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Phramaha Wiset sorphpdee
Associate Professor in
Department of Buddhist and
Philosophy, Mahamakut
Buddhist University, Lanna
Campus Thailand

Uten larping
Lecturer in Department of
Buddhist and Philosophy,
Mahamakut Buddhist
University, Lanna Campus
Thailand.

Correspondence
Phramaha Wiset sorphpdee
Associate Professor in
Department of Buddhist and
Philosophy, Mahamakut
Buddhist University, Lanna
Campus Thailand

Buddhist principles for human spiritual development of female prisoners at Chiang Mai woman correctional institution

Phramaha Wiset sorphpdee and Uten larping

Abstract

The purposes of this research were 1) to study the female prisoners' demand on human spiritual development 2) to identify Buddhist principles for human spiritual development of female prisoners and 3) to find out guidelines for Buddhist principle-based human spiritual development of female prisoners. The qualitative research collected data from two groups of samples including 15 experts on Buddhism and 288 female prisoners who were randomly selected from 1,151 female prisoners. The researcher conducted the in-depth interview with the samples and asked them to answer the questionnaires.

The data were analyzed by using percentage, mean, and standard deviation. It was found that 1) female prisoners want to improve their knowledge and become a good sample for other people. They are aware of the value of being human and wish happiness to all creatures. They want to practice meditation 2) the principles suitable for spiritual development include benevolence, truth acceptance, three studies, four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path. 3) Experts suggested that female prisoners should be taught about the value of life in order to help them to not bury themselves in their unhappy experiences. Therefore, monks should be invited to teach Buddhist principles to female prisoners.

Keywords: Buddhist principles, spiritual, female prisoners

Introduction

Background and Significance of the Study

Chiang Mai Woman Correctional Institution is responsible for the correction and development of behavioral habits of prisoners as a person who can socialize both physically and mentally after they are acquitted. These prisoners are educated in both common and vocational subjects as well as their minds are developed so that they have a career and go back as a good person in the society. In addition, the institute is responsible in enhancing the correctional management efficiently and effectively by developing its personnel and system, providing an opportunity for the private sector to participate in its operations, and making the society understand the missions and roles of prisons and the Department of Corrections. Female prisoners in Chiang Mai Woman Correctional Institution who have well adapted themselves more appreciate their self-esteem and believe in their internal locus of control than poorly adapted ones (Pongrit Chantramongkol, 2009) [3].

However, there is recidivism among these female prisoners that is not different from their first offence. Previously, after they had been freed, they returned to their families. In the first phase, they found that their families could not help them. In many cases, family members expressed their disdain again former prisoners as well as some neighbors showed their distrust. So, these prisoners left their homes to the same groups of their friends whom they were associated with before their first imprisonment. Moreover, the lack of help to start a new life from various authorities and the stigma from society caused these prisoners to commit their recidivism (Sirina Somnueg, 2004). The problem of drugs, particularly for community-based therapy project that focuses on adjusting, rehabilitating and improving the potential and behavior of these prisons, can be solved based on appropriate processes, techniques, professionals, activities, mental development, families, communities, and society. Also, it relies on appropriate media, materials, equipment, and budgets in various areas; in particular the place that is inadequate for organizing a number of activities causes a

Delay in rehabilitation because it is unable to expand the project sufficiently to accommodate all prisoners to get a drug therapy (Chiang Mai Woman Correctional Institution: Online).

To achieve equality and fairness, these female prisoners should be granted a reduction and parole on their penalties. The penalty of imprisonment instead of fine should be avoided; rather, they should be assigned to provide community services instead of fine based on the length of imprisonment instead of fine decided by the court. The Probation Department is responsible in overseeing or applying a community justice process and therefore relevant rules and regulations should be amended to achieve such equality and fairness (Natthapol Chairin, 2011) [1]. In addition, there are problems with the shortage of medicine in nursing clinics because this prison for female prisoners is a place to accommodate ill prisoners from the prisons in area 5. The conditions of its school building are unsuitable, confined and insufficient for the increasing number of students. Moreover, there is no space for wastewater treatment. These prisoners are also ill with various diseases, such as gum and teeth diseases, syphilis, AIDS, tuberculosis, and mental disorder, as well as the immunization of children and pregnant women must be provided. Furthermore, there are no residents for its officials who have thus no morale in working, and lower-positioned government officers who have been newly employed must rent a house with no accommodation expenses provided, which causes a trouble in their cost of living (Chiang Mai Woman Correctional Institution: Online).

