THE T-MSH MODEL FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND SOCIAL HARMONY IN THAILAND

Phrakhrusamu Woravit Phasuko (Dutsadeephuttipun)[1],

Phrakruthammathon Phaiboon Ñāṇavipulo[2], Maechee Kulaporn Kaewwilai[3]

Ratchaburi Buddhist Shangha College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand[1,2]

Wat Thakanun, Kanchanaburi, Thailand[3]

Corresponding Author E-mail: kulapornka@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The Thai Mindfulness for Social Harmony (T-MSH) model is a theory-driven policy model for conflict transformation in Thailand. Grounded in Buddhist social ethics and accessible through secular language, T-MSH model integrates mindfulness-based self-regulation, ethical communication inspired by Right Speech, and restorative dialogue to support healing. This article synthesizes a multi-level framework for Thai society. Evidence from organizational and meta-analytic research indicates that mindfulness training can support constructive conflict management, reduce anger and aggression, and strengthen prosocial dispositions, especially when programs are rigorous and ethically grounded. However, integrative scholarship also highlights risks: decontextualized "attention-only" mindfulness may be ethically thin, culturally contested, or operationalized in ways that neglect the structural causes of conflict.

This T-MSH model is designed for scalable adoption across temples, schools, workplaces, local administrations, and digital communities. The model combines (1) self-regulation and emotion awareness, (2) ethical communication and compassionate listening, (3) restorative dialogue processes, and (4) community care infrastructures led by trained facilitators. Implementation guidance and measurable indicators are provided to support a national "mindfulness-for-harmony" policy that remains inclusive, trauma-informed, and aligned with Thailand's Buddhist cultural capital while respecting pluralism.

Keywords: Mindfulness (sati); Conflict transformation; Social harmony; Right Speech; T-MSH model

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is increasing across all levels of Thai society, from personal relationships and workplaces to communities and the digital sphere. Simple policy disagreements can escalate into polarization, moral outrage, and cycles of reactive speech. Research indicates that perceived ideological distance, amplified by echo chambers and biased media, fuels out-group hostility and undermines public trust. The digital environment, in particular, has become a source of harmful and discriminatory speech, with ongoing online hate and misogyny threatening civic safety and social unity. From a Buddhist psychological perspective, these issues reflect deeper forces such as reactivity, craving, conceit, and misperception, driven by untrained speech and weak community repair systems.

Buddhist traditions have long treated conflict as conditionally arisen and therefore transformable through training in ethics (sīla), mental cultivation (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā). Mindfulness meditation, understood as sati with clear comprehension (sampajañña), offers a practical capacity to recognise mental events at the point of arising, before they crystallise into harsh speech, retaliation, and entrenched hostility. Contemporary research is broadly consistent with this promise: mindfulness has been linked to more constructive conflict management in organisational contexts, including higher collaboration and lower avoidance (Kay & Skarlicki, 2020), and meta-analytic evidence suggests mindfulness training can aid regulation of anger and aggression (O'Dean et al., 2025). However, policy design must address two significant problems. First, "thin" mindfulness, reduced to attention training without explicit ethical commitments, risks instrumental use, cultural distortion, and limited social impact (Purser & Milillo, 2015). Second, the broader mindfulness field has often lagged in multi-level implementation that targets collective and institutional conditions rather than only individual coping (Oman, 2025).

To address these gaps, a Buddhist-inspired, theory-driven, and actionable model is proposed for Thailand. This approach combines mindfulness-based self-regulation, Right Speech as a civic skill, and restorative dialogue across temples, schools, workplaces, and digital communities. The anticipated outcomes, reduced escalation, more compassionate communication, improved dispute resolution, and a harmonious climate that respects disagreement, are presented as testable goals for pilot programs and evaluation, rather than promises of immediate national change.

