Academic Paper

Mental Health Stigma in Thai Society: Cultural Barriers and Psychological Implications (Arail: 16 PT)

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(Time New Roman: 12 PT, 300-350 words)

Abstract: Mental health stigma in Thai society is deeply rooted in cultural beliefs, traditional values, and Buddhist teachings, creating significant barriers to addressing mental health issues. This study examines the cultural and psychological factors contributing to mental health stigma in Thailand, highlighting the impact of societal norms, family dynamics, and media portrayals. Traditional beliefs often frame mental illness as a consequence of karma or spiritual imbalance, deterring individuals from seeking professional help. The study also explores the historical evolution of mental health care in Thailand, the influence of Buddhism on perceptions, and the intersection of social norms with stigma. Addressing these challenges requires culturally sensitive interventions, community engagement, and systemic changes in policy and education to promote mental health awareness and reduce stigma. By fostering empathy and encouraging open dialogue, this research aims to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for individuals facing mental health challenges in Thailand.

Keywords: Mental health stigma, Thai society, cultural barriers, Buddhist perspectives, psychological implications (Time New Roman: 12 PT, 3-5 words)

1. Introduction (Time New Roman: 14 PT)

Understanding mental health stigma (Time New Roman: 14 PT) in Thailand requires looking at the different cultural ideas that affect how society thinks. In Thai culture, perspectives on mental illness are deeply connected to traditional values, including the importance of family reputation, communal harmony, and the significant role of Buddhist teachings. Common in many societies, mental health stigma shows a mix of negative views, beliefs, and misunderstandings about mental disorders, which greatly affect how people with these issues are treated. This stigma often appears through societal views that encourage ignorance and discrimination, creating a situation where those with mental health problems may feel excluded and hesitant to seek help. In Southeast Asia, studies show a worrying pattern where high stigma levels link to a low readiness to get professional help, with research revealing a fair understanding of mental disorders but widespread stigmatizing views (Dessauvagie et al., 2022). (Author, Year – APA 7th Edition Intext Citation) Moreover, the absence of a culturally specific understanding of mental health adds to this stigma, hindering clear discussions about mental health knowledge and allowing misinformation to

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spread in communities (Fairuziana et al., 2020). Tackling these cultural obstacles is essential for creating a more caring and knowledgeable approach to mental health in Thai society.

2. Historical Context of Mental Health in Thailand

The way mental health care has changed in Thailand shows a larger story about society and culture, often mixed with spiritual and religious ideas. In the past, mental health problems were seen as signs of spiritual problems, leading to treatments that relied on rituals and religious practices instead of scientific methods. This viewpoint was supported by Buddhism, which views mental issues as results of karma and being morally wrong. However, in the late 20th century, there was a big change as globalization and better education began to challenge these old beliefs. The arrival of Western mental health practices led to the creation of official mental health services; at the same time, more people in Thailand started to recognize the biological causes of mental disorders. Even with these improvements, leftover stigma from past views still makes it hard for the public to accept modern mental health care.
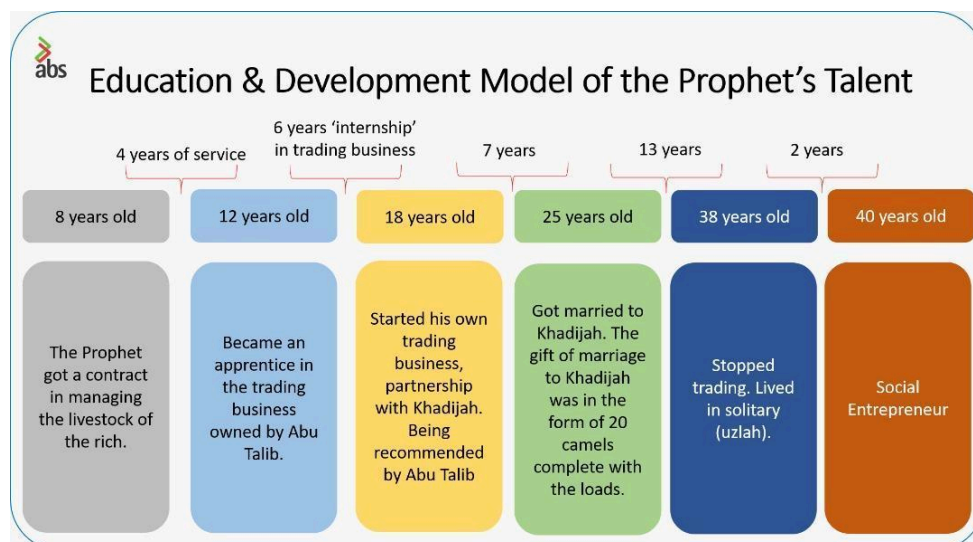

