

Research Report (Revised Edition)

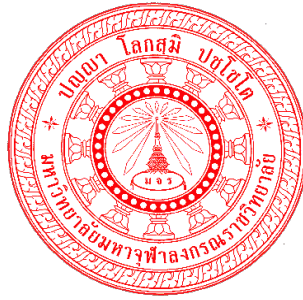
**A Model of Vipassana Meditation Practice for
Psychological Well-being Empowerment in Elderly Women**

by

**Phramaha Weerasak Abhinandavedi, Dr.
Dr. Nadnapang Phophichit**

**International Buddhist Studies College
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University
B.E. 2567**

**Research Project Funded by International Buddhist Studies College
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Research Title: A Model of Vipassana Meditation Practice for Psychological Well-being Empowerment in Elderly Women

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Abstract

The research titled “A Model of Vipassana Meditation Practice for Psychological Well-being Empowerment in Elderly Women” aimed to 1) To explore concepts and theories of psychological well-being, empowerment, and the contexts, problems, and necessary needs of elderly women in Vipassana meditation practice. 2) To Develop and examine the effects of Vipassana Meditation Practice on Psychological Well-being Empowerment in Elderly Women. 3) To present the Model of Vipassana Meditation Practice for Psychological Well-being Empowerment in Elderly Women.

This research employed mixed methods research. In-depth interviews were conducted with 4 groups of key informants including 1) Buddhist scholars 2) Vipassana Masters both domestically and internationally 3) Psychologists 4) Wellness experts 5) Elderly women.

Additionally, an experimental study involving the Four Foundations of Mindfulness practice conducted with a volunteer sample group participating in the research project, totaling 30 individuals, and interviews with volunteer groups after the experiment.

Acknowledgement

The research work on “A Model of Vipassana Meditation Practice for Psychological Well-being Empowerment in Elderly Women” has been successfully completed through my diligent efforts and the generous assistance of various individuals and institutions. Without their support, this research would not have been possible, and I extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude to them.

I would like to begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to Most Venerable Phra Medhivajrapundit. Prof. Dr., Director of the International Buddhist Studies College at MCU, as well as the institute's executives and staff. Their kindness and invaluable assistance provided essential guidance for each step of the research process.

Additionally, I extend my thanks to the senior experts of the institute for their insightful suggestions, which played a crucial role in the successful accomplishment of the research objectives.

In closing, I wish to dedicate any merit arising from this research to those who offered moral support throughout the process. May they all enjoy lasting prosperity, good health, and eternal happiness.

Researchers

August 2024

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VMP	Vipassana Meditation Practice
Ibid	In the same source
Loc. cit.	In the same page of the same source

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of the Problems

The global demographic landscape is experiencing a significant shift due to increased life expectancy and declining birth rates. This phenomenon, known as population aging, is particularly pronounced in developed nations but is also becoming evident in developing countries. Improved healthcare, nutrition, and living standards have contributed to people living longer, healthier lives. However, this demographic shift presents substantial challenges for societies worldwide, affecting economic stability, healthcare systems, and social structures.

The aging society poses several critical problems: 1) **Economic Impact:** As the proportion of elderly individuals rises, there is a corresponding decrease in the working-age population. This shift can lead to labor shortages, decreased productivity, and increased pressure on pension systems. Financing pensions and healthcare for a growing elderly population without a proportional increase in the working-age demographic strains public finances. 2) **Healthcare Demands:** Older adults typically require more medical care due to chronic conditions and age-related illnesses. This increases the demand for healthcare services and long-term care facilities, straining existing healthcare infrastructures and leading to higher public and private healthcare expenditures. 3) **Social Implications:** Aging populations can lead to social isolation and loneliness, particularly among those without strong family support networks. Additionally, caregiving responsibilities often fall on middle-aged family members, who may experience stress and economic hardship as they balance work and caregiving duties.

