

The Management of Dhamma Retreat Affecting Theologians' Satisfaction at Wat Pradu Song Tham in Phranakhon Si Ayutthaya Province

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Abstract

This research has the following objectives. 1) to study the personal factors, behaviors when coming, opinions about the retreat's management, and satisfaction of meditation practitioners coming to meditate at Wat Pradu Song Tham in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province; 2) to compare the opinions of the meditation practitioners regarding the management of the dhamma retreat, classified according to personal factors and behaviors when coming to meditate; 3) compare the satisfaction of the meditation practitioners with meditating on retreat at Wat Pradu Song Tham, classified according to personal factors and behaviors when coming; and 4) to study the relationship between the opinions of the meditation practitioners regarding the management of the dhamma retreat and their satisfaction with meditating at Wat Pradu Song Tham. The sample group used in the research consisted of 384 meditation practitioners. The tool used for the research was a questionnaire using a graduated scale of 5 values, with the data analyzed statistically using percentage frequency, mean, standard deviation and hypothesis tests, as well as statistics from T-test, F-test, LSD (least significant difference) tests and Pearson correlation coefficients determined by a level of statistical significance of .01. The results of the research found that:

1) The majority of the practitioners were male, single, aged 41-50, with the academic attainment of a diploma or higher vocation diploma, making a living as independent small businessmen earning a monthly income averaging either less than 5,000 baht or in the 10,000 - 15,000 baht range, and residing in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province. Their main reason for coming to meditate is that they have faith in the teacher as an heir to the branch of knowledge. They come to meditate with friends twice a week on the weekends for a period of 3-4 hours. On the whole, their opinions about the the management of the retreat at Wat Pradu Song Tham, and their satisfaction meditating there are both at the highest levels.

2) Differences in gender, age, level of education, career, marital status, place of residence, behaviors when meditating and frequency of meditation of the practitioners all have an effect on opinions about the management of the retreat at Wat Pradu Song Tham.

3) Differences of age, level of education, career and frequency of

meditation also have an effect on satisfaction of the practitioners with meditation at the retreat at WatPradu Song Tham. 4) The practitioners' opinions regarding the management of the retreat correlate with their satisfaction in meditating at a low to moderate level.

Keyword: The Management of Dhamma Retreat, Theologians' Satisfaction, Dhamma Retreat in Wat Pradu Song Tham in Phranakhon Si Ayutthaya Province

Introduction

1. Background and significance of the research

The practice of meditation has great significance for human life because it is a training process to develop the mental quality suitable for work. It is useful for various functions whenever people practice the steps of Vipassana until they attain clear knowledge of dharmic truth: then they will attain permanent peace within themselves, and, as a consequence, world peace as well. Thus meditation can drill the mind so as to attain the Right View, to become a good person, to achieve understanding of the global situation, and to live with passion and the right ignorance in check, losing these in order to reach the highest aim in life, that being the Path (Magga) to Enlightenment and so forth (Phramaha Rungrueang Rakkhitthammo, 2549 BE, pg. 45). However, these days most temples and dhamma retreats lack good management, thus leading to a public that is estranged from the temple and a much decreased role for the temple within the community. The way to solve this is by using the principle of good governance (dhammabhiban) in order to return to the center of the community as in the past (Phramahawasan Yannasitti Yangphimai, 2551 BE, pg. 35).

A dhamma retreat very suitable for meditation practitioners in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province is at Wat Pradu Song Tham in the front of the temple, which was built during the Ayutthaya Period and has continued to give lessons in meditation from that time up to the present. Nowadays, there are far fewer meditation schools of this quality relative to the nation's population (Pradu Song Tham, 2555 BE, page number not indicated).

Thus the researcher is interested in studying the effects of the management of a dhamma retreat on the satisfaction of meditation practitioners using data from the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham in Ayutthaya Province in order to develop and improve dhamma retreat management to build the highest level of satisfaction for Buddhists who come to meditate. This will maintain Buddhism and the science of meditation to help mankind truly escape suffering.

