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# AJHSI

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## **Objective**

Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI) is a journal in the humanities and social sciences. It aims to promote research and publish research articles, academic articles, review articles, and book reviews for scholars, researchers, lecturers, students at all levels, and interested persons in the dimensions of Sociologies, Anthropologies, Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, Business Administration, Politics, Public Administration, Development, Tourism, and other areas in Social Sciences. Articles that are considered for publication must be reviewed by at least 2 out of 3 qualified persons (Peer Review). Only English articles are considered for publication. Submitted works must not have been published or are under consideration by qualified persons for publication in other journals. Authors must strictly comply with the criteria for submitting academic or research articles for publication in the journal, and the referencing system must be in accordance with the criteria of the journal.

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## **Editorial**

Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI) is the first issue of the year 2024 with a total of 5 articles, 2 research articles and 3 academic articles. The journal is currently developing and improving its format and main issues to meet the journal quality assessment criteria in the TCI database to support the assessment from the Thai Journal Citation Index (TCI). In order to ensure that the quality of the articles meets international conditions and rules, it provides opportunities for scholars, researchers, and students at all levels to publish academic articles, research articles, review articles, and book reviews. The editorial team has followed the principled process of publishing articles according to the criteria of the Office of the Higher Education Commission in all respects.

The editors of Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI) would like to thank the authors, members and readers for their interest and trust in our journal. We sincerely hope that the selected articles will be of benefit to all readers. The editors would like to thank all the experts who have kindly read and suggested improvements to the research articles to improve their academic quality.

Finally, the editors sincerely hope that the contents of this journal will be of some use to readers. If readers have any suggestions for improving this journal to make it more complete, the editors will gladly accept them.

**Editor-In-Chief**

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# An Analytical Examination of Human Nature in Theravāda Buddhism\*

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## Abstract

The objectives of this research paper are 1) to study the concepts and theories of human nature, 2) to study human nature according to Theravada Buddhist philosophy, and 3) to analyze human nature according to Theravada Buddhist philosophy. This research is a qualitative research, which focuses on documentary research by studying the Tipitaka and related documents. The results showed that Human beings are high-minded. Know what is useful and what is not, have a rational thought. know the decision and know how to choose things that are beneficial to humans as beings that arise from two components: the part that is matter or form (body) and the part that is matter or name (Mind or spirit). The human body is made up of the basic four elements, namely earth, water, fire, and wind, through perception of the outside world through the senses. Each sense has its own unique emotion or object. Does the human mind or spirit really exist? By relying on the body as a natural habitat that has no shape. The mind is abstract in relation to the body. and is more important than the body. Human beings have a special nature of spirit or spirit. and has a high potential for self-improvement. It is an animal that has intelligence or reason to live. The nature of the human body has changed. It cannot remain in its original state forever (anicca) and is constantly subjected to internal changes (dukkha). Human beings are innately related to society. Because humans are animals with both high and low instincts. Waiting to be the driving force to be involved with society. Humans should show good behavior towards others and society.

**Keywords:** Analysis, Human Nature, Theravada Buddhist Philosophy

## Introduction

Nature has created the best and most suitable for the current environment through natural selection of living things. Any living thing that is able to adapt itself to the changing environment will be able to survive and pass on those outstanding characteristics to its offspring to continue the species and be able to maintain its species. Humans are creatures that are able to adapt very well. Therefore, humans have

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been able to maintain their species until today (Chamnong Thongprasert, 1990: 32). Thomas Hobbes said, "Human nature is barbaric, selfish, boastful, low, rude, self-centered, and competitive without limits. Their lifespan is short, but if they encounter hardship, they will reduce their selfishness and society will help them to be better." Williamson said similarly, "Everyone who is born is like an evil spirit." (Kritsana Saksri, 1987). However, John Locke had the opposite opinion, saying, "Humans are naturally good and not selfish. Their badness comes from their environment." In addition, sociologists believe that: The nature of human beings in general is to learn, to be curious, to see, to like to know about others. Some people know others better than themselves because they have never explored themselves. Because in general, people like to learn about others more than themselves and feel that they know others well. But if asked back, how much do they know themselves? That person often gets angry. Not because they look down on themselves. But under that consciousness is the lack of self-awareness, which makes them feel inferior. Humans are basically rational and can make decisions for themselves. Humans have dignity, value, goodness, trustworthiness and reliability. Humans are also intelligent in adapting and need freedom to develop themselves to progress (Jakkasin Pisesat, 1978). As for the tendency to develop themselves completely, Rogers believes that the nature of human beings has an innate tendency to develop all of their abilities and potentials in a way that will help the organs to remain or to be better by adapting, refining, developing, relying on themselves and being themselves.

According to Theravada Buddhist philosophy, people often think that we have a self and a person, something that is real and certain. In fact, the life that we see is impermanent, suffering, and not-self, which means it is not permanent. We are born as a person and then decay and disappear. It is suffering and cannot remain in the same state and is not a real self. The real self is permanent and exists in the same way. But what we are is like a bamboo basket that a weaver made of nothing and is not anything until it becomes a basket shape for use. But when the bamboo pegs are pulled out piece by piece, in the end there is no basket left, only a pile of bamboo pegs. Therefore, what we think we are this person or that person or have a self is our own assumption by our own viewpoint, which is believing, clinging, and taking that assumption seriously until we think it is something certain, so we have upadana, which is clinging with infatuation. If someone does something to us, we will feel hurt because we think that it affects us. If it is something that we like or is consistent with our image, we will be happy, joyful, and joyful. But on the contrary, we will feel sorry and sad. We have gained knowledge and understanding about humans in this aspect from the humanities. It makes us think that what we can see and touch is actually not genuine, but the genuine thing we cannot see, cannot touch, but we know, which appears in the form of thoughts, dreams, and imagination (Phra Thammakosacharn (Prayoon Thammajitto), 1995). Therefore, it can be said that the philosophy and beliefs about humans of Greek philosophers and Western religions and Buddhist philosophy are consistent in that respect.

The nature of human life is that it is an animal that must be trained and can be trained. In order for humans to have a good life, they must study, train, and develop themselves to be better in the system of life, which consists of behavior, mind, and intelligence. When trained and developed, education makes life better. But if we do not learn and train, being a human being will not be able to live well and correctly. This is

because humans living by instinct alone is not enough. (Phra Dhamma Pitaka (P.A. Payutto), 1997) The word “nature” has many meanings, depending on the perspective of each person. In Buddhist philosophy, the meaning of nature means the birth by nature (dharma = something pure and ultimate truth, jati = birth). Since the word dharma cannot be explained in a way that is acceptable, it is defined as something that already exists, no one created it, timeless, does not decay, and is immortal.

Therefore, the researcher believes that in order to understand the nature of human beings, which is the existence and the impermanence, it will help to know and understand humans in various aspects more, which will lead to learning human behavior and expression to use in building good relationships in the future. It will also help humans understand each other without causing conflicts.

## Objective

1. To study the concept and theory of human nature
2. To study the nature of human according to Theravada Buddhist philosophy
3. To analyze the nature of human according to Theravada Buddhist philosophy

## Literature review

The concept of human nature has been a subject of extensive philosophical, psychological, and religious discourse. Within Theravāda Buddhism, human nature is intricately linked to the doctrines of *anattā* (non-self), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anicca* (impermanence), forming a unique perspective distinct from Western essentialist views. This literature review surveys canonical texts, classical commentaries, and modern academic interpretations to elucidate the Theravādin understanding of human nature.

### 1. Canonical Foundations in Theravāda Buddhism

Theravāda Buddhism derives its teachings primarily from the Pāli Canon, which includes the *Vinaya Pitaka*, *Sutta Pitaka*, and *Abhidhamma Pitaka*. The *Sutta Pitaka*, especially, offers insights into human nature through discourses attributed to the Buddha. One of the most significant teachings is the doctrine of *anattā*, which denies the existence of a permanent self. In the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* (SN 22.59), the Buddha explains that the five aggregates (*khandhas*)—form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness—are impermanent and non-self, forming the empirical basis of human existence (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995).

Furthermore, the *Dhammapada* underscores the potential for human transformation through ethical conduct, meditation, and wisdom. Verses such as Dhammapada 165 (“By oneself is evil done; by oneself is one defiled”) suggest an internal locus of agency that contrasts with deterministic views of human nature.

### 2. The Role of the Khandhas and Dependent Origination

The *khandha* doctrine and *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination) are central in understanding human behavior and existential conditions. Scholars like Gethin (1998) assert that human beings are seen as dynamic processes rather than static entities. The cycle of birth and rebirth (*saṃsāra*) is sustained by ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*), indicating that suffering is not inherent but conditioned.

Warder (2000) emphasizes that this framework portrays human beings as capable of liberation through understanding the causal interdependence of phenomena.

Thus, human nature is not fixed but transformable, with the potential for enlightenment (*nibbāna*) through insight and moral cultivation.

### 3. Ethical Potential and Moral Psychology

Theravāda ethics assumes a fundamental moral neutrality in human nature, rejecting notions of inherent sin or purity. As Keown (2005) notes, the *Pāli Canon* views individuals as morally responsible agents capable of cultivating the ten perfections (*pāramī*) such as generosity, morality, and wisdom. This capacity reflects a form of moral optimism that is grounded in karmic volition (*cetanā*) (Harvey, 2013). Additionally, the concept of *bhāvanā* (mental development) shows that human nature is plastic and trainable. Meditation practices like *samatha* (calm abiding) and *vipassanā* (insight) enable practitioners to purify the mind, illustrating a developmental view of human nature (Bodhi, 2000).

### 4. Comparative Interpretations and Contemporary Reflections

Comparative studies often highlight the contrast between Buddhist and Western philosophical notions of human nature. While Western traditions (e.g., Aristotelian or Cartesian) often posit a fixed essence or soul, Theravāda Buddhism denies such permanence, positing a processual identity instead (Collins, 1982). This divergence is crucial in understanding ethical and psychological orientations in different cultures. Contemporary scholars like Thanissaro Bhikkhu (2010) argue that Buddhism's approach to human nature is pragmatic rather than metaphysical. It focuses on the conditions that lead to suffering and the methods to overcome it, suggesting that human potential is defined by the capacity to transform ignorance into wisdom.

### Conclusion of Literature Review

The Theravādin understanding of human nature reflects a non-essentialist, ethical, and process-oriented paradigm. Rooted in the doctrines of *anattā*, *dukkha*, and *paṭiccasamuppāda*, human beings are seen as capable of transformation through mindful practice and moral development. This dynamic and non-dogmatic view has profound implications for Buddhist ethics, education, and psychological well-being.

### Methodology

This research is a qualitative research that focuses on documentary research. It can be organized as follows:

#### Data collection stage

1. Study and research on the nature of man in Theravada Buddhist philosophy
2. Survey documents and research that experts have written and researched on the nature of man in Theravada Buddhist philosophy

#### Data collection stage

1. Collect data from primary sources, namely, the Thai-language Pitaka, Mahamakut Buddhist edition, printed on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Rattanakosin B.E. 2525
2. Collect data from secondary sources from commentaries, commentaries, commentaries, special articles, books, journals, articles, and related theses, and arrange them in order of relevance, importance, reasons, and sources to distinguish
3. Collect data from documents and research related to the concept of the nature of man in Theravada Buddhist philosophy

### **Data Analysis Stage**

1. Study and analyze data on the meaning, types, and nature of human beings in general perspectives and in Theravada Buddhist philosophy according to the set objectives.

2. Study and analyze the content of various issues and according to the set objectives regarding the nature of human beings in Theravada Buddhist philosophy. Data Presentation Stage in the form of Descriptive Analysis.

### **Results**

1. The concept and theory of human nature found that humans are people with high minds, know what is beneficial and what is not beneficial, have feelings and thoughts, are the center of matter and mind, know how to think rationally, know how to make decisions and know how to choose what is beneficial. The human body is a component of life in terms of matter, composed of 4 elements, with 5 senses or channels of perception: eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin. The human body is a tool of the spirit, a cave where the spirit lives. The spirit is the nature that controls and manages behind the scenes the movement of the body. Without the spirit, the body cannot do anything. The status of humans in the world that humans will have sins because there are causes of sins and the results of sins that occur to humans. But if humans do not create evil, humans will only have good deeds that occur to themselves. The humanity will be higher, which is called "a complete human being".

Monism: Human beings have body and mind integrated into one unity or are one and the same, which has 2 sub-concepts: mind and body are the same thing but have 2 aspects (Double Aspect Theory). Human life is therefore expressed in 2 ways: the mental aspect and the physical aspect. This concept appears in the works of philosophers of the 2nd line, explaining that mind and body are one but have 2 mental processes and physical processes. There are thinkers who propose this concept.

The dualist group explained that humans are composed of a body and a mind that are separate from each other. This group has 3 separate ideas: the mind and body are 2 things that have an influence on each other (Interaction). The mind has an influence on the body, for example, when the mind sets an intention, it causes the body to act as the mind thinks. In the same way, the body also has an influence on the mind, for example, when the body lacks water, the mind will feel thirsty and want to drink water. The second group explains that the mind and body are 2 different things that have no influence on each other. The activities of the mind and body are parallel lines that each side proceeds according to its function and mechanism (Function). The body has no influence on the mind and the mind has no influence on the body. The third group explains that the mind and body are 2 different things. Although the mind has no influence on the body, the body has an influence on the mind (Epiphenomenalism). The body is like a person and the mind is like a shadow. When the person moves, the shadow moves with it. Therefore, the mind is a by-product of the physical process of human conception. In modern biology, there has been great progress in the care, advice, assistance, and problem solving for all mankind. To preserve the human race, whether it is the problem of infertility or the control of human births, in order to be effective and produce quality humans for the world.

2. Human nature according to Theravada Buddhist philosophy finds that human nature is a condition that arises by itself, exists by itself, and exists by itself according

to causes and conditions. Within human life is human nature. Human nature according to the viewpoint of contemporary philosophers means the natural law that humans must follow, must perform duties accordingly, and will receive results accordingly. And the state is being a person who must be trained and can be trained.

Humans born into this world have 3 special characteristics: 1) Although they are different in terms of external appearance, internal qualities, life status, economic status, fame, etc., one thing that all humans have in common and equal is “being human.” 2) Because of being human, Theravada Buddhist philosophy believes that humans have the opportunity to develop themselves even though it may take different amounts of time. 3) Being human is considered a great fortune because it will be the foundation for advancing to other good things in life. The 3 special characteristics mentioned above are the natural value of human life, but it does not end there. Humans will have a high value in life according to the true meaning of the word “human” by practicing good deeds (good karma) or having virtue. Having virtue or doing good deeds will be the criteria for measuring between humans whether their life is of high value or low value, and whose life is no different from that of an animal in general. Even if a human lives for only one day, if they live with virtue or do only good deeds, it is considered more valuable than living for a hundred years without doing any good deeds. Humans who live their lives on this earth by creating a lot of virtue and karma are considered wise. It is like a clever garland maker who uses piles of flowers to make a beautiful garland.