Normative scope, pluralism, and constitutional neutrality are central considerations. Buddhist social ethics are used because they serve as a culturally salient moral vocabulary and institutional resource in Thailand; however, Buddhist doctrine is not treated as legally authoritative for public policy, nor is it assumed that citizens must hold Buddhist beliefs. The T-MSH model is presented as a policy option that can be justified in public reason terms (e.g., dignity, non-violence, psychosocial safety, procedural fairness) and delivered with parallel secular language alongside Buddhist framing. This approach addresses pluralism and aligns with constitutional guarantees of religious liberty and non-discrimination. In practice, constitutional neutrality is maintained when participation is voluntary, curricula avoid sectarian claims, delivery is non-coercive, and benefits are evaluated through transparent, measurable outcomes rather than religious conformity.

BUDDHIST FOUNDATIONS FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

Buddhist social ethics approaches conflict as conditionally arisen and therefore transformable through training in mind, speech, and relationships. Rather than treating harmony as the absence of disagreement, the Nikāyas present harmony as a practice outcome: reduced reactivity, disciplined communication, and shared norms that sustain concord in communities. The following foundations clarify why mindfulness-based conflict transformation can be framed as an integrated pathway, linking sati with ethics (sīla), wisdom (paññā), and pro-social conduct, when offered as an inclusive public model for Thai society (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1994).

1. Sati as relational capacity, not merely attention

In early Buddhist frameworks, mindfulness is not "neutral attention" but a path factor coordinated with Right View and Right Speech (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1994). In practical terms, sati and clear comprehension (sampajañña) increase sensitivity to the moment of contact (phassa) and to the feeling tone (vedanā), enabling practitioners to recognise escalation cues, irritation, threat appraisal, and self-justifying narratives before they become harsh speech or retaliation (Bhikkhu Anālayo, 2003). For conflict transformation, this produces a policy-relevant mechanism: a reliable "choice-point" that shifts behaviour from automatic reaction to reflective response, preserving conditions for dialogue and repair.

In the Theravāda exegetical tradition, clear comprehension (sampajañña) is often analysed into four complementary modes: comprehension of purpose (sātthaka), suitability

(sappāya), domain or proper range (gocara), and non-delusion or reality-orientation (asammoha). For policy pedagogy, these can be operationalised as practical checkpoints for ethical speech and de-escalation: (a) purpose: what outcome is my speech trying to accomplish; (b) suitability: is this the right time, place, and medium; (c) domain: can I keep speech within verifiable facts and respectful boundaries; and (d) non-delusion: can I see how self-defence narratives amplify threat and soften them before speaking. This operationalisation strengthens analytic clarity by showing how a canonical concept can be translated into teachable competencies without treating scripture as a self-evident warrant for policy (Nyanaponika Thera, 2005).

2. Ethical communication: Right Speech as social technology

Right Speech (sammāvācā), from a Buddhist ethical perspective, can be interpreted as a scalable social technology because it protects dignity and reduces secondary harms that prolong disputes (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1994). For policy design, speech ethics should be operationalised into teachable competencies, truthfulness (accuracy and transparency), non-harshness (de-escalation language), non-divisiveness (non-inflammatory framing), and timeliness (choosing the right moment and medium). These map naturally to modern skills such as reflective listening, nonviolent phrasing, clarification requests, and explicit repair attempts; the normative claim is that such competencies are ethically desirable and publicly beneficial, not that canonical authority alone settles policy choice.

3. Brahmavihāra and public virtue

The four immeasurables mettā, karuṇā, muditā, and upekkhā, provide the affective-moral infrastructure of harmony: goodwill reduces hostility, compassion supports repair, and equanimity stabilizes fairness under disagreement (Nyanaponika Thera, 1998). Importantly, upekkhā is not indifference; it is steady-minded impartiality that enables restorative outcomes without denial of harm.

4. Social cohesion principles: saṅgahavatthu and sārāṇīya-dhamma

Whereas mindfulness and brahmavihāra shape inner and interpersonal capacities, the Buddha also articulated explicit community-binding principles. The saṅgahavatthu (giving, kind speech, beneficial action, impartiality) functions as a practical template for social solidarity and participatory inclusion (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012). Complementarily, the sārāṇīya-dhamma ("conditions for amiability") emphasises embodied goodwill, sharing, and concordant

virtues and views, directly aligning with contemporary cohesion constructs such as trust, reciprocity, and procedural justice (Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 1997).