2. Research objectives

1) To study personal factors and behaviors when coming to meditate, opinions regarding the management of the dhamma retreat, and the satisfaction of meditation practitioners at Wat Pradu Song Tham in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province.

2) To compare the opinions of meditation practitioners regarding the management of the dhamma retreat at Wat Pradu Song Tham in Ayutthaya Province, classified according to personal factors and behaviors when coming to meditate.

3) To compare the satisfaction of meditation practitioners at Wat Pradu Song Tham in Ayutthaya Province, classified according to personal factors and behaviors when coming to meditate.

4) To study the relationship between the opinions of meditation practitioners regarding the management of the dhamma retreat and their satisfaction with meditating at Wat Pradu Song Tham in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province.

3. Scope of the research

1) Population and sample group

The population and sample group of the current research consisted of meditation practitioners who meditated at Wat Pradu Song Tham in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province. The exact size of the population was unknown. The size of the sample group was 384 people, the sample size being limited according to the Cochran formula (Tanin Sincharu, 2555 BE, pg. 46).

2) The variables of the study, such as independent variables, are: the meditation practitioners' personal factors, which consist of gender, age, level of education, career, monthly income, marital status and place of residence; and behaviors when coming to meditate, which consist of reasons for meditating at Wat Pradu Song Tham, frequency of coming to meditate, the time of the meditation sessions, the duration of the sessions, and by whom the practitioner is accompanied when meditating. The dependent variables are: the opinions regarding the management of the dhamma retreat, which comprise the areas of governance, moral foundations, transparency, responsibility, a principle of participation and a principle of value; and the satisfaction of the meditation practitioners, which comprises the areas of puggala sappaya (suitable companions), avasa sappaya (a suitable place), arhara sappaya (suitable food) and dhamma sappaya (suitable principles).

4. Research hypotheses

1) Differences in the personal factors of the meditation practitioners go with differences in their opinions regarding the management of the dhamma retreat.

2) Differences in the personal factors of the meditation practitioners go with differences in their levels of satisfaction.

3) Differences in the behaviors of the meditation practitioners coming to meditate go with differences in their opinions regarding the management of the dhamma retreat.

4) Differences in the behaviors of the meditation practitioners coming to meditate go with differences in the satisfaction of the practitioners.

5) The level of opinion regarding the management of the dhamma retreat is related to the satisfaction of the meditation practitioners.

5. Research framework

Defining the concepts of the current research starts off from educational concepts and theory, which pertain to the management of the dhamma retreat that affects the satisfaction of meditation practitioners at Wat Pradu Song Tham in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province. Details are shown in Figure 1.