Theravada Buddhist philosophy believes that humans by nature have the potential: 1) The ability to train and develop oneself to be the most excellent is hidden. 2) The latent nature that occurs naturally in humans is “habits” and nature is “faith”. It is nature that is suitable for training and developing the body and morality. When the body and morality are developed, it will affect the training and development of the mind and wisdom in sequence. When training and developing until achieving the qualities of being a person with a developed body, morality, mind and wisdom, only then can one be called the most excellent among humans. 3) Theravada Buddhist philosophy places great importance on human life because it is difficult to achieve human life. Human life is an important variable for world peace. It can be said that whether the world has war or peace depends on humans. In the ethical teachings, they teach not to kill other humans (including other animals) but to have compassion for each other instead. And by nature, no human being wants others to destroy their lives. Therefore, humans should not think of destroying each other’s lives or even their own lives. 4) Being born as a human being is considered the value of human life by nature and is considered a great fortune. But the value of human life will increase. It will be more valuable, meaningful and excellent if one has virtue and tries to do good deeds or virtuous deeds. Because a person who only does good deeds, even if he lives only one day, is more excellent than a person who lives a hundred years but does nothing good. And doing only good deeds not only benefits oneself, but also benefits other people and animals.

3. Analysis of human nature according to Theravada Buddhist philosophy found that all nature in the form aggregates of humans according to Theravada Buddhist philosophy arose because they depended on each other and were each other's causes and conditions. The nature of the body as mentioned above is that the human body is called the form aggregate and appears because the four great elements come together

and are subject to the laws of impermanence, suffering and non-self. The nature of this body can be divided into two main parts:

1) The original nature or basic nature (Original nature) is the nature that is the entire physical component of the body, which arises from the combination of the four great elements, supported and provided by karma.

2) The part that is a natural dependency (Derivative nature) which is the nature that depends on the 4 great elements to arise and operate naturally. This part of nature arises because it depends on the original nature. According to the Pali, the 24 characteristics and functions of the body are included in this natural dependency. The nature of the mind can be divided into 3 parts: the part that is universal for humans in general, the part for ordinary humans, and the part for noble humans. The nature of the mind that is universal for humans in general can be divided into 4 groups: 1) the group that is a feeling (vedana), 2) the group that is a memory (saññā), 3) the group that is a natural condition that conditions the mind (sankhara), and 4) the group that functions to know the emotions that come into contact through the various doors (viññā). The nature of the mind of ordinary humans has the following characteristics: 1) formless, with a body as a basis; 2) cannot be known or seen by the 5 senses, but can be known or seen by wisdom or thinking; 3) The behavior of the mind is an abstract matter, determined and named according to the factors that this abstraction affects; 4) quickly merges with the desired emotions. Regardless of whether the emotion is wholesome or unwholesome, good or bad, for this reason, Theravada Buddhist philosophy must teach the principle of training the mind to unite with the emotion that is wholesome or only good, for the happiness of human life itself. 5) The human mind is an abstract concept that can be trained to be good. 6) The human mind is naturally under the power of the three characteristics: impermanence, suffering, and non-self, arising, existing, ceasing, and being a current. 7) It changes quickly and is difficult to see. As for the nature of the mind of an Ariya person, in addition to being under the law of the three characteristics, normally the mind of an Ariya person will be in accordance with the strength that has been trained. That is, the mind of a Sotapanna still has lust, anger, and delusion, but can control it to some extent and can abandon three fetters: sakkayaditthi, vicikiccha, and silabbataparamasa. The mind of a Sakadagami can abandon three fetters as well, but can reduce the intensity of lust, anger, and delusion more than a Sotapanna. The mind of an Anagami can abandon 2 more fetters: Kama-raga and Atighga, making a total of 5 fetters. They can alleviate lust, anger, and delusion more than a Sakadagami, but still need to practice and polish further. The mind of an Arahant can abandon all fetters. It is a mind that is completely clean and pure, and does not need to practice and polish further.

## Discussion

The results of this analytical examination present a comprehensive comparison between general philosophical understandings of human nature and the more specific interpretations rooted in Theravāda Buddhist thought. These interpretations illustrate both convergences and distinct departures in defining what constitutes “human nature,” human potential, and the implications for moral and spiritual development.

### 1. Human Nature in General Philosophical Thought

General philosophical conceptions depict humans as rational beings with a dualistic or monistic nature, integrating body and mind in different configurations. The

monist perspective, such as the **Double Aspect Theory** (Spinoza, 1677), proposes that mind and body are two aspects of a single substance, experienced differently but essentially unified. This view underscores a holistic understanding of human existence, where physical and mental processes are inseparable components of human expression (Feinberg & Shafer-Landau, 2013).

In contrast, the dualist position, represented by thinkers like **René Descartes (1641)**, insists on a clear distinction between the mental (*res cogitans*) and the physical (*res extensa*). Dualism has evolved into three dominant strands: **interactionism**, where the mind and body influence one another; **parallelism**, where they function independently; and **epiphenomenalism**, where the body affects the mind but not vice versa (Robinson, 2020).

These concepts affirm that humans possess faculties of reason, ethical awareness, and choice, capable of discerning good from evil. Yet, they also highlight the material limitations of the human body, describing it as a vessel or "cave" for the spirit, emphasizing the dependency of bodily actions on inner consciousness or volition (MacIntyre, 1999).

## 2. Human Nature in Theravāda Buddhist Philosophy

In Theravāda Buddhism, human nature is profoundly rooted in dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) and the three marks of existence: impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). Human beings are viewed as an assemblage of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*)—form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness—which together explain the human experience (Bodhi, 2005).

Theravāda thought underscores the potential for transformation inherent in human existence. Despite physical and social differences, all humans share the essential capacity for moral development and spiritual liberation (Rahula, 1974). This potential is realized through practices aimed at cultivating *sīla* (morality), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom). Through disciplined training, individuals can progress from the ordinary human state to that of a noble person (*Ariya*), culminating in the state of an *Arahant*, a being free from all defilements.

Importantly, the Buddhist framework considers being born human as a rare opportunity (*manussatta-dullabha*) with inherent value and responsibility. Unlike the static nature in some philosophical traditions, Theravāda Buddhism stresses human impermanence and changeability—each person is a dynamic process subject to karmic influences and capable of ethical evolution (Harvey, 2013).

## 3. Comparative Analysis and Integration

Both traditions agree that human beings have unique faculties—reason in the philosophical sense and mindfulness in the Buddhist sense. Yet they diverge in their metaphysical underpinnings. While Western dualists emphasize a stable self or soul (often immaterial), Theravāda Buddhism deconstructs the self into non-substantial components, negating the existence of an eternal soul (Collins, 1982).

Moreover, while Western philosophy often centers on moral agency and rational autonomy, Theravāda Buddhism integrates ethical conduct with existential insight, arguing that moral purity and wisdom are both required for true liberation.

In essence, the philosophical notion of becoming a “complete human being” through rational ethics finds a parallel in Theravāda Buddhism's path to becoming “the most excellent among humans” through the cultivation of virtue and wisdom. Both

uphold a vision of human excellence, though the Buddhist path is intrinsically soteriological—aimed at liberation from suffering, not merely moral perfection.

### Conclusion

The study affirms that both philosophical and Theravādin frameworks provide deep insights into the nature of human existence. While differing in method and metaphysics, both acknowledge human capacity for ethical reflection and transformation. Theravāda Buddhism, however, offers a comprehensive, practice-oriented path that begins with recognizing human potential and culminates in the transcendence of worldly suffering.

### New knowledge



Figure 1 New knowledge, 2024

The diagram titled "Comparative Analysis of Human Nature Perspectives" presents a four-part framework comparing different conceptions of human nature, particularly highlighting contrasts and parallels between philosophical and Theravāda Buddhist views.

#### 1. Integrated Mind-Body (Monistic Perspective)

- **Concept:** This quadrant represents the monistic view, which holds that the mind and body are not separate entities but are one unified existence.
- **Interpretation:** This aligns with some philosophical traditions (e.g., Spinoza's Double Aspect Theory), and also resonates with aspects of Theravāda Buddhism where mental and physical phenomena (nāma-rūpa) are seen as co-arising and interdependent.

- **Core Idea:** Enlightenment and human experience occur within a unified framework of existence.

## 2. Ariya Person (Enlightened Being)

- **Concept:** The Ariya person embodies the ideal in Theravāda Buddhism—a noble person who has trained their mind to overcome defilements and control emotional impulses.
- **Interpretation:** Although rooted in a dualistic body-mind reality, the Ariya person transcends this by mastering emotions through insight and discipline.
- **Core Idea:** Dualistic enlightenment through emotional regulation and ethical practice.

## 3. Ordinary Human with Potential

- **Concept:** Represents the common human condition with latent capacity for moral and spiritual development.
- **Interpretation:** This is consistent with Theravāda teachings that all humans, regardless of birth or status, have **the potential for self-training** and progress toward liberation (nibbāna).
- **Core Idea:** Humans are monistic in essence and trainable—growth and virtue are possible through effort.

## 4. Dualistic Mind–Body Conflict

- **Concept:** Illustrates the dualist philosophical view, where the mind and body are separate and often in tension or conflict.
- **Interpretation:** This includes interactionist dualism (e.g., Descartes), where mental intentions can influence the body, and vice versa. It contrasts with Buddhist views that emphasize non-self (anattā) and interdependent processes rather than opposing substances.
- **Core Idea:** The conflictual relationship between mind and body reflects inner struggle and fragmentation.

This analysis is valuable in comparative philosophy, religious studies, and human development theories, offering a deeper lens into how different traditions conceive, value, and transform human nature.

## Recommendation

1. Should research on the development of human quality of life with the principles of Tri-sikkha according to Theravada Buddhist philosophy.
2. Should research on human conduct according to the principles of Right Livelihood according to Theravada Buddhist philosophy.
3. Should research on the development of human minds with Right View in the Noble Eightfold Path according to Theravada Buddhist philosophy.
4. Should research on the development of human behavior with loving-kindness according to Theravada Buddhist philosophy.

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# An Analytical Study of the Kalamasutta in Theravāda Buddhist Philosophy and Its Application in Contemporary Society\*

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## Abstract

This research article has the following objectives: 1) to study the general beliefs, 2) to study the principles of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy, and 3) to analyze the value of the principles of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy in order to apply them in the present society. This research aims to study and research the principles of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy and analyze various issues according to the objectives set regarding the principles of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy.

The research results found that general beliefs are: 1) Belief in nature, gods, spirits, religious teachings, and superstitions. Beliefs arise from doubt, fear, inheritance of power, and hope for good fortune. Current Thai society believes in traditions, culture, and social media. 2) Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy is the teachings of the Lord Buddha to use reason and wisdom before deciding to believe. There are 10 principles: Do not believe because you claim to have heard it. Do not believe because you claim to have practiced it. Do not believe because you claim to be a rumor. Do not believe because you claim to have come from a book or scripture. Do not believe because you claim to be consistent with logic. Do not believe because you claim to be consistent with inference. Do not believe because you claim to have considered the symptoms. Do not believe because you claim that it is consistent with your own opinions or theories. Do not believe because you claim that the speaker looks credible. Do not believe because you claim that this monk is our teacher. The value of the Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy 3) The value of promoting wisdom and traditional beliefs Human curiosity initially has its roots in human ignorance. Because of ignorance, one is suspicious. Because of doubt, one is curious. Because of curiosity, one seeks knowledge about the thing in question. The Kalama Sutta is a principle that teaches about using wisdom and reason before making a decision because beliefs that arise from doubt may be uncertain beliefs. Therefore, one must use judgment before believing. The Kalama Sutta says: Do not believe in what others hear. Believe that it is true by hearing what others hear.

## Citation



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## Introduction

The evolution of human beliefs initially had a belief in spirits that were born from nature (Animatism) that had special powers that could bring about both good and bad things, coupled with human fear, which led to people worshipping and praying (Rawipawilai, 2543). Later, humans began to have more doubts and thought that there might be someone behind the powerful people, so they turned to believe in ghosts, spirits, or animism (Animism), spirits, or spirits (spirit) because these powers could bring about suffering or happiness. In addition, belief in gods and angels and humans also had beliefs about ghosts, which was a belief in ancestral spirits (Ancestor Worship) that the spirits of ancestors who had died did not go anywhere, but still existed to protect and take care of their children. Later, there were rituals to worship the spirits of ancestors (Manee Phonyomyong, 1993: 70) (all beliefs Most of them originated from the Indian social concept of believing in many gods or polytheism. They created images of gods according to their own ideas, thinking about what nature should look like and how each nature has higher or lower power. Each god has different power and different duties. Belief in one god of a group of people or henotheism is the worship of gods according to their caste group without mixing them. Belief in one god or monotheism is the belief that in this world there is only one supreme god, the great god who created all things, has great power and is a hero. (Suwattana Chanchamnong, 1997: 1-2) In Buddhism, beliefs are classified into 4 types: Kammasaddha means belief in the law of karma, Vipākasaddha means belief in the reality of the results of karma, Kammasakatasaddha means belief that all beings have their own karma, and Tathāgatabodhisaddha means belief that the enlightenment of the Buddha is real (Ang.Sattaka. 23/4/3).

The current society is modern and advanced, considered a modern society, a world of social networks. The current beliefs are so diverse that it is hard to know what to believe. Although there are many modern beliefs flowing in, the current political situation is not much different from the past because humans are still greedy, angry, and deluded. Therefore, humans still have doubts about the original belief system by believing in the earth, sky, air, ghosts, and angels because they may still think that these beliefs can inspire happiness and suffering (Suwat Chanchamnong, 1997). Therefore, beliefs are a part of people in today's society. Beliefs are passed down through the educational process, through textbooks, scriptures, words, listening, believing, inheriting, and passing on. Although there are modern scientific principles used in development, the phenomenon of beliefs is still inconclusive, especially beliefs about mental states, religion, textbooks, and listening to each other, in which each person believes in what they have studied. In addition, these beliefs are used to express opinions to debate and indicate the situation of differences in opinions, where each side often cites principles or theories that they hold. To support the correctness of one's own thoughts and indicate absolute confidence. If the debate does not reach a conclusion, there will often be a mediator or an expert who will be above the issue being debated. The belief systems that often have problems are beliefs in traditional systems, beliefs in nature, beliefs in gods, spirits, and spirits, beliefs in the law of karma, beliefs in witchcraft, beliefs in traditions, beliefs in culture, beliefs in politics and government, and beliefs in the modern world. The world of social networks, especially today,

communication is very efficient. When there is an interesting event happening, no matter where in the world, in just a moment, the news can be spread around the world. Every day, we receive a lot of news and it is not certain that it is all correct and good. Therefore, when receiving news, we should consider it first so as not to make mistakes or distort them. Therefore, we should adhere to the principle of mindfulness and wisdom, think and contemplate what is happening in our country right now. There are many things or events that make us wonder whether it is true or not, correct or incorrect, whether it is harmful or not, and how much we should trust it. But most people do not think or doubt it. They will immediately believe or accept what they say is good and correct. If it is like this, we can say that our society is very weak and can easily be manipulated.

