



**BUDDHIST MEDITATION ACTIVITIES IN URBAN CHINA:  
A CASE STUDY OF THE CHAN HALL OF DAFO SI  
IN GUANGZHOU**

**SIYUAN ZHAO**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS IN GLOBAL BUDDHISM  
INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE INNOVATION AND CULTURE  
RAJAMANGALA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY KRUNGTHAP  
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**Major** Master of Arts (Global Buddhism)

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between Buddhist meditation practices and individuals' psychological well-being. This study employs qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of Buddhist meditation practices. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 participants in the Hall of Dafo Si, Guangzhou, China. This study used phenomenological techniques for its data analysis. Understanding these variations provides insight into the complexities of leadership legitimacy in multicultural societies. This study has found that Buddhist meditation plays a vital role as a source of therapy among people who are dealing with mental health. Hence, this result provides insight to the government and organizations about maintaining mental health, which is a rapidly growing global concern. This study is one of the few that highlights the Buddhist meditation activities of the Chinese people. Hence, the government needs to improve the alignment between meditation and people's mental health and a long-term strategy to combat this issue. This study presents a comprehensive plan that combines technology and strategic meditation to help people lead more fulfilling lives.

**Keywords:** Buddhist, Meditation, Mental Health, Psychological well-being, China

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Siyuan ZHAO

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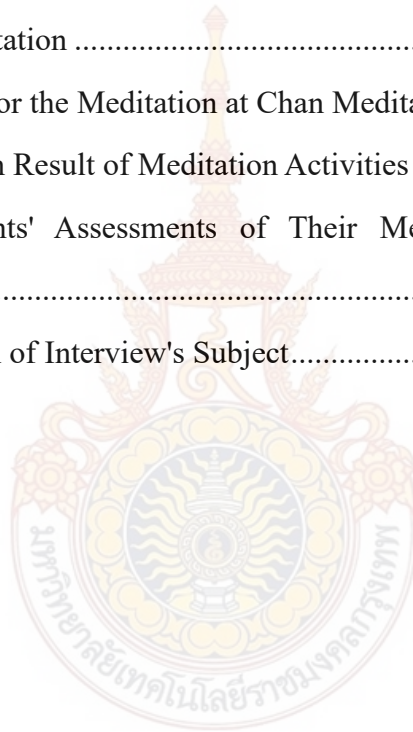
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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

The Chan Hall of Dafo Si, commonly known as the Great Buddha Temple, holds significant cultural and religious significance in Guangzhou, China. The temple boasts a rich historical background that can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD) and has undergone multiple cycles of repair and restoration. The temple is situated at the heart of the city, and its architectural design seamlessly combines traditional Chinese aesthetics with distinctive Buddhist elements. The Chan Hall is a crucial component of the temple complex, with the dual purpose of providing a space for meditation and disseminating Buddhist teachings. The Chan Hall is adorned with elaborate wood carvings and stunning Buddha sculptures, creating a tranquil and peaceful atmosphere that is ideal for spiritual reflection and meditation.

Meditation is a practice that employs various techniques to focus attention and awareness, typically to achieve a state of mental tranquility and clarity. Meditation is vital in the Buddhist framework, serving as a key element in the pursuit of enlightenment and a deeper understanding of the fundamental essence of being. Chan (or Zen) Buddhism prioritizes meditation as the principal means to attain mindfulness and serenity. Studying Buddhist meditation practices in urban China, particularly at the Chan Hall of Dafo Si in Guangzhou, is crucial for understanding how this ancient spiritual tradition has adapted and remained significant in the complexities of modern urban life. This study examines the implementation of meditation and its impact on metropolitan areas that are often overwhelmed by the pressures of contemporary society.

Several research have investigated Buddhist meditation practices in various settings. Shaw's (2006) study examines the methods and advantages of meditation in Buddhist traditions, with a particular emphasis on ancient writings and practices in rural

monasteries. John's (2004) study examines the practice of Buddhist meditation in academic and philosophical settings but does not explicitly discuss its adaptations to urban situations. While studies like Watanabe's (2014) offer a comprehensive examination of Chan (Zen) Buddhism, they often overlook the dynamic urban environment and its associated challenges. Sharf's (2014) study examines the distinctions between contemporary mindfulness meditation techniques and the early Chan traditions. However, it does not prioritize examining how these practices have been adapted for urban settings.

Prior research on Buddhist meditation in China has primarily concentrated on temples located in rural or underdeveloped regions. Current research often overlooks the historical development and implementation of this meditation technique in bustling urban areas like Guangzhou. Furthermore, prior research is also constrained by the methodologies employed. For instance, Bodhi (2000) utilized textual analysis of the Pāli Canon to investigate Buddhist meditation teachings. Shaw (2006) collated and examined ancient texts without conducting thorough investigations through interviews or surveys. Sharf (2014) employed textual analysis to examine the distinctions between mindfulness meditation techniques in the early Chan tradition and its contemporary iteration. Thus, this study addresses a notable research gap by examining the adaptation and implementation of Buddhist meditation in urban settings, specifically through a comprehensive approach that combines observation, interviews, surveys, and textual analysis. The study specifically focuses on the Chan Hall of Dafo Si. This study examines meditation practices at the Chan Hall of Dafo Si, contributing to the existing literature on Buddhist meditation and offering fresh insights into the role and impact of meditation in contemporary urban environments.

## **1.2 Rationale**

This section elaborates on the coverage of the previous study, Buddhist

meditation activities in urban China, especially those in the Chan Hall of Dafo Si in Guangzhou. The reason why this research is deemed important and how this study differs from previous research are elaborated in detail in this section. Firstly, this study is distinguished by its specific attention to the location of The Chan Hall of Dafo Si in Guangzhou. This study diverges from past research, which has typically focused broadly on temples in rural regions or explored historical and philosophical aspects. Instead, it investigates the practical implementation of Buddhist meditation practices within a vibrant metropolitan setting in one of China's largest cities. Dafo Si is a renowned cultural and religious venue that offers a distinct and abundant context for comprehending the adaptation and significance of Chan meditation in urban environments.

Furthermore, the research methodology employed in this study is a qualitative approach utilizing a case study design. This methodology enables academics to comprehensively comprehend meditation techniques and their impact on those who engage in them at the Chan Hall of Dafo Si. This study aims to comprehensively capture the intricacies and dynamics of this meditation space by employing participant observation, in-depth interviews, surveys, and document analysis. This qualitative methodology diverges from past research, which has predominantly employed quantitative methodologies or relied solely on historical text analysis.

Moreover, this study examines the current elements of Chan meditation practice in a metropolitan area such as Guangzhou. This literature not only elucidates the practical aspects of Chan meditation but also delves into the difficulties and benefits experienced by practitioners in an urban setting. This study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature by addressing the knowledge gap in integrating Buddhist meditation practices in contemporary metropolitan settings. This study makes a valuable contribution by offering a fresh and detailed viewpoint on Buddhist meditation practice in the city center. It highlights the importance of the research location, thorough research methods, and specialized research tools that accurately

capture the intricacies and changes in meditation practice at the Chan Hall of Dafo Si.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The study formulates three research questions based on its background and rationale, which will be addressed in this research:

- 1) What are the demographic characteristics of the Chinese urban residents who meditate at the Chan Hall of Dafo Si?
- 2) How are the meditation activities practiced at the Chan Hall of Dafo Si?
- 3) What is the impact of meditation on the participants' assessments of their mindfulness and mental health?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The research is structured around three primary objectives derived from the research questions. These objectives are:

- 1) Analyzing the demographic characteristics of individuals in urban China who engage in meditation at the Chan Hall of Dafo Si in order to better understand the patterns and dynamics of meditation practices.
- 2) To explore the meditation activities organized by the Chinese Urban at the Chan Hall of Dafo Si.
- 3) To investigate the participants' subjective interpretations of their mindfulness and mental health levels following a meditation practice.

## **1.5 Research Scope and Limitations**

### **1.5.1 Research Scope**

This study aims to explore Buddhist meditation practices in urban China, with a specific focus on the Chan Hall of Dafo Si in Guangzhou. The scope of the research is structured into three main areas: geographical location, topic coverage, and temporal duration, each of which will be detailed below.

#### **1) Geographical Location: Dafo Si**

The geographic focus of this study is centered on Dafo Si, which is located in the Yuexiu District of Guangzhou City. Known for its significant historical, cultural, and religious importance, Dafo Si offers a rich context for studying the nuances of Buddhist meditation. This research explored the meditation traditions, participants involved, and specific techniques applied within the Chan Hall of the temple to uncover the distinct characteristics and practices of Buddhist meditation in urban Chinese settings.

#### **2) Topic Coverage: Participants, Meditation Traditions and technique, and participant perception**

#### **3) Temporal duration: April 2023 to March 2024**

The research was conducted from April 2023 to October 2024, spanning eleven months. During this time, the research team conducted various activities, including field trips, questionnaires, and interviews, to gain a comprehensive understanding of Buddhist meditation practices in Chan Hall.

### **1.5.2 Research Limitation**

While the Chan Hall of the Guangzhou Dafo Si case study offers an in-depth perspective on Buddhist meditation activities in Chinese cities, several limitations to this study could affect the comprehensiveness, accuracy, and general applicability of the findings. The primary limitations are outlined below:

#### **1) Single-Case Study:** The primary limitation of this study is its reliance on a single-case study approach. While the Chan Hall at the Guangzhou Dafo Si provides



a rich source of data and insights as a significant venue for meditation, it represents only one specific instance within a Chinese city. Therefore, it may not encapsulate the full diversity and complexity of Chan meditation activities across different urban environments in China. This could restrict the generalizability of the findings to the broader context of Buddhist meditation activities in Chinese cities.

2) Sample Selection Bias: The study may also face potential biases in sample selection. There is a likelihood of selecting meditators who are more willing to participate in surveys and interviews, potentially overlooking other groups with varying ages, genders, cultural backgrounds, and meditation experiences. This selection bias could skew the understanding of meditation practices at Chan Hall, thereby impacting the objectivity and credibility of the study's outcomes.

3) Data Acquisition and Reliability: Another challenge lies in the acquisition and reliability of data. Despite utilizing diverse research methods such as field observations, questionnaires, and interviews, capturing comprehensive and accurate data can be difficult. Meditation practices are often private and personal experiences; some participants may hesitate to share their full experiences and viewpoints, thus limiting the integrity and reliability of the collected data.

4) Limitation of Time Range: The study's time frame also poses limitations. Conducted over a specific period, the research may not accurately reflect the long-term developments and fluctuations in meditation practices, which seasonal and holiday-related variations could influence. This restricted observation window may not fully capture the ongoing characteristics and determinants of meditation practices.

5) Influence of Cultural and Social Background: Furthermore, the context of Buddhist meditation activities in Chinese cities is deeply influenced by China's unique cultural, religious, and social backdrop. These conditions may differ significantly from those in other countries or regions, potentially limiting the applicability of the study's findings to other contexts.



## **1.6 Definition of Key Terms**

### **1.6.1 Buddhist Meditation Activities**

Buddhist Meditation Activities encompass the meditation techniques formulated and employed within the Buddhist tradition to attain diverse spiritual and mental objectives. These activities encompass methods designed to enhance mindfulness, focus, and insight.

### **1.6.2 Mindfulness Meditation**

Mindfulness Meditation is a contemplative activity that directs complete attention and consciousness toward the moment of meditation without making judgments or reacting to the observed stimuli.

### **1.6.3 Sitting Meditation**

Sitting Meditation is a contemplative practice when an individual assumes a specific posture to cultivate focused attention, tranquility, and profound understanding.

### **1.6.4 Walking Meditation**

Walking Meditation is a form of meditation that focuses on walking mindfully, with complete attention on the act of walking. During walking meditation, individuals engage in deliberate and unhurried walking, focusing their awareness on each bodily movement and sensation, including the tactile experience of their feet making contact with the ground, muscular actions, and the rhythm of their breathing.

### **1.6.5 Chinese Urban**

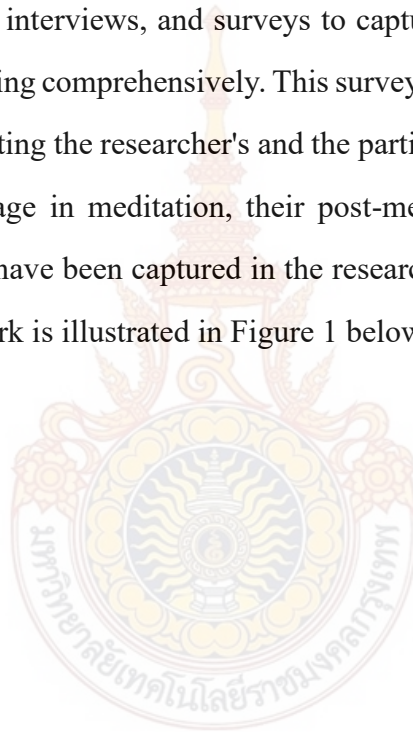
Chinese Urban refers to highly populated and well-developed urban districts in China, encompassing large cities and metropolitan hubs with advanced infrastructure.

### **1.6.6 Mental Health**

Mental health encompasses an individual's emotional, psychological, and social well-being, influencing their cognitive processes, emotional experiences, and daily functioning.

## 1.7 Research Framework

This study focuses on the meditation practices at the Chan Hall of Dafo Si in Guangzhou. This study diverges from past research, which typically concentrates on temples located in rural regions or on historical and philosophical aspects broadly. Instead, it investigates the practical application of Buddhist meditation practices within a vibrant metropolitan environment in one of China's largest cities. This study employs a qualitative methodology utilizing a case study approach. It involves non-participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and surveys to capture the intricacies and dynamics of this meditation setting comprehensively. This survey aims to supplement the research findings by incorporating the researcher's and the participant's perspectives. It explores how individuals engage in meditation, their post-meditation experiences, and other aspects that may not have been captured in the researcher's observations. In summary, the research framework is illustrated in Figure 1 below.



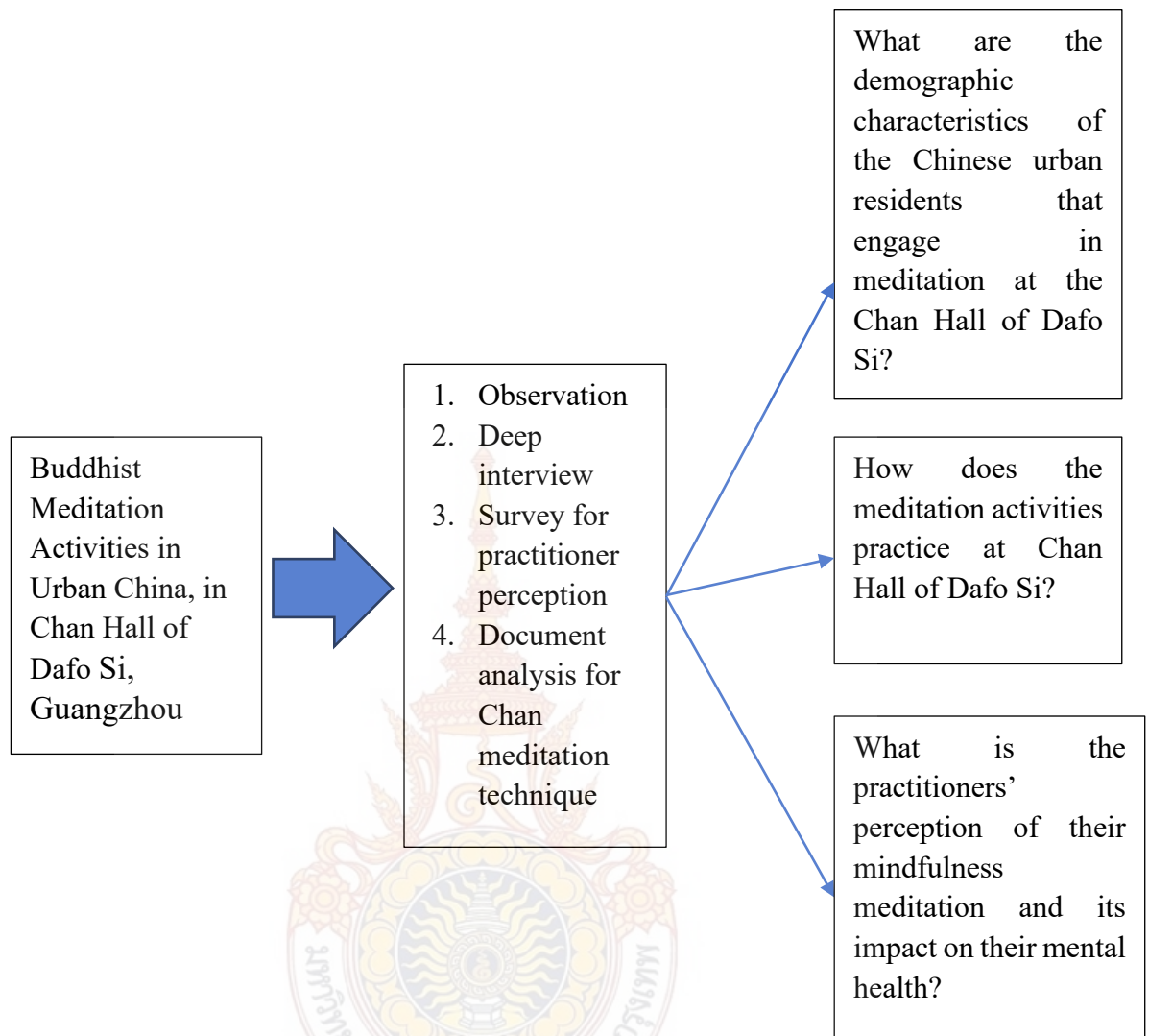


Figure 1.1 Research Framework

## 1.8 Research Significance

Buddhist meditation activities are crucial in Chinese urban life, significantly impacting individual practitioners and society. This paper, using the Chan Hall of Dafo Si in Guangzhou as a focal point, explores the amalgamation and innovation of mindfulness meditation and Patriarch Chan, demonstrating significant research relevance and practical utility in several key areas:

- 1) Promotion of Development and Innovation in Chan Practice Traditions

Investigating the integration and innovation of mindfulness meditation and Patriarch Chan within the Chan Hall will aid in advancing and refreshing Buddhist meditation traditions. As modern society evolves, so does the demand for inner peace and spiritual fulfillment, necessitating that traditional meditation techniques adapt to contemporary needs. This study aims to discover meditation methods that align more closely with modern societal requirements, providing insights and inspiration for the evolution of Chan practice traditions.