According to the above-mentioned reasons, the researchers appreciate the spiritual development process of humanity based on the following three principles of intellectual development process. Firstly, *Sutamaya-pañña* (wisdom resulting from study) refers to a study and research to understand the principles, values and rationales of humanity from other people's experiences by listening, asking and reading various information sources. Secondly, *Cintāmaya-pañña* (wisdom resulting from reflection) refers to the use of consciousness to monitor, analyze and research internal phenomenon of various manners to see the actual life of things. Lastly, *Bhāvanāmaya-pañña* (wisdom resulting from mental development) refers to a mental practice and control to make it powerful, agile, energetic, bright, and concentrated under a systematic development process. These principles can lead to an awareness of prisoners who will then appreciate the values of their humanity by restoring, evoking and supporting their dry, gloomy and hopeless minds caused by their wrong thoughts in the past. Upon seeing their own values, they will be able to create their humanity spirits easily, which is a key part in promoting the development of human resources as a valuable deemed by society and country. Therefore, this research was carried out.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the need for humanity spirit development of female prisoners in the Chiang Mai Woman Correctional Institution,
2. To synthesize the principles of humanity spirit development of these prisoners, and
3. To find appropriate ways of humanity spirit development of these prisoners according to the Buddhist principles.

Research Methodology

Population used in this research included female prisoners in the Chiang Mai Woman Correctional Institution and the Buddhist experts and the sample was divided into two groups as follows:

1. Respondents of questionnaire were randomly chosen. Because the number of population was exactly 1151 people, the sample size of 310 people was calculated by Crecy and Morgan's formula.
2. Respondents of interview were the Buddhist experts consisting of five Buddhist academicians, two monks with highest level of Buddhist education, and three graduate students majoring in Buddhism and Philosophy, ten people in total who were selected by purposive sampling.

Data collection in this research was based on the following two instruments:

1. A questionnaire was created for female prisoners under the conceptual frameworks, theories and studies relating to the research questions, objectives, scope and definition of operating terms and then applied in accordance with the requirements and principles in the humanity spiritual development based on the following steps:

Step 1: Review relevant documents and studies to serve as a guide to create a questionnaire.

Step 2: Draft the questionnaire to cover and meet the objectives.

Step 3: Present the questionnaire to the advisors to consider the use of suitable language and general appropriateness by covering all relevant details in order to rectify its shortcomings

Step 4: Check its content validity and ask the experts to examine the instruments and consider the comprehension and consistency of details and questions with research conceptual framework and objectives before determining the Index of Consistency, rectifying its shortcomings, and trying it out with 30 female prisoners in the Lamphun Prison. The reliability of this questionnaire was 0.997.

Step 5: Collect actual data from the sample and the researcher performed this step on their own.

2. A structured interview was created for Buddhist experts under the conceptual frameworks, theories and studies relating to the research questions, objectives, scope and definition of operating terms, and the researchers performed the data collection with the sample on their own.

The data obtained from this structured interview were used and analyzed to meet the second objective that was aimed at synthesizing the principles of humanity spirit development and the third objective that was aimed at finding appropriate ways of humanity spirit development.

Equipment used to collect data from this structured interview included:

1. Equipment for noting, such as structured interview form, pens, pencils, erasers, and notebooks.
2. Equipment for voice recoding

For quantitative data analysis, when the data were obtained from the questionnaire, the answers specified in this questionnaire was checked for their completeness, encoded, recorded in a computer and processed by software, and analyzed to determine the need for humanity spiritual development of female prisoners. Statistical parameters used to analyze the personal factors included frequency, percentage while those used to analyze the need for humanity spiritual development included mean and standard deviation.

