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Application Development for Learning the Process of Buddhist Monk Ordination of Theravada Sect

Phrakhrusuphattharasilasophon[1], Samran Srikammul[2], Montri Lodgaew[3], Winyoo Thaothawong[4], Phrakhruwimonpariyatthiwat[5], Varinporn Funfuengfu[6]

[1]Mahamakut Buddhist University, Mahavajiralongkorn Rajavidyalaya Campus, Thailand
[2]Mahamakut Buddhist University, Mahavajiralongkorn Rajavidyalaya Campus, Thailand
[3]Mahamakut Buddhist University, Mahavajiralongkorn Rajavidyalaya Campus, Thailand
[4]Independent Scholar, Thailand
[5]Mahavajiralongkorn Buddhist College, Thailand
[6]Lopburi College of Dramatic Arts, Bunditpatanasilpa Institute, Thailand
Corresponding Author's E-mail: wongsurin2520@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to: (1) investigate the problems and needs related to ordination as a Buddhist monk in Theravada Buddhism; (2) develop and evaluate a learning application on the process of Buddhist monk ordination in Theravada Buddhism; and (3) evaluate users' satisfaction with the application. The study was conducted in three phases. In Phase 1, problems and needs concerning ordination were examined. The sample consisted of 75 monks and novices residing in 23 temples and 2 monastic residences (25 sites in total) in the Dhammayuttika Nikaya area of Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. A questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.84 was used, and the data were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation. In Phase 2, the learning application was developed and evaluated for appropriateness using an evaluation form with Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) values ranging from 0.60 to 1.00. The data were analyzed using the mean and standard deviation. In Phase 3, the effectiveness of the application was examined by comparing pretest and posttest scores. The sample comprised 25 monks and novices from three temples in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province—Wat Chujit Dhammaram, Wat Niwet Thammaprawat, and Wat Ban Ram—selected through purposive sampling. The learning achievement test had IOC values ranging from 0.60 to 1.00, difficulty indices (p) ranging from 0.23 to 0.73, discrimination indices (r) ranging from 0.38 to 0.78, and a reliability coefficient of 0.93. The data were analyzed using a dependent-samples t-test. Satisfaction was measured using an evaluation questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.89 and analyzed using the mean and standard deviation. The findings revealed that: (1) overall problems and needs concerning ordination in Theravada Buddhism were at a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.72, S.D. = 0.46). All aspects were rated at a high level: pre-ordination preparation ranked highest ($\bar{x}$ = 3.97, S.D. = 0.73), followed by basic information ($\bar{x}$ = 3.71, S.D. = 0.65), ordination-related problems ($\bar{x}$ = 3.68, S.D. = 0.47), and preparation formats ($\bar{x}$ = 3.54, S.D. = 0.63); (2) the application was evaluated as highly appropriate ($\bar{x}$ = 4.46, S.D. = 0.28); and (3) posttest scores were significantly higher than pretest scores at the .05 level, while overall user satisfaction was high ($\bar{x}$ = 4.50, S.D. = 0.50).

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1. Introduction

Buddhism is one of the most important institutions contributing to social well-being. It plays a role in shaping the minds and behavior of Thai people and helps address social problems. Thai people have long been closely involved in Buddhist activities, and the majority of the population identifies with Buddhism. Temples therefore hold a significant place in Thai society and serve as visible symbols of the faith. Buddhism has been closely intertwined with Thai history and culture since ancient times. Many important stages of life and social activities have traditionally involved Buddhist practices, including novice ordination (pabbajja), full ordination (upasampada), and learning from monks. Buddhism has consequently become an important social framework that influences traditions, culture, and everyday life. It is a valuable heritage that should be preserved (Chiradet Orachun, 2004).

Ordination is a long-standing Thai tradition and reflects the close relationship between Buddhism and Thai ways of life. Traditionally, men from different social backgrounds, from members of the royal family to ordinary citizens, have entered the monkhood.

