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Buddhist Approaches to Managing Stress and Improving Mental Health
พุทธวิธีบริหารจัดการความเครียดและเสริมสร้างสุขภาพจิต

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บทคัดย่อ

มวลมนุษย์ทั่วทุกมุมโลกประสบกับความเครียดมากมายในชีวิตประจำวัน สืบเนื่องมาจากความเปลี่ยนแปลงที่รวดเร็วของโลก ซึ่งก่อให้เกิดปัญหาทางด้านเศรษฐกิจ สังคม การเมือง และปัญหาครอบครัว ปัญหาแต่ละอย่างนำไปสู่ความเครียด มีผลก่อให้เกิดคุณภาพในการทำงานตกต่ำ ผลิตผลตกต่ำ ปัญหาด้านขวัญกำลังใจ ปัญหาสุขภาพ และความทุกข์ทางใจอื่นอีกมากมาย ความเครียดอาจเกิดจากเหตุการณ์จริงหรือจากจินตนาการก็เป็นได้ ซึ่งสามารถบรรเทาให้ลดลงหรือบริหารจัดการได้โดยการปฏิบัติตามหลักคำสอนทางศาสนา บทความวิจัยนี้นำเสนอพุทธวิธีบริหารจัดการความเครียดและเสริมสร้างสุขภาพจิต เช่น การสร้างความรู้สึกเชิงบวก การเปลี่ยนวิกฤติเป็นโอกาส การสร้างความสงบสุขภายใน การเปลี่ยนกระบวนความคิด การบำเพ็ญสมาธิ และการดำเนินตามมรรคมีองค์แปด ตามหลักการทางพระพุทธศาสนา ความสุขขึ้นอยู่กับความฉลาดของจิตซึ่งเป็นปัญญาภายในในการตอบสนองต่อสถานการณ์ที่แต่ละคนประสบพบเห็น ทุกคนจะต้องมีสติกำหนดรู้ความรู้สึกของตนทุกขณะ

หลีกเลี่ยงอารมณ์ที่ก่อกวนจิตใจ และความรู้สึกเชิงลบ บุคคลจะต้องเรียนรู้วิธีประคับประคองสุขภาวะทางจิตเพื่อมิให้จิตตกไปในอารมณ์ฝ่ายอกุศล นอกจากนี้ บุคคลจะต้องเรียนรู้วิธีการเปลี่ยนแปลงวิธีคิด มองเหตุการณ์ในเชิงบวก พร้อมทั้งกำจัดพลังแห่งอกุศลจิต และพัฒนากุศลจิต (ความคิดที่ดี) ให้เกิดขึ้น

คำสำคัญ: พุทธวิธี การบริหารความเครียด สุขภาพจิต ความสุขภายใน

Abstract

Humanity around the world is faced with tremendous stress in everyday life due to the rapid changes in the world creating economic, social, political, and family problems. Each problem can lead to stress, which later on can result in poor work quality, poor productivity, morale problems, health problems, and other mental suffering. Stress can be real or imagined, which can be reduced and managed through implementation of religious teachings. This research paper presents the Buddhist approaches to managing stress and improving mental health such as creating positive feelings, changing crisis to opportunity, creating inner peace, reframing thinking, practicing meditation, and following the eight-fold path. According to Buddhism, happiness is very much dependent on mental intelligence, or the wisdom within one's mind, to respond and to react to the situations confronting each individual. Everyone needs to be conscious of one's feelings, and avoid all mental disturbances and negative feelings. One needs to learn how to maintain mental well-being so that the mind doesn't fall victim to unwholesome thoughts (*Akusla*). Additionally, one needs to learn how to manipulate the ways of thinking, see things more positively, and diminish the force of bad thoughts and develop the good ones.

Keywords: Buddhist Approaches, Stress Management, Mental Health, Inner Happiness

Introduction

Buddhism originated in India, where Gautama Buddha was enlightened under the Bodhi tree and then set forth to spread his message of enlightenment, compassion, and peace. Buddhist teachings and practices have greatly influenced Asian culture and religion for millennia (Mitchell, 2002). The teachings in Buddhism place great emphasis on improving the supreme wisdom to combat mental suffering such as stress, worry, anxiety, sadness, and fear. One needs to understand the suffering, its causes, its resolutions and implementation so that one will attain the state of real happiness and inner peace.