Countries worldwide are grappling with the realities of an aging population: 1) **Japan:** Japan has the highest proportion of elderly citizens globally, with nearly 30% of its population aged 65 or older. This has prompted extensive governmental reforms, including policies to boost fertility rates and integrate more women and older individuals into the workforce. 2) **Europe:** Many European countries, including Italy and Germany, face similar issues, with aging populations putting pressure on social security systems. Reforms are being made to increase the retirement age and encourage higher birth rates through family-friendly policies. 3) **United States:** The U.S. is also seeing a growing elderly population, with significant impacts on Medicare and Social Security. Efforts are underway to reform healthcare and pension systems to ensure sustainability.

Thailand is among the fastest ageing countries in the world. Of its 67 million population, 12 million Thais, are elderly according to the latest national statistics report.

Since 2005, the country has been classified as an ‘aged society’ as people aged 60 years and above accounted for 10% of the population. It is expected that the country’s elderly population will increase to 28% and that Thailand will become a ‘super-aged society’ by the next decade. With advances in the health care system, the number and proportion of people aged 60 years and older are on the rise both in Thailand and globally. In 2019, more than one billion of the world’s population was above the age of 60. This is expected to increase to 1.4 billion by 2030 and 2.1 billion by 2050¹.

As we know that Thailand's aging population presents a complex picture, with elderly women facing a unique set of challenges that can significantly impact their well-being.

1) **Widowhood and Loneliness:** Due to higher life expectancy, many elderly women face widowhood. Traditional family structures often place the burden of caregiving on daughters, leading to social isolation and loneliness.

2) **Financial Strain:** Many women lack formal employment histories, resulting in limited pensions or dependence on children for financial support. This creates insecurity and a sense of powerlessness.

3) **Limited Access to Healthcare:** Rural areas often have fewer healthcare facilities, making it difficult for elderly women to access essential medical services. Cultural stigmas may also discourage them from seeking help for mental health concerns.

4) **Digital Divide:** The rapid shift to digital services can leave elderly women behind, hindering access to government assistance, social connections, and even healthcare information.

5) **Vulnerability to Abuse:** Social isolation and financial dependence can make elderly women more susceptible to financial abuse or neglect by family members or caregivers.

These challenges have a cascading effect on the well-being of elderly women in Thailand. Loneliness and isolation can contribute to depression and anxiety. Financial insecurity adds stress and worry. Limited access to healthcare can exacerbate health problems and decrease overall quality of life.

¹ <https://www.who.int/southeastasia/news/feature-stories/detail/thailands-leadership-and-innovation-towards-healthy>

Mindfulness practices like Vipassana meditation offer a powerful tool to bridge this gap and improve well-being in several ways:

- 1) **Stress Reduction:** By cultivating present-moment awareness, mindfulness can help regulate the nervous system, leading to a decrease in stress hormones and feelings of anxiety.
- 2) **Enhanced Emotional Regulation:** Through self-awareness, women can learn to observe and accept their emotions without judgment, promoting emotional resilience.
- 3) **Combating Loneliness:** Mindfulness practices often involve group activities, fostering social connections and a sense of community.
- 4) **Improved Cognitive Function:** Meditation can enhance focus, memory, and cognitive function, which can be helpful for managing daily life.
- 5) **Increased Self-Compassion:** Learning self-kindness and acceptance can be especially beneficial during challenging times and contribute to a greater sense of well-being.

To fully utilize the potential of mindfulness, it's crucial to make these practices accessible to elderly women in Thailand:

- 1) **Tailored Programs:** Develop shorter, modified meditation sessions suitable for physical limitations and cultural preferences.
- 2) **Community Integration:** Offer mindfulness programs within existing senior centers or social clubs, fostering a sense of familiarity and community.
- 3) **Technology Integration:** Develop mobile apps or online resources with audio-guided meditations in local languages to overcome geographical barriers.

By addressing the specific challenges faced by elderly women in Thailand and making mindfulness practices accessible, we can create a path towards improved well-being. By cultivating inner peace, emotional regulation, and social connection, mindfulness can empower these women to age with greater dignity and quality of life.

1.2 Objectives of the Research

1.2.1 To explore concepts and theories of psychological well-being, empowerment, and the contexts, problems, and necessary needs of elderly women in Vipassana meditation practice.

1.2.2 To Develop and examine the effects of Vipassana Meditation Practice on Psychological Well-being Empowerment in Elderly Women.