The Kalama Sutta is a Buddhist principle that the Lord Buddha used as the first teaching for the Kalama people of Kesaputta in the Kosala region, where there was a debate about various beliefs (Belief) that could not be proven (Anguttara Nikaya 20/505/179-184). (The Kalama Sutta is a teaching that the Lord Buddha taught, emphasizing the knowledge of learning to gain wisdom in various matters that are still uncertain about what is right and what is wholesome and what is unwholesome and should not be believed. The principle is to consider goodness and to reduce and abandon unproductive beliefs because if believed and put into practice, it will cause more harm than good. Considering the truth to clearly see the truth according to the natural state, which is a belief or truth that already exists and no one created or embellished it, but it occurs by the truth of nature that has been done or created by itself according to the factors of nature. The truth of nature, beliefs or truths that are different from human creation, such as the creation of the belief that humans created the world (Fuen Dokbua, 1990). Most of the current society refers to it in textbooks. From the scriptures of creating sacred objects to create fear, creating textbooks, creating scriptures to create beliefs through verbal expressions, creating various traditions and introducing modern culture until it became the current values (Suwan Sathanan, 1994), the various belief systems that exist today cannot be proven to be true or false, good or bad. Some beliefs can be trusted, some beliefs cannot be proven by sight. Belief arises from mental states. The principle of Kalama Sutta is a principle of Buddhism that the Lord Buddha has shown as a principle to be used to search for facts until true wisdom is gained before deciding to believe (Ang. Satthaka. 20/505/179-184)

For this reason, the researcher is interested in studying and analyzing the principles of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy to apply in the present society. The research results will be used as information and as a guideline for developing knowledge to apply in the present society.

## Objective

1. To study the general beliefs
2. To study the principle of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy
3. To analyze the value of the principle of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy to apply in the present society

## Literature review

### 1. The Kalamasutta: Historical and Scriptural Context

The *Kalamasutta*, found in the Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN 3.65), is often referred to as the "Charter of Free Inquiry" within Theravāda Buddhist tradition. The Buddha's discourse to the Kalamas emphasized independent reasoning, critical thinking, and experiential validation over blind faith or tradition (Bodhi, 2005). This sutta was delivered in the town of Kesaputta, where the Kalama people expressed confusion about conflicting religious teachings. The Buddha responded not with doctrine, but with a method of discerning truth through direct understanding, ethical consequences, and personal experience.

### 2. Core Teachings and Philosophical Implications

The sutta outlines ten epistemological sources that should not be accepted uncritically—such as tradition, scripture, or the reputation of teachers—if they lead to unwholesome consequences. Instead, individuals are encouraged to evaluate teachings based on whether they promote greed, hatred, and delusion or their opposites (Rahula, 1974). This approach aligns with the Theravāda emphasis on *paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhi*—personal verification through wisdom.

Kalupahana (1992) highlights the *Kalamasutta* as a foundational text demonstrating the Buddha's pragmatic and empirical outlook. Rather than constructing a rigid metaphysical system, the Buddha proposes a path toward liberation grounded in ethical conduct and mindfulness.

### 3. Kalamasutta and Rational Inquiry

The sutta's emphasis on rationality and inquiry has attracted the attention of modern scholars and philosophers who see parallels with Enlightenment ideals. According to Jayatilleke (1963), the *Kalamasutta* exemplifies an early form of scientific thinking, where belief must be tested through reason and ethical consequences. This perspective supports the notion of Buddhism as a rational religion, appealing to modern secular audiences.

Furthermore, Gombrich (2009) argues that the sutta is a reaction against the dogmatism and ritualism prevalent in Brahmanical traditions of the Buddha's time. By placing ethical outcome and experiential knowledge at the center of spiritual practice, the Buddha presented a revolutionary epistemology that challenged both orthodoxy and superstition.

### 4. Application in Contemporary Society

The message of the *Kalamasutta* is profoundly relevant today, particularly in the context of information overload, religious pluralism, and social polarization. In an age of digital misinformation and ideological extremism, the call for critical thinking, ethical evaluation, and personal inquiry is both timely and necessary (Keown, 2013). Moreover, the sutta can inform ethical decision-making in education, interfaith dialogue, and even public policy, where rational scrutiny and compassion should guide actions. As Kaur (2021) points out, Buddhist epistemology, as exemplified in the *Kalamasutta*, offers valuable frameworks for inclusive and humane social discourse.

The *Kalamasutta*, a discourse found in the Aṅguttara Nikāya, is often regarded as a foundational teaching in Theravāda Buddhism that promotes free inquiry and critical thinking. Delivered by the Buddha to the Kalama people in the town of Kesaputta, the sutta addresses their confusion caused by conflicting religious teachings. Rather than imposing a doctrine, the Buddha encourages the Kalamas to evaluate

teachings through personal experience, reason, and ethical outcomes. The core message of the Kalamasutta discourages blind reliance on tradition, scripture, hearsay, or authority figures if such reliance leads to unwholesome results. Instead, it urges individuals to reflect on whether teachings reduce greed, hatred, and delusion, and whether they lead to personal and communal well-being. This approach underscores the importance of wisdom and direct understanding in the Buddhist path. Philosophically, the sutta illustrates a pragmatic and empirical method that emphasizes ethical conduct and mindfulness over metaphysical speculation. Its rational tone has drawn comparisons to scientific thinking, where beliefs are tested through experience and practical outcomes. The Kalamasutta also represents a critique of dogmatism and superstition, highlighting a revolutionary framework centered on ethical consequences and lived experience. In modern society, characterized by information overload, social division, and ideological extremism, the teachings of the Kalamasutta remain profoundly relevant. It provides a guide for cultivating critical thinking, making ethical decisions, and fostering compassionate dialogue. Its principles can be applied in various areas such as education, social engagement, and public decision-making, where reasoning and compassion are essential for harmonious coexistence and personal growth.

### **Methodology**

In this research, the researcher studied the principle of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy from the Thai Tripitaka, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya Edition, printed in honor of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit on the auspicious occasion of her 5th cycle birthday anniversary in 1996, and studied documents, namely general books, journals, articles, theses, and related research, to be used as the scope of this research.

#### **Data collection stage**

- 1) Research on the principle of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy
- 2) Survey research documents written by experts and research on the principle of Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy

#### **Data collection stage**

- 1) Collect data from primary sources, namely the Thai Tripitaka, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya Edition Printed in honor of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit on the auspicious occasion of Her Majesty's 5th cycle birthday anniversary in 1996
- 2) Collect secondary documents (Secondary Sources) from commentaries, commentaries, and special articles and arrange them in order of relevance, importance in terms of reasons and sources to separate them into categories.
- 3) Collect data from research documents related to the Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy.

#### **Data analysis stage**

- 1) Study and analyze data on the meaning, types, and principles related to the Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy according to the set objectives.
- 2) Study and analyze various issues according to the set objectives regarding the Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy.

Data presentation stage the researcher will present the research results in a descriptive and analytical format.

## Results

1. General beliefs Development of beliefs: Belief in nature or other things that have power over oneself Belief in theism Belief in the gods Belief in power over humans can control human behavior Belief in karma Belief means the mental state of a person or society that believes that something is true, good and beautiful, which leads to the behavior of that person or society as a model of behavior that leads to the organization of society in the form of religion or various theories of knowledge. Types of beliefs Belief in spirits in nature Belief in the belief in ghosts, angels or animism Belief in ancestral spirits Belief in many gods or polytheism Belief in one god of a group of people or hypertheism (Henotheism) Belief in one god or monotheism (Monotheism) and belief in human intelligence Use reason not to depend on the power of things that are invisible and cannot be proven Divided into 3 types: (1) Belief in Buddhism (2) General beliefs and (3) Superstitions

Characteristics of beliefs arise from feelings Insecurity from supernatural power, inspirational power

2. Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist Philosophy The teachings of Buddhism that the Lord Buddha taught to be used in making decisions. Consider carefully before believing, which consists of ten points: 1) Do not believe just because you claim to have heard it from others, that is, believe in what has been heard from others, believe that it is true by listening to others. 2) Do not believe just because you claim to have practiced and passed down characteristics, that is, something that has been passed down from one generation to another for a long time. 3) Do not believe just because you claim to be a rumor, that is, a method that has more disadvantages than advantages because this method is heard, heard from being told or spoken to. 4) Do not believe just because you claim to be from a book or scripture, that is, a written text, which should cover all writings. 5) Do not believe just because you claim to be in line with logical principles, that is, it is a matter of thinking, pondering, finding reasons, and using reasons to prove the facts. 6) Do not believe just because you claim to be in line with inference principles, that is, it is a matter of thinking, pondering, finding reasons. And using reason to prove the facts 7) Do not believe just because it claims to be considered according to the symptoms that appear. It is a way of thinking that is still stuck with reason, circling around the framework of using reason and does not go far. There is some knowledge that cannot be explained by thinking along the lines of reason. 8) Do not believe just because it claims that it is consistent with one's opinion or theory, which is a stubborn thought, opinion, theory of belief, the principle of wrong view (wrong view). 9) Do not believe just because it claims that the speaker looks credible, which is a possible appearance, looking at the possibility or looking at the external form. And 10) Do not believe just because it claims that this monk is our teacher. The relationship between the teacher and the student has the Buddha's words showing neutrality that the teacher cannot help the student in every case. But the teacher's duty is only to advise and teach. But the person who tells people to proceed will be free from the bonds of Mara. (Phra Maha Prabhas Parichano (Kaewketphong), 2010)

3. Analyze the value of the Kalama Sutta in Theravada Buddhist philosophy to apply in the present society. Belief is something that humans create. When it is systematically established in society, it is often called religion. It plays an important role in linking various institutions in politics, economics, and society. Religious beliefs are therefore the main institutions of culture and direct social development. Most Thai

beliefs and human beliefs arise from the relationship between humans and nature. When something happens, it affects human life.

Value of fostering wisdom Traditional beliefs are the curiosity of humans. Initially, it was rooted in human ignorance. Because of ignorance, they are curious. Because of curiosity, they seek knowledge about the things they are curious about. The principle of Kalama Sutta is a principle that teaches about using wisdom and reason before making a decision because beliefs that arise from doubt may be uncertain beliefs. Therefore, they must use judgment before believing. The Kalama Sutta states that do not believe in what others hear. Believe that it is true by listening to others.

Value of fostering wisdom Natural beliefs are beliefs in nature. The lowest level of human belief is belief in nature because nature is adjacent to humans. When humans are born and open their eyes to the world, the first thing humans see and touch before anything else is nature around humans and nature. Today's society believes in nature. They believe only because they claim to have practiced and passed it on because natural beliefs are something that has been passed down from one generation to another. They have been practicing for a long time. Whether it is belief, thoughts, opinions, culture, traditions and customs, these things will go through the process of social transmission. According to the Kalama Sutta, we should have belief with reason and wisdom before making a decision. The value of fostering wisdom, belief in gods and angels, it was found that the evolution of human beliefs occurred along with other surrounding developments. Humans are suspicious of darkness, light, heat, cold, sun, moon, sky, rivers, even mountains and large trees that can cause various changes in nature and cause happiness and suffering to humans. The beliefs of Thais in the past were probably no different from other nations, that is, believing in things that cannot be seen that have power over people and can cause both good and bad. Such beliefs are beliefs in ghosts and angels. Buddhism has mentioned the principle of belief in this matter as follows: Do not believe just because.

## Discussion

1. Belief, as a psychological and sociocultural phenomenon, plays a foundational role in shaping individual and collective behavior. It arises from the innate human response to uncertainty, the search for meaning, and the desire to explain experiences that transcend empirical understanding (Durkheim, 1915). The development of belief systems—such as belief in natural forces, deities, karma, and metaphysical entities—has historically served to reduce existential insecurity and foster a sense of control over the environment. These beliefs have, over time, evolved into complex religious structures and moral philosophies that guide societies and cultures across generations (Eliade, 1959).

Beliefs can be categorized in several ways. First, **naturalistic beliefs**—such as animism and nature worship—emerge from early human attempts to interpret natural events and phenomena. This type of belief attributes agency to trees, rivers, the sun, and other elements of nature, often viewing them as conscious beings or spirits (Tylor, 1871). Second, **theistic beliefs**—including polytheism, henotheism, and monotheism—reflect more developed theological systems that posit divine beings with moral and creative authority. Third, **superstitions and folk beliefs** often combine elements of religion, mythology, and tradition, relying on rituals and taboos to ward off misfortune

or gain blessings (Frazer, 1922). Lastly, modern secular beliefs in **rational human intelligence** emphasize the use of reason and empirical evidence, often rejecting reliance on supernatural forces altogether. These belief systems reflect a move toward epistemologies grounded in logic, skepticism, and science (Jayatilleke, 1963).

In Theravāda Buddhist philosophy, particularly in the *Kalama Sutta* (Aṅguttara Nikāya 3.65), the Buddha addresses this plurality of beliefs by offering a framework for evaluating them critically. The sutta emphasizes the importance of **not accepting beliefs based solely on tradition, hearsay, scripture, reasoning, or the credibility of the teacher**, but instead urges individuals to consider whether such beliefs lead to wholesome or unwholesome results (Rahula, 1974). This method of epistemological inquiry aligns with a **pragmatic and ethical standard**—namely, that one should believe in what leads to the cessation of suffering and promotes well-being (Bodhi, 2005). The ten criteria presented in the *Kalama Sutta* serve as a safeguard against dogmatism and gullibility, encouraging mindfulness and personal verification.

The value of the *Kalama Sutta* lies in its enduring applicability, especially in contexts where misinformation, superstition, and ideological manipulation are rampant. It serves as a philosophical tool for **fostering critical thinking, rational inquiry, and ethical awareness** (Gombrich, 2009). For example, many traditional beliefs in spirits, ancestral influences, or astrological powers persist in Thai and Southeast Asian cultures, often influencing everyday decision-making. While such beliefs may provide cultural identity and comfort, they can also lead to fear-based behaviors and social rigidity. Through the lens of the *Kalama Sutta*, such beliefs can be respectfully examined and reassessed in light of personal experience and ethical outcomes (Kalupahana, 1992).

Furthermore, the principle of **self-reliant wisdom (paccattam veditabbo viññūhi)** as taught in the *Kalama Sutta* highlights the Buddhist emphasis on individual discernment. This is particularly significant in today's pluralistic society, where individuals encounter diverse and often conflicting belief systems. The sutta promotes a middle path: neither dismissing belief entirely nor accepting it blindly, but instead using mindfulness and ethical reflection as the basis for belief adoption (Keown, 2013).

In conclusion, belief systems—whether religious, superstitious, or rational—continue to shape the moral and cultural framework of society. The *Kalama Sutta* offers a timeless method of belief evaluation that can bridge traditional spirituality with modern critical inquiry. It invites individuals to examine not only the content of their beliefs but also the **consequences** of holding them, ultimately guiding both personal conduct and societal harmony.

2. The *Kalama Sutta* (Aṅguttara Nikāya 3.65) presents one of the most intellectually rigorous and ethically profound teachings of the Buddha within the Theravāda Buddhist tradition. Its central theme is the critical examination of beliefs before accepting them as truth. This discourse was given to the Kalama people, who were confused by the diverse religious claims they encountered. Rather than promoting dogma, the Buddha presented a set of **ten guidelines** to help them evaluate teachings independently. These guidelines continue to serve as a philosophical and ethical compass for personal decision-making and epistemological inquiry.