Ordination has several meanings and purposes: preserving and continuing Buddhism, expressing gratitude to one's parents, maintaining Thai cultural heritage, and developing oneself spiritually (Somdet Phra Buddhaghosacariya [P. A. Payutto], 2016). This is consistent with the study by Phra Khru Prasutbodhikhun (Suwannalong) et al. (2020), which explains that ordination is a means of sustaining Buddhism and has been practiced from the time of the Buddha to the present. Without an ordained Sangha, monastic duties prescribed by the Buddha could not be performed, and rituals associated with the Sangha might disappear. Ordination also gives individuals an opportunity to become closer to Buddhism and study the Dhamma and Vinaya taught by the Buddha. Even after leaving the monkhood, former monks may remain connected to the monastic community and support the religion when appropriate. Their relatives and friends may also gain opportunities to visit temples, listen to Dhamma teachings, and participate in Buddhist activities.

Ordination is a procedure authorized or prescribed by the Buddha to guide the consideration of individuals who wish to become members of the monastic community as monks or nuns. The qualifications of the presiding monk and the Sangha assembly are specified. No individual monk may grant ordination arbitrarily or decide the matter alone. The presiding monk and the assembly must carefully consider the candidate and reach a unanimous decision. This process is intended to ensure that those admitted to the Sangha possess faith, sincere commitment, and all required qualifications (Udomsri, n.d.). In Thai tradition, men are commonly expected to be at least 20 years old before full ordination, as they are considered legally mature and better able to understand the value of ordination, exercise patience, and undertake religious training. Such training may help them overcome defilements, which are regarded as causes of suffering (Katangchol et al., 2023)

Before the Buddhist Lent, men who have reached the customary age for ordination may enter the monkhood to study the Dhamma and Vinaya. Some take leave from their employment to ordain, although they may not be able to remain monks for the full three months. Even when the period of ordination is short, it is valuable to have the opportunity to become ordained. However, limited time may make it difficult for new monks to know what and where to study. Some temples may not provide sufficient training, allowing time to pass without purposeful learning. One way to address this issue is to provide books and other learning materials for study (Wannapok, 2006).

Full ordination as a Buddhist monk in Theravada Buddhism is significant in both religious and Thai cultural terms. It marks the beginning of a new life for an individual who wishes to renounce worldly concerns, train the mind, and study Buddhist teachings seriously in pursuit of liberation from suffering. This requires accurate and appropriate understanding. Ordination generally follows clearly defined stages and important rituals. These procedures may nevertheless be complicated for people who wish to participate in the ceremony or study the process in detail. It is therefore important to make accurate and comprehensive information about each stage readily accessible.

Digital technology now plays an important role in education and learning across many fields, including science, communication, business, transportation, and religion. Applying technology to religious learning and rituals can make information easier and more convenient to access. In Thai society, where Buddhism has considerable importance, understanding the stages of monk ordination is relevant not only to religious education but also to preserving and continuing Buddhist traditions and culture. Applications can provide effective and accessible learning experiences, particularly for younger generations who are familiar with digital devices. Such an application can help users learn the ordination process while also preserving and disseminating Buddhist knowledge in the digital age.

The researchers therefore undertook this study to develop an application that would enable users to learn and understand the process of Buddhist monk ordination in Theravada Buddhism in a convenient and accessible format. The application presents information on preparation before ordination and the ordination ceremony itself. It uses technology to promote accessible learning and encourage younger generations to understand and continue the ordination tradition, which is important for the sustainable preservation of religion and culture in Thai society. Sitthinanthawat (2017) observes that, although ordination is commonly understood in Thai tradition as a way to repay one's parents, from a Buddhist perspective this is not its primary purpose. Unless individuals train and improve themselves, they cannot truly repay their parents' kindness. The primary purpose of ordination should therefore be to correct one's own unwholesome habits. The application is intended to help users understand this purpose and learn the process accurately and comprehensively, while serving as a channel for preserving and disseminating knowledge of Buddhist traditions and rituals.

2. Research Objectives

To investigate the problems and needs related to ordination as a Buddhist monk in Theravada Buddhism.

To develop and evaluate a learning application on the process of Buddhist monk ordination in Theravada Buddhism.

To assess users' satisfaction with the learning application on the process of Buddhist monk ordination in Theravada Buddhism.

3. Research Hypotheses

The learning application on the process of Buddhist monk ordination in Theravada Buddhism is of a high level of effectiveness.