## 2) Enhancement of Meditation Teaching Quality and Effectiveness

Detailed research into the nuances of mindfulness meditation and Patriarch Chan in the Chan Hall will enrich our understanding of the content and methodology of Chan meditation teaching. This enhancement improves the quality and impact of meditation instruction within these halls. The insights gained enable meditation instructors and practitioners to refine their techniques, thereby enhancing their ability to achieve inner peace and focus and ultimately elevating the overall efficacy of meditation practices.

## 3) Provision of Experience and Reference for Other Meditation Halls

The Chan Hall of Dafo Si is a significant benchmark in the application of mindfulness meditation and Patriarch Chan within Chan practice. Studying its practices allows us to distill successful strategies and identify potential pitfalls, providing a valuable reference for similar practices in other Chan halls. This comparative analysis fosters improvements and innovations in meditation practices across various locales, contributing to the broader advancement of Buddhist meditation nationwide.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Related Theories**

##### **2.1.1 Mindfulness Meditation**

Mindfulness meditation, derived from the Buddhist tradition, is a technique that has undergone substantial growth in contemporary metropolitan settings, including China. The research framework titled "Buddhist Meditation Activities in Urban China: A Case Study of Chan Hall of Dafo Si" highlights the significance of mindfulness meditation in comprehending the meditation experience and its impact on individual well-being in an urban setting. Mindfulness meditation focuses on the present moment with complete awareness, without forming opinions or judgments. Kabat-Zinn (1994) defines mindfulness as being consciously aware of the current moment, achieved by purposefully directing one's attention without forming judgments. This practice enables individuals to gain a deeper understanding of themselves, their emotions, and their relationships with their environment.

In urban contexts characterized by elevated stress levels and life pressures, mindfulness meditation can be a potent technique for alleviating stress and enhancing mental well-being. A study conducted by Chiesa and Serretti (2010) demonstrated that mindfulness meditation has the potential to alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression while also enhancing overall quality of life. Furthermore, this meditation practice enhances the capacity to handle difficult circumstances with greater composure and wisdom (Brown et al., 2007).

The Platform Sutra of the Dharma Treasure of the Great Master, the Sixth Patriarch, also known as the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch, holds significance in the Chan tradition of Buddhism. This work highlights the value of direct experiential understanding attained through meditation. The sutra, ascribed to Huineng, the sixth

patriarch, highlights that anybody can attain enlightenment via diligent meditation and a deep understanding of the inherent nature of their minds (McRae, 2000). This teaching promotes the cultivation of mindfulness to attain awareness and enlightenment in one's daily existence, particularly applicable to individuals residing in bustling urban centers such as those examined in Dafo Si.

Furthermore, current research provides evidence for the efficacy of mindfulness meditation in urban environments. Tang et al. (2015) conducted a study demonstrating the efficacy of mindfulness meditation in enhancing attention, emotion regulation, and psychological well-being. Practicing mindfulness can offer substantial advantages in maintaining composure and concentration in the fast-paced and demanding nature of city life. This theoretical framework combines traditional literature, such as the Platform Sutra, with contemporary research to establish a solid foundation for understanding how mindfulness meditation may enhance the well-being of individuals in urban China.

### **2.1.2 Characteristics and Elements of Mindfulness Meditation**

As a significant psychological practice, mindfulness has been extensively studied and widely practiced. Brown and Ryan (2003) noted that the core of mindfulness involves paying attention to internal and external experiences with an open and accepting attitude while maintaining continuous awareness of one's actions. This allows individuals to act without being influenced by external factors, preventing automatic and mechanized reactions (Brown et al., 2003). Further, with support from various Buddhist sects and empirical research, Brown et al. (2007) defined the state of mindfulness, which includes the following six characteristics:

- 1) Clarity of Awareness: Individuals possess a clear awareness of both their inner and outer worlds. Mindfulness is a form of simple attention that allows one to observe thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and environments.

- 2) Nonconceptual, Nondiscriminatory Awareness: The individual does not distinguish or recognize directly experienced things in conceptual ways, such as

evaluation, comparison, classification, or explanation, and simultaneously takes a step back to observe their thoughts. It does not respond directly to thoughts.

3) Flexibility of Awareness and Attention: Consciousness is not fixed on a specific focus. Attention can be used to observe the overall experience and micro details like a telescopic lens. Therefore, in mindfulness, attention is flexible and adaptable.

4) Adopt an experimental attitude to understand reality (Empirical Stance Toward Reality): Mindfulness is inner self-verification, just like the comprehensiveness of scientific exploration of objective facts, without making judgments based on small assumptions.

5) Present-oriented Consciousness: The general mind tends to think about past and future events, so it is easy to form fantasies, judgments, and conjectures that deviate from facts and cause anxiety; while in a state of mindfulness, consciousness is directed to this At this moment, the focus is on what is happening at the moment, and the thoughts in the mind can also be used as the object of observation at this moment.

6) Stability or Continuity of Attention and Awareness: Unlike the general state where the mind is unaware of the focus of attention constantly jumping, the state of mindfulness is the stable and continuous awareness of the focus of attention, clearly knowing what one is experiencing at this moment (Brown et al., 2007).

In addition, Shapiro and Carlson (2009) divided mindfulness into two parts in nature and action: a) Mindful Awareness, which is a sustained display of awareness of intellectual freedom from reflexive conditioning and delusion, and b) Mindful Practice, which is a systematic practice of consciously focusing on a state of openness, care, and sensitivity to increase intellectual awareness of reality (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009).

1) Intention: Intention is the basis for the growth of mindfulness. For example, the Buddhist practice of mindfulness aims at liberation and the elimination of suffering. Kabat-Zinn (2013) pointed out that intention determines future possibilities, and a clear understanding of intention can constantly remind practitioners why they



engage in mindfulness practice in the first place. D.H. Shario's research found that, with continued practice, the intention of mindfulness practitioners shifts from self-regulation at the beginning to self-discovery and ultimately to self-liberation and selfless dedication.

2) Attention: Attention is the core of mindfulness practice. By focusing, individuals can better observe internal and external experiences without being disturbed by the outside world.

3) Attitude: Attitude is a fundamental quality of mindfulness practice. Kabat-Zinn (2013) emphasized that mindfulness involves more than just attention; it is attention coupled with compassion. Key attributes of the mindfulness attitude encompass non-judgment, patience, intentionality, trust, effortless engagement, acceptance, and the capacity to let go (Kabat-Zinn, 2013).

Furthermore, in his work, Kabat-Zinn proposes a set of attitudes that can shape the main pillars of mindfulness practice. These attitudes include:

1) Non-judging: Mindfulness employs a gentle attitude as the foundation for development and a neutral perspective on personal experience. When practicing mindfulness, we should avoid judging ourselves and others and remain open to observation.

2) Patience: We must patiently accept inner turmoil and changes in mindfulness practice. We should be completely open to each moment, understanding that things can only develop at their speed.

3) Beginner's mind: Look at things as if you are experiencing them for the first time, avoid being influenced by past concepts, and focus on everything happening now.

4) Trust: In mindfulness practice, gradually develop a sense of trust in oneself. We should trust our experience and inner wisdom rather than rely on external authority.



5) Non-striving: Mindfulness practice is not aimed at a specific goal or achievement but directs the mind to the observation and experience of the present moment. Rather than striving for a specific outcome, we should accept the reality of the moment.

6) Acceptance: Accepting things as they are, unaffected by judgment, prejudice, or bias. We should be willing to see the true nature of things and accept their existence.

7) Letting go: Let go of attachments and desires, let the past be gone, and let the future unfold as it will. We should learn to release the desire to control, accept, and let go of our feelings and thoughts.

Shapiro and Carlson added four attitudes based on Kabat-Zinn's attitude:

1) Curiosity: Maintain an exploratory curiosity about all arising experiences and constantly explore new things and perspectives.

2) Gentleness: Approach experiences with a soft and gentle attitude, and instead of passively doing nothing, face and deal with them actively.

3) Nonreactivity: Responding to things with conscious actions rather than automatic or inertial reactions. We should learn to observe and respond to external stimuli calmly.

4) Loving-kindness: Having a friendly, loving, and kind attitude towards oneself and others. We should begin by cultivating loving kindness towards ourselves and then expand it to include loving kindness towards others and the world.

Together, these attitudes and elements form the foundation of mindfulness practice, helping us cultivate awareness and openness to live more holistically, calmly, and meaningfully.

### **2.1.3 Mindfulness Meditation and Mental Health**

Mindfulness meditation is a form of meditation that focuses on being fully present in the moment and accepting one's experiences without judgment. The practice has its roots in the Buddhist tradition. It has gained widespread acceptance in modern

psychology as a means to enhance mental well-being. Kabat-Zinn (2003) defines mindfulness as the conscious and non-judgmental observation of one's experiences in the present moment. Mindfulness meditation encompasses techniques such as directing attention to the breath, conducting a thorough body scan, and noticing transient thoughts.

Numerous research has demonstrated that mindfulness meditation yields beneficial outcomes for mental well-being. In a meta-analysis conducted by Hofmann et al. (2010), it was discovered that mindfulness-based therapies had a significant impact on reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. Mindfulness can enhance emotion control, diminish emotional reactivity, and enhance coping abilities (Chambers et al., 2009). Furthermore, Shapiro et al. (2008) showed that mindfulness can enhance individuals' subjective well-being and alleviate burnout, particularly among individuals in professional occupations.

Mindfulness mechanisms encompass heightened bodily awareness, facilitating pain management, and enhancing the mind-body connection (Mehling et al., 2011). Mindfulness facilitates a shift in perspective, allowing individuals to observe their thoughts and emotions from a detached standpoint, thereby diminishing their attachment to negative thoughts (Garland et al., 2011). Furthermore, mindfulness encompasses essential elements such as careful observation, detailed description, deliberate conscious action, non-reactivity to internal experiences, and non-judgment of events. These factors collectively contribute to enhanced mental well-being, as noted by Baer et al. (2006).

Mindfulness meditation also enhances fundamental aspects of mental well-being, such as the acceptance of emotions and physical experiences. The research conducted by Baer et al. (2006) indicates that the acceptance component assists individuals in managing internal experiences by adopting an open and non-judgmental approach. This is crucial for minimizing emotional reactivity that may induce stress and other psychological problems. Additionally, mindfulness meditation enhances

individuals' ability to recognize and attend to their physiological sensations, thereby alleviating pain and physical discomfort. Enhanced bodily awareness enhances general well-being by diminishing tension and promoting relaxation.

Another prominent aspect of mindfulness meditation involves the impartial observation of thoughts and emotions without passing judgment on them. Garland et al. (2011) demonstrated that mindfulness enables individuals to view their thoughts more objectively, thereby decreasing their attachment to negative thoughts. This intervention aids in alleviating symptoms of anxiety and depression by disrupting the pattern of pessimistic thoughts that frequently exacerbate mental disorders. Furthermore, using mindfulness techniques facilitates the cultivation of enhanced coping mechanisms, enabling individuals to manage stress more effectively and navigate life's obstacles with greater adaptability. Hence, mindfulness meditation enhances mental well-being by promoting emotional regulation, physical awareness, and alterations in cognitive processes.

#### **2.1.4 The Definition and Practice of Patriarch Chan**

The concept of Patriarch Chan can be traced back to the Weiyang Chan sect. Weishan Lingyou (771–853) received Chan teachings from Baizhang Huaihai and later passed these teachings to Shanhuiji (804–890). Master Weiyang and his disciples founded the Weiyang sect, the earliest of the five Chan schools. When Yangshan investigated the enlightenment state of his junior disciple, Xiangyan Zhixian (898), he first delineated the differences between Patriarch Chan (Zhushi Chan) and Tathagata Chan (Rulai Chan), asserting the superiority of Tathagata Chan. Patriarch Chan, originating from traditional Chinese Chan thoughts, evolved into a unique practice method and system (Xiang Shishan, 1995).

The history of Chan Buddhism extends back to Nagarjuna, who established the Mahayana Buddhist system. After several transmissions, it reached Master Bodhidharma. In 520 A.D., Bodhidharma introduced Buddhism to China, established the Chinese Mahayana Chan system, and is revered as the founder of Chan Buddhism

in China. Master Huike, regarded as the second patriarch, passed the heart seal to the third patriarch, Sengcan. Under the leadership of the Fourth Patriarch, Daoxin, Chan Buddhism underwent significant changes. Master Daoxin promoted Chan at Huangmei Shuangfeng Mountain in Hubei, attracting over 500 disciples. The teachings continued with the Fifth Patriarch, Hongren, and were later passed to the Sixth Patriarch, Master Huineng.

Master Huineng, a pivotal figure in Chinese Chan Buddhism, advanced the core ideas and methods of the tradition. His Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch is a seminal Chan Buddhist text that offers insights into meditation for enlightenment. His teachings influenced Chan Buddhism, producing notable teachers such as Huairang, Desi, Huizhong, Shenhui, and Xuanjue, who led the Mahayana Southern School. During the early Tang Dynasty, five schools of Chan Buddhism—Weiyang, Jianji, Caodong, Yunmen, and Fayen, metaphorically described as "one flower blooms with five leaves"—were established.

Patriarch Chan, having evolved over thousands of years, has become a primary practice in Chan Buddhism, characterized by stringent methods and rules (Wu Li-Min, 1995). Today, many Chan halls emphasize the practice of investigating the koan: "Who is chanting the Buddha's name (念佛是谁)?" Practitioners might recite the Buddha's name as a skillful means to cultivate their practice. Nevertheless, the essence of this practice lies in understanding the non-arising and non-ceasing nature of the original mind. By exploring the origin of thoughts, one may awaken to the original state where no thought has ever arisen. This approach, termed "keyword meditation by reciting the Buddha's name (看话念佛)," has deep doctrinal roots and significant practical implications. It offers a direct route to realizing one's intrinsic nature, a unique aspect of the Chan School, and provides newcomers with effective techniques.

However, due to cultural nuances, contemporary Chan practitioners often conflate "keyword meditation by reciting the Buddha's name" with "keyword meditation (看话禅)", as proposed by Dahui Zonggao, leading to confusion regarding

their theories and applications. Despite years of practice, many still struggle to grasp the essence of these methods. This reflects Chan's ongoing evolution and adaptation, a mind-based method that dates back to Bodhidharma's introduction to the East. Generally speaking, there have been seven major changes:

1) From Bodhidharma, the first Patriarch, to Huineng, the sixth, early masters emphasized "enlightenment through verbal teachings" (藉教悟宗), relying on texts such as the Lankavatara Sutra, the Manjusri Prajnaparamita Sutra, the Diamond Sutra, and the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch. They stressed cultivating the mind in accordance with these teachings

2) Between the third and fourth generations after Huineng, Chan Buddhism matured, shifting away from verbal teachings toward the use of masters' quotations and straightforward methods, such as "stick-and-shout" (棒喝). These practices aimed to "directly awaken one to his intrinsic nature (直指人心)," as noted in the Recorded Sayings of the Four Houses (《马祖四家录》)—comprising teachings from Mazu, Baizhang, Huangbo, and Linji.