Taken together, these principles, seen through the lens of Buddhist ethics, make a compelling case for a Thai policy model rooted in self-regulation, compassionate communication, and restorative repair. They offer a clear ethical direction—non-harm, harmony, and care—that can be transformed into practical program goals and measured in real-world settings, rather than simply assumed as policy justification.

WHAT CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE SUGGESTS (AND WHAT IT DOSE NOT)

Contemporary mindfulness research offers policy-relevant signals for conflict resolution, but it also contains important boundary conditions. Across the literature, findings cluster around (1) constructive conflict management, (2) anger/aggression reduction, and (3) prosocial development, especially when mindfulness is embedded in ethical and wisdom-oriented training. At the same time, heterogeneity of interventions, variability in control conditions, and risks of "thin" (ethically decontextualized) mindfulness mean that evidence should be interpreted as support for a capacity-building component of conflict policy, not a standalone solution.

1. Constructive conflict management

For policymakers, the takeaway is that mindfulness training can help people de-escalate and handle conflict more constructively by boosting emotional regulation and curbing aggression, especially when paired with ethical guidance and hands-on dialogue skills. Still, these promising results do not guarantee that a nationwide rollout will automatically create harmony; careful piloting, adaptation, and ongoing evaluation remain essential. In their conflict-positive workplace model, Kay and Skarlicki (2020) show that mindfulness supports constructive conflict management partly through cognitive reappraisal, an emotion-regulation strategy that helps individuals reinterpret triggers and respond with greater flexibility. For policy translation, the implication is specific: mindfulness can strengthen the in-the-moment capacity needed for de-escalation and problem-solving, particularly when paired with communication skills and shared norms.

2. Anger and aggression reduction

Meta-analytic evidence indicates that mindfulness-based interventions can meaningfully reduce anger and aggression outcomes, while also highlighting the need for rigorous designs and well-matched control groups to strengthen causal inference (O'Dean et al., 2025). Earlier systematic review work similarly suggests potential reductions in aggression/violence-related outcomes but cautions that conclusions are constrained by study heterogeneity and risk-of-bias issues (Gillions et al., 2019). For Thai policy, this supports mindfulness as a preventive and rehabilitative support, especially for anger-escalation pathways, while discouraging overclaims about universal effects across contexts.

3. Prosocial development through ethically enriched practice

Evidence is stronger when mindfulness is integrated with Buddhist ethical and wisdom components. A systematic review of wisdom-based Buddhist-derived meditation practices reports benefits for prosocial behavior and identifies plausible mechanisms (e.g., values-based orientation and perspective transformation) that go beyond attention training alone (Furnell et al., 2024). This aligns with Buddhist theory: sustainable harmony requires moral cultivation, not only improved attentional control.

4. Thai-context relevance

Thai scholarship underscores that mindfulness practice in Thailand is plural and socially embedded spanning monastic training, temple-based lay practice, and modernized secular applications—necessitating context-sensitive design and credible teacher formation (Bodhisatirawaranggoora et al., 2024) Thai Buddhist peacebuilding perspectives also frame Buddhism as a social innovation for addressing multi-level conflict, supporting temple–community platforms for reconciliation and civic harmony (Bunthavee, 2020).

5. Limits and cautions

Critical voices caution that mindfulness, if stripped of ethics, can become a tool that individualizes social problems, silences real grievances, or is used without accountability undermining its value for justice-focused conflict transformation (Purser & Milillo, 2015). Public health experts add that scaling mindfulness demands careful attention to quality, fairness, and supportive institutions, not just spreading techniques (Oman, 2025). For Thailand, this means mindfulness should be positioned as a skill-building practice that strengthens

negotiation, dialogue, and repair, always working alongside, not instead of, fair governance and just procedures.

