

Loving-Kindness Meditation with Dhamma Gita for Mental Well-Being of Adolescents

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Received: November 11, 2024; **Revised:** December 22, 2024; **Accepted:** December 22, 2024

Abstract

This study explores the combined impact of LKM and Dhamma Gīta music on mental health by fostering emotional resilience, self-compassion, and mindfulness. LKM has been shown to reduce anxiety and stress, while Dhamma Gīta music enhances calmness and emotional regulation. Together, these practices support emotional development, improve relationships, and help adolescents navigate challenges. The findings highlight the potential of integrating these practices into school and community programs to promote mental health and emotional well-being in young people.

The use of Dhamma Gīta (Dhamma songs) in the practice of loving-kindness meditation is an approach that the researcher is interested in, based on a study of suitable Buddhist practices for today's adolescents. Adolescents often exhibit behaviors of acting on impulse and lack patience. To capture their attention and guide them towards Buddhist teachings as a means of nurturing their minds, it is necessary to employ methods that are engaging and easy to understand. Most adolescents enjoy listening to music, so transforming the Buddha's teachings into Dhamma lyrics and setting them to music that resonates with young people can be an effective way to attract their interest and encourage them to practice Dhamma.

The Mindfulness Wisdom & Loving-kindness (MWL) program, developed by the Buddhamahemetha Foundation, uses Dhamma songs as a medium to present teachings and activities within the practice course. The feedback from parents, teachers, and the students themselves has been positive, demonstrating that this approach effectively helps to cultivate mindfulness, understanding, and compassion in adolescents.

Keywords: Loving-Kindness Meditation; Dhamma Gita; Mental Well-Being; Adolescents

Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2024), mental disorders account for around 13% of the global disease burden among people aged 10 to 19 years. Around 10–20% of children and adolescents worldwide experience mental health issues, but their needs are often ignored, especially in low- and middle-income countries (Christian Kieling et al., 2011). Adolescents face a variety of challenges, including homelessness, violence, substance abuse (such as drugs, alcohol, and smoking), and teenage pregnancy, which can lead to unintended pregnancies, STDs, and other health problems. Teenage drug addiction is a particularly serious issue in the United States, where it is considered one of the most pressing public health concerns (Garofoli, 2020).

The pressure to fit in socially and the struggle for independence during adolescence can worsen these problems, often leading to long-term negative outcomes (Refanthira and Hasanah, 2020).

Good mental health is important for adolescents because it shapes their future as adults. In Buddhist teachings, the principles of avoiding evil, doing good, and purifying the mind are emphasized, and the four foundations of mindfulness can help achieve mental clarity. Mindfulness meditation, which is used to reduce stress, benefits adolescents by improving emotional regulation, helping them manage stress, anxiety, sadness, and anger, and enhancing social skills. This supports their mental well-being and helps them get along with others (Pinto et al., 2023). Meditation also boosts cognitive functioning and emotional well-being, making students feel happier and more relaxed (Delavari et al., 2023). Music, too, plays a significant role in emotional expression and regulation for adolescents, as it influences their mood and helps them manage emotions like joy, sadness, and anger. Additionally, bowing, a gesture common in many religious traditions, including Buddhism, is a meaningful practice that helps adolescents connect with their spiritual beliefs. Adolescents who regularly bow to their parents are more likely to engage in spiritual behaviors like abstaining from alcohol and reading religious texts, suggesting that this practice supports their spiritual and mental health (Phra Nicholas Thanissaro, 2010).

However, there is limited research on how the combined practices of mindfulness, loving-kindness meditation, and music impact adolescent mental health. This study aims to explore how these practices can address mental health challenges and promote overall well-being in adolescents.

Adolescents

Adolescence is a complex developmental stage that encompasses significant physical, psychological, and social changes. It serves as the transitional period from childhood to adulthood, characterized by a variety of challenges and transformations influenced by cultural, social, and biological factors. This period plays a key role in shaping identity and autonomy as adolescents strive to balance dependence with increasing independence. The following sections explore the various dimensions of adolescence:

1. Biological and Psychological Changes

Adolescence marks a period of rapid growth and development, as detailed in the research of Ashok Maaan et al. in their study on adolescent sexual behavior (Maaan et al., 2021). The term adolescence is derived from the Latin word *adolescere*, meaning "to grow" or "to mature," reflecting the essence of this transitional phase. While a universally accepted definition of adolescence does not exist, the World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescence as spanning from ages 10 to 19, identifying this stage by key characteristics such as:

- Rapid physical growth and maturation
- The onset of sexual maturity and activity
- Cognitive and emotional development, including the evolution of adult-like thinking
- A shift from total socio-economic dependence to increasing independence

2. Social and Cultural Influences

Adolescence is also deeply shaped by social and cultural factors, which vary across different societies. Key aspects include:

a) Risk-Taking and Peer Influence:

Adolescents are often characterized by a tendency for risk-taking and sensation-seeking behaviors, which are driven by emotions that can sometimes override rational decision-making.

This period is marked by a transition from family to peer influence, which becomes more pronounced as adolescents seek independence. Those who have experienced trauma or abuse may be particularly vulnerable, as symptoms of post-traumatic stress can interfere with their coping mechanisms. Community interventions are critical for supporting adolescents with a history of maltreatment, especially in preventing violence in families and relationships and addressing post-traumatic stress disorder (Wekerle et al., 2020).

b) Rights and Responsibilities:

The transition to adulthood involves increasing self-responsibility. While different countries define adolescence differently, it generally spans from ages 14 to 25, with varying rights and obligations. Up to the age of 18, children's rights are emphasized, including the right to appropriate development, education, health care, and protection from harm. As young people approach adulthood, they are granted more autonomy, but educational and civic participation goals are often shaped by the prevailing values of society (Bertram, 2024).

3. Age Range and Developmental Stages

Human life progresses through distinct stages, with adolescence being a particularly crucial period. The World Health Organization defines adolescence as ages 10 to 19, which is subdivided into early (10-14 years), middle (15-17 years), and late (18-19 years) stages. Adolescents undergo significant transitions during this time, moving from dependence on caregivers to greater autonomy, forming their identities, and exploring vocational paths (Shalini et al., 2021).

a) Early Adolescence (Ages 10-13)

- Physical Changes: During early adolescence, children experience rapid physical growth, including the development of secondary sexual characteristics such as body hair, breast development in girls, and testicular enlargement in boys. These changes typically begin earlier in girls (around age 8-9) and later in boys (around age 9-10). Girls usually get their first period around age 12, about 2-3 years after their breast development begins.

- Psychological and Social Changes: Early adolescents often think in concrete, binary terms—right or wrong, good or bad. They may be egocentric, with heightened self-consciousness about their appearance, believing that they are constantly judged by peers. This stage also sees an increased desire for privacy and independence from family, which may lead to testing boundaries and emotional reactions when limits are set.

b) Middle Adolescence (Ages 14-17)

- Physical Changes: Puberty-related physical changes continue, with males experiencing voice deepening and potential acne outbreaks, while most females have completed physical development and established regular menstrual cycles.

- Sexual and Emotional Development: Adolescents in this stage may begin to explore romantic and sexual relationships, and for many, this is a time of questioning sexual identity. Exploration of sexuality, including self-stimulation, is common.

- Cognitive and Emotional Development: The brain continues to mature, particularly the frontal lobes, which are responsible for decision-making, impulse control, and evaluating consequences. However, these areas are not fully developed until the mid-20s. Consequently, while middle adolescents can think abstractly, they are still prone to impulsive behavior driven by strong emotions.

- Social Changes: Adolescents often spend more time with peers and less time with family. Peer pressure intensifies, and concerns about appearance can dominate. Arguments with parents over independence are common.

c) Late Adolescence (Ages 18-21 and Beyond)

- **Physical and Cognitive Maturation:** By late adolescence, physical development is generally complete, with individuals reaching their adult height. Cognitive maturity continues to develop, leading to better impulse control and the ability to assess risks and rewards more effectively.

- **Emotional and Social Development:** Late adolescents develop a stronger sense of individuality and become more future-oriented. They begin making decisions that align with their personal values and life goals. Friendships and romantic relationships stabilize, and emotional and physical separation from parents occurs. However, many also develop more adult-like relationships with their parents, seeking advice and engaging in mature discussions.

In Conclusion, Although adolescence is often seen as a time of "storm and stress," it is also a period of significant opportunity for growth and transformation. The challenges faced during this stage, including physical, emotional, and social changes, can be navigated with the right support systems in place. Community interventions and family-based strategies are essential for supporting adolescents through this tumultuous period, especially those with histories of trauma, by promoting resilience, emotional regulation, and positive identity development (Wekerle et al., 2020). The adolescence stage, with its blend of challenges and opportunities, sets the foundation for healthy adulthood.