3) Following the suppression of Buddhism by Emperor Wuzong of the Tang Dynasty, many Buddhist schools struggled to recover. Chan Buddhism, however, thrived due to its adaptable teaching methods, including the "opportune point and stick-and-shout (机锋棒喝)," reaching its zenith during this period.

4) After the Song Dynasty, Chan underwent four significant changes. Literary Chan emerged, as exemplified by works such as Fenyang Shanzhao's One Hundred Principles of Ode to the Ancients (《颂古百则》), Juefan Huihong's Shimen Literary Chan (《石门文字禅》) and Yuanwu Keqin's Bi Yanlu (《碧岩录》). These texts employed poetic and indirect discourse to inspire enlightenment. However, they gradually shifted towards a more intellectual and less practical approach, becoming obstacles to genuine spiritual cultivation.

5) The Silent Illumination method, represented by Tiantong Zhengjue and Zhen Xieqingluo, emphasized genuine practice and enlightenment. Advocating "silent



illumination without discrimination (忘情默照)" and "simultaneous illumination and silence (默照同时)," this method sought to correct the intellectual excesses of Literary Chan. However, it sometimes results in static tranquility that has lost the vibrant essence of the tradition (Huang Qin, 2010).

6) Dahui Zonggao addressed the drawbacks of both "literary Chan" and "silent illumination Chan" by advocating for the focused contemplation of a single, meaningless koan as a primary practice. This practice encourages practitioners to delve into the unresolved doubts, as mentioned in Instructions to the Pure Layman (《示清净居士》): "When studying the scriptures and the stories of the ancients' enlightenment if one feels unclear and troubled as if biting on an iron spike, this is precisely where effort should be applied. It is crucial not to abandon this effort as it pertains to a state where consciousness does not operate, thought cannot reach, distinctions cease, and the path of reasoning is extinguished. Usually, one can speak of logical reasoning and discernible practices, but these are merely at the periphery of consciousness. One often mistakenly takes the thief as one's child, which must be recognized." Master Zonggao believed that through engaging with a koan, practitioners' consciousness could be driven into a dead end, rendering their tricks useless, and thus plugging the "vines and tendrils Chan (葛藤禅)" loopholes. Simultaneously, by leveraging the power of the koan, practitioners could maintain a dynamic awareness, avoiding the dry stagnation of favoring quiescence over activity, thereby resolving the shortcomings of "dead tree Chan (枯木禅)." He strongly recommended this method of Chan, which involves an irrational approach to meditation and enlightenment, later known as "keyword meditation."

7) Unlike Dahui Zonggao, figures such as Zhenxie Qingliao advocated for a rational approach to koans, proposing that the phrase "Amitabha Buddha" be used as the subject of meditation. Their method involved chanting "Amitabha Buddha" ten times each morning, followed by a direct and vigorous contemplation, which could lead to sudden enlightenment or rebirth in the Pure Land. The Buddha Light Dictionary (《佛

光大辞典》) describes it as follows: "During the Song dynasty, Dahui Zonggao advocated for Kanhua Chan, considering it a method for unfolding one's Buddha-nature. At the same time, the joint cultivation of Chan and Pure Land was also popular. Zhenxie Qingliao and others also proposed using the phrase 'Amitabha Buddha' as the subject of meditation, which could lead to sudden enlightenment and rebirth in the Pure Land, known as keyword meditation by reciting the Buddha's name."

Compared to other meditation methods, Patriarch Chan emphasizes the importance of insight and direct realization rather than merely meditation or relaxation. Overall, the development of Chan Buddhism has been a continuous process of transmission, growth, and evolution. Through the efforts and promotion of successive patriarchs, Patriarchal Chan has been widely disseminated and recognized in China and around the world. Today, at Dafo Si's Chan Hall in Guangzhou, Patriarchal Chan remains one of the principal practice methods and continues to be broadly transmitted and developed.

### **2.1.5 Practice Methods and Techniques of Patriarch Chan**

For more than a thousand years, through the vigorous promotion by eminent monks of the Chan and Pure Land schools, a method of practice that begins with reciting the Buddha's name and explores the question "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" has become the mainstream approach in Patriarchal Chan today. This method leads practitioners to a direct understanding of their minds. The author has compiled teachings on the koan "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" from eminent monks by searching the Electronic Tripitaka and reviewing related materials. Presented as primary sources, these teachings offer readers an insight into the profound depths of this practice.

#### **1) Chan Master Zhenxie Qingliao (1089~1151)**

Master Qingliao, a renowned monk of the Caodong sect during the Northern Song Dynasty, advocated for the simultaneous cultivation of Chan and Pure Land teachings. In terms of Chan, his teachings are preserved in two volumes titled

Master Zhenxie Qingliao's Recorded Sayings (《真歇清了禅师语录》), with the second volume, Master Zhenxie's Comments on Ancient Cases (《真歇和尚拈古》), addressing Dahui Zonggao's criticisms of Silent Illumination. He utilized the Faith in Mind (《信心铭》) text by the Third Patriarch to elucidate profound principles, pointing out the malpractices of the times and admonishing those who mindlessly pursued enlightenment through untrustworthy practices.

Regarding Pure Land teachings, his work Essentials of the Pure Land School (《净土宗要》) is included in Volume 3 of the Treasure Mirror of the Pureland School (《莲宗宝鉴》) compiled during the Yuan Dynasty by Pudu. Another work, Discourse on the Pure Land (《净土说》), appears in Questions on the Pure Land (《净土或问》) by Master Weize (?-1354) among other Pure Land writings, with the most comprehensive being A Concise Record of the Pure Land (《净土简要录》) by Dao Yan in the fourteenth year of the Hongwu era (1368).

Master Qingliao directly used the phrase "Amitabha Buddha" as a meditation subject, indicating the principle of "single-mindedness (一心)." His approach, stripping away the four phrases of existence and non-existence, gets to the heart of inquiry, making it a method that directly points to the mind, embodying the essence of Patriarch Chan. Today, many Chan practitioners emphasize holding tightly to the phrase "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" or focus solely on the word "Who," constantly stirring up doubt as a key to inquiry. However, suppose one focuses only on doubt yet omits the direct rest on the original mind. In that case, they fail to be in absolute enlightenment, but rather, they descend to a secondary spiritual attainment.

## 2) Youtan of Donglin Monastery (1255~1330)

During the Yuan dynasty, Master Youtan Pudu of Donglin Temple on Mount Lu authored the ten-volume Treasure Mirror of the Pureland School. His attendant, Master Guo Man, compiled a text called Lushan White Lotus Orthodox Collection of Epitaphs (《庐山白莲正宗昙花集》), which includes several verses related to Master Youtan's teachings on how to contemplate the koan "Who is reciting the Buddha's



name?" Master Youtan instructed his students with the verse, "When a single recitation of Buddha's name steadies the mind, ask yourself, who is this Amitabha?" This verse emphasizes that when reciting the Buddha's name, one should not seek any other state but rather directly question, "Who is reciting the Buddha?" Thus, it dispels doubts and fosters a profound understanding of the mind. Here is the verse: "Using Amitabha's name as the subject, simply focus without seeking else. Through diligent effort, dispel all doubts as even an iron Buddha would sweat. When a single recitation of Buddha's name steadies the mind, ask oneself, who is this Amitabha?"

### 3) Duanyun Zhiche (1309)

Master Zhiche, a Chan master, encouraged those reciting the Buddha's name to reflect deeply with questions such as "From where does this recitation of Buddha's name arise? (这一声佛从何处起)" and "Who is the one reciting the Buddha's name (这念佛者是甚么人)?" He advocated for a relentless pursuit of doubt. He emphasized the practicality of doubt and the importance of directly addressing the issue, enabling practitioners to deeply engage with the essence of the question, "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" His instructions are: "When you recite the Buddha's name, be it once, or three, five, or seven times, quietly ask yourself: 'From where does this recitation arise?' Then ask: 'Who is the one reciting the Buddha's name?' If doubts arise, continue doubting. If the inquiry does not feel personal, and the doubts are not intense, raise the question again: 'Ultimately, who is reciting the Buddha's name (毕竟这念佛的是谁)?' Keep asking this way, make the inquiry personal, and let the doubt cut deep." This teaching by Chan Master Zhiche is the first version of teaching people in today's Chan Hall to arouse doubts and investigate "Who is chanting the Buddha's name, who is it, who is it after all".

### 4) Fazhou Daoji (1487~1560)

Master Tianning Daoji, a Ming dynasty Linji sect monk and the Dharma heir of Master Yungu, guides the koan "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" in his Remaining Words from Master Daoji of Tianning (《天宁法舟济禅师剩语·普说》).

The excerpt reads: "Virtuous ones, while the four elements are still strong and suffering has not yet arrived, take the phrase 'Amitabha Buddha' and make it a momentous, urgent matter. With each recitation of 'Namo Amitabha Buddha,' the question immediately follows: 'Who is reciting the Buddha's name?' At such pressing moments, maintain continuous mindfulness without interruption or distraction. No matter the circumstances—be they suffering or joy, adversity or prosperity, in all their myriad forms—let there be no slight wavering or retreat in one's mind. It is as if one was wielding the vajra sword of a king, severing all greedy, angry, foolish thoughts, delusions, and inverted false habits that occupy the gates of the six senses and mediate between the internal and external. Cut through them all, past, present, and future, focusing solely on the mind that recites the Buddha's name, like a great spinning windmill or a massive gathering of fire, letting no other thoughts or references slip in.

Master Daoji emphasizes that using "Amitabha Buddha" as the meditation subject is straightforward and reliable. He stresses the importance of persistently questioning, "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" One can open up the mind's ground by not deviating from the recitation and cutting through all illusions.

#### 5) Yungu Fahui (1500~1575)

Master Fahuai, a disciple of Master Daoji and a monk of the Linji sect during the Ming dynasty, practiced the method of concentration and contemplation (止观), placing a strong emphasis on cultivating doubt and persistently pursuing the question, "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" He emphasized the importance of frequently raising this question during recitation, examining "Who is the one reciting the Buddha?" This approach was meant to open the practitioner's mind, turning it away from external seeking.

#### 6) Yunqi Lianchi (1532~1612)

Master Yunxi taught that practitioners reciting the Buddha's name who wish to engage in Chan do not need to use a separate meditation phrase. Instead, they should reflect inwardly, asking, "Who is reciting the Buddha?" He emphasized that with

diligent practice, enlightenment will naturally emerge (Liu Hongmei, 2003). If difficult, one can continue with straightforward recitation, maintaining a focus such that the recitation and the Buddha remain inseparable. Over time, this focused practice will lead to a deep connection and the direct experience of the Buddha's presence.

#### 7) Hanshan Deqing (1546~1623)

Master Hanshan emphasized the importance of focusing on the key phrase in Chan meditation, particularly the question, "Who is reciting the Buddha?" He advocated for examining this koan deeply to cut through delusions and open the mind until its innate clarity is fully revealed. His teachings are summarized: "In Chan, focusing on a key phrase is crucial for enlightening the mind, yet few in recent times start with this approach. Some lack the determination of the ancients due to their dull capacities; others fall into erroneous views without a true mentor. Therefore, combining the recitation of the Buddha's name with Chan is a very reliable method. When reciting 'Amitabha Buddha', keep it in your mind, and relentlessly pursue the origin and conclusion of each recitation, aiming to see the ultimate point of clarity. Over time, this will suddenly reveal the innate purity of and open up the mind."

For those examining the koan 'Who is reciting the Buddha?', use 'Amitabha Buddha' as your key phrase. With each recitation, delve into doubt, questioning who is reciting. Repeated questioning deepens the inquiry, striving to see who ultimately is reciting the Buddha.

By steadfastly focusing on this phrase, all delusive and distracting thoughts are instantly severed, like cutting through tangled threads, allowing no room for them to arise; if they arise, they are extinguished on the spot."

#### 8) Tianyin Yuanxiu (1575~1635)

Master Tianyin, a Ming dynasty Linji sect monk and mentor to Master Yulin, authored the 20-volume Recorded Sayings of Monk Tianyin (《天隐和尚语录》). In Volume 13 of his teachings, he discusses: "As for reciting the Buddha's name, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, frequently raise the thought. It is unnecessary

to be loud, but during mindful recitation, intensify the inquiry, 'Who is reciting the Buddha?' Over time, this will naturally brighten and open the mind, turning it away from external pursuits. Suppose one falls into the views of heretics or external paths, which take root in the Alaya consciousness. In that case, it becomes almost impossible to eradicate them. The above is said because those who seek the Path sincerely are distressed without realizing it."

Master Tianyin believes that in reciting the Buddha's name, regardless of one's physical posture, one should frequently engage in the practice, deepening the question, "Who is reciting the Buddha?" He emphasizes the importance of observing the mind. He warns against the peril of falling into external teachings, which can entrench deeply into one's consciousness.

#### 9) Chan Master Poshan Haiming (1597~1666)

Master Poshan expressed that the inquiry "Who is reciting the Buddha?" is a straightforward and effective method of Chan practice. He illuminated this through dialogues and teachings with his disciples, guiding all beings towards enlightenment. An excerpt from his teachings is as follows:

"All tricks and maneuvers in life are surpassed by the direct approach of investigating one point: 'Who is reciting the Buddha?' Ultimately, delving into who is at the heart of this action makes all methods and teachings converge into one path."

A dialogue exemplifies his method: Old Lady Zhu asked, "*Who is reciting the Buddha in me? Please, Master, show me the answer.*" The Master responded, "Where does your question arise from?" She said, "It never leaves me." He asked, "What never leaves?" As she turned around, she said, "This non-leaving one." The Master remarked, "It is like red earth mixed with milk."

#### 10) Records on Realizing the True Nature (《天隐和尚语录》) by Chan Master Zuyuan

In the Chan Lectures (《禅宗讲录》), authored by Master Huiguang during the Republic of China era, the texts "Jianxinglu" and "Diagram of the Origin and Flow

of Mind and Consciousness Records on Realizing the True Nature" are included, said to have been transmitted from Master Zuyuan of the late Ming dynasty. The Continued New Collection (《新续藏》), Volume 65, contains Master Zuyuan's Record of All Dharma Returning to the Heart in three volumes, including an autobiography written in the fifteenth year of the Qing dynasty's Kangxi era (1676). It is unclear if this is the same person. The Record of Seeing Nature (《万法归心录》) not only explains how to investigate the koan "Who is reciting the Buddha?" but also outlines the process of breaking through the fundamental barrier, the multiple barriers, and escaping the prison barrier. At the same time, the Diagram of the Origin and Flow of Mind and Consciousness (《心识源流图》) vividly illustrates the specific content of breaking through these three barriers.

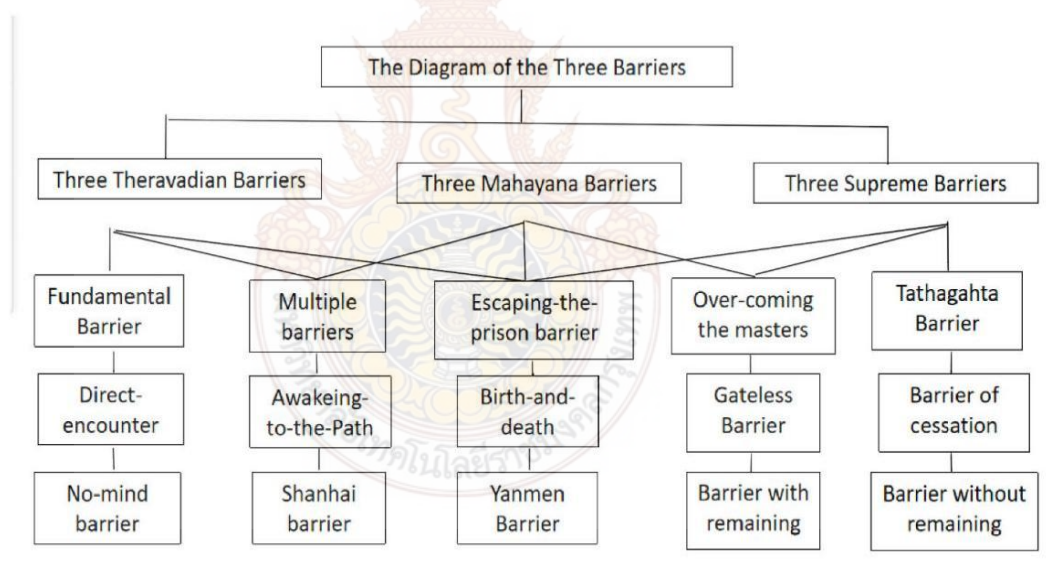


Figure 2.1 Diagram of the Three Barriers

#### 11) Master Xuyun (1840~1959)

Master Xuyun emphasized that asking, "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" fundamentally involves observing the mind as the mind initiates speech and thought. He highlighted the importance of observing the mind, noting that all phenomena originate from the mind, which is the forerunner of all (Ouyang Zhen, 2020).