Learning achievement scores after using the application are higher than scores before using the application.

Users' satisfaction with the learning application on the process of Buddhist monk ordination in Theravada Buddhism is at a high level.

4. Research Conceptual Framework

The researchers established an input–process–output framework for developing the learning application.

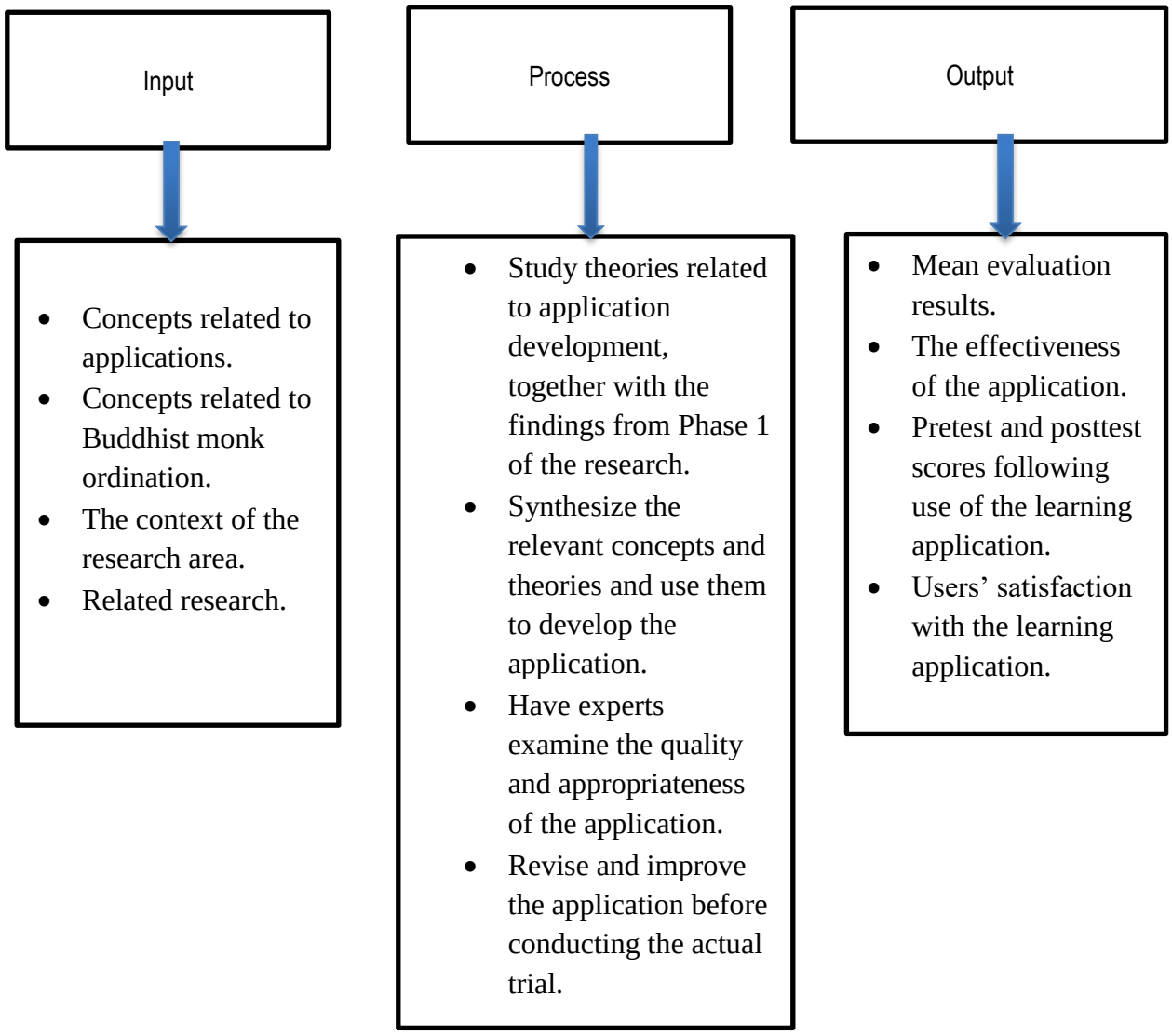


Figure 1. Research Conceptual Framework

5. Research Methodology

Phase 1: Investigation of Problems and Needs Related to Theravada Buddhist Ordination

5.1 Population and Sample

The population consisted of monks and novices residing in 23 temples and 2 monastic residences, a total of 25 sites in the Dhammayuttika Nikaya area of Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province. The population comprised 224 monks and 254 novices, totaling 478 individuals (Office of the Ecclesiastical Provincial Governor of Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Dhammayuttika Nikaya, 2024).