The Buddha's tenfold counsel includes instructions such as: do not believe something merely because it has been **heard from others, passed down by tradition,**

is **part of scripture**, aligns with **logical or inferential reasoning**, or is spoken by a **respected authority figure** (Bodhi, 2005). He even warns against belief formed solely from personal preferences or external appearances. Importantly, the final caution—**not to believe simply because the speaker is a revered teacher**—highlights the radical individualism in Buddhist epistemology. Each person must examine truth for themselves and apply reason, direct experience, and ethical consequence as criteria for belief (Rahula, 1974).

Phra Maha Prabhas Parichano (2010) explains that these ten cautions are not a rejection of all forms of belief, but rather a **systematic method** to eliminate blind faith and encourage self-reliance in wisdom (*paññā*). The *Kalama Sutta* thus emphasizes a balance between **skepticism and confidence**, where beliefs must be tested against their real-world impact, particularly their tendency to reduce or increase **greed, hatred, and delusion**—the three poisons in Buddhism. This alignment with pragmatic ethics rather than abstract metaphysics makes the *Kalama Sutta* unique in religious philosophy (Gombrich, 2009).

Kalupahana (1992) further notes that the *Kalama Sutta* reflects the **empirical and experiential** core of Buddhist thought. Rather than urging passive acceptance, it promotes **critical inquiry**, asking individuals to adopt beliefs that result in personal well-being and social harmony. The framework is, therefore, not only spiritual but also applicable to broader epistemological systems, as it resonates with scientific and rational methods of investigation (Jayatilleke, 1963). This elevates the sutta beyond religious doctrine and into the realm of **universal ethics and rational thought**.

In contemporary society—characterized by misinformation, ideological polarization, and blind adherence to charismatic figures—the *Kalama Sutta* offers essential guidance. Its relevance is especially significant in educational, political, and religious discourse, where authority is often unquestioned, and traditions are followed without reflection. The *Kalama Sutta* reminds us that **truth must be discerned not by authority, heritage, or appearance**, but by critical reasoning and by the ethical impact of one's actions (Keown, 2013). This teaching encourages responsible autonomy in spiritual development, making it one of the most progressive and human-centered doctrines in world religion.

3. Belief is a human construct rooted in existential inquiry and cultural experience. When beliefs are formalized and institutionalized within society, they become the foundation of religion—shaping moral behavior, cultural identity, and social organization (Durkheim, 1915; Eliade, 1959). In Thai and other traditional societies, belief systems are often deeply intertwined with nature, spirits, deities, and unseen forces. These beliefs offer explanations for life events and natural phenomena, fulfilling psychological needs for security and control (Tylor, 1871). However, while such beliefs serve social functions, they can also become rigid, unquestioned traditions that limit critical thought and ethical development.

The *Kalama Sutta* offers a vital antidote to uncritical belief by encouraging the use of **wisdom (*paññā*) and reason (*yoniso manasikāra*)** before accepting any doctrine. The Buddha's teaching in this sutta specifically warns against believing something solely because it is widely accepted, passed down through generations, supported by scriptures, or endorsed by charismatic figures (Bodhi, 2005). Instead, he advises evaluating beliefs based on their outcomes—whether they reduce suffering,

cultivate compassion, and promote peace (Rahula, 1974). In this way, the *Kalama Sutta* fosters a type of wisdom that transcends mere intellectualism, integrating ethical reflection with experiential insight (Kalupahana, 1992).

One of the key values of the *Kalama Sutta* in contemporary society is its role in **fostering discernment amidst inherited traditional beliefs**. Many beliefs in Thai society, for example, stem from animistic traditions involving nature spirits, ancestral powers, or supernatural beings like ghosts and angels. These beliefs often go unchallenged due to their deep cultural roots and intergenerational transmission (Frazer, 1922). However, when such beliefs are accepted without reflection, they may perpetuate fear, superstition, or discriminatory behavior. The *Kalama Sutta* teaches that such beliefs should be **scrutinized based on reason, direct experience, and their impact on ethical behavior**, allowing for a respectful yet critical engagement with tradition (Gombrich, 2009).

Furthermore, the *Kalama Sutta* is especially relevant in **the age of information and digital media**, where misinformation spreads rapidly and ideological extremism can manipulate collective belief. The tenfold criteria in the sutta encourage individuals to avoid being swayed by charisma, groupthink, or emotional appeal and instead **evaluate beliefs through mindful awareness and ethical outcomes** (Keown, 2013). This principle has application beyond religion—it can be applied to education, politics, science communication, and public discourse, promoting a more thoughtful, responsible society.

Additionally, the *Kalama Sutta* promotes **epistemic humility**—the awareness that not all things can be understood by logic alone. While reason is central, the sutta also recognizes the limitations of inference and deduction, thereby balancing rational inquiry with contemplative insight. This balance makes it especially adaptable to pluralistic societies that accommodate both scientific rationality and spiritual values (Jayatilleke, 1963).

In conclusion, the *Kalama Sutta* offers timeless guidance for navigating belief in both traditional and modern contexts. It does not deny the value of cultural heritage or spiritual faith but encourages that such beliefs be evaluated through the lens of **wisdom, compassion, and ethical clarity**. In doing so, the sutta serves as a universal framework for belief formation—supporting individual freedom, intellectual autonomy, and collective well-being in today's interconnected and complex world.

## New knowledge



Figure 1 New knowledge, 2024

The image is a visual diagram summarizing different types of beliefs and the key teachings of the Kalama Sutta in Theravāda Buddhism. It appears to be organized into two major sections:

### 1. Types of Beliefs

On one side of the diagram, it outlines a classification of human beliefs, such as:

- Belief in nature (animism)
- Belief in spirits and ancestral beings
- Polytheism (belief in many gods)
- Henotheism (belief in one main god among many)
- Monotheism (belief in one supreme god)
- Rationalism (belief in human reason and logic)

These beliefs are connected visually to human emotions and psychological needs, such as fear of the unknown, hope for protection, and the search for meaning.

### 2. The Kalama Sutta's Ten Guidelines

Another side of the image depicts the ten points from the Kalama Sutta, which caution against accepting beliefs on these bases:

- Oral tradition
- Scripture
- Logical reasoning alone
- Popular opinion
- Teacher's authority, etc.

It encourages evaluation based on ethical outcomes, personal experience, and the reduction of greed, hatred, and delusion.

### Central Message:

At the center of the diagram is a Buddhist principle of discernment—that beliefs should be adopted through wisdom, self-inquiry, and mindful reflection, not merely because of tradition or authority. The layout visually contrasts blind belief with wisdom-based discernment, reinforcing the core of the Kalama Sutta.

### Recommendation

#### 1. Policy recommendations

1.1 A center for studying and disseminating the Kalama Sutta principles should be established to all levels of the community.

1.2 A Kalama Sutta practice center should be established and open to interested persons to practice and conduct the center's activities.

1.3 A policy should be established to apply the Kalama Sutta principles in the process of business administration and conflict resolution at various levels.

#### 2. Suggestions for future research

2.1 Comparing the efficiency and achievements of agencies that apply the Kalama Sutta principles to their agencies.

2.2 A paradigm for applying the Kalama Sutta principles to all levels of society.

2.3 Applying the criteria for judging beliefs in the Kalama Sutta to the current conflicts in Thai social beliefs.

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# Cultural Identity and Social Change in Contemporary Thai Society<sup>\*</sup>

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## Abstract

This article explores the transformation of cultural identity in contemporary Thai society amidst the sweeping forces of globalization, digital technology, migration, neoliberalism, and urbanization. It examines how these dynamics influence the erosion of traditional values, the emergence of hybrid and transnational identities, and the negotiation between cultural continuity and innovation. Case studies from Thai adolescents, ethnic tourism in Northern Thailand, and Muslim youth in Southern Thailand illustrate the diverse ways in which individuals and communities adapt to shifting cultural landscapes. The analysis highlights that while some aspects of cultural identity face fragmentation, others are revitalized and redefined through digital expression, education, and political activism. This study emphasizes the need to understand cultural identity as a fluid, context-dependent construct shaped by both global trends and local resilience in Thai society.

**Keywords:** Cultural identity, Social change, Globalization, Thai society, Hybrid identity

## Introduction

In the 21st century, the global society is undergoing rapid transformation driven by the forces of globalization and advances in digital technology. These changes have significantly altered human lifestyles, values, and communication patterns on an unprecedented scale (Appadurai, 1996; Castells, 2010). As a result, cultural exchanges have become increasingly open and intense, challenging traditional cultural frameworks in many societies. This dynamic environment raises concerns about the stability and continuity of *cultural identity*.

Cultural identity refers to an individual's or group's sense of belonging to a cultural community, expressed through language, beliefs, values, traditions, and ways of life (Hall, 1996). It serves as a fundamental element that shapes personal and collective identities. However, in today's contemporary society—characterized by cultural diversity, cross-cultural interactions, and rapid consumption of globalized

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culture—cultural identity is no longer static but becomes fluid, negotiable, and subject to transformation (Bauman, 2001).

This situation leads to key academic questions: How does cultural identity function within the context of contemporary social change? How can local cultures preserve their identities in the face of global cultural pressures? What are the emerging forms of identity in an era of globalization?

This article aims to analyze the meaning, role, and transformation of cultural identity within contemporary society. It draws upon conceptual frameworks from the humanities and social sciences, including identity theory, globalization theory, and contemporary cultural studies. The objective is to offer critical insights and recommendations for preserving cultural diversity in an increasingly borderless world.

## **Conceptual framework and related theories**

The study of cultural identity within the context of contemporary social change requires a multidisciplinary approach that integrates perspectives from sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and political theory. This section presents the key concepts and theoretical frameworks used to analyze the dynamics of cultural identity and its transformation in a globalized world.

### **1. Concept of Cultural Identity**

Cultural identity refers to an individual's or group's affiliation with a particular culture, shaped by shared language, beliefs, customs, traditions, and values. Stuart Hall (1996) argues that cultural identity is not a fixed essence, but a "positioning" – a continuous process of becoming rather than being. According to Hall, identity is constructed through representation and difference, and it is always historically and socially situated.

This view challenges essentialist perspectives that see identity as rooted in a static, homogenous cultural heritage. Instead, identity is seen as dynamic, fluid, and shaped through discourse, power relations, and interactions with others (Hall, 1996; Woodward, 1997).

### **2. Theories of Social and Cultural Change**

To understand how cultural identity evolves, it is necessary to examine the broader theories of social and cultural change:

**Anthony Giddens' Theory of Structuration:** Giddens (1991) emphasizes the reflexivity of modern individuals, who constantly reflect on and revise their identities in response to new information and experiences. In the context of globalization, people encounter multiple sources of cultural meaning, leading to the emergence of hybrid identities.

**Modernization and Globalization Theories:** These theories, particularly as articulated by Appadurai (1996), view globalization as a process that intensifies cultural flows—of people, ideas, media, and capital—across national boundaries. While this can lead to cultural homogenization, it can also create spaces for resistance, adaptation, and new cultural forms.

**Bauman's Concept of Liquid Modernity:** Zygmunt Bauman (2001) introduces the idea of "liquid modernity," in which social structures and identities

become increasingly unstable and flexible. In this view, cultural identity is no longer rooted in tradition but is constantly renegotiated in response to shifting circumstances.

### **3. Cultural Hybridity and Identity Construction**

Another important theoretical perspective is the concept of **cultural hybridity**, which refers to the blending of elements from different cultures to create new, composite identities. Homi Bhabha (1994) describes hybridity as a “third space” where cultural meanings are negotiated. This space allows for the emergence of novel identities that challenge binary notions of East vs. West or local vs. global.

In contemporary societies, individuals—especially youth—often embody hybrid identities through language, fashion, media consumption, and values that cross traditional cultural boundaries (Pieterse, 2004). This hybridity reflects not cultural loss, but cultural innovation.

### **4. Identity Politics and Cultural Preservation**

From a political science perspective, **identity politics** explores how cultural identity becomes a basis for collective action and political struggle. Cultural groups may mobilize around their identities to demand rights, recognition, or autonomy in the face of cultural domination or marginalization (Taylor, 1994).

Furthermore, scholars emphasize the importance of cultural preservation in sustaining community cohesion and self-determination. UNESCO (2003) advocates for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage as a way to promote intercultural dialogue and protect cultural diversity.

## **Cultural identity in its original context**

Cultural identity in its original or traditional context was deeply rooted in stable social structures and long-standing cultural practices. It was closely linked to the environment, religion, community roles, and intergenerational transmission of values, forming a coherent and relatively unchanging sense of self and group belonging.

### **1. Cultural Identity as Community-Based and Inherited**

Traditionally, cultural identity was passed down from generation to generation through family, religious institutions, and community life. In many societies, especially agrarian or indigenous communities, identity was shaped by kinship ties, rituals, oral traditions, and communal knowledge systems (Geertz, 1973). These cultural markers provided individuals with a clear sense of "who they are" and "where they belong."

In this context, identity was collective rather than individualistic. People identified primarily as members of extended families, ethnic groups, or local communities. Social roles and expectations were determined by age, gender, and caste or class, and rarely questioned.

### **2. Role of Religion and Tradition**

Religion played a central role in shaping traditional cultural identities. In many cultures, belief systems provided moral frameworks, life rituals, and cosmological narratives that gave meaning to daily life and death (Durkheim, 1912). In Southeast Asia, for example, Theravāda Buddhism influenced not only personal values such as

compassion and detachment but also social institutions and festivals, thus reinforcing a shared cultural identity (Keyes, 1977).

Tradition functioned as a stabilizing force. It bound individuals to a collective memory and practices that defined group identity and ensured social continuity. Symbols, myths, language, and clothing were all tied to identity preservation.

### **3. Identity as Embedded in Place and Practice**

Traditional cultural identity was also tied to place—geographic and symbolic. People identified strongly with their local landscapes, villages, or homelands, which held spiritual and historical significance. The connection between identity and land was reinforced through farming rituals, ancestral worship, and sacred geography.

Moreover, cultural practices such as dance, music, dress, and cuisine were rooted in specific regions. These practices served not just as expressions of identity but as tools of transmission and reproduction of cultural norms (Barth, 1969).

### **4. Cultural Identity and Social Stability**

Cultural identity in its original context contributed significantly to social cohesion and stability. Shared cultural values and norms helped regulate behavior and maintain a sense of order within communities. Identity was not something to be "constructed" but rather something one was born into, expected to preserve and perform (Jenkins, 2004).

This stability, however, also came with limitations—such as rigid social roles, exclusion of outsiders, and resistance to change. But in terms of identity formation, the traditional context offered clarity, continuity, and communal belonging.

## **Phenomenons and drivers of change in contemporary society**

In the modern world, cultural identity is increasingly shaped, disrupted, and redefined by powerful forces of change. These forces emerge from globalization, technological advancement, migration, and the spread of neoliberal economic models. While these dynamics create new possibilities for cultural interaction and innovation, they also challenge traditional forms of identity and social cohesion.