The peace of the external world comes from inner peace that is in our mind. Dalai Lama (2001) stated that without inner peace, no matter how comfortable your life is materially, you may still be worried, disturbed or unhappy because of circumstances. Material development without spiritual development can cause serious problems. Real happiness and peace can be achieved through supreme wisdom. Dhammananda (2000) explained that wisdom in Buddhism is not academic or scientific knowledge. We can gather vast book knowledge through learning but that in itself does not bring wisdom. Wisdom cannot appear in the mind as long as selfishness, hatred and delusion predominate. It is only when these mental hindrances are completely erased from the mind and replaced with mental development that real wisdom will appear. To be successful in work and family life, one has to overcome a number of obstacles, drawbacks, and failures. If one learns how to think positively, speak politely, and act appropriately, he or she will not suffer from all problems confronting him or her. Channuwong and Katatian (2012b) stated that external events cannot be controlled, but one can learn to control the mind so as not to be affected by uncontrollable situations.

The journey of human life may experience both good luck and bad luck at different moments comparable to the two sides of a coin, i.e. upside and downside. A person who cannot control the mind will be very happy when faced with good luck, but will suffer greatly during difficult times, will suffer pain, distress and sorrow when faced with bad luck. During a time of crisis in our lives, we need to look for new opportunities and discover our potential and morale in order to be successful; in this way, we will not feel depressed and at least we'll feel that we have an opportunity and potential to make our hopes and dreams come true. In this regard, Dalai Lama (2001) stated that sometimes we feel hopeless; we become demoralized, thinking that we are unable to do anything. In such situations we should recall the opportunity and potential we have to be successful.

To live means to suffer because human nature is not perfect and neither is the world in which we live. During our lifetime, we inevitably have to endure physical suffering such as pain, sickness, injury, old age and death. We have to endure psychological suffering such as stress, sadness, fear, disappointment and depression. The aim of education and practice in Buddhism is to lead the person to attain the state of cessation of suffering, eternal happiness and peace. The purposes of this research were to investigate the causes and effects of stress, and find out the Buddhist approaches to reducing stress and improving mental health.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this research are (a) to investigate the causes and effects of stress, and (b) to study Buddhist approaches to reducing stress and improving mental health.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

The main concepts and ideas underlying the approaches used for reducing stress were derived from the teachings of Buddhism. The scope of this research was confined to the causes and effects of stress, and approaches to reducing stress and improving mental health based on the concepts of Buddhism. Both primary and secondary sources were used in this research.

Expected Outcomes

Since stress is like a silent killer, people who feel stressful may feel frustrated and burned out when they face problems that can lead to stress. This may leave a negative impact on the organization itself. People with a higher percentage of stress caused by work, finance, health, social conflict and family problems may not be satisfied with their job and therefore they may not feel happy working in their organizations. The Buddhist approaches can be very helpful for reducing stress as the main purposes of Buddhism are to liberate people from all kinds of suffering, especially mental suffering and imagined stress.

The Causes and Effect of Stress

Koster (2007) stated that stress has become a term that is widely used nowadays, and the media draws it to our attention frequently during any given week. The word “stress” is derived from the Latin word “stringere”, which means “to pull tight” or “to tighten”. The term “stress” can be translated as “pressure” or “tension”; in everyday language; we use it as an umbrella term denoting all kinds of tension. Koster also described stress as a situation where there is an imbalance between the demands made on us, and the tools we have at our disposal to meet these demands. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined stress

as a psychological state with both cognitive and emotional components. There is a notion that stress entails a sequence of events that include the presence of demands, a set of evaluative processes through which those demands are perceived as significant (in terms of threats and its impact) for the well-being of individual.

Every change that takes place can have the potential to cause stress. Stress can be emotional or physical. Stress can even be caused by imagined or perceived issues that are not based on reality. The connection between physical health and emotional health is strong; stress can contribute directly to one's physical well being. Stress can affect an organization by adversely effecting productivity, absenteeism, employee turnover, medical costs, and compensation awards. Stress causes low productivity, morale problems, absenteeism, alcohol abuse, poor work quality, high turnover, and accidents. In short, stress costs an organization a lot of money (Carpel, 1992).