The sample consisted of 75 monks and novices from the same 25 sites. Purposive sampling was used, with three participants selected from each temple or monastic residence to facilitate data collection and obtain information relevant to the research context.

5.2 Research Instrument

The research instrument was a 20-item questionnaire using a five-point rating scale. Its reliability coefficient was 0.84.

5.3 Data Collection

The researchers submitted the research proposal and research instruments to the Human Research Ethics Committee to obtain ethical approval before collecting data.

The researchers requested an official letter from Mahamakut Buddhist University, Mahavajiralongkorn Rajavidyalaya Campus, seeking cooperation and permission to distribute questionnaires to the sample.

5.4 Data Analysis and Statistics

The descriptive statistics used were the mean and standard deviation.

Phase 2: Development of the Learning Application

After identifying learning needs concerning the process of Buddhist monk ordination in Theravada Buddhism in Phase 1, the researchers developed the application as follows.

5.5 Research Instruments

A learning application on the process of Buddhist monk ordination in Theravada Buddhism.

An application appropriateness evaluation form. The quality of the instrument was examined using an IOC criterion of 0.60 or higher.

A learning achievement test consisting of 26 multiple-choice items, each with four options. The difficulty indices (p) ranged from 0.23 to 0.73, the discrimination indices (r) ranged from 0.38 to 0.78, and the reliability coefficient was 0.93.

5.6 Data Collection

The researchers requested an official letter from Mahamakut Buddhist University, Mahavajiralongkorn Rajavidyalaya Campus, to invite experts to evaluate the appropriateness of the instruments developed.

The researchers requested an official letter from the University to the abbots to obtain permission to conduct a trial of the research instruments.

The data were collected, and the resulting scores were analyzed statistically.

5.7 Data Analysis and Statistics

The descriptive statistics used were the mean and standard deviation.

Phase 3: Trial and Evaluation of Pretest and Posttest Scores and User Satisfaction

This phase was divided into two parts.

Part 1: Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Scores

The population consisted of 307 monks and novices residing in three temples in the Dhammayuttika Nikaya area of Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province: Wat Chujit Dhammaram, Wat Niwet Thammaprawat, and Wat Ban Ram. This population comprised 60 monks and 247 novices. The sample consisted of 25 monks and novices from these three temples, selected through purposive sampling to facilitate data collection and obtain information appropriate to the research context.

The research instrument was a learning achievement test. The study used a one-group pretest–posttest experimental design. A dependent-samples t-test was used to examine differences between learning achievement before and after using the application.

Part 2: Satisfaction with the Learning Application

The population and sample were the same as those described in Part 1: 307 monks and novices in the three temples, with 25 participants selected through purposive sampling. The research instrument was a satisfaction evaluation form with a reliability coefficient of 0.89. The researchers requested permission from the abbots through an official letter from Mahamakut Buddhist University, collected the

data, and analyzed the scores using the mean and standard deviation.

6. Research Findings

6.1 Problems and Needs Related to Theravada Buddhist Ordination

Overall, problems and needs concerning ordination were at a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.72, S.D. = 0.46). Every aspect was rated at a high level. In descending order of mean scores, the aspects were preparation before ordination ($\bar{x}$ = 3.97, S.D. = 0.73), basic information ($\bar{x}$ = 3.71, S.D. = 0.65), problems related to ordination ($\bar{x}$ = 3.68, S.D. = 0.47), and formats for preparation before ordination ($\bar{x}$ = 3.54, S.D. = 0.63).

For preparation before ordination, the overall result was high ($\bar{x}$ = 3.97, S.D. = 0.73). All items were rated high. The highest-rated item was that candidates should memorize the ordination request before being ordained ($\bar{x}$ = 4.21, S.D. = 0.81), followed by the need for candidates to understand the ordination procedures ($\bar{x}$ = 3.97, S.D. = 0.83). The lowest-rated item concerned knowledge and understanding of the items required for ordination ($\bar{x}$ = 3.82, S.D. = 0.86).