The qualitative data analysis was based on content analysis and the data organized were analyzed by a chart in order to determine the relevance and relationship between different factors. In addition, the data that were separated and organized were then clustered into groups based on their linkage, interpreted and concluded to reveal the principles in the humanity spiritual development of female prisoners by describing the relationship between various data with same contents and issues and different contexts in order to meet the research questions and objectives.

Conclusion

Need for humanity spiritual development of female prisoners

1. The female prisoners' need for humanity spiritual development according to the Sutamaya-pañña process (wisdom resulting from study) was at a high level with the mean (\bar{X}) of 4.19 and standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.614. The first aspect was knowledge development and good role model, followed by rationality development, principle values, intellectual development by learning, reading development, learning of new knowledge, and living development with moral ways. In addition, some guidelines for humanity spiritual development according to this Sutamaya-pañña process were also proposed consisting of, firstly, visiting a temple, sermon, meditation, mental practice, praying, philanthropy and practicing the dharma will make the life more valuable; secondly, effort, patience and discovery of the Buddha's teachings will reveal the values of life; and lastly, discovery of living approaches, self-study, and seeking general knowledge from daily life are based on the wisdom for determining what we want coupled with the study of academic knowledge.
2. The female prisoners' need for humanity spiritual development according to the Cintāmaya-pañña process (wisdom resulting from reflection) was at a high level with the mean (\bar{X}) of 4.24 and standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.593. The first aspect was thinking development to appreciate the values of being a human, followed by thinking development to live happily with the present, thinking development by wisdom, problem-solving development, and thinking development by rationality. In addition, some guidelines for humanity spiritual development according to this Cintāmaya-pañña process were also proposed consisting of, firstly, conscious control of feeling and thinking, rationality, and careful consideration; secondly, doing something that encourages people to think with wisdom and deliberation; and lastly, additional learning, seeking more knowledge in what human should know by any way, such as reading, thinking rationally and

consciously, happiness with the present, and understanding things with wisdom and deliberation.

3. The female prisoners' need for humanity spiritual development according to the Bhāvanāmaya-pañña process (wisdom resulting from mental development) was at a high level with the mean (\bar{X}) of 4.27 and standard deviation (S.D.) of 0.619. The first aspect was development of being compassionate to animals and meditation and praying development, followed by development of mental control to leave the passions, development of mental liberation, and development of mental practice with consciousness in every pace. In addition, some guidelines for humanity spiritual development according to this Bhāvanāmaya-pañña process were also proposed consisting of, firstly, consciousness, restraining, no distraction, patience, and mental liberation to leave the sufferings; secondly, calm mind without anything involved, new thinking and actions, and careful thinking; and lastly, mental control of not sticking with passions and mental liberation to leave the sufferings.

Principles of humanity spirit development of female prisoners

1. According to the study, the principles of humanity spirit development of female prisoners according to the Sutamaya-pañña process (wisdom resulting from study) included four sublime states of mind (goodwill, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity), four virtues for lay people (honesty, self-development, tolerance, and liberality), careful and deliberate thinking that prevents these prisoners from suffering with their past and that encourages them to develop their own minds to survive strongly, cultivation of awareness regarding appreciation of humanity under the principles of moral shame and moral dread or under other appropriate principles, eight worldly vicissitudes (gain, loss, dignity, obscurity, blame, praise, happiness, and pain), five rules of morality (to abstain from killing, to abstain from stealing, to abstain from sexual misconduct, to abstain from false speech, and to abstain from intoxicants causing heedlessness), and five ennobling virtues (compassion, right means of livelihood, sexual restraint, sincerity, and temperance).
2. According to the study, the principles of humanity spirit development of female prisoners according to the Cintāmaya-pañña (wisdom resulting from reflection) included consciousness that allows these prisoners appreciate their humanity under five rules of morality and five ennobling virtues, rationality, careful and deliberate thinking resulting in good speech and action, application of knowledge into daily life, seven qualities of a good man (knowing the cause, knowing the consequence, knowing oneself, moderation, knowing the proper time, knowing the society, and knowing the different individuals), compassionating, learning of the Buddha's teachings, self-practice, understanding of life change to prevent from having a distress, and understanding of law of actions that everyone has their own karma.
3. According to the study, the principles of humanity spirit development of female prisoners according to the Bhāvanāmaya-pañña (wisdom resulting from mental development) included medication of death awareness