Here is an excerpt from his teachings: "Recently, many places have commonly used the inquiry 'Who is reciting the Buddha's name?' They are all the same, quite ordinary, and nothing extraordinary. Whether one asks who is reciting the scriptures, who is chanting mantras, who is bowing to Buddha, who is eating, who is dressing, who is walking, or who is sleeping, it is all the same; the answer under the 'who' is always the mind. Speech originates from the mind, making the mind the leader of speech; thoughts originate from the mind, making the mind the leader of thoughts; all phenomena arise from the mind, making the mind the leader of all. Essentially, the topic of inquiry is the initial thought, and before the thought, there is the mind."

From the teachings of eleven distinguished masters, it is evident that the koan "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" fundamentally represents the integration of Chan and Pure Land practices in Buddhist history, grounded in a profound doctrinal foundation. These teachings encourage practitioners to deeply investigate their inner selves, emphasizing that while reciting the Buddha's name might seem simple, it involves a profound exploration of the mind and the nature of the reciter (Xiong Jiangning, 2012).

By asking, "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" practitioners are guided to probe their minds and awake to their true nature. The masters stress that this practice is not just mechanical chanting but involves persistent inquiry into "Who is the reciter?" Practitioners are encouraged to raise doubts and confront internal obstacles, continuously questioning the essence of the reciter. This investigation demands ongoing introspection and understanding of the source of recitation until the true meaning of "Who is reciting the Buddha?" is grasped.

The masters emphasize the importance of persistently raising doubt and using questions as a method of introspection. Practitioners should discard distractions and focus on observing the essence of recitation until they comprehend the true answer. Continuous practice and investigation lead to enlightenment, helping practitioners

transcend delusions and afflictions, confront their genuine emotions, and ultimately realize the essence of their minds and the realm of Buddha-nature.

### **2.1.6 The Purpose and Value of Patriarch Chan**

Across the country, numerous temples have preserved traditional Chan Hall rules well, such as Zhenru Chan Temple in Yunjushan, Yongxiu, Jiangxi, and Wolong Temple in Xi'an, Shaanxi. Many rules govern the meditation halls, and meditation practitioners must study attentively for several months to fully grasp these rules. As the heart of the temple, the Chan Hall embodies the practitioners' aspirations for enlightenment and the pursuit of truth. It houses four primary instruments on the table for the power of life: the bell plate, incense plate, incense stick, and wooden fish. The interior is divided into two large rooms, east and west. The central niche is dedicated to Vairocana Buddha, with the Vimalakirti niche behind it. Annually, job application slips are posted on the comprehensive slip and categorized into east and west orders. In the Eastern order, roles such as head monks are included.

In contrast, the Western order includes positions such as the head seat, Western Hall, back hall, and hall master. The bell and board, which are utilized regularly in the Chan Hall, serve as a means to direct the practitioners' regimen of walking and sitting meditation and function as a signal for commands. The practice incorporates distinct regulations of the Linji Sect, including the utilization of "one bell, one board, one wooden fish" and "two boards, one clock, one wooden fish," each of which holds symbolic significance.

In the Chan Hall, various instruments also hold different significances and purposes. The bell and board are used for various purposes, including initiating meditation or giving the signal for delivering instructions to still the mind. Other ritual instruments have specific functions and uses, such as the urging board, wooden fish, calling incense, leading chimes, and incense board. For example, the urging board is used as a signal to continue the running meditation after the standing and instructions. The wooden fish is used to initiate a session, remove the robe for the toilet break, stilling,

and so on. Signals and ceremonies, both inside and outside the Chan Hall, are crucial to the meditation life. From the first to the fifth board, signals and various ceremonies, such as starting meditation, hanging the second board, stopping the running, urging the running, taking a break, stilling, breaking silence, and raising the board, are all strictly regulated to guide the daily life and practice progress of practitioners. The Chan Hall is a sacred space chosen by the Buddha and is a significant location for Chan Buddhism. It enforces stringent regulations and regulated behavior to create an atmosphere of tranquility, allowing practitioners to engage in meditation undisturbed and pursue spiritual enlightenment. The monastic leader performs every action, such as walking, staying, sitting, and lying down, and the assembly adheres strictly to prescribed procedures (Liu Yifeng, 2018). For example, walking should be as swift and traceless as the wind; upon entering the hall, one should neither inquire nor join palms; sitting should be upright as if ringing a bell, and lying down should be curved like a bow with the right hand under the head and the left hand on the knee. The Chan Hall has numerous rules, including those governing entry and exit, daily routine, incense adjustment, and major temple entry at the start of each session.

## **2.2 Related Studies on Buddhist Meditation Activities**

The existing research on Buddhist meditation practices demonstrates diverse advantages, encompassing cognitive and physiological realms. According to a study conducted by Wang et al. (2018), Chan meditation was found to have a substantial impact in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety among individuals living in urban areas in China. Liu and Zhang (2020) discovered that practicing Chan meditation enhanced psychological well-being and life satisfaction by promoting heightened mindfulness and improved emotion regulation. Chen's (2019) research demonstrated that Chan meditation can promote the development of more cohesive and helpful communities, particularly in urban settings like the Chan Hall Dafo Si. Zhang and Liu



(2017) validated that this meditation technique can diminish stress levels and enhance the overall well-being of individuals residing in metropolitan areas.

Huang et al. (2020) conducted a study that revealed that Buddhist meditation can potentially enhance cognitive function and memory in elderly individuals residing in urban areas. Li's (2020) research demonstrated that Chan meditation enhances concentration and emotional equilibrium, which are crucial in high-pressure metropolitan settings. Zhou's (2018) research emphasized that Buddhist meditation has the potential to enhance empathy and social connections among individuals who practice it, hence fostering increased social unity within urban areas. According to Wu and Chen's (2019) research, Chan meditation has been demonstrated to enhance sleep quality and alleviate insomnia in urban areas. According to Ma's (2021) research, meditation is useful in controlling chronic pain. It can serve as an alternative to traditional medical treatments. Sun's (2019) research shows that consistent Buddhist meditation can enhance physical fitness and vitality.

The advantages of this meditation are undeniably interconnected with the actions it entails. Meditation activities encompass a range of methods and exercises designed to achieve mental tranquility, heightened consciousness, and spiritual well-being. Zazen is a prominent technique in Chan meditation that entails sitting in meditation and focusing entirely on the breath while clearing the mind of any disturbances. Suzuki's (2018) study indicates that practicing zazen enables individuals to attain profound tranquility and heightened cognitive concentration. Furthermore, Chan meditation often incorporates walking meditation, also known as *kinhin*. During this practice, individuals walk at a modest pace while maintaining complete focus on each step and their breathing, as elucidated by Tanahashi (2019). Visualization is a commonly employed meditation practice where individuals conjure certain mental images to induce a sense of tranquility or spiritual enlightenment. According to a 2020 study by Lopez, visualizing has been found to enhance concentration and induce a profound state of tranquility. Chanting sutras and mantras are a crucial component of

Buddhist meditation practice. According to Wang (2017), it aids in concentration and enhances spiritual connection through the vibrations produced by sound.

Furthermore, meditation often involves profound contemplation of Buddhist doctrines, known as vipassana or insight meditation. According to Goldstein (2019), this technique enables practitioners to perceive the genuine essence of the mind and things, ultimately resulting in enlightenment and profound comprehension. Meditation activities encompass daily mindfulness practices, including mindful dining and domestic duties. As Kabat-Zinn (2015) described, these practices facilitate the integration of contemplative awareness into all aspects of daily life. Research conducted by Kristeller and Wolever (2019) indicates that practicing mindful eating might effectively mitigate emotional eating tendencies and enhance self-regulation of eating habits. A study by Thich Nhat Hanh (2018) demonstrated that mindful walking can enhance emotional equilibrium and alleviate symptoms of anxiety. Mindfulness meditation activities encompass the practice of loving-kindness meditation, wherein individuals cultivate benevolent intentions and extend compassion towards themselves and others. Fredrickson et al. (2017) demonstrated that loving-kindness meditation can enhance happy emotions and interpersonal connections.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study employs a case study approach to explore the distinctive practice of Buddhist meditation in urban China, focusing on the activities conducted in The Chan Hall of Dafo Si in Guangzhou. Dafo Si upholds the Buddhist practice of "summer study and winter meditation," with a particular emphasis on arranging the Chan Seven-day Retreat during the winter period. During these retreats, the usual Buddhist services are reduced, and daily sutras and other services are paused to ensure that everyone in the temple concentrates exclusively on preserving the sacredness of the Chan Seven. The winter retreat is open to the general public and attracts many non-monastic Buddhists each year. In addition to the yearly event, the Urban Chan Hall also takes advantage of holidays and weekends to organize diverse meditation sessions centered around specific themes. During Labor Day and National Day vacations, the meditation center typically conducts seven-day intensive meditation camps to offer the public profound meditation experiences.

In this case study, the researcher actively participated in all research activities. The researcher actively participated in tasks such as observation, surveying, conducting interviews, and analyzing documents. Observation activities were conducted throughout 10 meditation sessions from April to mid-July 2023. Additionally, we conducted observation and interview activities with Buddhist monastics from urban areas in China who are over 20 years old and reside in Chan Hall. These monastics have practiced daily mindfulness meditation since entering monastic life. Aside from the permanent monks of the Chan Hall of Dafo Si, individuals who frequently engage in meditation were also included as subjects for observation. All participants engaged in mindfulness meditation through seated meditation in the early

morning. They allocated different durations to walking, meditation, and chanting throughout the day based on their responsibilities and tasks within the monastery.

Subsequently, the researcher administered a survey to participants utilizing the Chinese version of the Mindfulness Meditation and General Health Questionnaire (MMGH-Q) to investigate the effects of meditation practices on mental health. This questionnaire was administered during the second month of the observation period to gather thorough data that could be combined with the observation results. During the third phase, the researcher conducted interviews with participants to validate the findings obtained from the observation and survey. Additionally, the interviews aimed to explore the meditation practices that were not documented during the observation. The final phase involved the researcher using document analysis to juxtapose the findings from observations, questionnaires, and interviews. The text utilized for the study was the 2008 book "The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch" by John R. McRae. This book is a translation from the Chinese version of Zongbao and includes Chan Meditation.

### 3.2 Participants

The study included Buddhist monastics from Chinese urban areas who were over 20 years old and resided in Chan Hall, as well as regular visitors who engaged in meditation in Chan Hall. Table 3.1 below presents data on the number of Buddhist monastics and guests who engage in regular meditation in Chan Hall.

Table 3.1 Data Regarding the Quantity of Buddhist Monastics and Guests Who Regularly Meditate at Chan Hall

Period	Male	Female	Total
Phase 1	12	53	65
Phase 2	19	60	79
Phase 3	21	59	80
Phase 4	23	58	81
Phase 5	18	58	76

<b>Period</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Phase 6	25	63	88
Phase 7	13	61	74
Phase 8	14	58	72
Phase 9	26	63	89
Phase 10	22	60	82
<b>Total</b>	193	593	786

However, to ensure a concentrated observation, the goal of the observation was limited to a single group for each gender. The observation activities in this study involved two groups of participants: one group comprised males and the other females. The researcher consistently recorded the number of participants during each meditation session. However, there were variations in the participants due to some individuals being absent from some sessions. This modification enabled the researcher to acquire more extensive data from their meditation exercises. The quantity of participants in each group is displayed in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2 Observed Participants

<b>Period</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Phase 1	12	18	30
Phase 2	10	10	20
Phase 3	10	15	25
Phase 4	15	20	35
Phase 5	18	22	40
Phase 6	11	19	30
Phase 7	10	10	20
Phase 8	12	13	25
Phase 9	16	19	35
Phase 10	10	20	30

### 3.3 Data Collection

The data obtained in this study were derived from four distinct sources, specifically observation, interviews, surveys, and documents.

### **3.3.1 Observation**

In this study, the researcher employed non-participatory observation, meaning the researcher did not actively engage in the meditation exercises. The observed components included the meditation type, schedule (including start time and duration), participant-instructor interaction, and the techniques employed by the instructor to guide the meditation.

### **3.3.2 Interview**

Interviews were performed to delve more into the meditation exercises undertaken by the participants. The researchers recruited a sample of four individuals, comprising two males and two females. Specifically, the sample included two Buddhist monastics and two regular meditation practitioners who visited the research site. These individuals were selected as subjects for observation in this study. The interview aimed to investigate the impact of meditating with the numerous visitors to Chan Hall on their meditation habits. More specifically, two individuals from urban areas in China were interviewed about the effects of meditation on their mental health balance. The questions also focused on how they manage their busy schedules and organize their meditation routines.

### **3.3.3 Survey**

This survey was administered to all individuals who meditated during the 10th session or within the first three months of observation. The survey utilized the Mindfulness Meditation and General Health Questionnaire (MMGH-Q) in its Chinese translation to investigate the effects of meditation activities on mental health.

### **3.3.4 Document**

The text used for the study is "The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch," authored by John R. McRae in 2008. This book is a translation of the Chinese version written by Zongbao, focusing on Chan Meditation. This text analysis offers a comprehensive understanding of Chan meditation within the Chinese Buddhist tradition. This document is highly pertinent since it provides a comprehensive and



scholarly understanding of the historical and theoretical aspects of Chan's meditation practice. The Sutra in question is a pivotal source within the Chan tradition, elucidating the ideas and instructions of Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch. Huineng places great emphasis on the achievement of enlightenment through the practice of direct and non-dualistic meditation. The information provided in this text is valuable for constructing an analytical framework to evaluate the application of Chan meditation practice in a contemporary urban setting, such as Dafo Si. This approach enables academics to discern similarities and differences between classical doctrines and modern methodologies and to comprehend how traditional teachings are adapted in a vibrant urban setting.

### **3.4 Research Instruments**

The research instruments comprise:

#### **1) Observation Protocol**

Researchers employed an observational strategy to document information while observing meditation sessions. This protocol comprises comprehensive documentation of meditation activities, encompassing the entire duration of the practice. The form begins with details regarding the observation session, which includes a section called 'descriptive notes' where activities can be documented. Furthermore, there is a dedicated section called 'Reflective Notes' where one can document the process, reflect on the activities, and provide a concise summary of the conclusions drawn. Detailed information can be found in Appendix 1.

#### **2) Semi-structured Interview**

This interview sheet includes an interview guide and five open-ended questions for the interview—the interview questions center around the meditation practices conducted at the Chan Hall Dafo Si. Detailed information can be found in Appendix 2.



### 3) Questionnaire

The researchers developed a survey tool, the Mindfulness Meditation and General Health Questionnaire (MMGH-Q), in Chinese to investigate the practice of meditation and its impact on mental health, as perceived by practitioners. MMGH-Q comprises a total of twenty-six questions. The questionnaire was administered to participants following a meditation session in the third month. Participants completed the questionnaire online using Google Forms. Detailed information can be found in Appendix 3.

### 4) Document Analysis

The text examined in this study is titled "The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch", authored by John R. McRae in 2008. It is a translation from the Chinese language by Zongbao and focuses on the subject of Chan meditation. This paper is a seminal text in Chan teaching, elucidating the ideas and instructions of Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch, who stressed the achievement of enlightenment via the practice of direct and non-dualistic meditation. The primary focus of the analysis is the Chan meditation technique. Detailed information can be found in Appendix 4.

## 3.5 Validity and Reliability

Professionals in the field of meditation validated the observation sheets, interview instruments, and questionnaires internally. Specifically, two professors who have undertaken substantial studies on religion in Chinese urban areas, including meditation, were involved in the validation process.

## 3.6 Data Analysis

The methodology employed in this study is a three-step data analysis process comprising data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

### **3.6.1 Data Reduction**

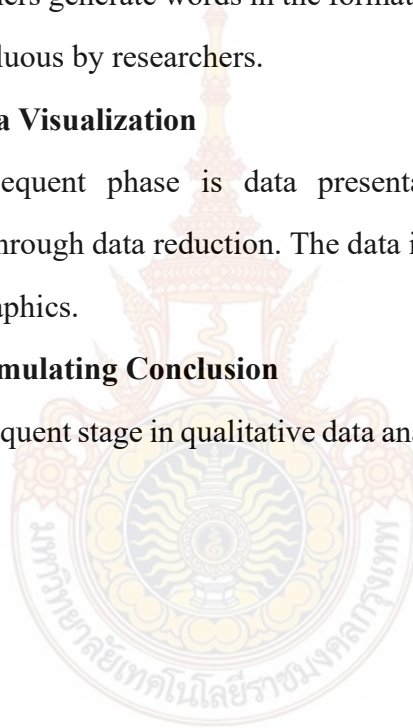
Data reduction is the first stage that researchers use to collect condensed data from various sources, such as observations, interviews, surveys, and document analysis. Researchers describe the data reduction procedure in this study as follows: Initially, researchers consolidate the findings from their field notes and record the outcomes of interviews conducted with informants. Additionally, researchers present findings derived from field observations, interviews, surveys, and document analysis. Furthermore, researchers generate words in the format of descriptions and exclude data that is deemed superfluous by researchers.