In summary, current research suggests mindfulness is a promising tool for building conflict-related skills. It is associated with improved conflict management and reduced anger, and, when grounded in ethics and wisdom, can foster prosocial attitudes essential for social healing. However, the evidence is mixed and often moderate, indicating that mindfulness without ethical or institutional support may be insufficient. In Thailand, mindfulness should be viewed as one important component, complementing governance and fairness, to enhance dialogue, negotiation, and repair, and should be continually tested and refined in practice.

THE THAI MINDFULNESS FOR SOCIAL HARMONY (T-MSH) MODEL

Developing mindfulness as a policy for Thai social harmony requires more than promoting calm. The model must emphasize its foundation in Buddhist 'right mindfulness,' demonstrate how self-regulation translates into practical skills for individuals and groups, and embed these practices within restorative, accountable institutions. The Thai Mindfulness for Social Harmony (T-MSH) Model provides a multi-level, evidence-based approach that links Buddhist ethics with contemporary research on conflict and aggression, and is ready for piloting in various settings. T-MSH serves as a blueprint for testing and adaptation, rather than a universal solution.

T-MSH differs from standard mindfulness programs by offering a training path grounded in ethics, combining Right Mindfulness and Right Speech, and supporting restorative dialogue. While temples are key civic partners, the model also provides secular options and transparent safeguards for all environments (Kay & Skarlicki, 2020; O'Dean et al., 2025; Purser & Milillo, 2015).

1. Core proposition

Mindfulness paves the way to social harmony when it is grounded in ethics, brought to life through disciplined speech, and woven into restorative systems that support real change. For "ethically embedded mindfulness" aligns with Buddhist accounts of mindfulness as operating within a moral-cognitive ecology (right view/right effort/right mindfulness), rather than as neutral attention; this matters because conflict escalation frequently involves moralized reactivity and identity threat, not merely poor concentration (Purser & Milillo, 2015).

Second, mindfulness must be expressed in communicative behavior, especially speech, because many Thai conflicts (offline and online) intensify through cycles of harsh, divisive, or humiliating language. Third, even well-trained individuals need procedures for repair: restorative practices provide a structured framework for acknowledging harms, meeting needs, and negotiating obligations, with safeguards to ensure fairness and follow-through (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2020; Zehr, 2002).

2. Model architecture (multi-level)

Level 1: Individual (Self-regulation / sati–sampajañña)

T-MSH begins with self-regulation capacities that predict better conflict behavior: attention stabilization, interoceptive/body awareness, affect labeling, and "impulse-delay" skills that interrupt anger scripts before speech and action occur. Evidence indicates mindfulness is associated with reductions in anger and aggression outcomes, though effect sizes vary by design quality and comparison conditions (O'Dean et al., 2025).

Level 2: Interpersonal (Ethical communication / Right Speech competencies)

At the next level, T-MSH translates Right Speech into practical skills such as reflective listening, nonviolent language, clarification, and making amends. The Truth–Benefit–Kindness–Timeliness checklist serves as a straightforward guide to maintain respectful conversations, even during disagreements. Organizational studies show mindfulness supports more constructive conflict styles by helping individuals manage their emotions (Kay & Skarlicki, 2020).

Level 3: Group (Dialogue and conflict transformation)

T-MSH extends to group settings through dialogue circles, interest-based negotiation, and restorative conferences when harm occurs. These methods transform personal insight into collective healing by addressing needs, impacts, and commitments, which are essential elements of restorative justice (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2020; Zehr, 2002).

Level 4: Institutional and digital ecology (Norms, infrastructure, accountability)