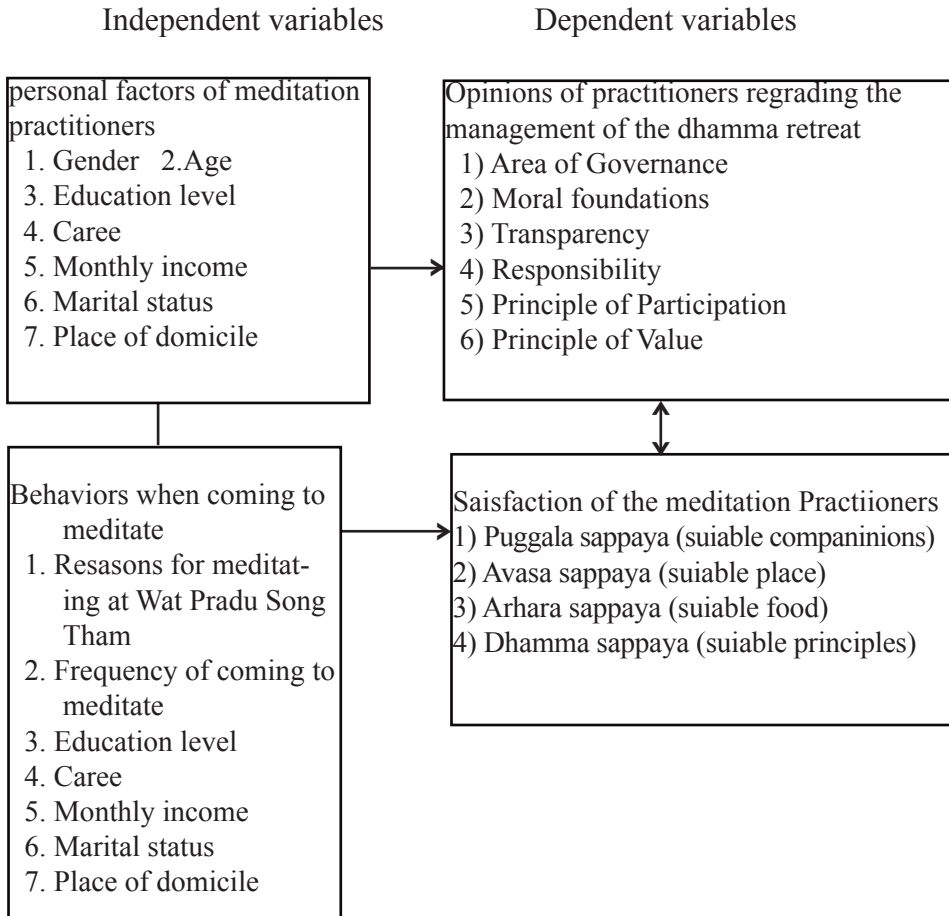


Figure 1. The conceptual framework of the research

Research methodology

1. Population and sample group

The population used in this study comprised meditation practitioners at Wat Pradu Song Tham in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province, the exact size being unknown. The sample group comprised 384 meditation practitioners at Wat Pradu Song Tham, the specific size of the sample being derived by

Cochran's formula (Cochran, 1953 CE) (Tanin Sincharu, 2555 BE, pg. 46) using random choice to collect the data from meditation practitioners at Wat Pradu Song Tham in Ayutthaya Province.

2. Tools used in the research

Part 1) Personal factors of respondents to the questionnaire, such as sex, age, level of education, career, monthly income, marital status and domicile.

Part 2) Behaviors when coming to practice meditation, such as reasons for meditating at Wat Pradu Song Tham, frequency of meditation, the time of each session of meditation, the duration of meditation, and companions accompanying the practitioner.

Part 3) Opinions regarding the management of the dhamma retreat: to check whether each factor has an effect on the opinions of the meditation practitioners at Wat Pradu Song Tham, with a questionnaire that uses a rating scale of 5 values.

Part 4) Satisfaction of the meditation practitioners: to check whether each factor has an effect on the opinions of the meditation practitioners at Wat Pradu Song Tham, with a questionnaire that uses a rating scale of 5 values.

The questionnaire has an index of item objective congruence (IOC) equal to 1.0, and the alpha coefficient of the questionnaire is .98, which meets the threshold for data collection.

2.3 Data analysis

The data was analyzed using percentage frequency, mean, standard deviation and hypothesis test statistics, as well as T-test, F-test, LSD (least significant difference) tests and Pearson correlation coefficients determined by a level of statistical significance of .01.

Conclusions

1. The majority of practitioners of meditation at Wat Pradu Song Tham who responded to the questionnaire were male, aged 41-50, having attained the educational level of a diploma or higher vocation diploma, small businessmen or merchants, with an average monthly income of either less than 5,000 baht or 10,000 - 15,000 baht, single and living in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province. Their behaviors in coming to meditate at Wat Pradu Song Tham consist of: the reason for coming - they believe the instructor is an heir to the knowledge of the field; a frequency of meditation of twice a week; a duration of 3-4 hours for each session, which occur during the weekend; and the company of friend during meditation. The meditation practitioners who responded to the questionnaire held a high opinion of the management of the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham, both overall and when dealing with separate aspects. When each aspect is considered singly, governance had the highest mean followed by responsibility, with transparency receiving the lowest mean. The practitioners who responded to the questionnaire were likewise highly satisfied when meditating at Wat Pradu Song Tham, with the aspect with the highest mean being dhamma

sappaya (suitable principles), followed (in descending order) by puggala sappaya (suitable companions), with arhara sappaya (suitable food) receiving the lowest mean.