### **1. Globalization and Cultural Flows**

Globalization, characterized by the increased interconnectedness of economies, societies, and cultures, is one of the most significant drivers of change in contemporary identity formation. According to Appadurai (1996), globalization facilitates the movement of people (ethnoscapes), technologies (technoscapes), media (mediascapes), ideologies (ideoscapes), and goods (financescapes) across borders. These cultural flows disrupt local traditions and introduce new ideas, values, and practices that reshape cultural identities.

For example, youth in rural communities can now consume global pop culture through social media, altering their tastes, language use, and even self-presentation, often in contrast to their traditional cultural expectations.

### **2. Digital Technology and Social Media**

Digital technology and especially **social media** have accelerated cultural exchange, personal expression, and identity experimentation. Platforms such as

Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube allow individuals to construct and broadcast their identities to global audiences, often blending local and global influences (boyd, 2014).

This creates what Manuel Castells (2010) calls the "network society," where cultural identity is less about geography and more about online communities and shared digital experiences. The speed and volume of online interactions also increase exposure to diverse perspectives, while algorithms can simultaneously create **echo chambers** that reinforce selective cultural values.

### 3. Migration and Transnationalism

The rise in international migration has resulted in **diasporic communities** and **transnational identities**. People who live across borders often retain connections to their homeland while adapting to the culture of the host country (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). This dual positioning fosters hybrid cultural identities that reflect both cultural continuity and adaptation.

Children of immigrants, for instance, may navigate multiple cultural expectations—those of their ancestral culture and the dominant culture in which they live—creating complex identity negotiations.

### 4. Neoliberalism and Individualism

Contemporary capitalism and neoliberal ideology emphasize **individual choice**, **consumer identity**, and **personal branding**. These values shift the meaning of identity from collective belonging to personal expression and economic positioning (Harvey, 2005).

Cultural identity becomes a “project” that individuals curate through consumption choices, lifestyles, and affiliations, often marketed as personal uniqueness rather than communal ties. This shift can weaken traditional forms of social solidarity and promote identity fragmentation.

### 5. Urbanization and Cultural Anonymity

The rapid growth of cities has also contributed to changes in identity. Urban life often weakens community ties and promotes **anonymity**, **diversity**, and **fluid social interactions**. Unlike in rural or tribal settings, urban residents are frequently exposed to multiple, sometimes conflicting, cultural norms, which compel them to adopt flexible and context-dependent identities (Sennett, 1977).

### 6. Education and Cultural Awareness

Formal education systems increasingly include global history, world religions, and multicultural content, which can broaden perspectives and foster **cosmopolitan identities** (Nussbaum, 1997). At the same time, this may cause tension with traditionalist views or localized cultural teachings.

In the modern world, cultural identity is being constantly reshaped by powerful and intersecting forces including globalization, digital technology, migration, neoliberalism, and urbanization. These dynamics open new avenues for cultural exchange and innovation while simultaneously disrupting traditional forms of identity and weakening long-standing social bonds. Globalization, through the intensified movement of people, ideas, and goods, exposes communities to new cultural influences

that alter tastes, values, and self-perception, especially among younger generations. Digital technology and social media further amplify this change by creating global networks where individuals experiment with identity across virtual platforms, blending local roots with global trends while also facing risks of algorithm-driven echo chambers. Migration gives rise to transnational identities as people maintain cultural ties to their homelands while adapting to new societal norms, resulting in complex negotiations of identity among immigrant families. The rise of neoliberal ideology emphasizes individuality, consumer choice, and self-branding, transforming identity from a shared cultural inheritance to a personal project curated through lifestyle and market participation, often at the cost of communal cohesion. Urbanization contributes by weakening traditional community structures and fostering cultural anonymity, compelling urban dwellers to develop flexible, situational identities in increasingly diverse and impersonal environments. Lastly, modern education expands cultural horizons through global and multicultural curricula, encouraging openness and cosmopolitan thinking, although it may also challenge traditional norms and spark intergenerational tensions. Altogether, these forces collectively reconfigure cultural identity into a more fluid, multifaceted, and contested construct in contemporary society.

### **Impact on cultural identity**

The transformative forces of globalization, digital technology, migration, neoliberalism, and urbanization have had profound and multifaceted impacts on cultural identity. These impacts range from the fragmentation and hybridization of identity to the revitalization of cultural expressions in new forms. While some communities experience erosion of traditional values, others actively engage in adapting and preserving their identities in the face of change.

#### **1. Fragmentation and Loss of Traditional Identity**

One of the most significant impacts is the **erosion of traditional cultural identity**. As global media and consumer culture penetrate deeply into local communities, especially through digital platforms, traditional languages, rituals, dress, and moral values can lose relevance among younger generations (Tomlinson, 1999). For example, indigenous youth may abandon traditional attire, crafts, or languages in favor of modern, globalized symbols of status or belonging. This can lead to **cultural homogenization**, where diverse local cultures become increasingly similar to dominant global cultures, often Western in orientation (Barber, 1996).

#### **2. Emergence of Hybrid Identities**

At the same time, the blending of global and local influences has led to the rise of **hybrid cultural identities**—where individuals combine elements from multiple cultural sources to form new, fluid, and personalized identities (Bhabha, 1994). This hybridity allows for creative expression and adaptability, especially among urban youth who participate in global subcultures (e.g., K-pop fans, hip-hop culture, digital influencers).

Such hybrid identities often reflect "**glocalization**"—the coexistence of global and local elements within identity construction (Robertson, 1995).

### 3. Negotiation and Identity Politics

The pressures of social change also compel individuals and communities to **negotiate their identities**, sometimes through political and cultural activism. Minority and indigenous groups may mobilize to assert their rights to cultural recognition and autonomy (Taylor, 1994).

This is evident in movements for language revitalization, cultural heritage preservation, or resistance to cultural appropriation. In this way, identity becomes both a **site of struggle** and a source of empowerment.

### 4. Virtual Identity and Online Self-Representation

Social media platforms have created **new spaces for identity construction**, where people actively curate and perform their identities online. While this allows for freedom of expression, it can also lead to superficial identity markers, pressure to conform to trends, or confusion between authentic and performative selves (boyd, 2014; Turkle, 2011).

Virtual identities may not reflect deeper cultural roots, raising questions about **authenticity and continuity** in digital cultures.

### 5. Reclaiming and Revitalizing Identity

In response to perceived cultural erosion, some communities and individuals have engaged in **revitalization efforts**. These include promoting local languages in education, reviving traditional festivals, using digital platforms to share indigenous knowledge, and integrating traditional values with modern lifestyles.

Such practices reflect a **resilient form of identity**, one that adapts without surrendering core cultural meaning (Smith, 2009).

### 6. Psychological and Social Impacts

On a personal level, the fluidity and instability of cultural identity in modern society can lead to **identity confusion**, especially among youth or migrants navigating multiple cultural contexts (Erikson, 1968). However, it can also foster **intercultural competence**, critical thinking, and global citizenship when individuals learn to embrace cultural diversity.

The forces of globalization, digital technology, migration, neoliberalism, and urbanization have profoundly reshaped cultural identity, leading to a spectrum of outcomes from loss to revitalization. Traditional cultural identities have experienced fragmentation as younger generations shift away from inherited languages, rituals, and customs, often embracing modern, globalized lifestyles. This has contributed to the homogenization of diverse cultures under dominant global influences. At the same time, these transformations have given rise to hybrid identities, where individuals blend global and local cultural elements to create fluid, personalized expressions of self, particularly among urban youth immersed in global subcultures. Cultural identity has also become a site of negotiation and activism, with marginalized groups mobilizing to assert their cultural rights and preserve heritage through language revival and resistance to cultural appropriation. Digital platforms have introduced new arenas for identity construction, enabling creative self-representation but also raising concerns about authenticity and the psychological effects of performative identity. In response to cultural erosion, some communities actively engage in reclaiming and revitalizing their

traditions, integrating modern tools to strengthen cultural continuity. These developments highlight the resilience of cultural identity, even as its forms become increasingly dynamic and adaptive. On a psychological level, individuals—especially youth and migrants—may struggle with identity confusion in the face of cultural flux, yet this environment also fosters intercultural competence and global awareness, enabling people to navigate diversity with greater openness and flexibility.

### Case Study

To further illustrate the transformation of cultural identity in contemporary society, this section presents selected case studies relevant to the Thai context and broader regional dynamics. Each example highlights the interaction between traditional identity elements and forces of modern change, revealing the complexities of identity negotiation and adaptation.

#### 1. Identity Changes of Thai Adolescents in the Digital Age

In Thailand, the identity formation of adolescents is increasingly influenced by digital media, global pop culture, and online communities. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube have created spaces where young people explore, express, and even reinvent their identities outside of traditional family or cultural expectations. According to recent studies (Srisontisuk & Kengganpanich, 2021), Thai adolescents often adopt fashion, language, and attitudes influenced by Korean, Japanese, or Western subcultures. This sometimes creates tension with older generations who value traditional Thai norms such as *kreng jai* (respectfulness) and *sabai-sabai* (easy-going attitude). Adolescents may thus live in a **dual identity** system—balancing expectations from their local culture while embracing a digital cosmopolitan lifestyle. Moreover, social media also promotes **performative identities**, where youths curate idealized versions of themselves to gain social validation, sometimes leading to identity confusion or pressure to conform to trends (Turkle, 2011).

#### 2. Ethnic Culture and Tourism: The Case of Northern Hill Tribes

The commercialization of ethnic identity is evident in the tourism-driven **representation of hill tribe cultures** in Northern Thailand. Groups such as the Karen, Hmong, and Akha have adapted their traditional attire, rituals, and crafts to appeal to domestic and international tourists (McKinnon, 2005). This adaptation is often seen as a **form of cultural commodification**.

While tourism offers economic opportunities, it also leads to tensions between **authentic cultural preservation** and **performance for outsiders**. In some cases, communities alter or simplify cultural expressions to meet tourist expectations, potentially eroding original meanings. However, some groups have used tourism as a platform for **cultural revitalization**, reviving dances, languages, and crafts that were previously in decline.

The case of hill tribe tourism demonstrates how identity can be both preserved and reshaped through engagement with the market economy and external audiences.

### 3. Religious Identity in a Multicultural Society: Muslim Youth in Southern Thailand

Southern Thailand, especially the provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, presents a unique context of religious identity negotiation. Muslim youth in this region often live at the intersection of Islamic cultural traditions, Thai national identity, and modern secular influences (Liow, 2009).

While the community holds tightly to religious practices—such as Islamic dress, education, and religious law—young Muslims are increasingly influenced by global Muslim media, diaspora connections, and modern aspirations. Some pursue education and employment in Bangkok or abroad, leading to hybrid identities where traditional Islamic values coexist with urban modernity.

In this context, **religious identity becomes a site of both preservation and innovation**, as Muslim youth negotiate their place in a broader Thai society that often privileges Buddhist norms.

Cultural identity in contemporary Thailand reflects dynamic interactions between traditional values and modern influences, as seen in diverse case studies. Thai adolescents increasingly shape their identities through digital media and global pop culture, creating a dual identity that merges traditional norms with cosmopolitan digital lifestyles. Social media platforms encourage performative self-representation, which can lead to both self-expression and identity confusion. In Northern Thailand, ethnic hill tribe groups like the Karen, Hmong, and Akha have adapted their cultural expressions to cater to tourism. While this provides economic benefits, it also raises concerns about the commodification and dilution of cultural authenticity. Nevertheless, some communities have leveraged tourism as a means of revitalizing endangered traditions. In the multicultural context of Southern Thailand, Muslim youth navigate complex intersections between Islamic traditions, Thai nationalism, and modern global influences. Their identities reflect a blend of religious continuity and urban adaptation, revealing efforts to maintain faith-based practices while engaging with broader societal trends. Collectively, these examples demonstrate that cultural identity in Thailand is not static but constantly negotiated, reshaped, and redefined amid the pressures and possibilities of contemporary change.

### Conclusion

In contemporary Thai society, cultural identity is undergoing significant transformation due to the multifaceted impacts of globalization, technological advancement, urbanization, and shifting social values. Traditional markers of identity, such as language, religion, and customs, continue to hold relevance, but they are increasingly being negotiated and redefined in response to new cultural flows and global influences. Thai youth, in particular, are navigating hybrid identities that blend local traditions with global popular culture, demonstrating both continuity and change.

While cultural change offers opportunities for innovation and intercultural dialogue, it also poses challenges to national cohesion, intergenerational understanding, and the preservation of heritage. The dynamic nature of identity in Thailand reflects broader global trends, yet it is shaped by distinct national narratives, Buddhist philosophies, and state-led modernization policies.

Ultimately, the evolution of cultural identity in Thailand highlights the need for inclusive policies and educational strategies that respect diversity, encourage critical

reflection, and foster cultural resilience. Understanding these shifts through interdisciplinary perspectives from the humanities and social sciences is crucial for navigating the complexities of identity in a rapidly changing world.

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# The Role of Art in Emotional and Moral Development<sup>\*</sup>

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## Abstract

This article explores the role of art in emotional and moral development, emphasizing its significance as a tool for self-expression, psychological well-being, and ethical growth. Art enables individuals to externalize complex emotions, manage stress, and foster empathy through creative processes. By engaging with various art forms such as visual arts, music, literature, and performance, individuals not only enhance emotional intelligence but also develop critical moral awareness and social responsibility. The article also highlights how art-based practices contribute to healing, character formation, and the cultivation of humanistic values in both personal and communal contexts.

**Keywords:** Art, Emotional development, Moral development, Creativity, Cmpathy

## Introduction

Art has long been recognized as a profound expression of human experience, serving not merely as decoration or entertainment but as a vital tool for fostering emotional growth and elevating human consciousness. From prehistoric cave paintings to contemporary digital installations, artistic expression reflects the evolution of human thought, emotion, and collective identity (Dissanayake, 1995). In particular, art functions as a language of emotion, enabling individuals to process internal experiences, communicate unspoken truths, and engage in reflective practices essential to human development.

In the context of today's fast-paced and increasingly fragmented society, emotional and psychological well-being is under threat from numerous sources. The rise of digital media has brought about overstimulation, reduced attention spans, and a decline in interpersonal empathy (Turkle, 2011). Simultaneously, economic inequalities, political instability, and global crises such as pandemics and climate change exacerbate emotional distress and diminish social cohesion. These societal challenges have led to a growing recognition of the need for holistic approaches that address not only the material but also the emotional and spiritual dimensions of human life (Nussbaum, 2010).

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The idea of using art for human development arises from both philosophical and empirical traditions. In ancient times, Plato and Aristotle emphasized the moral and emotional impact of drama and music on character development (Kristeller, 1951). More recently, art therapy has emerged as a discipline that leverages the creative process to support emotional healing and cognitive growth (Malchiodi, 2012). Educational theorists have also highlighted the role of the arts in fostering emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and self-awareness among learners (Eisner, 2002).

This article aims to explore the role of art in developing human emotions and consciousness in contemporary contexts. It seeks to identify how various art forms—including visual arts, music, performance, and literature—contribute to emotional resilience, ethical awareness, and a deeper understanding of self and society. By analyzing both theoretical foundations and practical applications, the article provides a comprehensive examination of how art can be harnessed to address the emotional and existential challenges of modern life.