T-MSH relies on robust infrastructure, including clear training standards for facilitators and teachers, safe reporting mechanisms, anti-harassment policies, and measurable indicators such as trust, resolution speed, and recurrence of conflicts. In Thailand, temple–

community partnerships are particularly effective, as Buddhist institutions can act as trusted centers for reconciliation and social innovation (Bunthavee, 2020; Saithong et al., 2025)
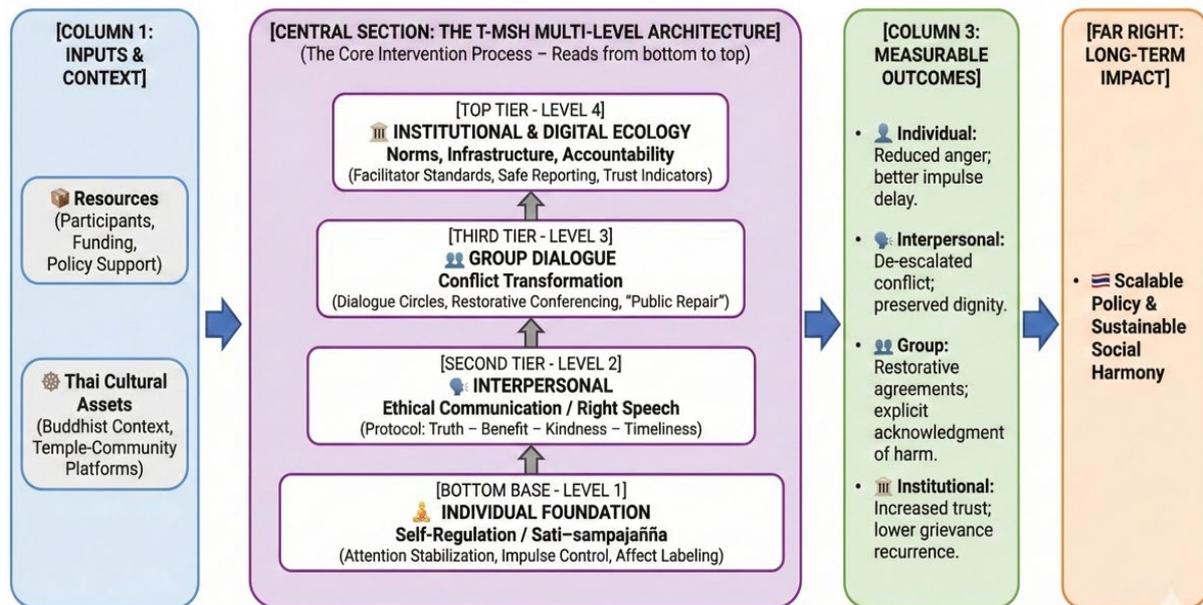

Figure 1: Simplified T-MSH Logic & Architecture Model

Figure 1. Simplified Logic Model of the T MSH (Thai Mindfulness for Social Harmony) Framework. Contextual inputs feed into a four-level architecture in which individual self-regulation skills (Level 1) support interpersonal ethical communication (Level 2), enabling group dialogue and conflict transformation processes (Level 3), and finally strengthening institutional and digital norms and accountability (Level 4). The framework is intended to generate measurable intermediate outcomes at each level and to guide staged piloting and evaluation; mechanisms for each level are detailed in the text (Model architecture).

IMPLEMENTATION, SCALING, AND QUALITY ASSURANCE.

To implement the T-MSH model, a robust delivery system is required, featuring strong governance, tailored program packages for each setting, and clear standards for training and safety. Global experience shows that successful scaling depends on dependable infrastructure, including shared skills, supervision, referral systems, and ongoing monitoring to protect participants and ensure quality. (Dandurand, Vogt & Lee, 2020)

1. Governance and delivery ecosystem

A scalable Thai policy should adopt a hub-and-network governance architecture that balances national quality assurance with local adaptability. This structure anchors the

program in shared standards while allowing implementation partners to tailor delivery to the social, cultural, and institutional realities of different settings. In practice, the system operates through three mutually reinforcing layers: a national standards hub, regional training hubs, and local delivery nodes.