### **3.6.2 Data Visualization**

The subsequent phase is data presentation, which encompasses the information derived through data reduction. The data in this study was presented using tables and graphic graphics.

### **3.6.3 Formulating Conclusion**

The subsequent stage in qualitative data analysis is drawing verification and reaching conclusions.



To summarize, Figure 3.1 below illustrates the data analysis process.

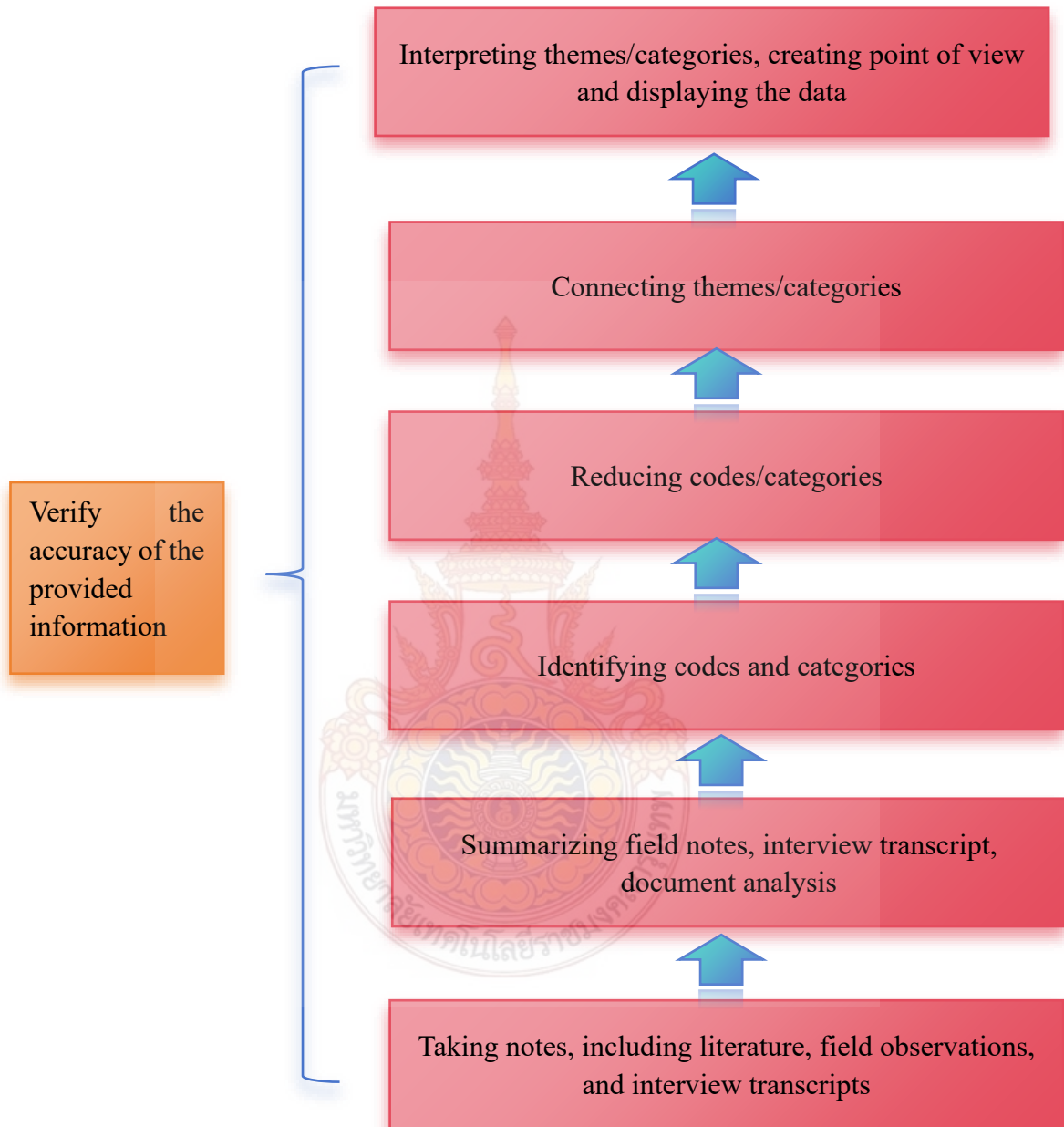


Figure 1.1 Data Analysis

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS RESULTS

#### 4.1 Participants' Demographics

To provide an overview of the participant participating in this study, the study presented the data on their gender, age, educational background, and occupation/position. This input is transformed into a dynamic aspect that serves a purpose in the meditation process in this study. Tables 1 and 2 display information on gender, age, educational background, and occupation/position.

Table 4.1 Gender, Age, and Meditation Experience of Participants

Period	Gender		Age			Meditation Experience			Total
	Male	Female	>40 years	30 - 40 years	20- 30 years	Less than one year	2-5 years	>5 years	
Phase 1	12	18	8	12	10	20	7	3	30
Phase 2	10	10	7	11	2	10	5	5	20
Phase 3	10	15	8	9	8	10	10	5	25
Phase 4	15	20	9	10	16	20	10	5	35
Phase 5	18	22	7	18	15	20	10	10	40
Phase 6	11	19	8	18	4	10	15	5	30
Phase 7	10	10	8	8	4	10	5	5	20
Phase 8	12	13	7	10	8	15	8	2	25
Phase 9	16	19	7	15	13	15	18	2	35
Phase 10	10	20	10	10	10	15	12	3	30

According to the data in Table 4.1, a total of 290 participants took part in 10 meditation sessions. Specifically, there were 124 male participants and 166 female participants. The table displays the distribution of participants' ages, indicating that there were 90 individuals between the ages of 20-30, 121 individuals between the ages

of 30-40, and 79 individuals above 40. Furthermore, Table 4.1 categorizes the participants according to their level of meditation expertise, particularly 145 individuals classified as beginners, 100 individuals, and 45 individuals who have maintained their practice. This data comprehensively shows the participant's demographic characteristics and experience level. Analyzing this information is crucial for assessing the influence of meditation on different age groups and levels of expertise. Figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 below provide age data, gender, and meditation experience independently.

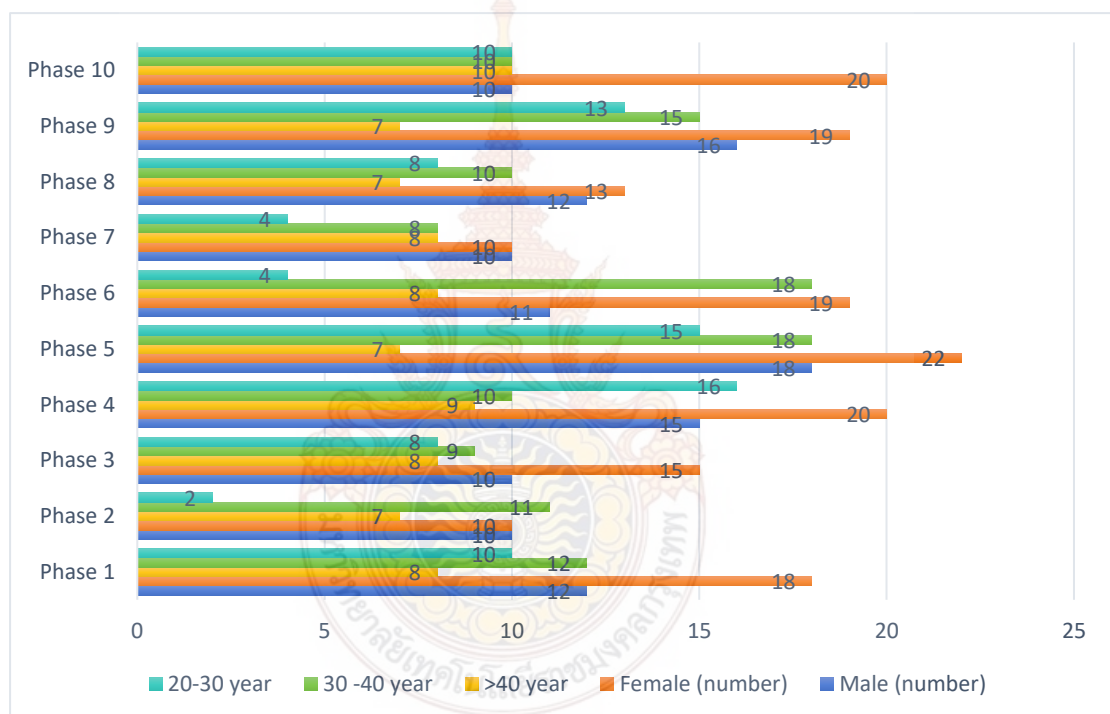


Figure 4.1 Distribution of Participant Age

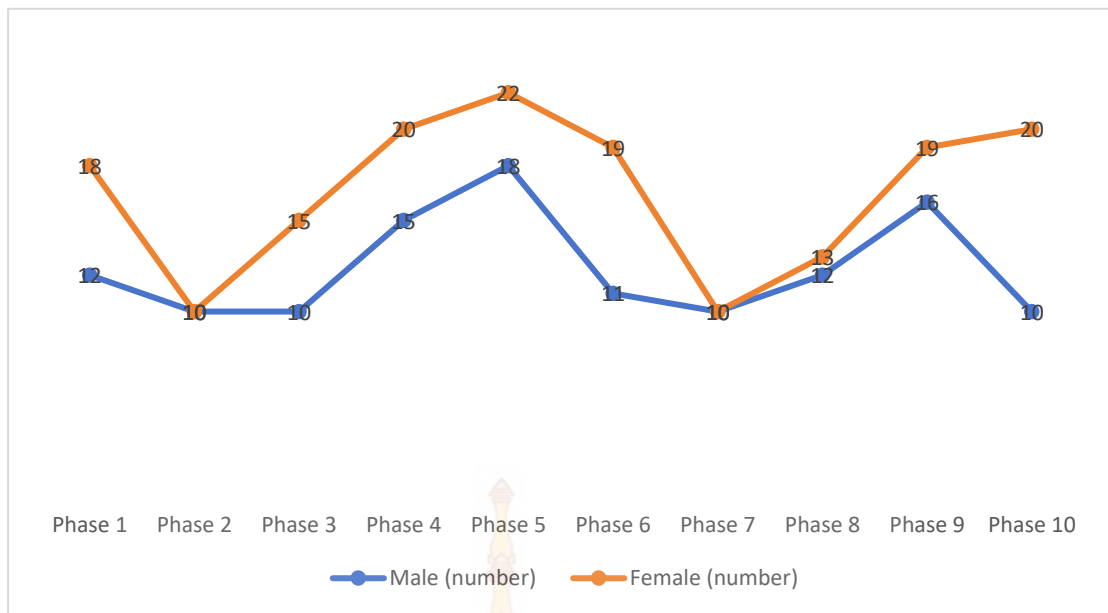


Figure 4.2 Distribution of Participant Gender

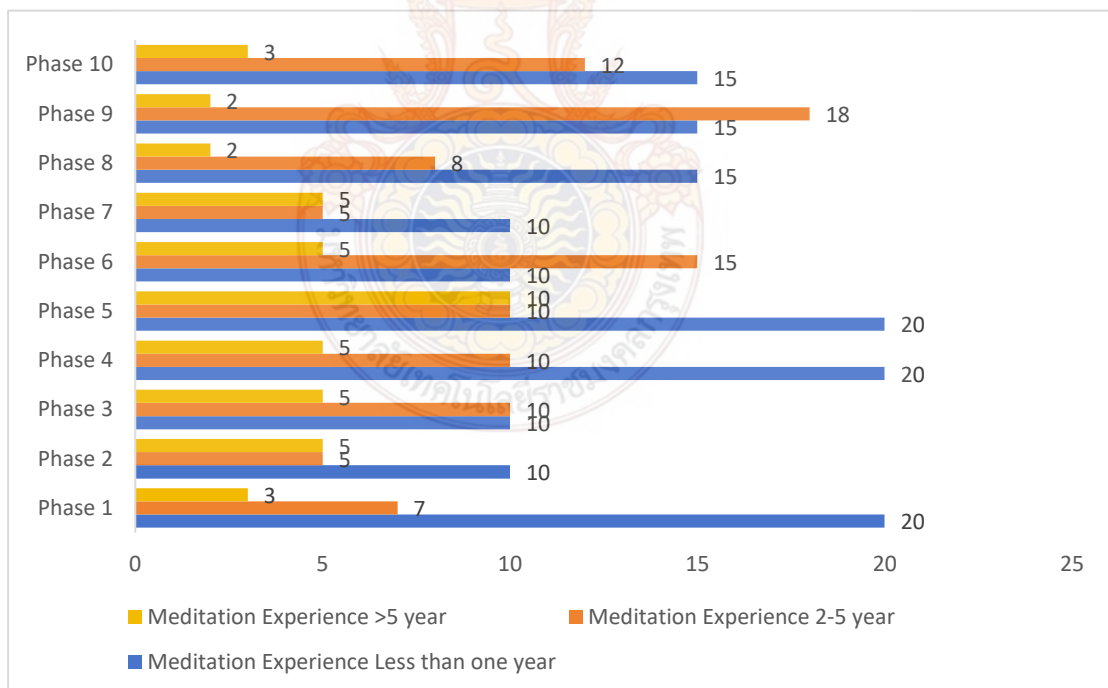


Figure 4.3 Distribution of Participants' Meditation Experience

In addition, the researchers gathered information on the participants' educational background and employment occupation/position, which was displayed in Table 4.2. The table indicates that out of the 290 participants, 20% possess an

undergraduate education, 50% possess a postgraduate education, and 20% possess an education obtained through a scholarship. Furthermore, while considering job roles, it is observed that 40% of participants are employed in the education sector, 26% in the health sector, and 34% in the business sector. This data provides valuable insights into the participants' educational backgrounds and professions. Such insights can contribute to a better understanding of how these different elements may influence their experience and the outcomes of their meditation practice.

Table 4.2 The Educational Background and Professional Field of the Individuals Participating in Meditation

Period	Educational Background			Job Occupation / Position		
	Under Bachelor	Bachelor	Master/ Doctor	Education	Business	Health
Phase 1	7	12	11	11	9	10
Phase 2	5	1	14	7	8	5
Phase 3	7	3	15	9	6	10
Phase 4	12	9	14	12	14	9
Phase 5	10	14	16	19	18	3
Phase 6	13	4	13	13	10	7
Phase 7	5	2	13	7	10	3
Phase 8	5	6	14	9	7	9
Phase 9	11	6	18	16	10	9
Phase 10	11	1	18	12	7	11

The study comprises observation efforts in conjunction with the "One-Day Chan in the City" event. This is evident in the augmented number of applicants for each event and in attaining the quota limit before the scheduled time. The Chan Center follows the principle of excluding repeat participants and instead focuses on attracting new attendees. The participants in the meditation activities come from varied backgrounds, with a significant number having attained higher education. Additionally, there is a notable representation of young and middle-aged individuals. Although the general public derives satisfaction from their meditation practice, they are enthusiastic about endorsing it to their contacts. Our activities are gaining more attention and



participation due to the increasing popularity of "Temple Fever" among young practitioners balancing work and personal growth. This is benefiting us greatly as we practice Chan.

Meditation sessions in the Chan Hall were organized to practice Chan meditation. Before commencing their Chan experience, students were guided on Buddhist teachings and fundamental meditation practices to enhance their ability to enter a meditative state. They engaged in mindfulness practice during various activities such as walking, standing, sitting, and drinking tea, fully embodying "walking Chan, sitting Chan, speaking, silence, movement, stillness, and bodily tranquility." The communal practice instilled in the trainees a sense of profound delight derived from the teachings of Dharma. The students' initial knowledge of Buddhism was gradually updated, and new life perspectives and ideals were established due to their experiences and reflections. They exhibited a recently acquired sense of assurance and receptiveness when confronting their lives, embracing the occurrences of life, and implementing Chan techniques in everyday life.

## **4.2 Information about the Meditation Schedule in Chan Hall**

The Chan Hall at Dafo Si is open to the public, offering structured meditation sessions throughout the day. Morning incense is conducted from 7:30 to 8:30 AM, followed by midday incense from 12:30 to 1:30 PM. The public is welcome to enter Chan Hall for meditation and self-study during these hours. Additionally, at 7:00 PM each evening until 9:30 PM, a master leads a group practice session. This evening session is structured into three parts: nourishing the breath meditation, stopping board and instructions, and the late evening session (see Table 4.3).