The scope of this study is interdisciplinary, combining perspectives from psychology, education, aesthetics, and cultural studies. It focuses on both historical and contemporary practices, examining global case studies and theoretical models that demonstrate the transformative power of art. The analysis is intended to benefit educators, mental health professionals, artists, and policymakers interested in promoting emotional well-being and conscious citizenship through creative means.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **1. The Concept of Human Emotion and Consciousness**

The understanding of human emotion and consciousness has evolved significantly through the contributions of major psychological theorists. Sigmund Freud emphasized the unconscious mind's role in shaping emotions and behaviors, proposing that repressed emotional experiences often manifest through symbolic forms, such as dreams or artistic expression (Freud, 1915). In this view, art becomes a channel through which unconscious conflicts are revealed and resolved.

Carl Jung, a student of Freud who later developed his own school of analytical psychology, introduced the concept of the *collective unconscious* and *archetypes*—universal symbols present in myths, dreams, and artworks (Jung, 1966). According to Jung, artistic expression allows individuals to access deeper layers of the psyche, facilitating personal integration and spiritual growth.

Abraham Maslow, a humanistic psychologist, offered a complementary perspective by introducing the hierarchy of needs. He argued that creativity and aesthetic appreciation are indicators of self-actualization, the highest level of psychological development (Maslow, 1943). In Maslow's framework, engaging in art contributes not only to emotional fulfillment but also to a broader consciousness of one's purpose and potential.

### **2. Theory of Perception and Learning through Art**

Learning through art is rooted in theories of sensory perception and experiential learning. According to John Dewey, art is a form of experience that engages both cognitive and emotional faculties, making it a unique educational medium (Dewey, 1934). Dewey proposed that art encourages reflection, interpretation, and critical thinking, helping individuals derive meaning from lived experiences.

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences further supports this idea, suggesting that individuals possess different kinds of intelligences—including visual-spatial and musical intelligences—that are best nurtured through artistic engagement (Gardner, 1983). In educational settings, art enhances not only emotional development but also problem-solving and communication skills.

### **3. The Concept of Art Therapy**

Art therapy is a psychotherapeutic approach that utilizes the creative process of making art to improve a person's physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Rooted in both psychological and artistic traditions, art therapy offers a non-verbal mode of communication, which is particularly valuable for individuals who have difficulty articulating their emotions (Malchiodi, 2012). It helps individuals explore their feelings, reconcile emotional conflicts, develop self-awareness, and manage behavior and addictions.

The American Art Therapy Association defines art therapy as “an integrative mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through active art-making and creative process” (AATA, 2017). Research has shown its effectiveness in treating trauma, anxiety, depression, and emotional dysregulation (Case & Dalley, 2014).

### **4. The Concept of Art for Social and Human Development**

Beyond the individual level, art plays a significant role in fostering social and human development. The concept of Art for Human Development (AHD) is based on the premise that creative expression can enhance civic participation, empower marginalized communities, and nurture collective identity. It aligns with Amartya Sen's capability approach, which views development as the expansion of individual freedoms and human capabilities (Sen, 1999).

Art projects in community settings have been shown to promote empathy, cultural understanding, and conflict resolution. As Boal (1979) argued in *Theatre of the Oppressed*, participatory art forms like theater can be used as tools for social transformation, giving voice to the voiceless and fostering critical consciousness.

AHD also links to the UNESCO model of cultural development, which advocates integrating cultural and artistic practices into sustainable development agendas (UNESCO, 2013). This approach recognizes the arts as essential to human dignity, creativity, and the formation of inclusive societies.

## **The Role of Art in Human Emotional Development**

### **1. Art for Expressing and Understanding Emotions**

Art provides a unique medium for individuals to express and explore their emotions, especially when verbal communication may be limited or ineffective. According to Kandinsky (1912), visual elements such as color, line, and form have the power to communicate deep emotional states and inner experiences. This expressive function allows individuals to externalize feelings such as anger, joy, fear, or confusion through symbolic or abstract forms.

Goleman (1995), in his work on emotional intelligence, emphasized the importance of recognizing and regulating one's emotions for psychological well-being. Artistic activities, whether through painting, music, dance, or poetry, cultivate these emotional capacities by allowing individuals to reflect on their internal states and develop empathy for others. Furthermore, Eisner (2002) argued that arts-based learning

helps learners develop aesthetic sensitivity and a richer emotional vocabulary, which are critical for emotional development.

## **2. Art for Treating Stress, Sadness, and Anxiety**

Art also functions as a therapeutic tool to help manage negative emotions such as stress, sadness, and anxiety. Engaging in creative activities can stimulate the release of dopamine and endorphins—neurochemicals associated with pleasure and relaxation (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). This physiological response contributes to emotional regulation and a sense of calm.

Art therapy, in particular, is widely used in clinical settings to support individuals coping with trauma, grief, and mental health disorders. According to Malchiodi (2012), creating art in a structured therapeutic environment allows clients to process traumatic experiences, gain control over emotions, and rebuild a sense of identity. The American Psychological Association has acknowledged that art therapy is especially effective for people experiencing PTSD, depression, and chronic anxiety (APA, 2017).

## **3. Case Study: Use of Art with Psychiatric Patients, Special Needs Children, and the Elderly**

Numerous studies and case applications highlight the beneficial impact of art on vulnerable populations:

- **Psychiatric Patients:** In a study conducted by Czamanski-Cohen et al. (2014), patients undergoing cancer treatment who participated in structured art-making sessions reported significant reductions in stress and improved emotional well-being. In psychiatric wards, visual art has been used to help patients articulate psychotic symptoms and engage in self-reflective healing (Chong, 2015).
- **Special Needs Children:** Art education has proven effective for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and emotional disturbances. Programs integrating music and visual art have been found to improve attention span, emotional expression, and social interaction in children with ASD (Karkou & Sanderson, 2006).
- **The Elderly:** Among older adults, especially those suffering from dementia or depression, art programs have shown to enhance memory, reduce feelings of loneliness, and foster emotional expression. For example, Cohen et al. (2006) demonstrated that participation in community-based arts programs led to fewer doctor visits, better morale, and greater overall well-being in older adults.

These case studies underscore the transformative potential of art in promoting emotional health across the lifespan.

## **The role of art in raising awareness and morality**

### **1. Art and Creating Awareness of the Environment, Community, and Society**

Art plays a crucial role in shaping collective consciousness and instilling a sense of moral responsibility toward the environment and society. By stimulating critical reflection, art allows individuals to visualize and emotionally connect with pressing social issues such as poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, and human rights (Gablik, 1991). Visual and performative arts can foster civic engagement by creating spaces for dialogue and questioning dominant ideologies.

Environmental art, in particular, raises ecological awareness by illustrating the relationship between humans and nature. For instance, Andy Goldsworthy, a prominent environmental artist, creates ephemeral works using natural materials to emphasize the fragility of ecosystems and the passage of time (Beardsley, 1998). Such artworks not only inspire aesthetic appreciation but also provoke ethical contemplation regarding human impact on the Earth.

In community contexts, participatory art empowers marginalized voices, fosters empathy, and builds collective identity. As Bourriaud (2002) argues in his concept of *relational aesthetics*, contemporary art can function as a catalyst for social interaction, moral discourse, and mutual care.

## **2. The Role of Literature, Music, Film, and Public Art in Raising Awareness**

Different art forms contribute uniquely to moral and social consciousness:

- Literature offers deep insights into human experiences and ethical dilemmas. Works such as George Orwell's *1984* or Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* have long served as critiques of authoritarianism, racism, and injustice. As Martha Nussbaum (1997) argues, literature nurtures moral imagination by helping readers emotionally inhabit lives different from their own.
- Music has historically been used as a vehicle for protest and moral awakening. For example, Bob Dylan's anti-war and civil rights songs in the 1960s or Fela Kuti's Afrobeat activism in Nigeria exemplify how music can mobilize public opinion and stimulate social reform (Street, 2012).
- Film, with its immersive power, can humanize abstract issues and galvanize ethical action. Documentaries like *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) raised global awareness about climate change, while feature films like *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) brought attention to genocide and humanitarian crisis.
- Public art, such as murals, sculptures, and street performances, engages viewers in everyday spaces, transforming passive observers into conscious citizens. The Guernica mural by Pablo Picasso, painted in response to the bombing of a Spanish town, remains a powerful anti-war symbol and ethical protest against violence (Chipp, 1988).

## **3. Examples of Social Art Projects or Artists Who Play an Ethical Role**

Several artists and projects exemplify the role of art in moral and social engagement:

- Ai Weiwei, a Chinese contemporary artist and activist, uses installation art and documentary film to challenge political corruption and advocate for human rights in China. His work *Remembering* (2009), composed of 9,000 children's backpacks, commemorates the victims of the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, critiquing state negligence (Munroe, 2011).
- The Inside Out Project by JR, a French street artist and photographer, is a global participatory art initiative that invites communities to display large portraits in public spaces, celebrating diversity and solidarity (JR, 2013). The project has been used to support social causes ranging from refugee rights to gender equality.
- Theaster Gates, an American artist and urban planner, transforms abandoned buildings in marginalized neighborhoods into cultural spaces, promoting community development and social justice through art (Thompson, 2015).

These examples demonstrate how artists can take on ethical roles by addressing social injustices, advocating for the marginalized, and encouraging moral introspection through creative practices.

## **Art, education and long-term human development**

### **1. Integrating Arts in the Curriculum**

Integrating the arts into educational curricula is vital for nurturing the full range of human capacities beyond traditional cognitive learning. According to Elliot Eisner (2002), art education supports multiple forms of intelligence and expression, allowing students to explore knowledge not only through logic and language but also through visual, musical, and kinesthetic modes. When embedded into general education, the arts promote deeper engagement, contextual thinking, and emotional resonance with learning materials.

The UNESCO Road Map for Arts Education (2006) emphasizes the importance of integrating arts in both formal and non-formal education, arguing that artistic experiences develop children's identity, social skills, and empathy. In multicultural contexts, arts education also helps students understand diverse cultures and histories, which supports social inclusion and global citizenship (UNESCO, 2010).

Examples of successful models include STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) frameworks that reintroduce creativity and aesthetics into STEM disciplines. Research has shown that students exposed to integrated arts curricula demonstrate better problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaboration skills (Sousa & Pilecki, 2013).

### **2. Promoting Creativity and Self-Awareness through Arts**

Creativity is not only a tool for innovation but also a key component of personal development. Through artistic expression, learners become more aware of their thoughts, values, and emotions. This self-awareness contributes to psychological well-being, resilience, and moral maturity (Goleman, 1995). The creative process fosters a sense of agency, where learners can experiment, take risks, and derive meaning from their lived experiences.

According to Ken Robinson (2011), educational systems that undervalue creativity tend to produce conformity rather than originality. He argues that fostering creativity through the arts equips individuals with the adaptive capacity needed for the complexities of 21st-century life. Arts-based learning has also been linked to enhanced emotional intelligence and social-emotional learning outcomes in youth (Winner et al., 2013).

Furthermore, self-awareness gained through the arts aligns with humanistic education models that place the learner's inner growth at the center of the educational process (Maslow, 1971). In this way, arts education supports both intrapersonal development and interpersonal ethics.

### **3. Policy Guidelines and Proposals for Supporting Arts at the National Level**

Despite growing evidence of the benefits of arts education, many nations still underfund or deprioritize the arts in policy agendas. Effective national strategies should include structural reforms to ensure access, inclusion, and sustained investment in the arts across educational levels.

UNESCO (2019) recommends four core policy actions:

- Guarantee access to quality arts education for all children and youth.
- Integrate the arts into national curricula and teacher training.
- Support community-based arts programs and partnerships with local artists.
- Allocate funding for arts research and evaluation to ensure evidence-based policymaking.

In countries such as Finland and South Korea, where arts are integrated systemically into education and cultural policy, students perform well not only academically but also in well-being and creativity indices (OECD, 2018). These examples suggest that national policies fostering arts education can contribute to both human capital development and democratic citizenship.

Policy frameworks should also recognize the arts as a driver of long-term sustainable development. The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development identifies culture and creativity as cross-cutting enablers of inclusive and equitable education, well-being, and peace (UN, 2015).

Integrating the arts into educational curricula enhances human capacities by supporting diverse intelligences and promoting engagement, contextual thinking, and emotional connection to learning. Arts education also fosters identity, empathy, and social inclusion, especially in multicultural contexts, and models like STEAM demonstrate its value in developing problem-solving and collaboration skills. Artistic expression nurtures creativity and self-awareness, which are essential for personal development, emotional well-being, and moral maturity, encouraging learners to explore their inner selves and adapt to modern challenges. Education systems that emphasize creativity over conformity help individuals build resilience and emotional intelligence, supporting holistic growth. At the national level, policy guidelines should ensure equitable access to arts education, integrate arts into curricula and teacher training, support community engagement, and invest in arts research. Countries with strong arts education policies show high academic performance and creativity, and global development frameworks now recognize the arts as key to sustainable, inclusive, and peaceful societies.

## Conclusion

Art plays a crucial role in emotional and moral development by serving as a powerful medium for expressing feelings, processing experiences, and building self-awareness. It helps individuals understand and manage emotions, reduce stress and anxiety, and develop empathy. Artistic activities—such as painting, music, literature, and theater—encourage reflection, foster ethical thinking, and inspire social awareness. Through engagement with art, people can explore moral dilemmas, connect with others' perspectives, and cultivate a sense of responsibility and compassion, making art an essential tool for both personal growth and the promotion of ethical values in society.

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# The Role of Thai Families in Building Social Capital in the Era of Globalization<sup>\*</sup>

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## Abstract

This article examines the evolving role of Thai families in creating and sustaining social capital amid the forces of globalization. Traditionally, extended Thai families functioned as key agents of moral education, community engagement, and trust-building. In the modern era, despite changes in family structure, values, and communication patterns, families continue to adapt by supporting ethical development, fostering social networks, and participating in community life. The study highlights both the challenges and potentials of Thai families in strengthening social cohesion in a rapidly changing social environment.

**Keywords:** Thai family, Social capital, Globalization, Trust, Community

## Introduction

The family is universally recognized as the most fundamental social institution, serving as the primary unit for socialization, value transmission, emotional support, and identity formation (Parsons & Bales, 1955). In Thai society, the family has traditionally played a central role in instilling moral values, maintaining social cohesion, and supporting community networks. It acts as the first environment where individuals learn to interact, trust, and cooperate, thus contributing directly to the accumulation of social capital—the networks, norms, and trust that facilitate collective action in society (Putnam, 2000).

However, the context of globalization has significantly altered traditional family structures and roles. Economic migration, urbanization, technological change, and the rise of individualism have redefined family dynamics in Thailand. As traditional extended families shift toward nuclear or even fragmented forms, the transmission of cultural values and communal trust is disrupted (Jones, 2012). Moreover, transnational influences brought about by global media and digital communication challenge the local foundations of identity, intergenerational relationships, and social obligations (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

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This transformation leads to a research problem: How do Thai families today contribute to or struggle with building and maintaining social capital in the rapidly changing global environment? The traditional functions of the family are being challenged, yet families may also find new ways to adapt and foster social connectivity through digital networks, education, and community engagement.