Stress may be related to work satisfaction. Beehr (1995) examined teachers' work satisfaction and reports of job-related stress in some English elementary schools. He found that teachers' general satisfaction and stress at work were related mostly to their reported feelings about what happened in class, such as relations with pupils, the process of teaching, and pupil behavior in school, rather than to administrative or policy questions such as degree of work autonomy, and relations with principals. Turner (2010) studied the financial stress and its solution; the results showed that magazines, newspapers and other media had suggested ways people could save money while shopping. It concluded that one should purchase only the necessary things. If one can control expenditure, one may be able to balance it with his or her income. For example, when one considers buying a new item, one should think about what one already has. One does not need to have every new appliance on the market when the existing item could serve the same purpose.

In a study done in New Zealand, Dewe and O'Driscol (2002) identified the following work stressors: task overload, lack of control over activities and outcomes, lack of job satisfaction, role conflicts, rapid or unpredictable changes, interpersonal conflicts, unrealistic expectations, and feelings of inadequacy. Several studies revealed that work overloads and time constraints are the factors causing stress. Wilkes, et al. (1998) found that work overloads and time constraints were significant contributors to work stress among community nurses. Work stress can be defined as reluctance to come to work and a feeling of constant pressure accompanied by general physiological and psychological behavioral as stress symptoms. Al-Aameri

(2003) described in his study that one of the six factors of occupational stress is pressure originating from the workload. Al-Aameri also found that low levels of job satisfaction are associated with high levels of work stress, and work stress leads to job dissatisfaction. Job stress is an indicator of job dissatisfaction, accompanied by an inclination to leave the organization.

Alexandros-Stamatios, Matilyn, and Cary (2003) stated that family and work are inter-related to the extent that experiences in one area affect the quality of life in the other. Stress at work might affect home life; home problems are brought to work and work has negative effects on home life. Lasky (1995) found that demands associated with family and finances are a major source of extra-organizational stress that can cause workplace stress. Arnold, Cooper, and Robertson (1998) found that poor relationships would lead to stressful problems. Employees who have poor relationships with co-workers cannot reach an organizational goal because there is a lack of support and participation from their colleagues. Poor relationship results from a lack of trust, a lack of support, and low interest in listening and attempting to tackle workplace problems. Makin, Cooper, and Cox (1996) found that having to live with other people is one of the most stressful aspects of life. This is also true of working relationships where workers are required to have significant interaction with other people, whether colleagues, bosses or subordinates. These relationships can be a major source of stress.

The effect of stress is not always negative. Some mild stress actually improves productivity and can be helpful in developing creative ideas. But if everyone lives under a certain amount of stress and that stress is severe and it persists long enough, it can be harmful. Such stress can be as disruptive to an individual as any accident. It can result in poor attendance, excessive use of alcohol or other drugs, poor job performance, or even overall poor health (Mondy, Noe, and Premeaux, 2002). Dunham (1992) identified four kinds of stress effects: (a) behavioral (e.g. heavy smoking, absenteeism, and turnover); (b) emotional (e.g. nervousness, anxiety, and depression); (c) mental (e.g. inability to concentrate); and (d) physical (e.g. headache and gastro-intestinal problems).

In sum, stress can be real and imagined. Some real situations such as facing bankruptcy, being separated from a loved one, getting a divorce, illness, accidents, and being unemployed can cause stress. On the other hand, when people imagine, worry or think too much about negative outcomes it can also cause stress even though those situations may not really happen. The effects of stress may be health problems, inability to work and sleep well, sadness, depression and many

other physical and mental sufferings. However, through correct understanding and practicing in the teachings of the Lord Buddha, all kinds of stress can be reduced and managed effectively.