Meditation is not a skill that can be mastered in a single day, nor can it be fully acquired through one or two meditation camps. It requires daily practice and long-term commitment. Conveniently located in the core business district, Dafo Si is easily

accessible, making it an ideal venue for meditation enthusiasts who may lack suitable conditions elsewhere. Each night, scores of meditation practitioners from Guangzhou gather at the meditation center to practice together.

Table 4.3 Timetable for the Meditation at Chan Meditation Center

Schedule			
	Time	Event	Remarks
Morning Meditation	7:00	Sitting	60min
	8:00	Breaking the silence	
Noon Meditation	12:30	Sitting	60min
	13:30	Breaking the silence	
Evening practice			
Evening Meditation	19:00	Walking meditation	25min
	19:25	Undo and take off	Toilet
	19:30	Quieting down	60min
	20:30	Breaking the silence	
Instructions	20:30	Walking meditation	15min
	20:45	Stopping board	15min
	21:00	Urging board	
Late evening Meditation	21:00	Sitting	30min
	21:30	Breaking the silence	

### 4.3 Findings from Observation

Dafo Si is an urban Buddhist temple that primarily teaches Chan Buddhism from the Han tradition to the general public while maintaining an open perspective free from sectarian bias. Periodically, Theravada monastics visit to teach the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and lead a seven-day meditation camp focused on this method. In past recreational camps organized by the temple, meditation has been a mandatory daily activity for participants who practiced the Four Mindfulness Meditations under guidance.

From the early days of group practice led by a prominent monk to the establishment of a dedicated group practice department and now to the current meditation center, Dafo Si has been actively promoting and practicing meditation for

over a decade. The successful execution of numerous meditation events by the Chan Center, along with the positive public response, underscores the need for a serene retreat where individuals can find peace of mind. Recognized as a method that addresses the physical and mental needs of contemporary individuals, meditation not only serves as an effective means of spreading Buddhism and benefiting lives but also continues to support a wise way of living.

From April 2023 to July 2023, researchers observed 10 meditation sessions at the Chan Hall Dafo SI. The detailed observations are reported in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4 Observation Result of Meditation Activities in the Chan Hall of Dafo Sii

Period	Event Date	Time	Summary of Observation
Phase 1	2023.04.01	07.00-08.00	<p>Meditation Type: Sitting Meditation</p> <p>The number of participants in the meditation session can reach up to 30.</p> <p>The monk initiates the practice with a 40-minute session of seated meditation, which is then followed by 20 minutes of Breaking the Silence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New participants receive specialized instruction, beginning with a fundamental comprehension of meditation, its advantages, and its impact on mental and emotional wellness.</li> <li>- Participants are instructed to maintain an erect posture with relaxed shoulders and lay their hands on their laps or above their knees.</li> <li>- The monk stresses the practice of a breathing method that involves directing attention to the inhalation and exhalation while being mindful of the sensation of air entering and leaving the body</li> <li>- It concludes with deliberations and contemplations on meditation experiences, encountered difficulties, and the impact of meditation on everyday life.</li> </ul>

Table 4.4 Observation Result of Meditation Activities in the Chan Hall of Dafo Si (continued)

Period	Event Date	Time	Summary of Observation
Phase 2	2023.04.08	12.30-	Meditation type: Sitting meditation
		13.30	<p>A total of 20 individuals participated in the meditation session.</p> <p>The monk commences the meditation session by engaging in a seated posture for 40 minutes. An overview of 20-minute visualization techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overview of Visualization Methods</li> <li>- Participants visualize specific pictures, such as radiant light permeating their entire body or serene nature landscapes. Visualization can be employed to attain inner tranquility or channel constructive energy.</li> <li>- No text was provided. The objective of meditation is to enhance focus and cultivate tranquility.</li> </ul>
Phase 3	2023.04.15	19.00-	Meditation type: Walking meditation
		20.00	<p>Twenty-five individuals participated in the meditation session.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The monk guides the meditation session.</li> <li>- Emphasis is placed on providing advice for proper posture.</li> <li>- Participants direct their attention to each step, paying close attention to how their feet are lifted, moved forward, and in contact with the ground.</li> <li>- Participants synchronize their breathing with their steps. For instance, taking a breath while taking two steps and then exhaling while taking two steps.</li> <li>- Participants focus their attention on the bodily sensations experienced during walking, including the tactile feedback of feet touching the ground, the shifting of weight, and the relaxation or tension in their muscles.</li> <li>- Participants walk while maintaining a detached and non-judgmental awareness of</li> <li>- emerging thoughts. They acknowledge the presence of these thoughts and then redirect their attention back to their steps and breathing.</li> </ul>

Table 4.4 Observation Result of Meditation Activities in the Chan Hall of Dafo Si (continued)

Period	Event Date	Time	Summary of Observation
Phase 4	2023.04.22	07.00-08.00	Meditation type: Sitting meditation 35 individuals participated in the meditation The participants engage in the complete awareness technique of meditation by sitting quietly and directing their attention to the breath or bodily sensations. Observe and acknowledge every thought or feeling that emerges without becoming engaged or making evaluations — direct one's attention on embracing and comprehending one's being.
		12.30-13.30	Meditation type: Sitting meditation The meditation session can accommodate up to 40 participants. Sitting meditation involves receiving more guidance on the practice of focus. - Emphasize the utilization of concentration techniques - The focus is on conquering cognitive interference. - Participants remain in tranquility and attentively acknowledge any emerging ideas or emotions. When experiencing distraction, promptly acknowledge the diversion without analyzing it and redirect attention back to the act of breathing or the body's physical sensations.
Phase 5	2023.05.13		
Phase 6	2023.05.27	21.00-21.30	Meditation type: Sitting meditation There were 30 experienced meditation participants and several inexperienced people. - Novices receive institutional coaching to facilitate their comprehension and assimilation of the proper meditation methodology. - Beginners are provided with intensive guidance to aid their comprehension and adoption of the accurate meditation approach. This encompasses comprehensive guidelines on proper body alignment, concentration on breath control, and strategies for managing intrusive thoughts. - Dialogue regarding the initial encounter with meditation

Table 4.4 Observation Result of Meditation Activities in the Chan Hall of Dafo Si (continued)

Period	Event Date	Time	Summary of Observation
Phase 7	2023.06.04	07.00-08.00	<p>Meditation type: sitting meditation</p> <p>A total of 20 individuals participated in the meditation session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The practice of Zen meditation is of a lengthier duration.</li> <li>- Participants assume a seated position with their spines erect on a meditation cushion, known as a Zafu. The lotus posture, also known as the half lotus, involves placing the legs on or behind the thighs. The hand is positioned in a mudra gesture, with the palm facing upwards and the fingers softly touching.</li> <li>- The user did not provide any text. Focus on the inhalation and exhalation of breath without attempting to alter the pattern. Experience the sensation of inhaling to fully expand the lungs and exhaling to release the air.</li> <li>- The user did not provide any text. Participants allow the mind to arise and dissipate without adhering to or dismissing it.</li> <li>- Concludes with a teacher-led discussion session</li> </ul>
		12.30-13.30	<p>Meditation type: sitting meditation</p> <p>Thirty-five individuals participated in the meditation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concentrate on practicing quiet meditation.</li> <li>- The focus is on self-reflection.</li> <li>- Participants engage in silent contemplation, directing their attention to their breath or bodily sensations. Observe and acknowledge every thought or feeling that emerges without engaging with or evaluating them. Direct your attention to embracing and comprehending your being.</li> <li>- Participants are instructed to select introspective inquiries such as "What is the purpose of my existence?" or "What brings me joy?" Reflect calmly and allow the answers to arise organically without imposition.</li> </ul>
Phase 8	2023.07.02		



Table 4.4 Observation Result of Meditation Activities in the Chan Hall of Dafo Si (continued)

Period	Event Date	Time	Summary of Observation
Phase 9	2023.07.09	19.00-20.00	<p>Meditation type: Walking meditation</p> <p>As many as 30 individuals participate in meditation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Walking meditation facilitates the cultivation of complete mindfulness.</li> <li>- The monk instructs participants to meditate while walking, assuming an initial standing posture with legs parallel, neck and back aligned, and shoulders relaxed. Position one's hands either in front or behind the body or allow them to rest at the side of the body.</li> </ul>
Phase 10	2023.07.16	07.30-13.30	<p>Meditation type: Sitting meditation</p> <p>As many as 30 individuals participate in meditation.</p> <p>The primary objective of meditation is to cultivate focused attention on the breath and cultivate feelings of love and compassion towards oneself and others through Metta Bhavana.</p> <p>Participants are instructed to concentrate their attention on the inhalation and exhalation of breath while monitoring the sensations without forming judgments. Furthermore, meditation sessions incorporate cultivating love and compassion, also known as Metta Bhavana. This exercise encourages people to cultivate emotions of affection and empathy, beginning with oneself and subsequently expanding toward others, encompassing close relationships and individuals with whom participants may have strained interactions. The objective of this meditation is to enhance the feelings of fondness and insight within oneself, thus enhancing emotional well-being.</p>

#### 4.4 Findings from Survey on Mindfulness Meditation and Patriarch Chan in Chan Hall of Guangzhou Dafo Si

To observe the practice of meditation that emphasizes full attention to participants' senses, the researcher administers a survey to the meditation participants during the ninth observation. The survey does not involve the researcher directly observing the participants. A total of 35 individuals completed the questionnaire. The measurement of mindfulness meditation involves five sub-indicators: dissociation from the body, attention, and awareness of feelings and bodily sensations, detachment from habitual thinking, knowledge of the mind-body connection, and acceptance of feelings and bodily sensations. Meanwhile, three specific measures are employed to assess the effect on the participants' mental well-being: vitality, social functioning, and role emotion. The participants recorded their assessment scale for each item using a value range of 0-3, where 0 represents "Never" and 3 is "Always" for positive statements. The participants scored 3 for negative statements for "Always" and 0 for "Never".

The findings of the mindfulness meditation and the mental health of the participants are displayed in Table 4.5 below:

Table 4.5 Participants' Assessments of Their Mental Health and Mindfulness Meditation

No	Item	Min Score	Max Score	Mean Score	SD
<b>Mindfulness Meditation</b>					
Disconnection from the Body					
1	I feel detached from my body	0	2	1.3	0.112
2	I feel disconnected from my body	0	2	1.5	0.011
3	I feel separated from my body	0	2	1.2	0.002
4	I feel removed from my body	0	2	1.1	0.210

Table 4.5 Participants' Assessments of Their Mental Health and Mindfulness Meditation (continued)

No	Item	Min Score	Max Score	Mean Score	SD
5	I feel distanced from my body	0	1	0.8	0.101
Attention and Awareness of Feelings and Bodily Sensations					
6	I am able to feel sensations throughout my body	1	3	2.9	0.002
7	I can easily direct my attention to my physical sensations	2	3	2.7	0.210
8	I notice my physical sensations	1	3	2.8	0.002
9	I notice changes in my physical sensations	2	3	2.75	0.021
10	I am aware of my physical sensations	1	3	2.69	0.110
Detachment from Automatic Thinking					
11	I tend to believe my thoughts	0	2	1.2	0.113
12	I get absorbed by my thoughts	0	1	0.9	0.131
13	I give a lot of importance to my thoughts	0	1	0.75	0.102
14	I am attached to my thoughts	0	1	0.8	0.010
15	I get caught up in my thoughts	0	2	1.13	0.001
Acceptance of Feelings and Bodily Sensations					
16	I avoid unpleasant physical sensations	2	3	2.89	0.110
17	I try to escape unpleasant physical sensations	2	3	2.77	0.021
18	I distract myself from unpleasant sensations	3	3	3	0.112
19	I distract myself from my negative feelings	2	3	2.87	0.110
20	I try to escape negative feelings	2	3	2.76	0.201

Table 4.5 Participants' Assessments of Their Mental Health and Mindfulness Meditation (continued)

No	Item	Min Score	Max Score	Mean Score	SD
<b>Awareness of the Mind-Body Connection</b>					
21	I notice how my negative thoughts impact my mood	2	3	2.56	0.021
22	I notice the association between feeling angry and tension in my body	2	3	2.76	0.132
23	I notice the link between feeling anxious and unease in my body	2	3	2.88	0.100
24	I notice the link between feeling sad and sensations of heaviness in my body	2	3	2.89	0.032
<b>Mental Health</b>					
1	Able to concentrate	2	3	2.89	0.012
2	Loss of sleep over worry	0	2	1.2	0.132
3	Playing a useful part	2	3	2.94	0.103
4	Capable of making decisions	2	3	2.76	0.001
5	Felt constantly under strain	0	2	1.3	0.001
6	Could not overcome difficulties	0	2	1.7	0.230
7	Able to enjoy day-to-day activities	2	3	2.6	0.101
8	Able to face problems	1	3	2.3	0.012
9	Feeling unhappy and depressed	0	1	0.8	0.110
10	Losing confidence	0	1	0.9	0.201
11	Thinking of oneself as worthless	0	1	0.76	0.003
12	Feeling reasonably happy	2	3	2.67	0.120

Table 4.5 shows the measurement of mindfulness meditation using five indicators: disconnection from the body, attention, and awareness of feelings and bodily sensations, detachment from automatic thinking, awareness of the mind-body connection, and acceptance of feelings and bodily sensations.

### 1) The First Indicator: Disconnection from the Body

The first indicator is assessed through five negative statements reflecting a person's sense of disconnection or lack of alignment with their bodily sensations and experiences. These occurrences are a result of stress, trauma, or demanding and high-pressure lifestyles, such as those seen in metropolitan China. The survey results indicate that the average score for this first sub-indicator is 1.18, which suggests a relatively low score due to its proximity to zero. This proximity to zero signifies a strong and positive connection between meditation participants and their bodies, as well as high levels of mindfulness. Figure 4.4 below presents the findings of the first indicator measurement.

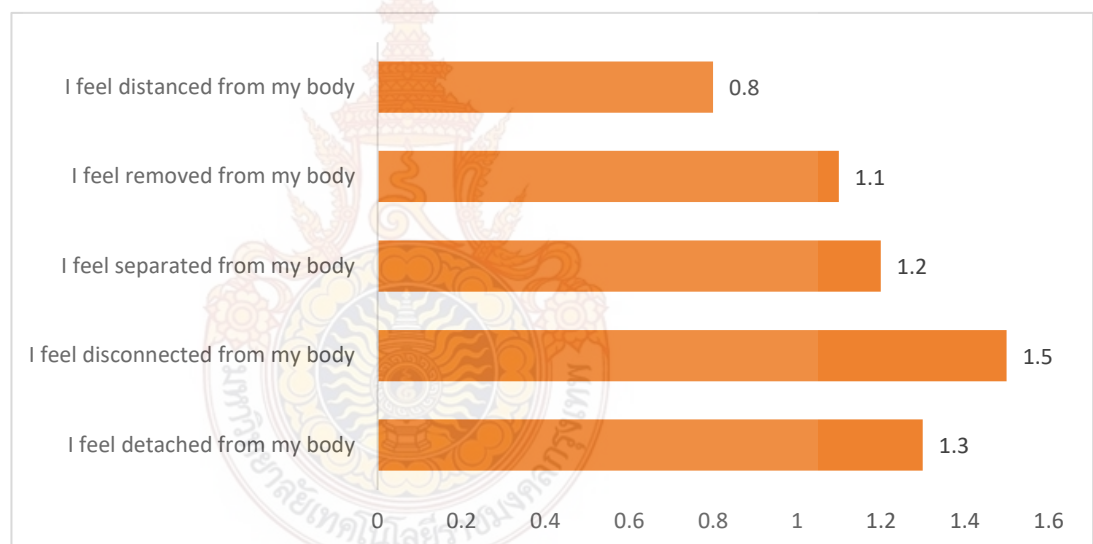


Figure 4.4 First Indicator Measurement of Mindfulness Meditation

### 2) The Second Indicator is attention and Awareness of Feelings and Bodily Sensations

This second indicator was assessed using five affirmative statements regarding the attention and awareness of emotions and physical sensations. The mean total score is 2.76. The average score for this sub-indicator 2 is high, indicating that participants frequently selected 'often' for the five statements. For instance, the initial phrase "I notice my physical sensations" is strongly linked to mindfulness, which entails

being fully conscious of the present moment and aware of the body's sensations without judgment.

To summarize, the measurement findings for the second indicator are provided in Figure 4.5 below.