At the core, a national standards hub (stewardship + integrity) sets the minimum curriculum requirements integrating sati sampajañña, Right Speech, and restorative pathways alongside an ethics code, safeguarding protocols, and a standardized evaluation toolkit. This national layer is designed to prevent "thin mindfulness" drift by requiring explicit ethical foundations consistent with Buddhist right mindfulness, understood as mindfulness embedded in view, intention, and non-harm rather than a value-neutral attention technique (Purser & Milillo, 2015). Surrounding this hub, regional training hubs (capacity + accreditation), based in universities and Buddhist colleges, build implementation capacity by certifying facilitators, providing structured supervision, and conducting periodic outcome audits. They also support culturally acceptable, pluralism-sensitive framing, which is particularly important when mindfulness is delivered across diverse religious and secular environments (Palitsky & Kaplan, 2021). Finally, local delivery nodes (access + trust), including temples, schools, primary care units, workplaces, and local administrative bodies, implement standardized modules with common reporting and referral pathways, ensuring accessibility while maintaining fidelity. In the Thai context, available evidence suggests that temples can function as credible civic institutions in justice-adjacent roles, reinforcing their feasibility as community anchors for dialogue and relational repair (Saithong et al., 2025).

This ecosystem should be governed by a cross-sector steering group (education, health, justice, digital safety, and Buddhist institutions) to ensure mindfulness is framed as a capacity builder for dialogue and repair, not a substitute for fairness, legal protection, or institutional accountability (Dandurand, Vogt & Lee, 2020).

2. Program packages by setting

(A) Temples and communities: "Wat-Based Mindful Dialogue Centers"

Temples can serve as active centers for weekly meditation and dialogue circles, providing community mediation and restorative options as needed. Integrating these activities with intergenerational volunteering strengthens social support networks and helps reduce

isolation and distrust that contribute to conflict (Kay & Skarlicki, 2020; Dandurand, Vogt & Lee, 2020).

(B) Schools: "Mindful Speech and Relationship Curriculum"

Schools can implement a straightforward, frequent approach: 5–10 minutes of daily mindfulness combined with monthly restorative circles to foster a positive classroom climate and address peer conflict. Two key safeguards support this approach:

1) Teacher development: large-scale education initiatives show that mindfulness components fail when teachers lack conceptual clarity and support for staged implementation (Equitable Education Fund [EEF], 2023).

2) Developmental tailoring: evidence syntheses emphasize adapting doses, methods, and outcomes to child/adolescent developmental stages (attention span, emotion vocabulary, peer dynamics) (Porter et al., 2022). Where schools adopt restorative practices, systematic reviews report improvements in school climate and reductions in aggression/bullying indicators compared with purely punitive approaches—supporting the integration of mindfulness with structured repair.

3) Workplaces: "Conflict-Positive Mindfulness & Mediation"

Workplace programs should integrate mindfulness into HR conflict systems by providing mindfulness, cognitive reappraisal, and safe communication training for managers, along with access to skilled mediators. Research indicates mindfulness promotes collaboration over avoidance, supporting its combination with practical conflict-resolution skills (Saithong et al., 2025)

4) Digital communities: "Mindful Online Civility Protocol" Digital programs should emphasize practical steps, such as pausing before posting, using moderation scripts to encourage respectful speech, and providing restorative options to address harm without shaming. As online polarization and hate speech increase, these teachable and measurable protocols are essential for preventing and resolving digital conflict (UN Women, 2023).

3. Training standards and minimum viable competency

A credible national model requires a tiered competency standard, supervised practice, and periodic recertification. At a minimum, facilitators/teachers should demonstrate:

1) Meditation pedagogy: grounded in satipaṭṭhāna-informed guidance and ethical right mindfulness (not attention-only performance enhancement (Purser & Milillo, 2015)

2) Ethics and safeguarding: consent, non-coercion, boundaries, referral protocols, and trauma sensitivity, consistent with international good practice in restorative and dialogue-based interventions (Dandurand, Vogt & Lee, 2020).

3) Dialogue facilitation and mediation fundamentals: de-escalation, structured turn-taking, interest-based inquiry, and repair agreements (Dandurand, Vogt & Lee, 2020).

4) Cultural and religious competence: ability to use Buddhist framing appropriately while respecting pluralism and avoiding sectarian pressure, an implementation-relevant factor in mindfulness acceptability (Palitsky & Kaplan, 2021).