This article focuses on Thai families in both urban and rural contexts, considering variations across socioeconomic classes and generational differences. It adopts a sociological and anthropological approach to analyze the impact of globalization on family functions and their capacity to build social capital. The study also incorporates comparative insights from other Asian societies experiencing similar transformations to contextualize the Thai case within a broader regional framework.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in a multidisciplinary theoretical framework that draws upon **Social Capital Theory**, socio-cultural understandings of the **Thai family**, and the **transformative effects of globalization**. These concepts collectively help explain how Thai families contribute to building social capital amid shifting social contexts.

#### **1. Social Capital Theory**

Social capital refers to the networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. Three major theorists provide foundational insights:

- **Robert Putnam** (2000) emphasizes the role of civic engagement and communal networks in strengthening democratic societies. He distinguishes between "bonding" social capital (within-group cohesion) and "bridging" social capital (connections across diverse groups), both of which are relevant to family-based interactions in Thai society.
- **Pierre Bourdieu** (1986) conceptualizes social capital as resources embedded in durable networks of relationships, often tied to economic and cultural capital. Families, especially in hierarchical societies like Thailand, are primary sites where such capital is accumulated and transmitted.
- **James Coleman** (1988) sees the family as a central unit for producing social capital, particularly through intergenerational relationships, shared expectations, and obligations among members.

These perspectives underscore that families are not merely private units but also key producers and transmitters of the social norms and trust that shape broader society.

#### **2. Concepts of Family in Thai Society**

In Thailand, the family is traditionally viewed as a collectivist and hierarchical institution, characterized by strong interdependence, filial piety, and respect for elders (Mulder, 1996). It has served as the primary unit of care, moral instruction, and social integration. In rural areas especially, kinship ties are closely linked to communal labor systems, religious activities, and informal welfare networks. This cultural understanding positions the family as an essential source of both bonding social capital and moral authority.

#### **3. Influence of Globalization on Family Structure and Role**

Globalization introduces new cultural norms, economic pressures, and communication technologies that challenge traditional family roles. As economic migration increases

and global media reshape values, Thai families face fragmentation and role shifts—such as increased roles of women as breadwinners or youth disengagement from traditional expectations (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Nuclear families are becoming more common, and intergenerational cohabitation is in decline, weakening the traditional transmission of social capital.

#### **4. Family Relationships and Building Trust, Cooperation, and Social Networks**

Trust, cooperation, and networks are core components of social capital, and they are often cultivated within the family. Daily interactions, caregiving, and shared rituals foster emotional bonds that support the development of trust and reciprocity (Fukuyama, 1995). These relational dynamics extend beyond the household to communities—through kin-based support systems, religious participation, and community engagement—demonstrating how families serve as bridges between personal and public spheres of social capital formation.

This study explores how Thai families contribute to building social capital within a changing global context by drawing on Social Capital Theory, cultural understandings of Thai family structures, and the impacts of globalization. Social capital is defined as the networks, norms, and trust that support cooperation, with major theorists highlighting the role of families in cultivating both bonding and bridging ties. Thai families have historically been seen as collectivist and hierarchical, responsible for moral guidance, care, and social integration, especially in rural settings where kinship and religious networks reinforce communal trust. However, globalization has altered these dynamics by introducing new cultural values, economic shifts, and digital technologies that challenge traditional roles, reduce intergenerational cohabitation, and reshape expectations. Despite these changes, Thai families continue to play a crucial role in forming trust, promoting cooperation, and maintaining social networks through daily interactions, caregiving, and engagement in community life, serving as a vital bridge between the personal and public dimensions of social cohesion.

#### **The role of the Thai family in the past in social capital**

In the past, the Thai family played a foundational role in building and maintaining social capital through its structure, values, and relational practices. As the most intimate and immediate social institution, the family not only nurtured individuals but also served as a vital link between the individual and the broader community, transmitting cultural norms and facilitating cooperation and trust.

##### **1. Traditional Family Forms**

Traditionally, Thai families were extended and multigenerational, encompassing parents, children, grandparents, and often other relatives such as aunts, uncles, and cousins living within the same household or nearby. This structure reflected both Buddhist values and the agrarian economy, where labor was shared and roles were interdependent (Mulder, 1996).

Patrilineal kinship patterns were common, and family elders held authority and were responsible for decision-making, conflict resolution, and religious instruction. This hierarchical but interdependent arrangement ensured social continuity and emotional security, which are essential conditions for fostering bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000).

Families also operated as units of mutual aid, particularly in rural settings, where cooperative labor in farming or ceremonies—known as *phueng ban* or neighborhood support—relied heavily on kinship ties. These practices created strong social networks, interwoven with moral obligations and long-term reciprocity, which are hallmarks of social capital (Coleman, 1988).

## **2. Inculcating Values, Culture, and Community Relations**

The Thai family was instrumental in the socialization process, teaching children core values such as gratitude (*katanyu*), respect for elders, modesty, and harmony—principles deeply rooted in Theravāda Buddhist ethics. Through storytelling, daily interactions, and participation in temple rituals, children learned not only religious teachings but also their social roles and obligations (Keyes, 1984).

Moreover, families served as mediators between individuals and the community. By encouraging participation in communal events—such as *boon* (merit-making) festivals, ordination ceremonies, and temple fairs—families fostered a sense of belonging and mutual responsibility. These cultural rituals reinforced collective identity and social trust, strengthening both vertical (intergenerational) and horizontal (peer-based) networks of cooperation (Fukuyama, 1995).

In essence, the traditional Thai family was a generator of social capital in its most robust form: a source of trust, cultural transmission, moral education, and community engagement. This legacy provides a contrast to the challenges faced by families in the era of globalization, where such roles are increasingly fragmented.

## **Changing Family Roles in the Era of Globalization**

The Thai family has undergone significant transformations in response to the sweeping forces of globalization. Structural, cultural, and behavioral shifts have redefined traditional roles, weakened intergenerational bonds, and challenged long-standing mechanisms for cultivating social capital. These changes are particularly evident in family size, technological influences, and evolving value systems.

### **1. Family Reduction**

One of the most visible changes in Thai society is the reduction in family size. Where once the extended family was predominant—especially in rural communities—modern Thai families are increasingly nuclear and geographically dispersed due to urbanization, migration, and declining birth rates (Jones, 2012). Young adults often leave home for education or employment in cities, leading to generational separation and a diminished role for grandparents in child-rearing and moral education. This structural transformation disrupts the traditional support system, reducing opportunities for the intergenerational transmission of social values and weakening the familial networks that foster social trust and reciprocity (Coleman, 1988). As such, the ability of the family to serve as a generator of bonding and bridging social capital becomes more limited.

### **2. Role of Technology and Media**

Globalization has been accelerated by advances in digital technology and media, reshaping how Thai families communicate, learn, and relate. On the one hand, technology has enabled families separated by distance to maintain connections via smartphones and social media. On the other hand, media saturation—particularly among younger generations—has exposed individuals to foreign values, lifestyles, and

ideologies that may conflict with traditional Thai norms (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

Moreover, digital devices increasingly replace in-person interaction, eroding shared family time, communal meals, and intergenerational dialogue. These changes reduce the affective bonds and communal trust-building that are essential components of social capital (Fukuyama, 1995).

### **3. Transformation of Values and Behaviors**

Globalization brings not only economic integration but also cultural diffusion, leading to changes in Thai values and family roles. The rise of individualism, consumerism, and youth autonomy challenges the traditional Thai emphasis on collectivism, respect for elders, and community harmony (Mulder, 1996).

Children and adolescents, influenced by global pop culture and online platforms, increasingly prioritize personal freedom over familial obligations. This has led to value dissonance between generations and a weakening of social norms such as *katanyu* (gratitude and filial duty), which traditionally reinforced trust, cooperation, and interdependence within both the family and the wider community (Keyes, 1984).

## **Thai families as new social capital creators**

Despite the pressures of globalization and social change, Thai families remain vital agents in the creation and renewal of social capital. While traditional forms of family support have diminished, families have adapted by fostering new forms of relational trust, civic engagement, and ethical development—bridging the personal and communal spheres in meaningful ways.

### **1. Building Vertical and Horizontal Relationships**

Modern Thai families continue to play a key role in cultivating both vertical (intergenerational) and horizontal (peer-based) relationships. Vertical relationships, such as those between parents and children or grandparents and grandchildren, remain essential in transmitting norms, values, and emotional support. Even in nuclear families, moral lessons, discipline, and spiritual guidance—often rooted in Buddhist ethics—are emphasized (Keyes, 1984; Mulder, 1996).

Simultaneously, horizontal relationships are formed through siblings, neighbors, and peers, where values like cooperation, reciprocity, and mutual respect are reinforced. These relationships mirror Putnam's (2000) concepts of bonding (within-group ties) and bridging (cross-group connections) social capital. In many communities, Thai families actively maintain both types through school associations, religious activities, and shared economic enterprises.

### **2. Supporting Learning, Social Participation, and Ethics**

Families are increasingly recognized as learning environments where children and youth develop social, emotional, and civic competencies. Beyond formal education, parents and guardians guide their children in understanding ethical conduct, conflict resolution, and respect for social norms. This aligns with Coleman's (1988) view that families are central to the development of human and social capital.

Thai families also promote social participation, especially through engagement in temple-based activities, local development projects, or community volunteering. These actions create opportunities for the younger generation to participate in society meaningfully, instilling a sense of responsibility, solidarity, and public-mindedness—crucial elements of social capital (Fukuyama, 1995).

### 3. Linkages to Community Strengthening

Families function as connectors between individuals and broader community structures. In rural and urban areas alike, households are key units in organizing community events, managing informal welfare systems, and promoting local identity. They help sustain social networks that are essential for community resilience, especially in times of crisis such as economic hardship or public health emergencies (Jones, 2012). Furthermore, families often lead initiatives in neighborhood associations, school committees, and religious foundations, reinforcing communal trust and shared values. These contributions mirror Bourdieu's (1986) understanding that social capital arises from embedded relationships that are mobilized for collective benefit.

Thai families, despite undergoing changes brought on by globalization, continue to play a crucial role in the creation and renewal of social capital by adapting to new social contexts through the development of trust, civic responsibility, and ethical values. They maintain both vertical relationships between generations and horizontal relationships among peers and neighbors, fostering norms of cooperation, respect, and mutual aid. These connections support emotional development and cultural continuity even within nuclear family structures. Thai families also serve as important learning environments, instilling moral conduct and encouraging social participation through religious, educational, and community-based activities. This contributes to the cultivation of responsible citizens who are actively engaged in public life. Additionally, families act as key bridges between individuals and broader community networks, often organizing or supporting local events, informal welfare systems, and collective initiatives. These activities strengthen communal ties and resilience, ensuring that families remain integral to the social fabric and to the functioning of society as generators of both bonding and bridging social capital.

### Conclusion

Thai families, despite undergoing significant structural and cultural transformation in the era of globalization, continue to serve as essential agents in the creation and sustenance of **social capital**. Historically rooted in extended and interdependent kinship systems, Thai families were central to cultivating trust, cooperation, and communal responsibility through the transmission of cultural values and religious ethics.

In contemporary society, while traditional family forms have been challenged by economic migration, technological disruption, and shifting value systems, families have adapted by finding new modes of connectivity and participation. The reduction in family size and increased digital engagement have altered how relationships are maintained, yet families still play a critical role in fostering **intergenerational trust, ethical development, and social engagement**.

Through their evolving roles—whether as caretakers, moral educators, or community participants—families remain at the heart of both **bonding** and **bridging** social capital. They link individuals to broader networks, strengthen communal ties, and help sustain the social fabric in both urban and rural contexts.

Ultimately, the resilience and adaptability of Thai families highlight their continued relevance in shaping social cohesion and collective well-being. To support this role, policies and community initiatives should recognize and empower families as

partners in nation-building and social development amid the complex challenges of globalization.

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## **Author Guidelines**

# **Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI)**

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### **1. Publication Policy in Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation**

Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI) is a journal in the humanities and social sciences. It aims to promote research and publish research articles, academic articles, review articles, and book reviews for scholars, researchers, lecturers, students at all levels, and interested persons in the dimensions of Sociologies, Anthropologies, Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, Business Administration, Politics, Public Administration, Development, Tourism, and other areas in Social Sciences. Articles that are considered for publication must be reviewed by at least 2 out of 3 qualified persons (Peer Review). Only English articles are considered for publication. Submitted works must not have been published or are under consideration by qualified persons for publication in other journals. Authors must strictly comply with the criteria for submitting academic or research articles for publication in the journal, and the referencing system must be in accordance with the criteria of the journal.

The views and opinions expressed in journal articles are the responsibility of the authors of the articles and are not the opinions of the editorial team. The editorial team does not reserve the right to copy but requires references to show the source.

Publication Frequency

Release scheduled of four issues per year (Biweekly 3 months per time):

Issue 1 January – March

Issue 2 April – June

Issue 3 July - September

Issue 4 October – December

### **2 . Types of works published in the Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation**

1. Research Article is a report of the results of a systematic study, research, or development.

2. An Academic Article is a work of writing an interesting topic in which the author presents new knowledge by using theories, concepts, and related research results as information sources.

3. Review Article is an article that combines theories, concepts, and research results on many subjects, the author will synthesize the literature to compile it into a conclusion or argument on a particular matter, which is a review of the academic progress of that matter.

### 3. Guidelines for Manuscript Preparation and Submission

#### Research Articles

##### Title

The title should be precise, concise, and accurately reflect the article's content and focus. Clearly specify the title: AJAJ - Writing Article Titles with Initial Capital Letters. (Times New Roman, 14 pt, Bold)

##### Author's name and surname

Full names of all authors, without including any titles, ranks, or honorifics. For multiple authors, separate the names with commas, and for the last author, use "and." (Times New Roman, 12 pt, Bold)

##### Full Address

Affair and country

*E-mail:*

Received xx/xx/20xx

Revised xx/xx/20xx

Accepted

xx/xx/20xx

*(Times New Roman, 11 pt, Italic)*

#### Abstract

The abstract should succinctly summarize the article, including its objectives, methodology, key findings, and discussion, all within 300-400 words. The abstract must be written as a single, coherent paragraph. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

**Keywords:** Keyword, keyword, keyword

Authors should provide a minimum of three keywords and a maximum of five, reflecting the core themes of the study. (Times New Roman, 11 pt; 5 keywords/phrases)

#### Introduction

The introduction of a research paper is a crucial component, as it is the first section that readers encounter to understand the topic under investigation. A well-written introduction should begin by presenting the general background of the issue or topic, gradually narrowing down to the specific problem that the researcher intends to explore. It should also highlight the significance and necessity of conducting the research.

Furthermore, the introduction should point out the gap in existing knowledge that the research aims to fill. It must clearly state the objectives of the study to ensure that readers can comprehend the rationale, importance, and direction of the research. A well-structured and thoughtful introduction not only enhances the credibility of the

study but also engages the reader's interest to continue exploring the entire research paper. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

### **Objectives**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

### **Literature review**

The literature review is a crucial component of the research process. Its primary purpose is to explore relevant information, concepts, theories, and previous studies related to the research topic. A thorough literature review helps researchers understand the current state of knowledge, identify academic trends, and recognize gaps that need further investigation.