2. The results of the comparison of the opinions the practitioners held regarding the management of the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham, when classified by personal factors, can in general be summed up as follows:

1) meditation practitioners of different gender, age, educational level, career, marital status and region of domicile hold different opinions regarding the management of the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province; and 2) different salary levels of the practitioners do not lead to different opinions regarding the management of the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham.

The results of the comparison of the opinions the meditation practitioners held regarding the management of the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham, when classified by behaviors when coming to meditate, can in general be summed up as follows:

1) meditation practitioners who differ in reasons for meditating at Wat Pradu Song Tham, and who come at different frequencies to meditate, hold different opinions regarding the management of the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham; and 2) practitioners whose sessions differ in the time and duration of each session, and who come with different companions, do not hold different opinions regarding the management of the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham.

3. The results of the comparison of satisfaction of the meditation practitioners with the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham, when classified by personal factors, can in general be summed up as follows:

1) meditation practitioners whose gender, monthly income, marital status and region of domicile show no difference in levels of satisfaction with the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham; and 2) practitioners who differ in age, educational level and career show different levels of satisfaction with the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham.

The results of the comparison of satisfaction of the meditation practitioners with the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham, when classified by behaviors when coming to meditate, can in general be summed up as follows:

1) Meditation practitioners who differ in the reasons for meditating at Wat Pradu Song Tham, the time of each session, the duration of meditation and the companions who meditate with them do not differ in the degree of satisfaction they have when meditating at Wat Pradu Song Tham; and 2) Practitioners who differ in the frequency with which they come to meditate show differences in satisfaction.

3.4 The results of the study regarding the connection between the opinion of the meditation practitioners towards the management and their satisfaction with the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham found that:

1) the opinions of the practitioners toward management in the

areas of governance and transparency showed a correlation with satisfaction with the meditation center in the areas of puggala sappaya (suitable companions) and avasa sappaya (suitable place);

2) the opinions of the practitioners toward management in the areas of moral foundations, participation and value showed a correlation with satisfaction with the meditation center in the areas of puggala sappaya (suitable companions), avasa sappaya (suitable place) and arhara sappaya (suitable food); and 3) the opinions of the practitioners toward management regarding responsibility show a correlation with satisfaction with meditation center in the areas of puggala sappaya (suitable companions), avasa sappaya (suitable place) and dhamma sappaya (suitable principles).

Discussion

1. Governance

It was found that the opinions of the practitioners of meditation regarding the management of the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham in the area of governance, both in general and in individual cases, was at a high level in all cases due to the meditation center having dharmic principles and a method of meditation which has been carried on for a long time, which is the greatest resource, in agreement with the research of Phramaha Sutthichai Chitkhoksung (2552 BE, abstract) in a study about the development of a model for the practice of meditation in the temple in order to bring social peace and contentment in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. The results of that study found that it is most important that there is a meditation instructor in each center. When there is a good instructor of meditation available, then the practitioners who come to share in meditation will have very good support, and the meditation is likely to succeed without any problems. Avasa sappaya (a suitable place) is also something that is important to a meditation center, because if the site is completely prepared, with lodgings for monks, bathrooms, cafeteria, residences, then meditation is likely to go well.

2. Moral foundations

It was found that the opinions of the practitioners of meditation regarding the management of the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham in the area of moral foundations, both in general and in individual cases, was at a high level in all cases due to the meditation center working cooperatively in such fashions as understanding each other, helping one another, forgiving and respecting each other. Practitioners respect their instructors, and provide advice in way that benefits the practice and the public, essentially in agreement with the research of Phramaha Bundit Nisapai (2550 BE, pg. 31), which found that moral foundations lead to success in seizing and having confidence in what is right and fine, through a campaign to build fine social values for people working in organizations and members of society to adhere to, for example, honesty, sacrifice, patience, perseverance, discipline, and so forth. Moral foundations are thus important for everybody.