5) Monitoring literacy: fidelity checklists, basic outcome tracking (e.g., trust, recurrence, grievance resolution time), and reflective learning cycles for continuous improvement (Dandurand, Vogt & Lee, 2020).

ETHICAL AND CULTURAL SAFEGUARDS

Thailand's Buddhist legitimacy is a significant implementation advantage, yet a national mindfulness-for-harmony policy must be designed to avoid coercion, sectarian framing, and preventable harms. Ethical and cultural safeguards should therefore be treated as core program requirements, not optional "ethical add-ons," because they directly shape public trust, equitable access, and the integrity of outcomes across schools, workplaces, healthcare, and community settings. In practice, the safeguards below operationalize constitutional neutrality and pluralism sensitivity while protecting participants and preserving the ethical intent of the intervention.

First, participation must be voluntary and supported by ongoing informed consent. Delivery in schools, workplaces, and justice-adjacent settings is particularly vulnerable to implicit pressure; therefore, participants should have explicit rights to decline or withdraw at any time without penalty. Consistent with restorative-program guidance, voluntariness and continuing consent function as baseline conditions for legitimacy and safety, rather than procedural formalities.

Second, implementation should adopt pluralistic framing with transparent language options. Programs should offer parallel framings, Buddhist (e.g., Right Mindfulness/Right

Speech) and secular (e.g., attention regulation, ethical communication, conflict de-escalation), so participants can choose without stigma. Implementation research indicates that religious or spiritual associations can influence acceptability if left unaddressed, while forcing a rigid "religious versus secular" dichotomy can also undermine delivery by making the program appear either covertly religious or culturally dismissive. A transparent, choice-based framing reduces these risks and improves inclusivity.

Third, the policy should mandate trauma-informed pathways and risk management. Practical safeguards include alternatives to eyes-closed practices, grounding options (e.g., eyes-open attention, movement-based regulation, external anchors), and appropriate screening and referral protocols when indicated. Evidence suggests meditation-related adverse effects can occur, and reviews recommend setting clear expectations, monitoring responses over time, and providing additional support especially for participants with trauma histories or mental health vulnerabilities.

Fourth, safeguards must address non-instrumentalization and justice-compatibility. Mindfulness should never be used to silence grievances, normalize inequity, or protect abusive hierarchies. Buddhist-informed critiques caution that "thin mindfulness" can become an individualizing tool, shifting responsibility onto individuals, unless it is explicitly anchored in ethical commitments, accountability mechanisms, and pathways for addressing harm. For a harmony-oriented public policy, the program must therefore be compatible with justice: it should build capacities for respectful speech and emotional regulation while preserving legitimate dissent and channels for repair.

Finally, the system requires quality control to prevent "certificate inflation" and program dilution. This entails competency-based training, structured supervision, and periodic recertification, with fidelity and competence assessed using established integrity tools (e.g., MBI: TAC), which emphasize adherence, differentiation, and facilitator competence. These quality mechanisms protect against superficial delivery and help ensure that outcomes, positive or negative, can be interpreted credibly.

In conclusion, these safeguards provide a culturally grounded yet pluralism-respecting implementation envelope: they protect participants, preserve ethical coherence, and ensure that a mindfulness-for-harmony policy remains compatible with constitutional neutrality in diverse Thai public settings.

CONCLUSION

Mindfulness meditation can contribute significantly to conflict resolution and social harmony in Thailand when developed as a Buddhist-informed, ethically grounded public resource rather than a private wellness trend. Research links mindfulness to improved conflict management and reduced anger, while emphasizing the need for context-sensitive and ethically robust approaches. In Thailand, where mindfulness is practiced in diverse settings, temple–school–community networks provide a practical foundation. The T-MSH model applies Buddhist social ethics, Right Speech, the brahmavihāra, and principles of concord through testable programs and restorative processes across society, including the digital realm. With strong governance, safeguards, and evaluation, the T-MSH model can be piloted as public policy to promote lasting social cohesion, enabling disagreement without hatred, repair without shame, and a community built on dignity and care.

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