1.2.3 To present the Model of Vipassana Meditation Practice for Psychological Well-being Empowerment in Elderly Women.

1.3 Statement of the Problems Desired to Know

1.3.1 What are the concepts and theories of psychological well-being, empowerment, and the contexts, problems, and necessary needs of elderly women in Vipassana meditation practice.

1.3.2 What are the effects of Vipassana Meditation Practice on Psychological Well-being Empowerment in Elderly Women.

1.3.3 What is the Model of Vipassana Meditation Practice for Psychological Well-being Empowerment in Elderly Women.

1.4 Scope of the Research

1.4.1 Scope of Sources of Data

The research titled "Model of Vipassana Meditation Practice for Enhancing Psychological Well-Being and Empowerment in Elderly Women" will draw from the following sources of data:

Primary Sources:

Buddhist Scriptures: The Tipitaka, Commentaries, sub-commentaries as well as other related.

Interviews: Conducting in-depth interviews with elderly women who have practiced Vipassana meditation to gather personal experiences, challenges, and perceived benefits.

Surveys and Questionnaires: Distributing structured surveys to a broader group of elderly women practicing Vipassana to quantify aspects of psychological well-being and empowerment.

Observations: Observing Vipassana meditation sessions to understand the context and practice in real-time, noting any specific adaptations for elderly women.

Secondary Sources:

Literature Review: Analyzing existing academic literature on Vipassana meditation, psychological well-being, and empowerment, focusing on studies involving elderly populations.

Published Case Studies: Reviewing documented case studies of elderly women who have experienced significant changes through Vipassana meditation.

Health and Wellness Reports: Examining reports and publications from health and wellness organizations that discuss the impacts of meditation on elderly individuals.

1.4.2 Scope of Content

The research scope will study three main points, they are as follows:

Firstly, this study focuses on concepts and theories of psychological well-being, empowerment, and the contexts, problems, and necessary needs of elderly women in Vipassana meditation practice.

Secondly, this study focuses on the effects of Vipassana Meditation Practice on Psychological Well-being Empowerment in Elderly Women.

Thirdly, this research focuses on the Model of Vipassana Meditation Practice for Psychological Well-being Empowerment in Elderly Women.

1.4.3 Scope of Population

1.4.3.1 Key informants: The key informants of this research will be divided into 5 groups as following; Group 1) Buddhist Scholar 5 persons. Group 2) Vipassana Master 10 persons. Group 3) Buddhist Psychologist 5 persons. Group 4) Wellness experts 5 persons 5) Elderly women 10 persons

1.4.3.2 Sampling Group for training practice meditation; Elderly women 30 persons

1.4.4 Scope of Area

Meditation Center of Watpacharoenrat, Buengthonglang subdistrict, Lamlukka district, Pathumtani province, Thailand 12150

1.4.5 Scope of Time

The scope of timing this research had been set at 3 months from May 2024 to September 2024.

1.5 Research Hypothesis

Based on the topic "Model of Vipassana Meditation Practice for Enhancing Psychological Well-Being and Empowerment in Elderly Women," a research hypothesis could be:

Hypothesis: Implementing a tailored model of Vipassana meditation practice specifically designed for elderly women will lead to significant improvements in psychological well-being and feelings of empowerment among participants compared to traditional meditation practices or no intervention."

This hypothesis suggests that by adapting Vipassana meditation techniques to address the unique needs and challenges of elderly women, there will be measurable positive effects on their psychological well-being and sense of empowerment.

1.6 Definition of the Terms Used in the Research

1.6.1 **Model** refer to a systematic representation or framework that outlines the structure, components, and processes of a proposed approach or method. It provides a structured way of understanding and implementing a particular practice or intervention.

1.6.2 **Vipassana Meditation Practice** refer to Vipassana meditation is a traditional form of meditation originating from ancient Indian teachings. It emphasizes mindfulness and insight into the true nature of reality. The practice involves observing sensations in the body with heightened awareness to cultivate insight and wisdom. Vipassana meditation practice refers to the systematic application of these principles in meditation sessions.

1.6.3 **Enhancing** refer to Enhancing means to improve or augment the quality, effectiveness, or positive outcomes of something. In this context, enhancing refers to the aim of making changes or adjustments to the Vipassana meditation practice to promote greater psychological well-being and empowerment in elderly women.