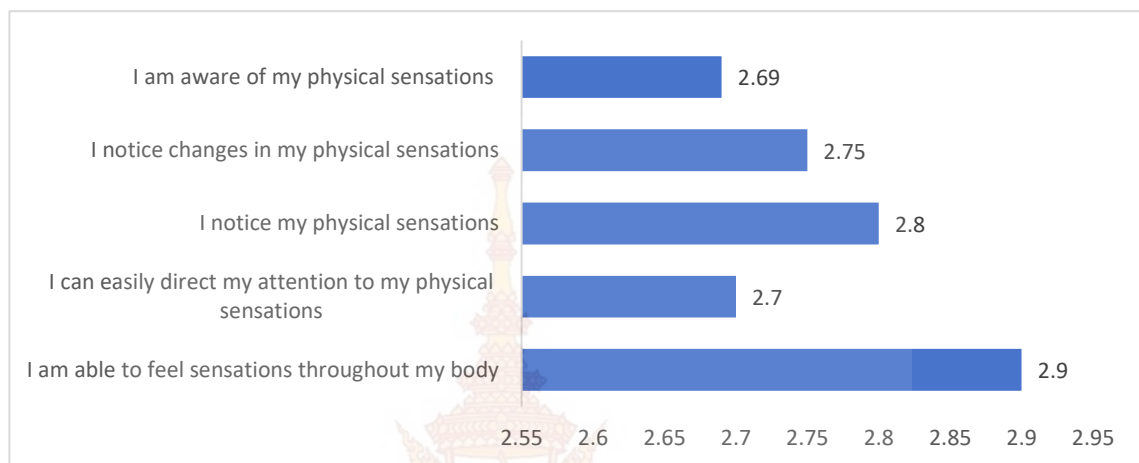


Figure 4.5 The Second Indicator Measurement of Mindfulness Meditation

### 3) The Third Indicator: Detachment from Automatic Thinking

The third indicator was assessed using five negative statements about 'Detachment from automatic thinking'. The average score of 0.96 suggests that participants rarely or virtually never experienced the situations described in the claims. For instance, the initial remark, 'I tend to believe my thoughts,' indicates a predisposition to regard the mind as a tangible or factual entity, which contradicts the fundamental concept of mindfulness. Low scores on this statement are indicative of a high level of awareness. Figure 4.6 presents a summary of the measurement data for this third indicator.



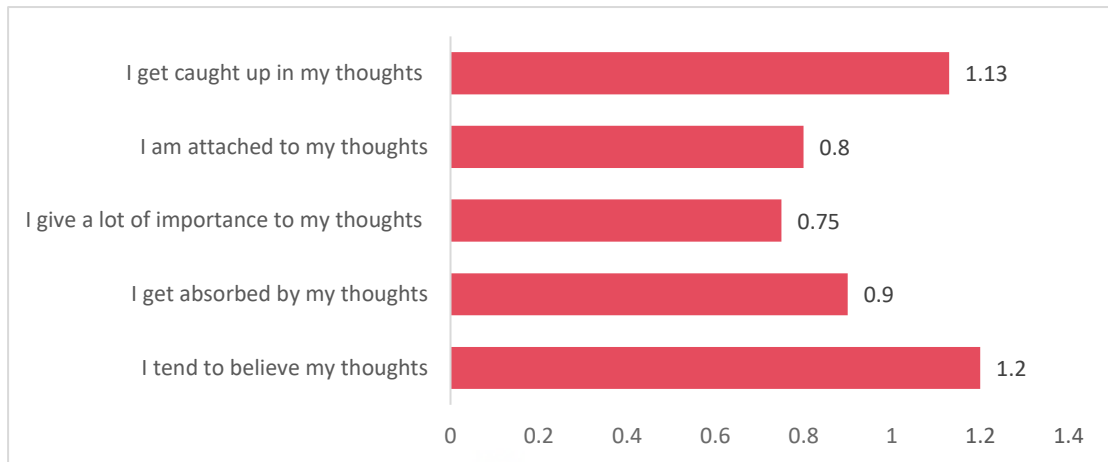


Figure 4.6 The Third Indicator Measurement of Mindfulness Meditation

#### 4) The Fourth Indicator: Awareness of the Mind-Body Connection

This fourth indicator is assessed based on five affirmative statements, with an average score of 2.85, indicating a high level of agreement. This suggests that participants frequently engage in or experience the situations described in the statements. For instance, the initial statement, '*I avoid unpleasant physical feelings*,' suggests a tendency to evade or elude unpleasant physical sensations. For instance, the third line, '*I distract myself from the unpleasant sensations*', demonstrates a proclivity to shift focus away from uncomfortable physical sensations. The survey findings indicated that the participants could redirect their focus away from uncomfortable bodily sensations. This is closely connected to mindfulness, which emphasizes the complete acceptance of all unpleasant sensations, including those that are unpleasant, as integral components of life experiences. Figure 4.7 presents a summary of the findings for the fourth indicator assessment.



Figure 4.7 The Fourth Indicator Measurement of Mindfulness Meditation

#### 5) The Fifth Indicator: Acceptance of Feelings and Bodily Sensations

The fifth indicator was assessed based on four affirmative statements regarding the 'Acceptance of feelings and bodily sensations'. The average score of 2.77 suggests that participants consistently or frequently demonstrated acceptance in this area. The first statement, "I notice how my negative thoughts impact my mood," demonstrates an understanding of the connection between negative thoughts and changes in one's mood. This remark holds great significance within the framework of mindfulness as it exemplifies an individual's capacity to see and comprehend the influence of their thoughts on their emotions. Figure 4.8 displays the results of the measurement of this fifth indicator.

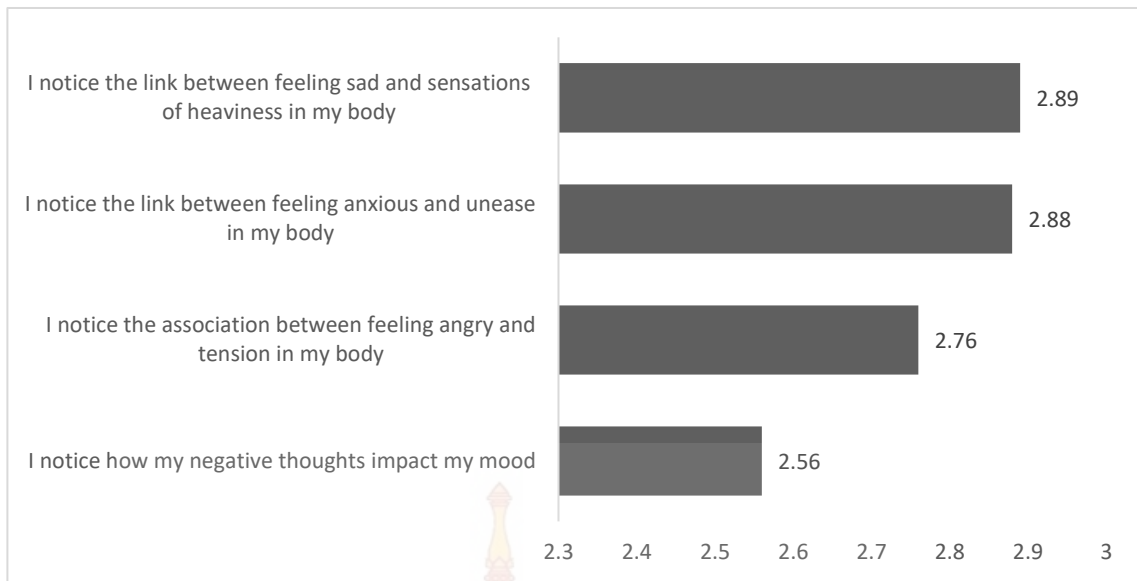


Figure 4.8 Measurement of the Fifth Indicator of Mindfulness Meditation

Additionally, mental health is assessed using a set of 12 statements, comprising 6 positive statements and 6 negative statements. The average score of the six positive statements is 2.69, indicating favorable mental health conditions. The average score of the six additional negative items is 1.11, indicating that participants are not experiencing bad conditions, as stated. The statement with the highest score in the positive statement component is "Playing a useful part," with an average score of 2.94. The lowest score for the negative component is attributed to the phrase 'thinking of self as worldless', which has a score of 0.76, suggesting that participants rarely experience a state of perceiving themselves as workless.

The measuring item and its corresponding score are displayed in Figure 4.9 below.

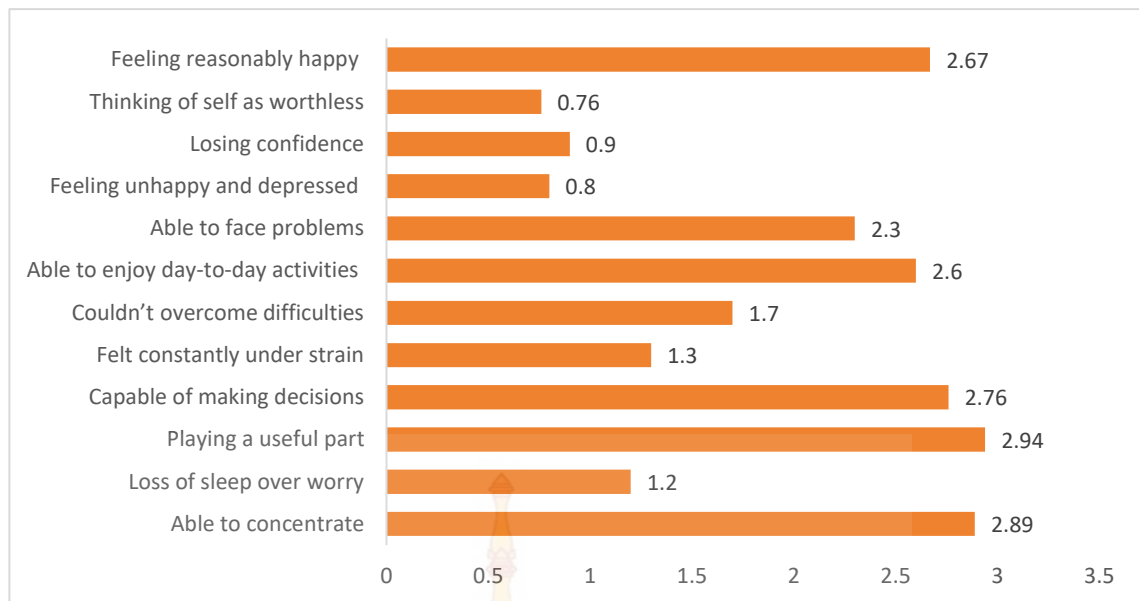


Figure 4.9 The Results of the Mental Health Assessment of Participants Following Meditation Activities

#### 4.5 Findings from Semi-structured Interviews

The author conducted semi-structured interviews at the end of meditation observation activities in July 2023. A total of eleven individuals have indicated their willingness to participate in interviews. The researcher conducted interviews with each participant for less than 20 minutes. The participants were randomly picked from a pool of individuals who had previously participated in observation activities. Table 4.6 presents the data from the interview subjects.

Table 4.6 Information on the Interview's Subject

No	Initial Name	Age	Educational Background
1	HY	50	Master
2	SY	52	Bachelor
3	XC	51	Doctor
4	JH	35	Bachelor
5	YX	43	Bachelor
6	FH	34	Bachelor

Table 4.6 Information of Interview's Subject (continued)

No	Initial Name	Age	Educational Background
7	CX	28	Bachelor
8	YZ	29	Bachelor
9	JW	27	Bachelor
10	YY	37	Master
11	ZH	35	Master

Table 4.6 demonstrates that participants in this semi-structured interview exhibit diversity in age and educational qualifications.

Below are interview transcripts featuring the responses of the participants.

*Researcher: What are the procedures for engaging in meditation activities at Chan Hall Dafo Si?*

*SY: At Chan Hall Dafo Si, we adhere to a well-defined meditation framework to ensure thorough and regular practices. Our program commences each day with a fundamental sitting meditation practice. This session typically ranges from 30 to 60 minutes, during which the participants assume a conventional meditation posture, maintaining an upright and relaxed attitude. The primary emphasis of this session is on breathing, and participants are instructed to attentively notice their breath and mindfully acknowledge any thoughts that arise without becoming entangled in them.*

*CX: Our meditation activities at Chan Hall Dafo Si often commence with a seated meditation session. Typically, we commence our practice with a seated meditation lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Throughout the practice, we maintained an erect posture on the meditation cushion, ensuring our spine was aligned and directing our attention to our breath.*

*Researcher: Additionally, what activities do you primarily engage in during meditation?*

*JH: We allocate approximately 20 to 30 minutes for meditative walking in the designated area surrounding the temple. This entails engaging in a*

*deliberate and mindful practice of walking leisurely while focusing entirely on each footstep's sensations and the body's physical sensations in motion.*

*YX: Apart from sitting and walking, we also engage in Dharma Talk, during which a monk or instructor imparts lessons or explanations on the fundamentals of Buddhism and meditation.*

*Researcher: What are your efforts to achieve Mindfulness Meditation?*

*HY: Our efforts to assist people in achieving Mindfulness Meditation encompass several systematic approaches. Initially, we ensure that every participant attains a comprehensive comprehension of the fundamental tenets of mindfulness through dharma lectures and personalized mentoring. Our instruction focuses on fundamental practices, such as deliberate breathing and heightened bodily perception, which serve as the bedrock of mindfulness.*

*XC: We provide regular meditation sessions, including sitting and walking meditation. These sessions are specifically designed to enhance mindfulness and concentration. In addition, we offer supplementary assistance through individualized counseling sessions, during which participants can openly discuss their experiences and receive tailored recommendations for their personal growth.*

*YY: I regularly attempted to participate in meditation sessions that involved both sitting and walking, which took place at the temple. I have discovered that maintaining consistency is crucial. Therefore, I consciously try to go every day and actively engage in all sessions.*

*YZ: I engaged in meditation training in the comfort of my own home. Each morning, I allocate a specific period for meditation. Additionally, I consciously try to cultivate mindfulness while performing routine tasks, such as eating or walking. This practice enables me to cultivate attention throughout my daily activities, extending beyond the dedicated meditation hour.*

*JW: Utilizing the respiratory skills acquired from the Dharma Monk and*



*Lecture.*

*Researcher: What is your perspective on the influence of meditation on mindfulness and mental well-being?*

*YY: Meditation has a substantial influence on the mindfulness and mental well-being of our participants. During meditation, our main objective is to cultivate complete mindfulness, which enables individuals to enhance their awareness of their body's thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations. This directly enhances mental well-being.*

*SY: Meditation aids in the reduction of stress and anxiety by providing individuals with techniques to control their thoughts and emotions effectively. During meditation, individuals develop the ability to attentively monitor their thoughts and emotions without automatically reacting. This skill enables them to confront stressful situations with greater tranquility and self-control.*

*JW: I experience a highly beneficial influence of meditation on my mindfulness and mental well-being. Initiating my meditation practice enables me to concentrate effortlessly on the present moment without becoming excessively preoccupied with anxiety or pessimistic thoughts. Meditation enhances my self-awareness of my emotions and thoughts, enabling me to respond with composure and self-control.*

The interview results align with the observations provided by researchers. The primary meditation practices conducted in the Chan Hall Dafo Si are sitting meditation and walking meditation. An interview with a resident monk in the Chan Hall revealed that sitting meditation is a fundamental component of the meditation practice. It allows for extended periods of introspection and the cultivation of deep concentration. Consistent with empirical results, the seated meditation practice typically lasts 30 to 60 minutes daily.

Furthermore, the monk highlighted that meditation runs constitute a crucial component of the temple's meditation practice, intending to establish a connection

between the mind's awareness and the body's actions. This aligns with the findings of studies indicating that meditation often lasts 30 to 60 minutes and is a supplementary practice to seated meditation. In addition to their meditation practice, participants reported incorporating breathing methods and body awareness techniques, which they had learned during meditation sessions, into their temple visits and daily routines. They stated that this exercise helps them sustain attention during everyday tasks and overcome cognitive obstacles. These findings emphasize that the practices acquired at the Chan Hall Dafo Si are not solely utilized during meditation sessions but are also incorporated into the everyday lives of individuals.

Additionally, the conclusions drawn from this interview align with the outcomes of a survey that demonstrates meditation's beneficial influence on mindfulness and mental well-being. Interviews with monks indicated that engaging in meditation, both in a seated and walking position, had a substantial impact on enhancing self-awareness and diminishing stress and anxiety. This aligns with the survey findings indicating that participants have improved their capacity to concentrate on the present moment and have a greater sense of overall tranquility. During the interview, participants also reported improved capacity to regulate their thoughts and emotions. This finding aligns with survey data indicating that meditation helps decrease emotional reactivity and enhance emotional stability. This discovery suggests that the meditation approach taught at the Chan Hall Dafo Si not only yields benefits during meditation sessions but also has a lasting positive impact on participants' daily lives.