and ten recollections (such as recollection of the Buddha, recollection of the Dhamma, and recollection of the Sangha) by praying “Buddha Buddha” so that these prisoners have what should be kept in their minds and are calm and compassionate for other people as well as spread happiness to all sentient beings, and spiritual development under the three characteristics (impermanence, state of suffering, and soullessness) because all things are not true and are changeable by good deeds and under the principles of precept, concentration and wisdom by learning from suffering, origin of suffering, cessation of suffering, and path to cessation of suffering (Noble Eightfold Paths), which is concerned with meditation and justification.

Suggestions for humanity spirit development of these prisoners

1. Experts suggested for humanity spirit development of these prisoners according to the *Sutamaya-pañña* process (wisdom resulting from study) that the prisoners can be prevented from mourning with their past by instructing them on the appreciation of life, encouraging them to work in order to forget their bad embedded in their minds, having some monks to give them a sermon regarding goodness and badness and other relevant principles for their new lives, and allowing them to listen to what are creative and useful. In addition, if they are mentally suffering, they should be encouraged to have an exercise, such as aerobic dancing, yoga, changing their sleeping place, singing, playing music instruments, eating vitamins, or seeing comedy movies. On the other hand, if they are physically suffering, they should be supported to accept the facts. These things must be done in conjunction with listening to sermons and praying. Conscious living during doing, talking and thinking can allow these prisoners see their own values more. Finally, they should be encouraged to listen to and apply the opinions of their teachers or of those who have a great hope for them in their life.
2. Experts suggested for humanity spirit development of these prisoners according to the *Cintāmaya-pañña* (wisdom resulting from reflection) that the prisoners can have a pride of their humanity by encouraging them to regard the Buddha as a good example or other model individuals in the present time, such as a person who had missed in the past and then has become a new and better one, and cultivating them to help difficult people or society, sacrifice their own assets to those who deserve, accumulate the goodness and merits, practice themselves to see the world in a positive or moral way more frequently, forgive themselves, and see the results of doing what is bad and good. These should be conducted by educating and informing the prisoners properly as well as check to see if they understand correctly by means of interviewing or testing. In addition, both secular and religious educations should be promoted, especially the endurance of hardship, including an encouragement of career development appropriate for prisoners who should have an endeavor of working. Finally, they should get prepared, both physically and mentally, to listen to the Dharma and meditate in an atmosphere where they can be content

and ready to accept the development before giving them an appropriate lecture.

3. Experts suggested for humanity spirit development of these prisoners according to the *Bhāvanāmaya-pañña* (wisdom resulting from mental development) that the prisoners should be initially trained to be conscious before slowly looking into their past as a lesson to prevent it from occurring again and to live happily. In addition, the prisoners should be mentally developed with an opportunity to gain new knowledge and follow the Buddhist principles of making merits, maintaining precepts, and meditation. They should also think of something carefully and deliberately based on four noble truths (suffering, cause of suffering, cessation of suffering, and path leading to the cessation of suffering). Moreover, these prisoners should be supported to practice their consciousness and know what they are doing. Once they are able to define their consciousness happily, they will understand their own life and how to live with a new face to the outside world wisely and consistently with ultimate goal of their life. They should also be encouraged to consider and improve their own life based on appropriate praying. Finally, these prisoners should be explained as to the benefits of practicing meditation. Relevant personnel should also be developed to specialize in training, praying, and meditation as well as be educated on how to psychologically transfer knowledge to the prisoners so that their minds are raised up with love and unity within their own groups and they are able to apply the principles properly according to the Buddha's teachings.