1.6.4 **Psychological Well-Being** refer to psychological well-being refers to a state of optimal mental health characterized by a sense of happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction with life. It encompasses positive emotions, resilience to stress, a sense of purpose, and healthy relationships with oneself and others.

1.6.5 **Empowerment:** Empowerment refers to the process of enabling individuals to gain control over their lives, make informed choices, and take action to improve their circumstances. It involves fostering autonomy, self-efficacy, and a sense of agency, particularly in marginalized or disadvantaged groups.

1.6.6 **Elderly Women:** Elderly women specifically refer to women who are advanced in age, typically over the age of 60 or in retirement age. This demographic group may face unique challenges related to aging, health, social roles, and well-being, which can influence their experiences with meditation and empowerment.

1.7 Research Methodology

This research follows a Research and Development (R&D) methodology, integrating exploratory, developmental, and evaluative phases to create and validate a model of Vipassana meditation practice for elderly women.

Phase 1: Exploration

1. Literature Review:

- Purpose: To understand the existing concepts and theories of psychological well-being, empowerment, and the practice of Vipassana meditation.

- Sources: Academic journals, books, and credible online resources focusing on well-being, empowerment, elderly populations, and Vipassana meditation.

2. Qualitative Research:

a. In-Depth Interviews:

-Participants: Elderly women practicing Vipassana meditation, Vipassana instructors, and mental health professionals.

-Method: Semi-structured interviews to gather insights into the experiences, challenges, and perceived benefits related to psychological well-being and empowerment.

- Analysis: Thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns.

b. Focus Groups:

- Participants: Groups of elderly women who practice Vipassana meditation.

- Method:Facilitated discussions to explore collective perspectives on well-being, empowerment, and specific needs during meditation practice.

- Analysis: Coding and thematic analysis to extract common themes and insights.

Phase 2: Development

1. Design of the Model:

-Integration: Synthesize findings from the exploration phase to develop a comprehensive model of Vipassana meditation practice tailored for elderly women.

-Components: Define the structure, components, and processes of the model, incorporating specific practices and adaptations for elderly women.

2. Expert Review:

- Participants: Meditation experts, psychologists, and gerontologists.

- Method: Review sessions to evaluate and refine the proposed model based on expert feedback.

- Analysis: Iterative revisions to incorporate expert suggestions and ensure the model's validity and relevance.

3. Pilot Testing:

a. Implementation:

- Participants: A selected group of elderly women practicing the developed model over a specified period.

- Method: Pre- and post-intervention assessments to measure changes in psychological well-being and empowerment.

- Tools: Standardized well-being and empowerment scales.

b. Evaluation:

- Method: Collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data from the pilot group.

- Analysis: Use statistical analysis to evaluate the effectiveness and thematic analysis to gather participant feedback and experiences.

Phase 3: Presentation and Validation

1. Final Model Presentation:

- Documentation: Prepare comprehensive documentation of the final model, including guidelines, best practices, and practical recommendations.

- Workshops and Training: Conduct sessions for elderly women and Vipassana instructors to introduce and train them in the developed model.

2. Longitudinal Study:

- Participants: A larger group of elderly women engaging with the model over an extended period.

- Method: Conduct regular assessments to monitor long-term effects on psychological well-being and empowerment.

- Analysis: Longitudinal data analysis to evaluate the sustained impact and refine the model as necessary.

Data Analysis:

- Qualitative Data: Thematic analysis to extract meaningful patterns and themes from interviews and focus groups.

- Quantitative Data: Descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze survey and pilot study data, validating the model's effectiveness.

Ethical Considerations:

- Informed Consent: Obtain informed consent from all participants.

- Confidentiality: Maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of participant data.

- Approval: Secure approval from the relevant ethics committee before commencing the research.

Conclusion:

This Research and Development methodology will enable the creation of a validated model of Vipassana meditation practice that effectively enhances psychological well-being and empowerment in elderly women. The findings will offer valuable insights and practical guidelines for implementing meditation practices tailored to the needs of elderly women, contributing to their overall mental health and quality of life.