Buddhist Approaches to Reducing Stress and Improving Mental Health

This section presents the Buddhist approaches to reducing stress and improving mental health from a literature survey and theoretical analysis. Since Buddhism is a religion that places great emphasis on improving wisdom within, which is considered as a special weapon to overcome suffering in human beings, there are many interesting approaches which can be implemented to combat all kinds of stress. The Buddhist approaches to reducing stress and improving mental health can be presented as follows:

Creating Positive Feeling

In Buddhism, positive feeling is very much dependent on the way one sees things and responds to the situations. In the same situation, some may feel negative, whereas some may remain feeling positive. In spite of many problems and stressful situations, if one learns how to think positively, speak politely and reasonably, and act appropriately, one will not suffer from any problems confronting him or her. Therefore, one should learn to create a positive feeling even during a time of crisis. Channuwong and Kantatian (2012a) explained that positive feelings are hopeful, pleasant, and energetic feelings, which are based on the followings: (a) compassion and love, (b) satisfaction, (c) confidence, (d) expectation of success, (e) reasonableness, and (f) tolerance. The basic way to create a positive feeling is to see things in positive manner, and then calm one's mind, and make it free from stress and all negative emotions like hatred, anger and revenge so that he or she will have space available in the mind to generate positive mental energy. This mental energy can be achieved only if one has a calm and peaceful state of mind.

By focusing on positive thoughts and invoking the power of positive thinking, one can create one's physiological well-being. Willingness to complete a task in a positive manner can enhance personal performance. It doesn't matter what kind of organization one is associated with, this method can be very helpful. Channuwong (2009) described two kinds of positive thinking: (a) reasonable positive thinking, and (b) unreasonable positive thinking. One should invoke reasonable positive thinking, which is the right way to solve the problems.

Changing Crisis to Opportunity

In the researcher's opinion, each question has its answer, and each problem also has its resolution; this is a universal truth. Therefore, whenever one experiences problems, he or she shouldn't feel too disappointed. One should understand that the problem is what one has to know, not what one has to be. The causes of the problem are what one has to eliminate and destroy, not what one has to foster and increase. The resolution to that problem is what one has to implement. In sum, suffering is what one has to identify, the cause of suffering is what one has to eliminate, the resolution to that problem is what one has to implement, and the inner peace is what one has to create within one's mind.

In fact, each problem is not big or small in itself; it is a very simple one. But it becomes bigger or smaller based on one's imagination, adherence and attachment. Our imagination is very important in creating happiness and suffering in our life. If we have negative feelings towards experiencing the problem, the problem will become bigger and more serious in our mind than it really is. If we have positive feelings, even a very serious problem becomes a very simple one. V. Vacharamethee, a Buddhist scholar (2012), suggested that we should have positive thoughts towards hard work, since it is a great opportunity for us to be professional; without hard work no one can be an expert and professional. Usually, most famous people have to work harder than average persons do. At the same time, we should not forget to do things that can help us relax our body and spirit. Whenever we experience a complicated and serious problem we should think positively; it is a great opportunity to improve and sharpen our wisdom. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (2010) mentioned that usually complicated, complex and serious problems may require us to seek for more resolutions; hence, knowledge and wisdom will arise during the time we are looking for more resolutions. Remember that scientists are people who set up very complicated hypotheses, and try to find the answers to those hypotheses. Whenever some people blame us and complain to us about something, we should think positively that those people are telling and showing us a great treasure. Usually people do not like it when being criticized and blamed; they think that this is negative feedback. Only a few persons can see that there are great values hidden behind the blame and complaints by others. We should learn to say thank you to those who blame and complain about us.

Therefore, whenever one experiences and faces serious crises and problems in one's life, one should think positively that *"among crisis there will be an opportunity; critical situations always create a hero".* One should consider critical situations as a lesson

to improve one's knowledge, experience and wisdom. Moreover, one should create a new opportunity in the midst of crisis so that problems will not pass by without any benefits.

Creating Inner Peace

The fundamental concerns of Buddhism are as follows: to identify the inner causes of suffering, embrace the possibility of freedom from suffering, and explore the means by which one can realize such freedom (Wallace and Shapiro, 2006). Through Buddhist practice, people could gradually approach the ultimate goal of life. Gautama Buddha described the ultimate goal, Nirvana, as the complete cessation of craving. Another word the Buddha used to describe Nirvana was peacefulness, which refers to a status of being "unmoved" by life events that would ordinarily shift one into a negative state of mind (Mitchell, 2002). It was believed that even though a nirvanic person is not immune to things such as sickness or death, he or she can experience a "peaceful and calm" state of mind when facing ills. Therefore, according to Buddhism, maintaining inner peacefulness is the ideal mental state that one should long for (Chen Lee, et al., 2012).