For basic information, the overall result was high ($\bar{x}$ = 3.71, S.D. = 0.65). The highest-rated item was that preparation before ordination is very important for learners ($\bar{x}$ = 4.22, S.D. = 0.84). This was followed by the finding that candidates lacked confidence in reciting the ordination request ($\bar{x}$ = 3.68, S.D. = 0.79). The lowest-rated item indicated that most candidates lacked knowledge and understanding of the details of ordination ($\bar{x}$ = 3.56, S.D. = 0.94).

Problems related to ordination were at a high level overall ($\bar{x}$ = 3.68, S.D. = 0.47). The highest-rated item was receiving support from parents and relatives ($\bar{x}$ = 4.26, S.D. = 0.64), followed by receiving consent for ordination ($\bar{x}$ = 4.09, S.D. = 0.73). The lowest-rated item concerned candidates' knowledge of the process of Buddhist monk ordination ($\bar{x}$ = 3.14, S.D. = 0.58).

Regarding preparation formats, the overall result was high ($\bar{x}$ = 3.54, S.D. = 0.63). Learning through online channels such as YouTube, Facebook, and other platforms received the highest mean ($\bar{x}$ = 3.65, S.D. = 0.87), followed by learning through applications ($\bar{x}$ = 3.64, S.D. = 0.92). Learning through lectures received the lowest mean ($\bar{x}$ = 3.42, S.D. = 0.64).

6.2 Development and Evaluation of the Learning Application

The experts' overall evaluation of the appropriateness of the learning application was high ($\bar{x}$ = 4.46, S.D. = 0.28). By individual expert, Expert 1 rated it high ($\bar{x}$ = 4.43, S.D. = 0.50); Expert 2 rated it at the highest level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.60, S.D. = 0.65); Expert 3 rated it at the highest level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.69, S.D. = 0.47); Expert 4 rated it high ($\bar{x}$ = 3.86, S.D. = 0.62); and Expert 5 rated it at the highest level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.73, S.D. = 0.44).

6.3 Pretest–Posttest Results and Satisfaction

Table 1. The pretest and posttest scores

Scores	N	Mean	S.D.	df	t / Sig.
Pretest	25	17.16	4.73	24	
Posttest	25	21.68	2.64	24	6.36* / 0.000

* Statistically significant at the .05 level.

The mean pretest score was 17.16 (S.D. = 4.73), while the mean posttest score was 21.68 (S.D. = 2.64). The comparison showed that posttest scores were significantly higher than pretest scores at the .05 level.

Overall satisfaction with the application was high ($\bar{x}$ = 4.50, S.D. = 0.50). By aspect, satisfaction with quality was at the highest level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.56, S.D. = 0.51). Four quality items were rated at the highest level, while the remaining items were rated high. The highest-rated item was that the test was appropriate and consistent with the content ($\bar{x}$ = 4.72, S.D. = 0.61), followed by the clarity of the audio accompanying the content ($\bar{x}$ = 4.68, S.D. = 0.62). Font size was also considered appropriate, readable, and interesting. The lowest-rated item concerned the suitability and clarity of the text and background colors ($\bar{x}$ = 4.44, S.D. = 0.58).

Satisfaction with usefulness was high overall ($\bar{x}$ = 4.49, S.D. = 0.58). Two items were rated at the highest level, while the others were rated high. The highest-rated finding was that the learning content could be applied in practice and that the application was a good learning resource ($\bar{x}$ = 4.64, S.D. = 0.56). This was followed by the ability to learn anywhere and at any time according to the learner's interests ($\bar{x}$ = 4.60, S.D. = 0.70), as well as the completeness of the content. The lowest-rated item concerned whether learning was enjoyable and not boring ($\bar{x}$ = 4.32, S.D. = 0.74).