Mental Well-Being

In a critical review of the definition of well-being for doctors and patients post-COVID-19, well-being is described as "a state of positive feelings and the ability to meet one's full potential," which can be measured both subjectively and objectively using a salutogenic approach (Simons and Baldwin, 2021). Tchiki Davis (2023) further defines well-being as a positive sense of health and vitality, influenced by one's thoughts, emotions, actions, and experiences, and includes feeling happy, healthy, socially connected, and purposeful most of the time.

A definition of mental well-being proposed by Saran Pimthong et al. (2022) emphasizes feelings of well-being alongside functional performance. In their study, a new scale for measuring Thai mental well-being was developed, which incorporates three key components: positive thinking, positive relationships, and positive functioning.

Measurement of Mental Well-Being : The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS), a widely used measure of mental well-being, focuses on the positive aspects of mental health. This 14-item scale, which offers five categories of responses, produces a single score and has been validated for use in diverse populations. According to Ruth Tennant et al. (2007), the WEMWBS demonstrates high consistency and can differentiate between various population groups due to its flexible scoring system that lacks an upper limit.

In addition, the Thai Mental Well-Being Scale, developed by Saran Pimthong et al. (2022), identifies three core factors that characterize Thai mental well-being: positive emotions, positive thoughts, and positive relationships, with an emphasis on positive functioning. This scale was specifically designed to account for cultural nuances in Thai society.

Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS)

The Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS), developed by Carol D. Ryff and Corey L. M. Keyes (1995), measures well-being across six components: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Each of these components is assessed using a series of 18 items, which help to gauge whether an individual

is thriving in these areas of life. For example, a person with high autonomy is self-determined, able to resist social pressures, and regulates their behavior according to personal standards. In contrast, someone with low autonomy may rely heavily on external expectations and judgments.

The scale, which has been translated into several languages, including Thai, is used to measure well-being among various populations. The Thai version, developed by Yada Thongthammarat (2022), consists of 42 items and was created using a rigorous process that included back-translation, bilingual committees, and pre-testing to ensure cultural relevance and clarity.

Concept of Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being is described as a combination of feeling good and functioning effectively in life. It is not about feeling good all the time, but about managing negative emotions (such as disappointment, grief, or failure) in a way that supports sustainable well-being. An overabundance of negative emotions can interfere with a person's ability to function effectively in their daily life, compromising overall well-being (Huppert, 2009).

For the participants in the study, who were Thai women working as practitioners, the researcher used the Thai-specific mental well-being scales—focusing on positive emotions, thoughts, relationships, and functioning. These scales were designed to be concise and appropriate for the time constraints of working women, ensuring that the items were not overly burdensome to complete.

In summary, mental well-being is defined by positive feelings, thoughts, relationships, and functioning, and can be measured using various scales that assess these factors subjectively and objectively. The scales used in the Thai context have been carefully adapted to reflect local cultural norms and provide meaningful insights into the well-being of Thai women in the workforce.

Loving-Kindness Meditation

Loving-kindness (Mettā) is a central concept in Buddhist teachings, particularly in the Metta Sutta, which emphasizes cultivating goodwill, compassion, empathy, and equanimity towards oneself and others. It teaches that by practicing these qualities, one can attain inner peace, happiness, and contribute to the welfare of all beings. Mettā involves treating all beings with kindness, refraining from harm, and radiating boundless love and compassion. It encourages the abandonment of fixed views and desires, leading to liberation from suffering (Ñanamoli Thera, 1998).

In Theravada Buddhism, Mettā is defined as an altruistic desire for the well-being and happiness of others, marked by benevolence, friendliness, and nonviolence. Unlike self-interested amiability, Mettā is about unselfish love and kindness, transcending social, racial, and political barriers. It fosters a mentality of camaraderie and compassion, and its practice can lead to true happiness, as it focuses on self-reliance rather than dependency (Tongsupachok, 2024).

The Karaniya Mettā Sutta further emphasizes cultivating boundless loving-kindness towards all beings, encouraging virtues such as humility, contentment, and frugality. It guides practitioners to overcome ill-will and radiate kindness in thoughts and actions, promoting harmony and well-being for all (The Amaravati Sangha, 2004).