According to Buddhism, there are two kinds of happiness: mental happiness and physical happiness. Mental happiness is a state of mind that is free from all mental disturbances and negative feelings like discouragement, sadness, worry and anxiety. Mental happiness can be achieved through meditation and wisdom. Physical happiness is a condition in which the body is full of energy, and free from any ailments and diseases, which can be achieved through appropriate health care. In order to create inner happiness, one should eliminate the feeling of hopelessness and disappointment. One should avoid repeatedly dwelling on negative thoughts and feelings. One should learn to control his or her mind; controlling one's mind is very important way to avoid stress and suffering because mind is a leader of all behaviors and activities in human life. In Dhammapada text, the Buddha stated that

"Manopubbanggamā dhammā, manosetthā manomayā, manasā ce padutthena, bhasati vā karoti vā, tato nam dukkhamanveti, cakkam'va vahato padam."

"All the phenomena of existence have mind as their precursor, mind as their supreme leader, and of mind are they made. If one speaks or acts with an impure mind, suffering follows him in the same way as the wheel follows the foot of the chariot." (Dhammapada cited in Kaviratana, 1980).

"Manopubbanggamā dhammā, manosetthā manomayā, manasā ce pasannena, bhasati vā karoti vā, tato nam sukkhamanveti, chaya'va anupāyini."

"All the phenomena of existence have mind as their precursor, mind as their supreme leader, and of mind are they made. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows him like his shadow that never leaves him." (Dhammapada cited in Kaviratana, 1980).

The words of the Lord Buddha place great emphasis on mind, the inner power that stands behind any movement in human activities. Thus, one's positive or negative thoughts are very important in creating happiness and suffering in human life. Negative feelings usually occur in people who are full of anger and hatred. Positive feelings usually occur in people who can placate their anger and hatred. In order to realize this eternal truth, the Buddha stated in Dhammapada text,

"Akkocchi mam avadhi mam, ajini mam ahasi me, ye ca tam upanayhanti, veram tesam na sammati."

"Hatred of those who harbor such ill feelings as, "He reviled me, assaulted me, vanquished me and robbed me," is never appeased."

"Akkocchi mam avadhi mam, ajini mam ahāsi me, ye ca tam nupanayhanti, veram tesupasammati."

"The hatred of those who do not harbor such ill feelings as, "He reviled me, assaulted me, vanquished me and robbed me," is easily pacified."

"Na hi verena verani, sammantidha kudacanam, averena ca sammanti, esa dhammo sanantano." "Through hatred, hatreds are never appeased; through non-hatred are hatreds always appeased -- and this is an eternal law" (Dhammapada cited in Kaviratana, 1980).

It is a healthy strategy to wait a few seconds before reacting whenever people or things make us angry. Usually anger will happen when we do not have patience and reason. Waiting a few seconds before reacting can help one to be more reasonable. When patience and reason occur, wisdom will arise, which will help us to understand the reality of things. Since anger really results in suffering, adversity, confusion, sadness, negative feeling, revenge and unhappiness, the more anger we can eliminate and reduce, the more happiness, peaceful mind, and positive feeling we can expect to have in our life (Channuwong and Kantatian, 2012a).

Reframing Thinking

One should learn to reframe thinking, change one's thoughts, and get away from and remove oneself from stressors. If one cannot stop and control thinking, one should think other stories. When thinking about satisfactory events, one's negative thoughts will be changed and developed to be positive. If one cannot change the situations causing

stress, one should change the stories in one mind. Dalai Lama (2001) taught that one should replace the old emotion with the new one. Usually people's minds can hold only one emotion at a time; if one can change the emotion at that moment, the old emotion will be automatically replaced by the new one. One should develop new thoughts, which regularly remove and distract the mind from stressors. Thus, learning how to change the emotion and replace it with a better one is a very important way to recover one's mental health. Instead of having negative feelings, one should reframe negative feeling by positive attitudes; replace anxiety by finding out new opportunities and replace the feeling of disappointment by creating new hope.

Practicing Meditation

Meditation is generally a subjective, personal experience and most often practiced without any external involvement, except perhaps prayer beads to count prayers. Meditation often involves invoking and cultivating a feeling or internal state such as compassion, or attending to some focal point (Feuerstein, 2006). The word "meditation" means many things depending upon the context of its use. People practice meditation for many reasons within the context of their culture. Meditation is a component of many religions, and has been practiced since antiquity, especially by monks (George and Jeffrey, 2002). Sogyal Rinpoche (1994) mentioned that the gift of learning to meditate is the greatest gift you can give yourself in this life, for it is only through meditation that you can undertake the journey to discover your true nature, and so find the stability and confidence you will need to live, and die, well. Meditation is the road to enlightenment.