Satisfaction with usability was high overall ($\bar{x}$ = 4.46, S.D. = 0.52). Two items were rated at the highest level. The highest-rated item was that the application was easy to use ($\bar{x}$ = 4.60, S.D. = 0.57), followed by the appropriate placement of images, content, and audio ($\bar{x}$ = 4.52, S.D. = 0.65). The lowest-rated item concerned the placement of buttons within the application ($\bar{x}$ = 4.36, S.D. = 0.70).

7. Discussion

7.1 Problems and Needs Related to Ordination

The overall level of problems and needs related to Theravada Buddhist ordination was high. Preparation before ordination had the highest mean, followed by basic information, ordination-related problems, and preparation formats. The findings on preparation indicate that religious leaders—including abbots, assistant abbots, heads of monastic residences, monks within temples, and novices—consider preparation before ordination highly important. This shared view places emphasis on the quality of those entering the monkhood rather than ordination merely as a customary practice. These individuals have direct experience with ordination and are responsible for screening, supervising, and training candidates. They therefore recognize that preparation is essential to ensuring that ordination follows Theravada principles and reducing problems during and after the ceremony.

Mental preparation was also emphasized. Oyelere (2018) and Channuwong et al. (2022) suggested that candidates should develop faith, confidence, and devotion to the Triple Gem, which form an important foundation for entering monastic life. Firm faith can encourage sincere commitment to the study and practice of the Dhamma and help a monk lead a meaningful monastic life. Knowledge and practical skills are also necessary, particularly the ability to memorize and recite the ordination request accurately and fluently, as well as understanding the stages of the ceremony. Candidates should understand basic teachings, including the contemplation of the five parts of the body (tacapañcaka-kammaṭṭhāna), the Ten Precepts for novices, and the 227 rules of discipline for monks. They should also know the requisites and other items required for the ordination ceremony.

These findings are consistent with Phra Khru Prasutbodhikhun (Suwannalong) et al. (2020), who reported that in the past a candidate for ordination (upasampadāpekkha or nāga) would prepare for approximately one to two months by staying at the temple, studying the traditional chants, and memorizing the ordination request. Today, however, candidates often have less time because of work and other responsibilities. Preparation must therefore be adapted to contemporary social conditions, including work schedules, particularly in the private sector. The discussion also accords with Phra Phromkhunaphon (P. A. Payutto) (2003) and Channuwong et al. (2018), who notes that candidates for novice or full ordination should first study basic morality and monastic discipline. This includes the Five Precepts for laypeople, the Ten Precepts for novices, the 227 rules for monks, basic temple practices, daily monastic routines, and important ritual chants.

The findings on basic information show that candidates recognize the importance of preparing in advance so that ordination can proceed correctly and smoothly. Nevertheless, some candidates lack confidence in memorizing the ordination request and pronouncing Pali accurately. This may cause anxiety when they must perform the recitation during the actual ceremony. The lowest mean concerned candidates' knowledge and understanding of ordination details, suggesting gaps in their understanding of the meaning of the ceremony, its procedures, and the roles involved. Limited preparation time may be one reason.

The findings on ordination-related problems indicate that family support is especially important. Ordination in Thai society is not solely an individual matter; it is also connected with family relationships and social values. Approval and support from parents and relatives can therefore influence a candidate's decision and readiness. Consent to ordination is also important from both disciplinary and cultural perspectives, particularly for individuals who remain under family care. Financial preparation is another relevant consideration because ordination may involve ceremonial expenses, requisites, and customary events. At the same time, some candidates continue to lack sufficient knowledge of the sequence, practices, and meanings of the ordination ceremony. These findings suggest a need for systematic education, preparatory training, and accessible learning resources so that ordination can be conducted in accordance with the Dhamma and Vinaya.

Regarding preparation formats, candidates showed a preference for diverse approaches suited to contemporary society. Online media such as YouTube and Facebook received the highest rating because they are convenient, accessible at any time, and often combine visual and audio materials. Applications were the next most preferred format. They can provide focused content, such as memorization of the ordination request, Pali pronunciation, and ceremonial procedures, allowing learners to practice systematically and continuously. Learning activities involving participation and practical exercises—such as simulations, recitation practice, and group learning—can also build understanding and confidence. Training sessions, documents, and lectures received comparatively lower ratings, possibly because they may be less flexible, less varied, or less consistent with the digital and interactive learning preferences of younger generations. The findings therefore support combining digital technology with practical learning activities to improve preparation for ordination.