Loving-kindness meditation (LKM), also known as *Metta Bhavana*, is a practice in Buddhism aimed at developing a mental state of loving-kindness and compassion towards all beings. It is the first of the Four Brahma Viharas (divine abodes), which include Metta (loving-kindness), Karuna (compassion), Mudita (appreciative joy), and Uppekha (equanimity) (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 2004; Venerable Sujiva, 2007). LKM involves cultivating positive

emotions, letting go of negative feelings, and promoting goodwill and compassion, ultimately leading to mental calmness and joy.

Loving-kindness meditation has been shown to have various benefits in both personal and social contexts. Studies have demonstrated its positive effects on mental health and relationships. For example, a study on veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) showed that LKM significantly improved self-compassion, mindfulness, and reduced PTSD symptoms (Kearney et al., 2013). Similarly, a study involving doctors found that LKM enhanced mindfulness, empathy, and communication skills, helping medical professionals better connect with their patients and reduce emotional burnout.

In terms of relationships, LKM has been shown to reduce depression and social negativity while increasing social support. One pilot study found that participants practicing LKM experienced improved relationship quality and mental well-being (Uchino et al., 2016). Another study indicated that even brief LKM interventions could reduce negative attitudes and foster better social connections (Schroter and Jansen, 2022).

Additionally, Buddhist teachings highlight the use of loving-kindness as a powerful tool for conflict resolution. Integrating LKM with mindfulness practices can provide effective solutions for resolving conflicts, aligning with modern conflict-resolution strategies (Venerable Neminda, 2019).

Loving-kindness meditation is a valuable practice that fosters positive emotions, enhances mental health, improves relationships, and can be used in conflict resolution. It cultivates a mindset of compassion and goodwill that benefits both individuals and society as a whole.

Meditation and Dhamma

The importance of gratitude and meditation in promoting mental well-being is emphasized in several Buddhist teachings and contemporary studies. Gratitude is central in the Kataññu Suttas from the Pali Canon, which underscore the significance of acknowledging and acting upon the kindness received from others, such as parents, teachers, and spiritual mentors. True gratitude is not merely a feeling but is expressed through actions, fostering positive mental states and communal bonds. Practicing gratitude enhances emotional resilience, reduces stress, and strengthens social connections. It also creates a cycle of generosity, where individuals inspired by the kindness they receive, engage in acts of kindness themselves (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 2002).

Buddhism also links gratitude with the concepts of Kuttaññu (recognizing kindness) and Katavedi (expressing gratitude through words and actions), reinforcing that thankfulness should lead to positive responses, like contributing to the community and living ethically (Gratitude and Generosity, 2024).

Contemporary research supports the therapeutic benefits of gratitude and mindfulness. For example, a study on meditation at the Buddhamahametta Foundation found that mindful discussions of gratitude helped executives manage stress, improve health, and foster stronger relationships (Jiwattanasuk, 2021). Similarly, a study on mindful bowing meditation with Dhamma music showed positive effects on the mental health of working women, increasing calmness, happiness, and comfort (Vasuratna, 2024).

Gratitude is also shown to have profound effects on children and adolescents. A study of fifth-graders in Colombia highlighted how children express gratitude in ways that promote their sense of connection and well-being, particularly toward their families (Gordon P. D. Ingram et al., 2023). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that gratitude meditation can enhance emotion regulation and brain-heart coupling, leading to improvements in mental well-being by reducing anxiety and depression (Kyeong et al., 2017).

Combining mindfulness and gratitude interventions can also improve well-being. A study with women found that both gratitude journaling and mindfulness practices significantly reduced stress and depression while increasing happiness (O'Leary and Dockray, 2015). These findings suggest that integrating gratitude with mindfulness may offer a powerful tool for enhancing overall mental health.

In conclusion, gratitude and meditation are powerful tools for enhancing emotional well-being. They are deeply rooted in Buddhist teachings and have been shown in modern research to reduce stress, improve relationships, and foster greater happiness, making them valuable practices for individuals seeking peace and fulfillment in their lives.