Meditation can be classified into two kinds: tranquility or relaxation meditation and insight or mindfulness meditation. According to Koster (2007), in tranquility meditation, one object is used and all other experiences are excluded. This basic object can be of different kinds: a flame, a sound (mantra) we repeat in our mind, water, an object we are observing, and so on. The Buddhist texts on meditation mentions more than forty different objects of concentration on which we can anchor our attention. When we are distracted by thoughts, emotions, sounds, or other experiences, we might just lightly acknowledge that this is the case but in all other respects we ignore them and return immediately to the original object of meditation. Through this narrowed and concentrated attention, quite soon we are completely focused and feel a deep sense of peace. Insight meditation is a technique that originated in Buddhism as practiced in Southeast Asia. Just as with tranquility meditation, it also results in relaxation, but that is not the main goal. In insight meditation, this restfulness is expressed as an accepting

and harmonious awareness of whatever is happening in or to us. Insight mediation involves learning to observe directly, accept, and understand the physical, emotional, and sensory experiences within ourselves. This gives us an opportunity to realize more happiness and inner freedom, and to get a clear understanding of who, what, and how we are. Insight mediation encourages the development of greater clarity and purity in the mind, and of intuitive wisdom.

Buddhist meditation is fundamentally concerned with two themes: transforming the mind, and using it to explore itself and other phenomena. The traditional goal of Buddhists is, as part of The Noble Eightfold Path, reaching enlightenment, which means liberation from the bonds of delusion and suffering. Meditation is also practiced for health benefits, which have been observed using the scientific method (Wallace, 2007). In compassion meditation, one develops a strong desire to help others, and thus transform his or her mind into a more compassionate way of being (even at baseline), which in turn transforms how they view and interact with others, especially when others are suffering. Feeling that other's suffering is the same as their own may create sympathy, generosity and kindness to living beings (Yogis of Tibet, 2009).

Deep breathing is considered the simplest and most effective way to reduce stress; participants should focus on deep breathing, and not allow their minds to wander to more stressful thoughts. Channuwong and Kantatian (2012b) stated that it is imperative that people have tools that they can use to reduce stress, and lower anxiety. Among many stressful situations, if managers cannot find any technique to reduce their stress, the deep breathing is the most useful and helpful technique. When we focus on breathing, we do not allow our mind to wander to more stressful thoughts; our mind will be relaxed along with the refreshing air flowing from our nose to brain. We can start counting 1-upon inhaling and 2-upon exhaling, and then 3-10 upon inhaling and exhaling. Meditation has been practiced for a long time in order to calm the mind, and attain tranquility and inner peace.

In sum, practicing meditation can help people to create mindfulness (*Sati*) and consciousness (*Sampachanya*) in each movement of human activity and emotion. As the mind always thinks about stressful stories, mindfulness and consciousness are the tools that can be used to keep the mind away from those mental disturbances. When there is a good concentration in the mind, there will be enough mindfulness to drive one towards good physical and mental health. Meditation also helps to make the mind function well; it enhances the tranquility of the mind, and enables it to think well, remember well and perform other duties well.

Following the Eight-Fold Path

The Buddhist philosophy asserted and supported the fact that the misery of human beings can be resolved. The Buddha advocated four noble truths to overcome the miseries of human life after his enlightenment through six years of study and meditation in the forest. The four noble truths are: (a) the fact that there is suffering, (b) there is a cause of suffering, (c) there is cessation or removal of suffering, and (d) there is a path leading to cessation of suffering. The aim of education in Buddhism is to lead the person to attain the state of cessation of misery and achieve eternal happiness and peace. The path that leads to cessation of misery is called the eight-fold path. It consists of eight steps namely: (a) right understanding, (b) right thought, (c) right speech, (d) right conduct, (e) right livelihood, (f) right endeavor, (g) right mindfulness, and (h) right concentration (D.II.312; vbh. 235 referred to in Phra Dhamma Pidok (Prayudh Payutto), 2003). Right understanding and right thought are classified as wisdom. Right speech, right conduct and right livelihood are classified as morality. Right endeavor, right mindfulness, and right concentration are classified as meditation. In brief, everyone can remove physical and mental suffering through practicing the principles of wisdom, morality and meditation. The Buddha endorsed the eight-fold path by stating that "This is the path; there is no other path that leads to purity of insight. Follow this path, for this path bewilders the Evil one (Mara)" (Dhammapada text cited in Kaviratana, 1980).