A high-quality literature review involves the careful selection of credible, up-to-date, and directly relevant sources. Researchers should analyze, synthesize, and compare information from various references to establish a clear conceptual framework or research hypothesis. Moreover, the literature review enhances the credibility of the study and demonstrates that the researcher has a deep and comprehensive understanding of the topic being studied. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

### **Methodology**

The methodology section is a critical part of a research study that outlines the systematic process for data collection, analysis, and presentation of research findings. A well-written methodology clearly specifies the type of research—whether it is quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods—and explains the sampling procedures, research instruments, data collection steps, and data analysis techniques.

An appropriately designed methodology ensures that the research questions can be accurately addressed and enhances the **credibility** and **reliability** of the study. Furthermore, a clear methodology provides a framework that allows other researchers to replicate the study if they wish to explore the same topic in future research. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

### **Results**

The results section presents the findings derived from the analysis of collected data based on the established research methodology. At this stage, no interpretations or personal opinions from the researcher should be included. The presentation of results must be clear, organized, and aligned with the research objectives.

Results can be conveyed through narrative descriptions, tables, charts, or figures to make the information easier to understand and compare. The language used should be neutral and objective, avoiding any exaggeration or interpretation beyond what the data reveals.

A well-structured results section enables readers to connect the findings directly with the research questions and objectives. It also lays the foundation for the discussion and interpretation that follows in the next section of the research paper. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

### **Discussion**

The discussion section is a vital component that demonstrates the researcher's ability to interpret and critically analyze the findings in relation to the research objectives, hypotheses, and relevant literature or theories. The researcher should connect the results to theoretical frameworks and explain whether the findings support or contradict previous studies.

This section should include logical reasoning, possible explanations, and factors that may have influenced the results. It is also important to address any limitations of the study that could affect the accuracy or applicability of the findings.

A well-written discussion reflects academic depth and shows that the researcher understands the broader context of the research. It bridges the gap between raw findings and the implications they may have for theory, practice, or future studies. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion of a research paper provides a concise, clear, and complete summary of the key findings in alignment with the study's objectives. It should not introduce any new information or data, but rather synthesize what has already been discussed to highlight whether the research questions were effectively answered or the research goals were achieved.

A strong conclusion also includes practical implications or recommendations based on the findings, and often suggests directions for future research to expand upon areas that remain unexplored or insufficiently studied. A well-crafted conclusion helps readers quickly grasp the core contributions of the study and appreciate its academic value. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

### **Recommendation**

The **recommendation** section is an important component of a research paper, demonstrating how the findings can be applied in practice or used to inform future research. Recommendations should be based on the results and conclusions of the study, focusing on areas that can be developed, improved, or addressed more effectively.

Recommendations are typically divided into two categories:

1. **Practical or policy-related recommendations** – for implementation by organizations, institutions, or stakeholders.

2. **Recommendations for future research** – for exploring unresolved issues or expanding on the current study's findings.

Effective recommendations should be **clear, feasible, and relevant** to the context of the research problem, offering meaningful guidance for both practitioners and future scholars. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

## References

References must adhere to the *APA 7th Edition* guidelines. All cited works should follow the *American Psychological Association* referencing style, particularly for articles in foreign languages.

Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

## Academic Articles:

### Title

The title should be precise, concise, and accurately reflect the article's content and focus. Clearly specify the title: AJAJ - Writing Article Titles with Initial Capital Letters. (Times New Roman, 14 pt, Bold)

### Author's name and surname

Full names of all authors, without including any titles, ranks, or honorifics. For multiple authors, separate the names with commas, and for the last author, use "and." (Times New Roman, 12 pt, Bold)

### Full Address

Affair and country

*E-mail:*

Received xx/xx/20xx

Revised xx/xx/20xx

Accepted

xx/xx/20xx

*(Times New Roman, 11 pt, Italic)*

### Abstract

The abstract should succinctly summarize the article, including its objectives, methodology, key findings, and discussion, all within 300-400 words. The abstract must be written as a single, coherent paragraph. Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

### Keywords: Keyword, keyword, keyword

Authors should provide a minimum of three keywords and a maximum of five, reflecting the core themes of the study. (Times New Roman, 11 pt; 5 keywords/phrases)

### Main Text

The manuscript should be structured into an introduction, followed by the main body, with clear subheadings or sections to enhance readability. Authors' identities must not

be discernible from the text; any self-references should use the term "author(s)" instead of personal names.

Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

## Conclusion

Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

## Acknowledgments

This section should acknowledge sources of research funding, institutional or personal support, and any contributions from generative AI tools, if applicable.

Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

## References

References must adhere to the *APA 7th Edition* guidelines. All cited works should follow the *American Psychological Association* referencing style, particularly for articles in foreign languages.

Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

## Appendix

If applicable, supplementary materials or data may be included as appendices.

Text (Times New Roman, 11 pt, Tab 0.5 cm)

## Highlight

Authors are requested to provide a concise summary that encapsulates the key arguments and significance of their article. This summary should not exceed 50 words and should effectively convey the central themes and contributions of the study, enabling readers to quickly understand the article's primary focus and relevance.

## Graphical Abstracts

A graphical abstract is a single, concise, and pictorial summary of the article's main findings. It may be the concluding figure from the article or a specially designed image.

1. **Image Size:** Provide an image with a minimum resolution of **531 × 1328 pixels** (height × width) at **300 dpi**. For larger images, maintain the same aspect ratio (e.g., **200 × 500**).
2. **File Type:** Preferred formats include **TIFF, PNG, and JPEG**.
3. **Content:** Do not include additional text, outlines, or synopses outside the image. Any text or labels must be integrated within the image itself.

\*\*\* (Attached as a separate file) Name the file **Graphical Abstracts**).

**Figure X** Text (Source: XXXXX) (Times New Roman, 10 pt, Align Text Left)



**Figure 1** Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI), 2024



**Figure 1** Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation (AJHSI), 2020

**Table 1** Table Title

| No. | Name | Mean |
|-----|------|------|
| 1   | A    | 0.00 |
| 2   | B    | 0.00 |

**Table 1** Experts specializing in the Nora performance

| No. | Name | Expertise |
|-----|------|-----------|
| 1   |      |           |
| 2   |      |           |

## References

Cite references in APA 7<sup>th</sup> edition in the manuscript

Standard references and referencing methods in APA - American Psychological Association for Foreign Language

**Reference example** APA (American Psychological Association) 7<sup>th</sup>

Include the complete citation at the end of your paper in a **references** section. References are organized by the author's last name in alphabetic (A-Z) order. Use an hanging indent to separate each list item.

## Basic Format:

Author, A. A., & Author, B. B. (Date). Title of the work. *Source where you can retrieve the work.* URL or DOI if available

## Journal Article

**Author(s).** Note: List each author's last name and initial as Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. Use an ampersand (&) before the final author's name. Read more from the APA Style website if there are 21 or more authors.

1. **(Year).**
2. **Title of the article.** Note: For works that are part of a greater whole (e.g. articles, chapter), use sentence case. Only the first word of the title and subtitle and proper nouns are capitalized.
3. ***Title of the Journal*,** Note: Italicize and capitalize each word in the journal.
4. ***Volume*** Note: Italicize the journal volume. If there is no issue, include a comma before the page range.
5. **(Issue),** Note: If there is a issue number in addition to a volume number, include it in parentheses.
6. **Page range.** Note: If there is no page range within the journal volume/issue, this can be excluded.

7. **DOI (Digital Object Identifier)** Read more about DOIs from the APA Style wesbite.

Phathong, K., & Kenaphoom, S. (2024). Changes in Family Structure and Social Roles in Thai Rural Communities. *Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation*, 1(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.>

### **Online News/Magazine Article**

1. **Author(s).** Note: List each author's last name and initials as Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. Use an ampersand (&) before the final author's name.
2. **(Year, Month Date).** Note: You do not need to abbreviate the month.
3. **Title of the article.** Note: For works that are part of a greater whole (e.g. articles, chapter), use sentence case. Only the first word of the title and subtitle and proper nouns are capitalized.
4. ***Title of the online newspaper or publication.*** Note: Capitalize each word in the publication and italicize. If the publication has an associated newly newspaper in print, use the newspaper article reference example.
5. **URL**

Phathong, K. (2021, December 30). Educational Inequality Between Urban and Rural Communities: A Case Study in Northeastern Thailand. <https://so14.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/AJHSI>

### **Book**

1. **Author(s).** Note: List each author's last name and initials as Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. Use an ampersand (&) before the final author's name.
2. **(Year).**
3. ***Title of the book.*** Note: For works that stand alone (e.g. books, reports), italicize the title. Only capitalize the first word of the title and subtitle and any proper nouns.
4. **(Edition).** Note: If there is an edition or volume, include it in parentheses and use abbreviations of ed. or vol.
5. **Publisher.** Note: You do not need to include the publisher location or databases where you retrieved it.

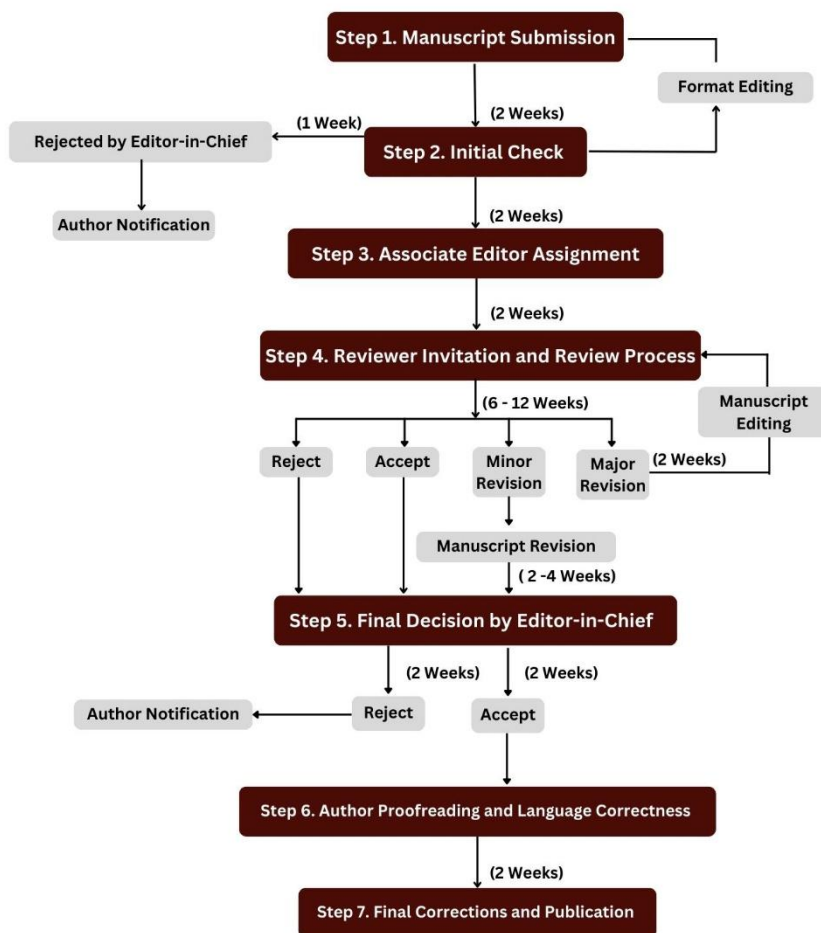
Phathong, K. (2021). *Analyzing Income Disparities and Social Mobility in Developing Economies*. Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation Publishing.

**Book Chapter with Editor(s)**

1. **Author(s).** Note: List each chapter author's last name and initials as Author, A. A., Author, B. B., & Author, C. C. Use an ampersand (&) before the final author's name.
2. **(Year).**
3. **Title of the chapter.** Note: For works that are part of a greater whole (e.g. articles, chapter), use sentence case. Only the first word of the title and subtitle and proper nouns are capitalized.
4. **In Editor(s),** Note: List each editor's last name and initials as A. A. Editor, B. B. Editor, & C. C. Editors, include (Ed.) or (Eds.) in parentheses, and end with a comma.
5. ***Title of the book*** Note: For works that stand alone (e.g. books, reports), italicize the title. Only capitalize the first word of the title and subtitle and any proper nouns.
6. **(pp.xx-xx).**
7. **Publisher.** Note: You do not need to include the publisher location or databases where you retrieved it.

Hattha, K.(2012). Three southern border provinces, Thai history before the Sukhothai period to the present. In Thepthai,K. (Eds.), Dimensions of culture, history, and visions of the future: Restoring peace to the southern border provinces. (pp. 1-19). Ministry of Culture.

## The process of reviewing articles in the Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Innovation



### Peer Review Process

#### Step 1. Manuscript Submission

Authors begin by preparing their manuscripts according to the ACAJ format and submitting them through the user-friendly ThaiJO online system. This system ensures the smooth receipt, processing, and review of manuscripts by the AJAC editorial team. The streamlined process maintains order and consistency, enabling efficient review and publication.

#### Step 2. Initial Check (2 Weeks)

Upon receipt of the manuscript, the editorial team conducts an initial assessment to ensure that the submission aligns with the journal's scope and complies with publication

requirements. Manuscripts that fail to meet these criteria are rejected without further review. Submissions with a similarity index exceeding 30% are also rejected at this stage. Additionally, the editorial team also checks the article's formatting and citation style according to the specified author guidelines. Manuscripts that do not meet these requirements are returned to authors for reformatting and resubmission. If approved, the manuscript proceeds to the review stage.

### **Step 3. Associate Editor Assignment (2 Weeks)**

Following the initial review, the Editor-in-Chief assigns an Associate Editor with relevant expertise to oversee the review process. The Associate Editor identifies and invites three qualified reviewers with expertise in fields related to the manuscript's scope. If the initial invitations are not accepted, additional reviewers are invited. This process typically takes 2 weeks.

### **Step 4. Reviewer Invitation and Review Process (6-12 Weeks)**

ACAJ employs a double-blinded review system with a minimum of 3 expert reviewers. Authors' names, affiliations, email addresses, and acknowledgments are anonymized by the editor before inviting reviewers. Invited reviewers should be affiliated with institutions distinct from the corresponding author. This step generally takes 6-12 weeks.

### **Step 5. Final Decision by Editor-in-Chief (2-4 Weeks)**

The Editor-in-Chief, along with the Associate Editors, reviews the evaluation reports, comments, and recommendations provided by the reviewers. A final decision is made, which may be one of the following: Accept Submission, Revisions Required, Resubmit for Review, or Decline Submission. The final decision is communicated to the author via the ThaiJO system. If the decision is "Revisions Required" or "Resubmit for Review," the author has 2-4 weeks to submit the revised manuscript.

### **Step 6. Author Proofreading and English Editing (2 Weeks)**

The author(s) engage in proofreading and ensure language accuracy through a professional editor. They must respond to queries from the language editor and improve any low-quality figures. The corresponding author signs the copyright transfer form on behalf of all co-authors to ensure completion within approximately 2 weeks.

### **Step 7. Final Corrections and Publication (2 Weeks)**

After the final manuscript is submitted, it is sent to the Assistant Editor for formatting and article design in accordance with the journal's guidelines. A CrossRef DOI is assigned, and the article is published on the journal's website. This final stage typically takes 2 weeks.