Figure 1. The important phases of Education (Time New Roman 12 PT)

3. Challenges of Teaching Buddhism in the 21st Century

Secularization and Pluralism

One of the primary challenges in teaching Buddhism in the 21st century is navigating its presentation in secular and multicultural classrooms. As educational institutions increasingly cater to diverse student populations with varying religious beliefs, it becomes essential to approach Buddhist teachings in a way that is inclusive and respectful of all perspectives. Educators must find ways to present Buddhist concepts as philosophical and ethical teachings rather than strictly religious doctrines. This secular approach can make Buddhist principles more accessible to students from different religious or non-religious backgrounds, allowing them to engage with ideas like mindfulness, compassion, and non-attachment without feeling like they are participating in a religious practice (Keown, 2013;

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Kabat-Zinn, 2013).

Modern Technology

Integrating modern technology into Buddhist education poses both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, digital tools, online resources, and multimedia platforms provide educators with innovative ways to teach Buddhist concepts. Virtual reality (VR) experiences can immerse students in ancient Buddhist sites, while online platforms allow students to access a wide range of Buddhist texts and teachings. However, ensuring that these tools are used effectively and do not oversimplify or commercialize Buddhist teachings is a key concern. Educators must strike a balance between utilizing technology to enhance learning and maintaining the depth and integrity of traditional teachings (Selwyn, 2019; Smith & De Simone, 2018).

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Table 1. The important phases of Education (Time New Roman 12 PT)

4. Conclusion

Teaching Buddhism in the 21st century presents both opportunities and challenges as educators strive to balance tradition with the demands of a modern, globalized world. Buddhism offers timeless teachings that promote mindfulness, ethical behavior, and compassion—values that are increasingly relevant in today's fast-paced and interconnected society. The integration of Buddhist practices, such as mindfulness and meditation, into educational systems has shown positive impacts on student well-being and personal development. As society continues to confront issues like mental health, social inequality, and environmental degradation, Buddhist principles provide a valuable ethical and philosophical framework that can contribute to addressing these challenges (Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Roeser et al., 2013).

(All papers should have Originality & Body of Knowledge)

Originality & Body of Knowledge

Originality: This study provides a unique contribution to the discourse on linguistic diversity and language policies in Thailand by critically analyzing the intersection of multilingualism, educational policies, and cultural identity. Unlike previous studies that

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primarily focus on either the dominance of Standard Thai or the impact of English Medium Instruction (EMI), this paper presents a comprehensive evaluation of how various linguistic policies influence student learning experiences and inclusivity in Thai education. Additionally, it explores comparative international frameworks, such as Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) models, offering novel insights on how Thailand can adopt successful multilingual strategies from global contexts. This research contributes to the originality of the field by integrating educational policy reform with the sociocultural impact of linguistic diversity, ultimately presenting a well-rounded discussion on sustainable multilingual education in Thailand.

Body of Knowledge: This study enriches the academic body of knowledge by addressing the critical gap in research regarding the implementation and effectiveness of multilingual education in Thai classrooms. By examining over 70 languages spoken in Thailand, this paper contextualizes how language policies have historically marginalized minority languages and how policy reforms can foster inclusive education. It provides a theoretical foundation by discussing linguistic hierarchy, globalization's effect on language learning, and the role of policy frameworks in supporting multilingual education. Furthermore, this research contributes practical implications for policymakers, educators, and curriculum designers by outlining best practices for integrating local languages into Thailand's educational system while balancing the growing demand for English proficiency. By incorporating comparative analyses from multilingual education systems in other countries, this study offers valuable recommendations for the development of an inclusive, culturally responsive, and globally competitive educational system in Thailand.

Declarations

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Ethical treatment of experimental subjects (animals & human): The research was conducted in compliance with the principles of the Helsinki Declaration regarding human subjects, so formal ethical approval was not required.

10. References

(Time New Roman 12 PT, APA 7th Edition Referencing)

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