Meditation for adolescents

A growing body of research highlights the positive impact of various forms of meditation on the mental health and emotional well-being of young individuals. Several studies have examined different meditation techniques, including mindfulness and loving-kindness meditation, and their effects on children, adolescents, and college students. Here is a summary of key findings from these studies:

Mindfulness Meditation in Schools

In A Randomized Controlled Pilot Trial of Classroom-Based Mindfulness Meditation Compared to an Active Control Condition in Sixth-Grade Children (Britton et al., 2014), a mindfulness meditation intervention was tested with sixth-grade students to evaluate its impact on mental health. The study involved 101 students who were randomly assigned to two groups: one group practiced mindfulness meditation daily during an Asian history class, while the control group engaged in an African history class with a comparable experiential activity. Both groups showed reductions in anxiety, cognitive function, and affect, but there were no significant differences between them. However, the mindfulness group showed a notable reduction in suicidal ideation and thoughts of self-harm compared to the control group. This suggests that mindfulness meditation can be a valuable tool for improving mental health and emotional well-being, particularly in preventing self-harm in adolescents.

Mindfulness for Enhancing Executive Function and Behavior

Another study, Effects of Mindful Awareness Practices on Executive Functions in Elementary School Children (Flook et al., 2010), explored the effects of Mindful Awareness Practices (MAPs) among elementary school children. Involving 64 second- and third-grade children, the study found that those who practiced MAPs for 8 weeks showed significant improvements in executive function (EF), particularly among children who initially displayed poor EF. The MAPs group demonstrated better behaviors and metacognitive skills compared to a control group that did not practice mindfulness. These findings highlight that mindfulness can improve cognitive control and self-regulation, helping children with lower EF develop better behavioral and emotional skills.

Mindfulness for Young Athletes

Young athletes face unique mental health challenges, including pressure from competitive sports, academic expectations, and a lack of support for mental health. In response to these challenges, mindfulness meditation programs have been shown to help reduce stress and improve well-being among young athletes. Research has indicated that mobile mindfulness meditation training effectively alleviates depression, anxiety, and perceived stress, while also boosting self-

esteem. Such programs provide a flexible and accessible approach to addressing mental health concerns in athletes, offering potential benefits for this vulnerable group.

Mindfulness and Art Therapy for Depressed and Anxious Adolescents

In Effects of Group Art Therapy Combined with Breath Meditation on the Subjective Well-Being of Depressed and Anxious Adolescents (Kim and Ki, 2014), a combined approach of art therapy and breath meditation was tested on depressed and anxious adolescents. The study involved 24 high school students who participated in 13 sessions of either combined art therapy and meditation, art therapy alone, or a control group. The results showed that the combined art therapy and breath meditation group experienced significant improvements in well-being, whereas the group focused solely on art therapy also showed positive effects, such as better self-insight and interpersonal relationships. These results suggest that combining mindfulness practices with other therapeutic interventions can be especially beneficial for improving the mental health of adolescents.

Meditation with Music for Young Practitioners

While research on meditation with music is still limited, its potential benefits for young practitioners are worth exploring. Studies examining mindfulness and meditation generally focus on traditional practices, yet incorporating music into meditation could provide a novel approach that combines relaxation with emotional regulation. According to Smith et al. (2020), music may enhance the calming effects of meditation by creating a more engaging experience for young individuals, potentially improving mental health outcomes. Additionally, Aaron H. Rodwin et al. (2023) noted that Mental health challenges among adolescents and young adults (A-YA) are rising, with many avoiding traditional treatments. Music-based interventions show promise for improving emotional well-being and reducing symptoms like anxiety and depression, especially in adolescents. However, their effectiveness for young adults and treatment engagement remains unclear. More research is needed to tailor these interventions culturally and developmentally and to understand how they work and for whom. Music offers a valuable, innovative approach to supporting A-YA mental health.

In conclusion, mindfulness and meditation practices have demonstrated significant potential in improving the mental health and emotional well-being of young individuals across various contexts. From school-based interventions for children (Brown et al., 2018) to mindfulness programs for college students and athletes (Taylor and Green, 2021), evidence suggests that these practices can reduce anxiety, stress, and depression while improving emotional regulation, self-awareness, and behavior. As more studies are conducted, especially on innovative approaches like meditation with music, it will be important to continue exploring how these interventions can be tailored to meet the specific needs of young practitioners (Smith et al., 2020).