The eight fold path is also called the middle path, which is appropriate to be practiced and implemented in all situations. His Majesty the King of Thailand has proposed the philosophy of sufficiency economy consisting of moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity , based on the middle path principle in Buddhism. If one spends one's life with moderation, one will be free from stress caused from spending more money than the income that one can earn, and he or she will not be faced with a debt problem. If one spends one's life with reasonableness, one will be free from stress caused from unreasonable decision making and inappropriate behavior. If one spends one's life with self-immunity , one will be able to rely on oneself, and live with one's own resources without too much dependence on others. Moreover, one will be free from stress caused from a lack of self-dependence. Wisakha Poochinda (2012: 1-4) described that sufficiency economy philosophy is the working principle that the King of Thailand himself has practiced, which can be implemented by each individual, family, and society for solving daily life problems and sustainable development of the country. Sufficiency economy philosophy

places great emphasis on the middle path, which consists of the process of step by step development.

Conclusion

We can view stress in different definitions and perspectives. Stress is a fact of nature. It is a force from the outside world and inner world affecting an individual or an organization. The outside world means outside situations that put demand or pressure on a person. The inside world means mental hindrance or negative feelings towards situations in which a person imagines and creates problems in his or her mind. Stress is an unavoidable consequence of life but can be reduced and managed effectively through right understanding and proper implementation of the right approaches. Channuwong (2012) stated that anything that causes change in one's life can cause stress. The point is that some people are scared of change, especially bad change. When they really don't know what is going to happen, they create imagined stress, what one might call "worrying". Imagined changes are just as stressful as real changes.

Due to high competition and struggle for survival, people in all areas of work today are faced with many problems such as social problems, family problems, economic problems, political problems, and workplace problems, which may lead to and create stress at any time. Individuals need to hope for the best and prepare for the worst at the same time. The best is what a person desires and joyfully accepts because it is a positive reward of individual destiny. I may think that the whole world belongs to me, stands behind my success, and supports my hope and dream to come true. However, human destiny is uncertain. One may be confronted with bad luck or the worst in one's life without any forewarning. Thus, individuals need to be well prepared to cope with unexpected events in one's life, or at least to increase the immune system in one's body and spirit so that one will not suffer from unsatisfied situations.

In order to deal effectively with stress, individuals should see things more positively, and try to diminish the forces of negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones. Those who ignore their mental health or inner peace will face sufferings and adversities everywhere they go, any step they walk, and anytime they perform an activity. Time and energy are required for maintaining physical health, whereas calmness of mind is required for improving emotional well-being. People with good emotional health will have ability to reduce stress and bounce back from adversity. They remain adaptable, happy, and positive in both bad times and good. They

have the ability to maintain good feelings and recover from bad thinking, which is known as "resilience." Success always belongs to a person who can manage stress effectively, eliminate emotional problems, sustain mental well-being, and are able to work in the midst of stressful environments.

Since the main purposes of Buddhism are to teach people to "avoid evil, to do good, and to purify the mind," Buddhism has many interesting teachings which can help believers liberate the mind from all kinds of suffering caused from stress, worry, anxiety and fear. By practicing the Buddhist teachings such as creating positive feeling, changing crisis to opportunity, creating inner peace, reframing thinking, practicing meditation, and following the eight-fold path, stress can be reduced and managed effectively.

Recommendations

This research is qualitative without a case study of employees in any organizations, there should be a case study on the causes and effects of stress, and strategies for reducing stress of employees in some organizations. There should be deep study in details of each approach to reducing stress in the teachings of the Buddha in order to find more appropriate strategies for reducing stress.

The approaches to reducing stress in this research are limited to the teachings in Buddhism; there should be further study on approaches to reducing stress through other religions and modern sciences.

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