3. Transparency

It was found that the opinions of the practitioners of meditation regarding the management of the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham in the area of transparency, both in general and in individual cases, was at a high level in all cases due to the meditation center having operational procedures that are orderly, simple, correct and straightforward, following the principles of discipline and law, along the lines of an account regarding principles of meditation, recorded accurately in documents and photographs of a center as important evidence in the research of Thitiporn Sasom (2553, abstract), a study of administrative systems and temple management in a Buddhist case study: Wat Phra That Chae Haeng, Phu Phiang district, Nan Province. The results of that study found that Wat Phra That Chae Haeng had administrative systems and temple management that was able to focus on personnel management, general administration, financial and accounting management, temple property management, and temple activities management, all of which have clear management systems that stress transparency.

4. Responsibility

It was found that the opinions of the practitioners of meditation regarding the management of the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province, in the area of responsibility, both in general and in individual cases, was at a high level in all cases due to the meditation center having instructors, custodians and staff, all of whom had a selfless dedication to the meditation operations of the dhamma retreat and faith in the teacher in order to work together maintain a worthwhile direction of meditation practice, and to look after the place alongside work performance that genuinely stems from the heart. This is in line with the research of Phramaha Budit Nisapai (2550 BE, pg. 43), which states that taking responsibility successfully in a role with obligations to the public requires setting up an institute that is capable of helping to coordinate and mediate the best direction for the temple to respond to the needs of various groups within the temple in a concrete fashion, and cover obligations and responsibilities to Buddhists across the spectrum.

5. Participation

It was found that the opinions of the practitioners of meditation regarding the management of the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province, in the area of participation, both in general and in individual cases, was at a high level in all cases due to the meditation center having a model of teaching that emphasizes acting in such a way that coming into dharmic principles goes hand in hand with maintaining the site in order that the practitioners take responsibility for both themselves and the public, thus creating a mind which is suitable for thinking about what is best for the organization and the institution, which agrees with the research of Phramaha Ruengsak Pimsakul (2545 BE, abstract) in study regarding temple management in the next decade. The research results found that the aims of the administration were to provide

the monks with practice in discipline, to keep the temple clean, cool and pleasant, to create a venue to learn moral principles, management policies, the finances and activities of the temple, and develop the abbot's vision and the administrative structure so as to emphasize a participatory management style.

6. The principle of value

It was found that the opinions of the practitioners of meditation regarding the management of the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province, in the area of value, both in general and in individual cases, was at a high level in all cases due to the meditation center being an organization that doesn't seek principally to make profit, but rather is a place that is used for meditation. Thus the center's base of income is solely donations from the faithful and meditation practitioners. In consequence, the center's spending is apportioned well to be used for the greatest benefit of the center, and this practice tallies well with the research of Phramaha Bundit Nisapai (2550 BE, pg. 44), which states that the principle of value is a mechanism for efficient operations in temple management, whether in religious activities or managing the education of monks to combine the secular with the religious so as to bring about a new paradigm in Wat Mahawanaram. To select all the monks in the temple's management to work well, and to control resource usage in the temple, e.g., water bills, electricity bills and so forth, is worthwhile and suitable, as are operations and service to the public which result in maximum benefit.

Suggestions for further research

1. The opinions of practitioners of meditation should be studied in other topics as well, for instance, attitude, inspiration, faith, in order to acquire data in the field that can be used to reach more people who are interested and encourage them to join in practicing, because each person is different.

2. There should be a study on the management and satisfaction at other meditation centers as well, in order to create a knowledge base for people who are interested in practicing dhamma, so that they find information and learn more.

3. There should be a study on the stability of the meditation center at Wat Pradu Song Tham and the center's current practices in the branch dhamma retreats that were expanded according to the plan to carry on the ancient meditation guidelines of the center at Wat Pradu Song Tham, so that interested people learn about the information and increasingly come together to practice dhamma carrying on genuine Buddhist rituals again in the one sole way.

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