1.8 Expected Benefits of the Research

1.8.1 Tailored Intervention Strategies: The research can lead to the development of tailored intervention strategies that specifically address the unique needs and challenges faced by elderly women in Vipassana meditation practice. By understanding these specific requirements, instructors and caregivers can customize meditation programs to maximize effectiveness and promote better outcomes in terms of psychological well-being and empowerment.

1.8.2 Enhanced Quality of Life: Implementing the findings of this research can significantly enhance the quality of life for elderly women. By fostering psychological well-being and empowerment through meditation, participants may experience improvements in mood, stress reduction, greater resilience, and a sense of control over their lives. These positive outcomes can lead to overall improvements in their quality of life, contributing to their overall happiness and satisfaction.

1.8.3 Informing Healthcare Practices: The research outcomes can inform healthcare practices related to elderly care and mental health interventions. Healthcare professionals working with elderly populations can incorporate Vipassana meditation techniques into their treatment plans or wellness programs, recognizing its potential to improve psychological well-being and empower elderly women. This integration can lead to more holistic and comprehensive approaches to elderly care, addressing both physical and mental health needs.

Chapter 2

Related Concepts, Theories, and Research Works

To achieve the research objectives, relevant documents, concepts, theories concerning Vipassana Meditation Practice for Psychological Well-being Empowerment in Elderly Women, textbooks, research works, and journals are investigated. The review of related literatures is listed as follows:

2.1 Four Foundations of Mindfulness

2.1.1 Definition

2.1.2 Significance

2.1.3 Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Tipiṭaka

2.1.4 Four Foundations of Mindfulness in Commentaries

2.1.5 The Methods of Four Foundations of Mindfulness Practice

2.1.6 The Purposes of Four Foundations of Mindfulness Practice

2.1.7 The Results of Four Foundations of Mindfulness Practice

2.1.8 The Benefits of Four Foundations of Mindfulness Practice

2.1.9 Insight Meditation Interviews by Meditation Masters

2.2 The Concepts of Elderly

2.3 Social Participation of Older Adults

2.4 The elderly in contemporary Thai society

2.6 Relevant research

2.7 Conceptual framework

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

The research, titled “A Model of Vipassana Meditation Practice for Psychological Well-being Empowerment in Elderly Women,” employed a mixed-methods research methodology. The first phase of the study utilized a qualitative research design involving literature review and in-depth interviews. This approach facilitated a broad and profound understanding of the concept of Four Foundation of Mindfulness-based Intervention. Subsequently, a quantitative research design was applied in the second part of the study. Data obtained from the qualitative phase were employed to develop a Model of Vipassana Meditation Practice for Psychological Well-being Empowerment in Elderly Women as research instruments. The mixed-methods approach is illustrated as follows:

3.1 Research Design

3.2 Phase 1: Qualitative Research Design

3.2.1 Key-informants

3.2.2 Research Instruments

3.2.3 Data Collection

3.2.4 Data Analysis

3.3 Phase 2 - Quantitative Research Design

3.3.1 Population/ Samples

3.3.2 Research Instruments

3.3.3 Data Collection

3.3.4 Experiments

3.3.5 Data Analysis

3.3.6 Statistical Usage

3.3.7 Human Research Ethical Consideration

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1. Primary Sources

2. Secondary Sources

(I) Books:

(II) Articles:

(III) Journal Collections:

(IV) Thesis/Dissertations:

(V) Report of Research:

(VI) Electronics:

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2. The Characteristics of Local Leaders Resulting in the Enhancement of Peace in the Communities, Research Project Funded by Buddhist Research Institute of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, 2020. (Co-Researcher)

(6.2) Research Findings/Publication/Application of Research

Publication of Academic Articles

1. Phramaha Weerasak Abhinandavedi (Sangpong). (2566). *Perspectives to Karma in Buddhists in Thai Society*, **Journal of MCU Peace Studies**, Year 11, Issue 1 (January-February): 391-400. (TCI 1)

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(6) Research Experience

(6.1) Research Report

1. **Chatbot Innovation for Enhancing Stress Resilience based on Buddhist Psychology in Working-Aged People**, 2024, Research funded by

Science Research and Innovation Promotion Fund. (Head of the Research Project) (Ongoing Research)

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