Discussions

1. The study found that female prisoners' need for humanity spiritual development according to the *Sutamaya-pañña* process (wisdom resulting from study) was at a high level, such as knowledge development, good role model, rationality development, principle values, intellectual development by learning, reading development, learning of new knowledge, and living development with moral ways. In addition, their need for humanity spiritual development according to the *Cintāmaya-pañña* process (wisdom resulting from reflection) was at a high level, such as thinking development to appreciate the values of being a human, thinking development to live happily with the present, thinking development by wisdom, problem-solving development, and thinking development by rationality. Moreover, their need for humanity spiritual development according to the *Bhāvanāmaya-pañña* (wisdom resulting from mental development) was at a high level, such as development of being compassionate to animals, meditation and praying development, development of mental control to leave the passions, development of mental liberation, and development of mental practice with consciousness in every pace. The need of these women prisoners in the humanity spiritual development is part of their good requirements according to the definition of “Chanda”, which refers to a will that can happen to all spiritual kinds, whether charitable or evil minds. Also, daily practices of merits, such as donation, maintenance of precepts, and learning of the Buddha's teachings, are all concerned with

charitable minds with regular merit makings. Furthermore, female prisoners expressed their need to develop their own spirits. Nevertheless, since their thinking conditions vary, it is required to carefully take into account the different rationales of their humanity. Similarly, Preeyaporn Wonganutrohd (1998, p. 40-42)^[9] suggested that human is naturally rational and emotional and acts as an alive computer that can gather the required information, analyze things thoroughly and carefully, weigh and assess the situations, and think reasonably. Additionally, human is rational in processing any information. On the other hand, human is also emotional with a variety of emotions. Some people have no self-control and consciousness coupled with grievance resulted from their childhood experience as well as often think of a relationship between people like father and son. Although these female prisoners had different living experiences, they all wanted to improve themselves. This meets the principles of "Attasampata" (S.M. 19/133/36), which refers to a commitment of self-training as much as a human can do. Humans should always realize the truth of human nature as an animal that can and must be trained as well as should practice more and more and regard various difficulties, obstacles and problems as a testing stage and develop their own intellectual abilities until the end of their full potential along with the development of all aspects, including behavior, mind, and wisdom.

2. According to the analysis of principles in humanity spiritual development according to the *Sutamaya-pañña* process (wisdom resulting from study), religious precepts are the best fundamental for humans, and wherever humans are, they can put into practice these precepts. After following the precepts completely, their minds will be calmer and happier, and once they are happy, other people nearby will also be happy. It is recommended to be associated with good friends who can induce and guide how to conduct and live in the society happily with appropriate sacrifice, creative, polite and melodious speeches, commitment of useful actions, and consistency or steadiness. This meets the principles of "Silasampata" (S.M. 19/129/36), which means that discipline is a fundamental of life development by organizing beings, activities, business, and environment that are conducive to the development of life. Humans should at least follow basic precepts by having correct behaviors in relation to the social environment and co-existing with other humans harmoniously. Also, they should conduct properly in relation to the material environment by consuming four basic needs and various technological devices in a way that promotes quality of life, education, creativity, and natural balance.

Similarly, Pirasak Lerttrakanont (2006, p. 1) described the behavioral dimension of spirit that the expression of spiritual beliefs of each individual is unique and they fight for everything for themselves and are responsible in choosing their own path of life. Humans are a creature that cannot be separated alone; rather, they have to interact with the (both inside and out) environment. How they respond to the environment is influenced by their society and past experiences and they often seek ways to mix them well with the environment. Each system of the body, such as

cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, muscle, bone, and skin systems, acts differently, but they are related to each other. Taking care of people needs to understand the elements of their life while taking care of physical, emotional, social, and spiritual elements simultaneously.

3. According to the proposed guidelines for spiritual development, the experts commented that human's mental distress may be caused by thinking of their past. The past is gone and the memory of evil experiences they had done in the past causes many problems such as mental distraction, physical unavailability, including illness, back, lumbar, shin or leg pains, and mental unavailability, including laziness, lack of faith, and lack of belief in the Triple Gem. Importantly, a mental development is critical in leading to a thinking process and expressing appropriate actions. The questions as to how to develop the mind internally and how to enhance the thoughts must be answered appropriately to the prisoners. For female prisoners in this study, some suggestions for their humanity spiritual development were that they should use their consciousness to control their thoughts and consider things carefully and deliberately as well as they should be allowed to do what can encourage them to think wisely, learn more, and search for what people should know.