Dhamma Gīta

Dhamma Gīta is the fusion of Buddhist teachings with music and audio instruments, designed to enhance practitioners' focus while studying the Dhamma (the Buddha's teachings). This modern approach has gained traction on social media, making the Dhamma more accessible to a wider audience. During the Buddha's enlightenment, music played a key role in conveying spiritual truths, with chanting and instrumental sounds serving as expressions of the Dhamma. The Buddha used the "Three-stringed lute" as a symbol of spiritual balance, teaching that excess indulgence leads to purposelessness, while extreme restraint results in coldness. In contrast, moderation fosters harmony and righteousness. Thus, music serves as an essential medium for communicating and embodying the principles of the Dhamma Gīta through sound and musical

expression (Phra Somdet Buddhakosajarn (Phra Brahmagunabhorn P.A. Payutto), 1996, Phra Woraponte Varadhammo Tanpoonkiat, 2023).

Music, as part of Dhamma Gīta, uses religious chants, hymns, and Dhamma songs to present Buddhist teachings in an auditory form, helping practitioners absorb and align their minds with the Dhamma. A notable story from the Mahavimana Sutta illustrates how a frog, holding a musical instrument, listened to the Buddha's teachings. The frog's mind became pure, leading to immediate enlightenment and ascension to a higher realm, demonstrating how music in the form of Dhamma Gīta can guide individuals towards spiritual awakening (Duangloy, Phumathon and Phrapalad Raphin Buddhisaro, 2016).

Dhamma Gīta, which incorporates songs inspired by Buddhist teachings, promotes virtues such as peace, loving-kindness, mercy, and faith in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha. These align with the six recollections (Anussati) taught by the Buddha in the Mahanama Sutta (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1997). The practice of Budhanusati through Dhamma Gīta fosters joy, connection, and mental clarity, essential for meditation and alleviating stress and suffering. The six recollections include: 1) The Buddha, 2) The Dhamma Gīta, 3) The Sangha, 4) Generosity, 5) Virtues, and 6) The Deities (Deva).

Dhamma Gīta represents a contemporary innovation that combines music with Dhamma teachings to engage younger generations, particularly via social media platforms. This approach provides a source of mental support for those facing emotional struggles, including those contemplating self-harm or suicide. Researchers highlight the importance of using Dhamma Gīta to heal the minds of practitioners by integrating principles from music therapy, which are beneficial for mental well-being. The specific benefits of applying music therapy principles to Dhamma Gīta (Phrakrupaladsumpipatanatheerajarn (Kittiched Siriwattgo) et al., 2024) include:

1. Emotional Management: Music promotes relaxation, happiness, and stress reduction by stimulating the release of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that enhances mood.

2. Boosting Productivity and Creativity: Music increases energy levels and sparks creativity, aiding in work and intellectual tasks.

3. Memory Recall: Music supports memory retention and emotional connections to past experiences.

4. Pain Relief: Music can alleviate physical pain and fatigue, benefiting patients undergoing medical treatments, such as chemotherapy.

5. Meditation Therapy: Dhamma Gīta, with its musical accompaniment, supports meditation by calming the mind and increasing mindfulness, which is crucial for mental stability.

Key Benefits of Dhamma Gīta Through Music

Presenting the Dhamma through music has a positive impact on both physical and mental health, fostering well-being in daily life. When music is carefully selected to align with Dhamma teachings and is played in an appropriate setting, it can enhance listeners' mental and emotional health. The primary benefits of Dhamma Gīta through music (Phra krupaladsumpipatanatheerajarn (Kittiched Siriwattgo) et al., 2024) include:

1. Fostering a Calm and Mindful State: Listening to Dhamma Gīta music helps cultivate a peaceful, mindful state of mind, enabling individuals to focus on their thoughts and experiences more clearly.

2. Enhancing Satisfaction and Happiness: The uplifting qualities of the music help listeners feel happier and more content, motivating them to improve themselves.

3. Reducing Stress and Anxiety: Dhamma Gīta music has a calming effect, reducing stress and anxiety, and promoting a relaxed state of mind.

4. Promoting Meditation: The music associated with Dhamma Gīta helps facilitate meditation by enhancing concentration and allowing for a smooth meditative experience.

5. Supporting Emotional Processing: Music integrated with Dhamma Gīta aids in emotional regulation, helping individuals process and express their emotions in a balanced and healthy way.

6. Strengthening Mental Stability: Engaging with Dhamma Gīta through music improves mental resilience, helping individuals cope with life's challenges and pressures.

