditation. There were two pieces of evidence which were mindfulness and positive emotions like serenity, joy, tenderness, and comfort.

Discussion

The results from the interview revealed that the problems that the working women had when practicing at home were three hindrances which were sensual desire, sloth and torpor, and restlessness and anxiety. These hindrances were what the Buddha has mentioned to the monks. In *The Five Mental Hindrances and Their Conquest: Selected Texts from the Pali Canon and the Commentaries*, there were five hindrances which were Sensual desire (*kamacchanda*), ill-will (*byapada*), sloth and torpor (*thina-middha*), restlessness and remorse (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), sceptical doubt (*vicikiccha*) that could obstruct *Nibbāna*. The sensual desire, sloth and torpor, and restlessness and anxiety were three out of five hindrances that were found in interviewing the working women. This might be because of their work lifestyle. They have to live their lives in worldly life where there are sensual desires and they have to use a lot of thinking to create new ideas for the work. This can lessen their concentration and mindfulness as a result sloth and torpor can arise.

After the working women practiced meditation, the meditation could help enhance the mental well-being of working women. They were more mindful. They have positive feelings such as calmness, happiness, gentleness, and comfort. The result was similar to previous

studies. Mindfulness meditation with Dhamma music could help increase mental well-being (Ladpli, 2023; Phra Sukheesom, 2023; Vasuratna, 2023). The patients listened to the Dhamma songs. The outcome showed that it can improve the mental well-being of working women (Vasuratna, 2023), patients (Ladpli, 2023), and both patients and caregivers (Phra Sukheesom, 2023). The finding revealed that the practice of mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma music could be an alternative way for Thai working women practitioners.

New Knowledge

The mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma music could be used as an alternative way for working women to do meditation practice to enhance their mental well-being before going to bed. The Dhamma song about the Buddha could help increase the level of mental well-being. This practice could be introduced to other working people. However, working people should take meditation courses that have meditation masters who can guide them before starting to do the mindful bowing practice with Dhamma music by themselves at home.

Conclusion

This research explored the problems that Thai working women had when meditating before going to bed and whether the practice of mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma music helped enhance their mental well-being. The findings have shown that the problems were three hindrances which were sensual desire, sloth and torpor, and restlessness and anxiety. This practice of mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma music could help improve mental well-being. This meditation practice can be introduced to working people as a short-term practice to enhance mental well-being. For further studies, research could be conducted in a longitudinal study such as doing the practice of mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma music for two weeks or one month.

Recommendation

1. From the research result, there are two recommendations.

The working people who are interested in doing the mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma music are recommended to participate in the mindfulness meditation courses first to practice their mindfulness. Then, the meditation masters can introduce and guide the working people to do the mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma music.

2. The recommendation for further research

2.1 The Practice of Mindful Bowing Meditation with Dhamma Music for Children.

2.2 The Practice of Mindful Bowing Meditation with Dhamma Music for Older People.

2.3 The Practice of Mindful Sitting Meditation with Dhamma Music for Enhancing Mental Well-Being.

References

- Alshobaili, F. A. & AlYousefi, N. A. (2019). The effect of smartphone usage at bedtime on sleep quality among Saudi non- medical staff at King Saud University Medical City. *Journal of family medicine and primary care*. 8(6), 1953–1957. https://doi.org/10.4103/jfmpc.jfmpc_269_19
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In Cooper, H. Camic, P. M. Long, D. L. Panter, A. T. Rindskopf, D. & Sher, K. J. (Eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology*. 12(2), (57–71).

- Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 84(4), 822–848. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.4.822>
- De Witte, M. et al. (2019). Effects of music interventions on stress-related outcomes: A systematic review and two meta-analyses. *Health Psychology Review*. 14(2), 294–324. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17437199.2019.1627897>
- Jones, B. J. et al. (2020). Mindfulness-based stress reduction benefits psychological well-being, sleep quality, and athletic performance in female collegiate rowers. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 20(11), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.572980>
- Huberty, J. et al. (2021). A mindfulness meditation mobile app improves depression and anxiety in adults with sleep disturbance: Analysis from a randomized controlled trial. *General Hospital Psychiatry*. 21(73), 30–37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.genhosppsych.2021.09.004>
- Ladpli, C. (2023). *Acupuncture Treatment for Patients with Physical Illnesses through Mindfulness Meditation with Dhamma Music*. Doctoral dissertation. Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.
- Lindsay, E. K. et al. (2018). How mindfulness training promotes positive emotions: Dismantling acceptance skills training in two randomized controlled trials. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 115(6), 944–973. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1037/pspa0000134>
- Maxwell, L., & Duff, E. (2016). Mindfulness: An Effective Prescription for Depression and Anxiety. *The Journal for Nurse Practitioners*. 12(6), 403-409. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nurpra.2016.02.009>
- Osmanoglu, D. E., & Yilmaz, H. (2019). The effect of classical music on anxiety and well-being of university students. *International Education Studies*, 12(11), 18-22. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v12n11p18>
- The Five Mental Hindrances and Their Conquest: Selected Texts from the Pali Canon and the Commentaries, compiled and translated by Nyanaponika Thera*. (2013, November 30). Access to Insight (BCBS Edition). Retrieved 30 November 2023 from <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nyanaponika/wheel026.html> .
- Seinfeld, S. et al. (2016). Influence of music on anxiety induced by fear of heights in virtual reality. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 16(6), 1-12 <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01969>
- Phra Sukheesom Jiramahasuwan. (2023). *A Creation of Meritorious Audio Environment for Home-Treatment Patients in Chiang Rak Noi Sub-District, Thailand*. Doctoral dissertation. Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.
- WHO. (2004). *Promoting mental health: concepts, emerging, evidence, practice: summary report*. WHO: Geneva.
- Van der Riet, P. et al. (2015). Piloting a stress management and mindfulness program for undergraduate nursing students: Student feedback and lessons learned. *Nurse Education Today*. 35(1), 44-49. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2014.05.003>
- Vasuratna, V. (2023). *The Practice of Mindfulness Meditation with Dhamma gīta for Mental Well-Being: A Case Study of Working Women Practitioners at Buddhamahametta Foundation, Chiang Rak Noi, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya*. Doctoral dissertation. Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University.