7.2 Development of the Learning Application

The appropriateness of the application was evaluated by five experts and received a high overall rating. This indicates that its content, structure, and presentation were consistent with the principles of ordination and that it could be used effectively as a learning medium in the relevant context. Experts 1 and 4 gave high ratings, suggesting that some aspects might still be improved. Experts 2, 3, and 5 gave ratings at the highest level, reflecting confidence in the accuracy of the content, the appropriateness of the sequence of procedures, and ease of use. The results indicate that the application is suitable for helping candidates prepare for ordination and understand the process.

This finding is consistent with Nuchprayoon and Phunwan (2022), whose study of a participatory Buddhist tourism mobile application found that five experts rated the application's overall efficiency at the highest level. It is also consistent with Rawengwan (2021), who reported a high overall evaluation of a smartphone application designed to support vocabulary learning in three languages for young children. In addition, it accords with Anto et al. (2018), who developed "SUKPRA," a web application for monks' self-care on a Linux system. Their evaluation found the overall application performance and system completeness to be at a very good level.

7.3 Effects of the Application and User Satisfaction

The posttest scores were significantly higher than the pretest scores at the .05 level. This indicates that the learning management approach or learning medium used in the study was effective in improving learners' knowledge and understanding. The application provides opportunities to access content, review material, and learn independently. The result is consistent with the study by Elaish et al. (2019), which examined a mobile game application for promoting English vocabulary learning and found that mobile applications could enhance learning motivation and support improved learning outcomes. The present findings therefore support the use of mobile applications as learning media to increase access to content, encourage self-directed learning, and develop learners' knowledge and understanding.

Overall satisfaction with the application was high, indicating that most users had positive views and generally shared similar opinions. The evaluation suggests that the application performed well in terms of content, usefulness, and practical usability, and that it responded effectively to learners' needs. This is consistent with the concept described by Changyuenyong (2020), who explains that applications are programs designed to operate on tablets or mobile phones using Android and iOS, facilitating users' activities and meeting their needs in areas such as business communication and education. It is also consistent with Thongpha (2021) and Mano (2020) whose study of factors affecting continued intention to use mobile network applications found that application quality had the strongest effect on satisfaction, followed by perceived usefulness, confirmation of user expectations, perceived ease of use, and perceived enjoyment. Satisfaction, in turn, had the strongest effect on continued intention to use the application.

8. Recommendations

8.1 Policy Recommendations

Organizations and educational institutions involved in Buddhist education should establish policies to promote and support the development and application of digital learning tools for the process of Buddhist monk ordination. Applications should be designed to support a range of devices, such as smartphones and tablets, and different operating systems. This would enable learners to access educational content more widely, reduce technological barriers, and promote equality in access to digital learning resources.

Relevant organizations should establish guidelines to encourage the use of the application as a learning resource accessible anywhere and at any time. Learners should be encouraged to use it regularly and continuously, with an emphasis on reviewing content and studying the stages in sequence. This would strengthen knowledge, understanding, and the ability to apply information about pre-ordination preparation accurately and appropriately in real situations.

8.2 Recommendations for Further Research

The findings on learning needs concerning the process of Buddhist monk ordination in Theravada Buddhism should be used as a basis for further studies. Future research should examine factors affecting learning effectiveness, the design of learning media and activities, and the development of learning models or approaches that correspond to learners' contexts and needs, with the aim of producing knowledge that can be applied in actual educational settings. The scope of research should be expanded to include the development of a learning application for the process of Buddhist monk ordination in the Maha Nikaya tradition. Such a study could compare similarities and differences in content, ordination procedures, learning formats, and learner needs between the Theravada context examined in this study and the Maha Nikaya tradition. This could support the development of accurate and appropriate learning media suited to each tradition.

Further studies should compare the effectiveness of different media and learning formats for studying Buddhist monk ordination, such as mobile applications, computer-assisted instruction (CAI), interactive multimedia, and online learning platforms. Outcomes should include learning achievement, knowledge and understanding, satisfaction, and the ability to apply knowledge, in order to identify effective learning media suited to different learner groups.

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