Acquiring more knowledge in some ways, such as reading, thinking of things rationally and consciously, living happily with the present, and understanding things wisely are a process of spiritual development and are an important component of spiritual happiness (Nitisak Toniti, online) by combining physical, spiritual and social elements together, which cannot be separated from each other. However, some nurses may sometimes neglect the spiritual conditions of the patients or act unwittingly, such as cutting a holy thread off the patient's wrist before sending them to an operating room, disposing of a holy garland on the patient's bed head maintain the environmental cleanliness without taking into account the patient's faith and belief. Moreover, they may sometimes ignore or assume that their patients are a Buddhist who is likely to follow the Buddhist's principles without asking their information, belief or background. According to the studies on the care of spiritual happiness in addicts, after their spiritual happiness was taken care of by increasing their consciousness, raising positive feelings toward themselves, and establishing the goal of their life, the rate of drug cessation behaviors among this group of people was higher and they had higher life satisfaction. Beliefs and practices getting into the spirit of these addicts could reduce their feelings of mental distress. In addition, spiritual practices, such as meditation, Bible reading, and praying, could also affect their health and cause a relaxing response, which could in turn affect their body with a decrease in metabolism, slower breathing, lower blood pressure, lower muscle tightening, slower heartbeat, and an increase in slow-type brain waves. Moreover, those diagnosed with mental health problems also paid higher intention to the spiritual support.

Recommendations

Policy Recommendations

1. According to this study, the overall need for humanity spiritual development of female prisoners for all three processes, i.e. humanity spiritual development based on the Bhāvanāmaya-pañña process (wisdom resulting from mental development), on the Cintāmaya-pañña process (wisdom resulting from reflection), and on the Sutāmaya-pañña process (wisdom resulting from study), was at a high level. Mostly, female prisoners needed the development of being compassionate to animals and meditation and praying development, followed by development of mental control to leave the passions, development of mental liberation, and development of mental practice with consciousness in every pace, respectively. Therefore, the Chiang Mai Woman Correctional Institution under the Department of Corrections should establish a policy on moral training for female prisoners with a more emphasis on practices of Dharma, meditation and praying than theoretical classrooms in order to help raise their awareness of badness and goodness with calmer minds. This should be defined as a strategy for providing moral training to female prisoners with the main goal of making them appreciate both physical and spiritual values of their own humanity.
2. According to this study, the thinking principles must always be continuously followed, which include the consciousness that allows these prisoners appreciate their humanity under five rules of morality and five ennobling virtues, including rationality, careful and deliberate thinking resulting in good speech and action, and application of knowledge into their daily life. Therefore, the Chiang Mai Woman Correctional Institution under the Department of Corrections should establish a policy of practicing the discipline to standing, walking, sitting and sleeping in a systematic way coupled with moral classes where these prisoners will be encouraged to know what they are doing, speaking and thinking under the principles of physical, verbal and mental honesties.
3. Experts suggested for humanity spirit development that the prisoners can be prevented from mourning with their past by instructing them on the appreciation of life, having some monks to give them a sermon regarding goodness and badness and other relevant principles. In addition, some female prisoners argued that visiting a temple, sermon, meditation, mental practice, praying, philanthropy and practicing the Dharma would make the life more valuable by using the wisdom to determine what we want coupled with the study of academic knowledge. Therefore, the Chiang Mai Woman Correctional Institution under the Department of Corrections, including Chiang Mai monks in the Mahamakut Buddhist University and the Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University and other teaching monks, should establish a policy to create a place for morality in women's prisons with an atmosphere like a temple with daily meditation and praying activities while there should be additional activities of accepting the Five Precepts, sermon and meditation on every Buddhist's day.

Research Recommendations

1. There should be research on humanity spiritual purification process for female prisoners.
2. There should be research on self-development for female prisoners.
3. There should be research on ideal humanity values for female prisoners.
4. There should be research on moral development strategies for female prisoners.
5. There should be research on learning development strategies for female prisoners.

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