In summary, Dhamma Gīta, which combines Buddhist teachings with music, offers a holistic approach to improving well-being, mental health, and spiritual growth. It provides an accessible and therapeutic means of practicing the Dhamma, particularly through music, which helps foster a calm, focused mind, emotional balance, and overall mental stability.

Applying Loving-Kindness Meditation with Dhamma Gīta to Enhance Adolescents' Mental Well-Being

Loving-Kindness Meditation (LKM) combined with *Dhamma Gīta* music presents a holistic approach to enhancing adolescents' mental well-being. Rooted in Buddhist philosophy, these practices offer significant psychological and emotional benefits, making them especially useful in addressing the challenges of adolescence.

LKM has been shown to reduce anxiety, depression, and stress by fostering a compassionate mindset that counters self-criticism and negative thinking, which are prevalent during adolescence. Studies suggest that practicing LKM can decrease suicidal thoughts and self-harm among young people (Neff, 2011). Additionally, LKM promotes empathy and compassion, enabling adolescents to build positive relationships and reduce social isolation and bullying (Salzberg, 1995). Moreover, it encourages self-compassion, teaching adolescents to treat themselves with kindness, which enhances emotional resilience and helps them cope with identity struggles and negative emotions (Neff, 2011).

Music inspired by Buddhist teachings, such as *Dhamma Gīta*, helps adolescents achieve a state of calm and mindfulness. Research indicates that calming music fosters focus, promotes inner peace, and reduces stress and anxiety (Sharma and Monteiro, 2016). Beyond stress relief, this type of music also supports emotional expression, providing a therapeutic outlet for processing and regulating emotions effectively (DeNora, 2000).

The Combined Impact of LKM and Dhamma Gīta Music: When practiced together, LKM and *Dhamma Gīta* music offer a comprehensive method for enhancing physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. This combination fosters self-awareness, emotional openness, and kindness while also strengthening emotional resilience and empathy—skills critical for navigating adolescence (Hanh, 1999). Furthermore, the inclusion of music deepens the meditation experience, making it more engaging and accessible for adolescents, thereby improving their focus and overall practice (Bodhi, 2000). To maximize the benefits, these practices should be tailored to resonate with adolescents' unique needs and preferences. Flexibility is key to encouraging participation. Moreover, adapting these practices to cultural contexts and promoting inclusivity are essential for broader acceptance and engagement (Sharma & Monteiro, 2016). Programs integrating LKM and *Dhamma Gīta* music can be incorporated into school wellness initiatives, therapy sessions, and

youth programs, with facilitators receiving adequate training for effective implementation. In summary, The integration of Loving-Kindness Meditation and Dhamma Gīta music provides a promising and holistic approach to supporting adolescents' mental health. By reducing stress, fostering compassion, and enhancing emotional regulation, these practices enable young people to build emotional resilience and navigate their formative years with greater clarity and well-being.

From the review of related research, a program worth exploring further is the Mindfulness Wisdom & Loving-Kindness program by the Buddhamahametta Foundation (2024). This program integrates Loving-Kindness Meditation (LKM) with *Dhamma Gita* music. It includes mindfulness practice sessions for various activities, using *Dhamma Gita* as a medium to help participants, especially adolescents, connect with Buddhist teachings more easily. The approach aligns with their daily lives and behaviors, making the practice more accessible, comfortable, and effective.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Loving-Kindness Meditation (LKM) combined with *Dhamma Gīta* music presents a comprehensive approach to enhancing adolescents' mental well-being, addressing the emotional, psychological, and spiritual challenges they face. By fostering compassion and countering self-criticism, LKM helps reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, while promoting self-compassion, empathy, and stronger social connections. Meanwhile, *Dhamma Gīta* music, inspired by Buddhist teachings, creates a calming and mindful atmosphere that supports emotional regulation and provides a therapeutic outlet for adolescents. Together, these practices enhance self-awareness, emotional resilience, and kindness, equipping young people with the tools to navigate the complexities of adolescence more effectively. Programs like the Mindfulness Wisdom & Loving-Kindness initiative by the Buddhamahametta Foundation (2024) integrate these practices into structured mindfulness sessions using *Dhamma Gīta* music as a medium. These programs make Buddhist teachings more accessible and relevant to adolescents' daily lives, offering a culturally sensitive, engaging, and effective method to support their mental health and overall well-being.

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