#### **4.6 Document Analysis**

John R. McRae's "The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch," translated from Chinese by Zongbao, is one of the central texts in the Chan tradition of Buddhism. The sutra outlines the teachings and experiences of Huineng, the Sixth Patriarch of Chan, who played a pivotal role in the development of Chan Buddhism in China. In the

context of Chan meditation, the text provides profound insights into the techniques and meditation practices employed in Chan practice.

The researcher's investigation revealed the following results:

1) The core of Huineng's teachings is the practice of Chan meditation, also known as "zazen" in the Japanese Zen tradition. This sutra places a strong emphasis on this meditation technique. Huineng emphasized the importance of attaining enlightenment through direct comprehension and personal experiences rather than relying solely on studying written texts. The sutra teaches many Chan meditation techniques, such as:

A) Mindfulness is a practice that involves directing one's attention to the breath or a specific object in order to cultivate a calm mind and enhance self-awareness. Mindfulness helps diminish cognitive disruptions and enables individuals to be more fully engaged in the present moment.

B) Huineng teaches the principle of non-attachment, which advises practitioners to release their attachment to thoughts and emotions. This is attentively monitoring the thoughts and feelings that emerge during meditation without becoming entangled in narratives or judgments about them. The objective of this technique is to achieve a lucid mental state free from disturbances.

C) Insight Meditation: This practice entails reflecting on the genuine essence of oneself and the nature of reality. Practitioners are advised to explore the concepts of emptiness (shunyata) and impermanence to gain a deeper understanding of the fundamental essence of existence.

2) Chan Meditation Activities. This sutra encompasses Chan meditation exercises that extend beyond just stillness, encompassing a range of practices that foster spiritual growth. Several meditation practices are mentioned, such as:

A) Sitting meditation is the predominant practice in the Chan tradition. The individual assumes a particular position, typically with an erect spine and crossed legs, while focusing on the breath or a mantra. Sitting meditation is often regarded as a highly

efficient technique for achieving mental tranquility and enhancing focus.

B) Huineng emphasized the importance of walking meditation as a complementary practice to sitting meditation. During walking meditation, individuals engage deliberately and attentively, taking slow and deliberate strides while directing their attention on each step and the corresponding feelings that emerge. This practice enables practitioners to cultivate a state of contemplative awareness during their daily tasks

C) Huineng emphasized that engaging in any daily task with mindfulness can transform it into a form of meditation. Activities such as cooking, cleaning, or gardening can serve as chances to cultivate mindfulness and detachment. This statement exemplifies Chan's idea that attaining enlightenment is possible through the practice of thoughtful and conscious living daily.

The review of this document reveals a congruence between the meditation practices in the Chan Hall of Dafo Si and the meditation activity requirements given in the document.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Discussion**

##### **5.1.1 The Chan Hall Dafo Si's Meditation Program Mostly Consists of Sitting Meditation**

According to the results of this study, seated meditation predominately drives meditation activities at the Chan Hall Dafo Si. These results align with earlier research demonstrating the need for sitting in Chan's practice. For instance, studies by Sharf (2015) in his paper "Mindfulness and the Cultural Construction of Self" emphasize that while seated meditation can help increase attention and self-awareness, it is the primary practice in the Chan and Zen traditions. According to Sharf (2015), sitting meditation helps practitioners cultivate a profound awareness of their thoughts and emotions, which are essential for realizing enlightenment in this faith.

Furthermore, this finding aligns with the study conducted by Lutz et al. (2008), which demonstrated that meditation, particularly in formal meditation at Chan Hall Dafo Si, successfully enhances the capacity to regulate attention and awareness. This study demonstrates that extended periods of sitting might result in heightened mental tranquility and enhanced emotional equilibrium, corroborating the findings observed at Chan Hall Dafo Si.

Meditation at the Chan Hall of Dafo Si follows a rigorous and organized pattern, which embodies the fundamental principles of Chan's practice. This technique involves assuming a specific seated posture, typically in a lotus or semi-lotus position, with an erect back and hands resting on the lap. The duration of sitting may vary, but it typically ranges from 30 to 60 minutes per session. During meditation, participants focus on their breath or mantras to clear their minds of external and internal distractions and achieve a profound awareness. This finding corroborates the research conducted by

Tolle (1999), which demonstrates that maintaining a stable and concentrated body position is crucial for achieving complete mindfulness and inner peace.

Additionally, the meditation practice conducted at the Chan Hall Dafo Si incorporates supplementary practices to enhance focus and promote self-reflection. This encompasses practices like engaging in deep breathing exercises, attentively monitoring one's bodily sensations, and observing the mind without being actively engaged in its contents. These strategies help practitioners overcome mental challenges and develop a deeper understanding of their inner nature. According to Goldstein's (2002) research, employing these approaches while sitting can enhance an individual's capacity for concentration and cultivate wisdom. Therefore, sitting meditation serves as a means of spiritual exercise and a practical method for cultivating profound mental faculties.

#### **5.1.2 Participants Who Practiced Meditation in the Chan Hall Dafo Si Experienced Significant Improvements in Their Mindfulness and Mental Health**

The study's findings demonstrate that meditation conducted in the Chan Hall Dafo Si has been substantiated to enhance participants' mindfulness and mental health. This study aligns with previous research findings that corroborate the efficacy of meditation in enhancing mental well-being. Research by Kabat-Zinn (1990) demonstrates that mindfulness-based meditation programs can diminish stress levels and enhance overall quality of life. Kabat-Zinn elucidated that mindfulness meditation enhances individuals' awareness of present experiences, diminishes anxiety, and enhances overall well-being. The findings corroborate the study's outcomes at the Chan Hall Dafo Si, wherein participants reported a notable enhancement in self-awareness and emotional regulation.

Moreover, a study conducted by Goyal et al. (2014) substantiated the efficacy of mindfulness meditation, specifically the type taught in the Chan Hall Dafo Si, in alleviating symptoms associated with depression, anxiety, and stress. This meta-analysis demonstrates that mindfulness meditation programs can substantially benefit



mental health, particularly in mitigating stress symptoms and enhancing emotional well-being. The results of Chan Hall Dafo Si's research align with the findings of Carmody and Baer (2008), who discovered that an augmentation in mindfulness can enhance mental well-being by reducing emotional reactivity and enhancing stress management capabilities. This study demonstrates that consistent meditation practice can enhance individuals' mindfulness and reduce susceptibility to emotional problems. These findings provide more evidence of the effectiveness of meditation in the Chan Hall Dafo Si in promoting participants' mental well-being.

An important aspect of mindfulness identified in the Chan Hall Dafo SI research is the 'Acceptance of feelings and bodily sensations'. The study conducted by Germer et al. (2013) demonstrates that incorporating acceptance of bodily sensations and emotions is a crucial component of mindfulness practice. This acceptance enables individuals to confront their inner experiences with a receptive mindset and refrain from making judgments. This can mitigate the adverse effects of unpleasant emotions and enhance emotional well-being. The results obtained at Chan Hall Dafo Si demonstrated that those who engaged in meditation had an enhanced capacity to acknowledge and overcome bodily sensations and negative emotions. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Baer et al. (2006), which demonstrates that accepting the sensations of the body and emotions without evaluating them is a crucial aspect of mindfulness. This acceptance plays a vital role in promoting mental well-being. Individuals can reduce stress and improve their emotional well-being by cultivating the ability to acknowledge bodily sensations and emotions without triggering negative responses. The study found that participants who engaged in mindfulness meditation showed a notable improvement in their capacity to perceive bodily sensations and emotions.

Conversely, the 'I distract myself from the unpleasant sensations' aspect indicates that certain participants employ the transfer mechanism to evade unpleasant sensations. A study conducted by Hayes et al. (2006) demonstrates that self-

transference from unpleasant sensations can impede the practice of profound mindfulness, as it tends to evade feelings that frequently accumulate stress and emotional pain. This discovery demonstrates that while meditation at the Chan Hall Dafo Si can enhance one's capacity to confront emotions directly, certain individuals may still struggle with a tendency to avoid uncomfortable sensations. Addressing this transfer might be crucial for advancing meditation practice to optimize the advantages of mindfulness and mental well-being.

### **5.1.3 There is a Positive Correlation between Mindfulness Meditation and Mental Health**

The result of this study suggests a direct relationship between mindfulness meditation and mental health, consistent with the findings of other related studies. A study conducted by Creswell et al. (2014) demonstrated that practicing mindfulness meditation can have a substantial positive impact on mental well-being by effectively alleviating symptoms of anxiety, despair, and stress. This study demonstrates that mindfulness meditation enhances mental well-being and the immune system, revealing the extensive advantages of meditation practices on multiple dimensions of health.

Furthermore, this finding aligns with the meta-analysis by Kuyken et al. (2016), which confirms that mindfulness-based meditation, particularly mindfulness meditation, is effective in preventing depression relapse and improving mental well-being. This meta-analysis demonstrates that Mindfulness Meditation enhances individuals' ability to regulate emotions and mitigate negative thoughts, hence leading to enhancements in overall mental well-being. Grossman et al. (2004) found that further corroborate this conclusion, demonstrating that the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program substantially benefits mental well-being, notably by alleviating stress symptoms and enhancing overall quality of life. This study demonstrates that mindfulness meditation can enhance mental well-being by strengthening individuals' ability to cope with stress and increasing their self-awareness.

Overall, this study's findings align with current evidence on the advantages

of mindfulness meditation in enhancing mental well-being. The observed positive association suggests that engaging in mindfulness meditation significantly lowers psychological phenomena and enhances emotional well-being. These findings align with other research indicating that Mindfulness Meditation is a potent resource for promoting mental well-being and overall welfare.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

This study examined the meditation practices of the urban Chinese population in the Chan Hall of Dafo Si, where meditation sessions are conducted continuously from morning until night. Most practitioners engage in seated meditation as a primary component of their meditation practice. The study revealed that the practice of meditation in the Chan Hall Dafo Si had a substantial positive impact on the participants' mindfulness and mental well-being. These findings align with prior studies indicating that mindfulness meditation can diminish symptoms of anxiety, sadness, and stress while also enhancing quality of life and emotional well-being. An important aspect of mindfulness in this study is the acceptance of bodily sensations and emotions. This practice has helped participants approach their internal experiences with an open and non-judgmental attitude. There is a positive association between Mindfulness Meditation and Mental Health. The positive association suggests that mindfulness meditation plays a crucial role in reducing psychological distress and promoting emotional well-being. Further study can be conducted to construct and evaluate more comprehensive meditation programs to ascertain how different meditation practices enhance awareness and mental well-being.

## **5.3 Recommendation**

### **5.3.1 Recommendation for Policy**

- 1) Advising the government to contemplate incorporating mindfulness

meditation programs into mental health treatments provided in clinics and hospitals. An effective approach would involve implementing meditation training for healthcare professionals and offering meditation sessions to patients dealing with stress, anxiety, and depression.

2) Design policies that support and streamline meditation practice in diverse settings, including community centers, schools, and workplaces.

3) Launching an awareness campaign to educate the general public about the advantages of mindfulness meditation in promoting mental well-being.

### **5.3.2 Recommendation for Resident Monk in Chan Hall**

1) Advise the resident monk to pursue additional meditation and mindfulness training to enhance and refresh their knowledge and skills. This encompasses participating in meditation retreats, seminars, and workshops facilitated by professional meditation teachers.

2) Develop a flexible meditation program that can be tailored to meet the unique needs of each participant. This entails offering diverse meditation sessions, including seated meditation, walking meditation, and breathing exercises, to cater to each participant's individual needs.

3) Offer mentorship and support to individuals engaging in meditation, particularly those new to the practice. The Resident Monk offers personalized counseling sessions to help individuals overcome obstacles in their meditation practice and maximize the benefits they receive.

4) Organize a forum for discussion and a recurring session for introspection, allowing participants to exchange their experiences, gain insights from one another, and receive supplementary assistance. This collective can enhance the cohesion of the meditation community and offer participants supplementary perspectives.

### **5.3.3 Recommendation for Chinese Urban Community**

1) Recommend that the Chinese Urban Society incorporate mindfulness meditation into their daily routines, whether through sitting meditation, walking

meditation, or simple breathing exercises. This can help alleviate stress and promote mental well-being.

2) Encourage the community to attend classes and meditation sessions hosted by various groups, including Chan Hall Dafo Si. This will provide them with the appropriate advice and assistance to support the growth of their meditation practices.

3) Participate in a group or meditation community. It can offer valuable social support and the necessary motivation to sustain meditation practices. Engaging in dialogue and sharing experiences with other practitioners can enhance the quality and depth of one's meditation practice.



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### Observation Sheet

Duration of Activity: 90 Minutes	
Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
General: Describe the meditation moment at the Chan Hall of Dafo Si.	
What meditation practices do practitioners practice at the Chan Hall of Dafo Si?	
How does the practitioner implement the meditation practice?	

## Appendix 2

### Semi-structured Interview

1. How is your meditation experience at Dafo Si's Chan Hall?
2. What activities do you primarily engage in during meditation?
3. Are you familiar with mindfulness meditation? Please provide a brief description of your understanding of mindfulness meditation.
4. What is your perspective on the influence of meditation on mindfulness and mental health?





### Appendix 3

#### Questionnaire of Mindfulness Meditation and Mental Health

##### IDENTITY

Gender
<input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female
Age
<input type="radio"/> 20 – 30 years <input type="radio"/> 30 – 40 years <input type="radio"/> >40 years
Meditation Experience
<input type="radio"/> 2- 5 years <input type="radio"/> >5 years
Educational Background
<input type="radio"/> Under Bachelor <input type="radio"/> Bachelor <input type="radio"/> Master / Doctor
Expertise / Job Occupation
<input type="radio"/> Education <input type="radio"/> Business <input type="radio"/> Health

No	Item	Score			
		0	1	2	3
Mindfulness Meditation					
Disconnection from the Body					
1	I feel detached from my body.				
2	I feel disconnected from my body.				
3	I feel separated from my body.				
4	I feel removed from my body.				
5	I feel distanced from my body.				
Attention and Awareness of Feelings and Bodily Sensations					
6	I can feel sensations throughout my body.				
7	I can easily direct my attention to my physical sensations.				
8	I notice my physical sensations.				
9	I notice changes in my physical sensations.				

No	Item	Score			
		0	1	2	3
10	I am aware of my physical sensations.				
Detachment from Automatic Thinking					
11	I tend to believe my thoughts				
12	I get absorbed by my thoughts.				
13	I place a great deal of importance on my thoughts.				
14	I am attached to my thoughts.				
15	I get caught up in my thoughts.				
Acceptance of Feelings and Bodily Sensations					
16	I avoid unpleasant physical sensations				
17	I try to escape unpleasant physical sensations.				
18	I distract myself from unpleasant sensations.				
19	I distract myself from my negative feelings.				
20	I try to escape negative feelings.				
Awareness of the Mind-Body Connection					
21	I have noticed how my negative thoughts affect my mood.				
22	I notice the association between feeling angry and tension in my body.				
23	I notice the link between feeling anxious and unease in my body.				
24	I have noticed a link between feeling sad and sensations of heaviness in my body.				
Mental Health					
1	Able to concentrate				
2	Loss of sleep over worry				
3	Playing a useful part				
4	Capable of making decisions				
5	Felt constantly under strain				
6	Could not overcome difficulties				
7	Able to enjoy day-to-day activities				
8	Able to face problems				
9	Feeling unhappy and depressed				
10	Losing confidence				
11	Thinking of self as worthless				
12	Feeling reasonably happy				

## Appendix 4

### The Document ‘The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch’

#### THE PLATFORM SUTRA OF THE SIXTH PATRIARCH



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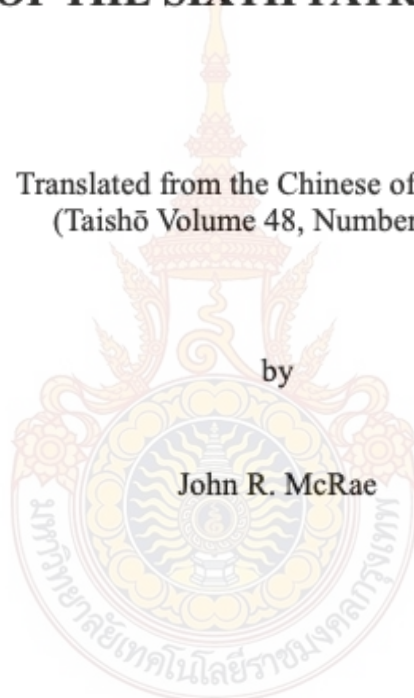
**BDK English Tripiṭaka Series**

**THE PLATFORM SUTRA  
OF THE SIXTH PATRIARCH**

Translated from the Chinese of Zongbao  
(Taishō Volume 48, Number 2008)

by

John R. McRae



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## Appendix 5

### Documentation



Figure 2. Photos from the Briefing Session with the Monk





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