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MINDFULNESS, MONKS, AND MEALS: BUDDHIST ETHICS AND COMMUNITY-BASED FOOD WASTE MANAGEMENT IN URBAN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how religion (e.g., Buddhism) campaign and empowerment on Thailand people to food waste management, including teach local people on urban farming. A qualitative and thematic approach were applied to validate research questions and the current phenomenon. A total of 10 participants joined during the study. The mindfulness Buddhism principle has a crucial role in shaping people attitudes on food waste management including the environmental impact of food choices. Local temples and monks play a crucial role in promoting ethical consumption, reinforcing the connection between mindful practices, spiritual well-being, and sustainable living. In addition, Buddhist temples are vital in promoting mindfulness and sustainable practices regarding food consumption and waste management. Buddhism temples can foster sustainable lifestyles through partnerships and educational campaigns that raise awareness about reducing food waste and making ethical choices. It provides practical strategies like meal planning and composting. Meanwhile, Buddhist temples can utilize moral authority to encourage mindfulness and ethical consumption, integrating teachings on compassion and interconnectedness into outreach programs. The collaboration between government and Buddhist temples fosters a culture of mindfulness and sustainability, enhancing community cohesion. These initiatives encourage collective responsibility, leading to positive social change towards promoting ethical consumption and waste reduction. This holistic approach strengthens community ties while addressing environmental challenges, ultimately benefiting both individuals and the planet.

KEYWORDS: Buddhist Temples, Food Wastes, Culture, Mindfulness And Ethical Consumption.

1. INTRODUCTION

Food waste is a significant global issue, with approximately one-third of all food produced for human consumption around 1.3 billion tons lost or wasted each year (Farahdiba et al., 2023; Shen et al., 2022). This staggering amount contributes to severe food insecurity for nearly 1 billion people worldwide, highlighting a critical disconnect between food production and distribution. The implications of food waste extend beyond hunger; it also has dire environmental consequences, accounting for about 11% of global greenhouse gas emissions and wasting valuable resources like water, energy, and labor (UNCC, 2024). In addition, the water used to produce wasted food could fill the needs of millions facing water scarcity. Efforts to combat food waste are gaining momentum globally (Filimonau et al., 2022; Todd & Faour-Klingbeil, 2024). It is a campaign to encourage prioritizing waste prevention, followed by donation, composting, and disposal. On an individual level, people can help mitigate this issue by planning meals, understanding expiration dates, and participating in community initiatives like food banks and composting programs (Baran et al., 2024; Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2025). However, educational campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the impact of food waste are also crucial in fostering a culture of responsibility. Moreover, religion also has a crucial role to mitigate food waste towards personal social responsibility action and ensuring that resources are used efficiently and ultimately feeding the growing global population while protecting the environment for future generations.

Food waste management is a critical personal social responsibility issue, with significant implications for sustainability and resource conservation towards religion (Biggi et al., 2024; Rasool et al., 2024). Furthermore, some scholars try to validate the role of religion in human behavior and ethics (van Aaken and Buchner, 2020; Warner, 1970), personal social responsibility (PSR) (Davis et al., 2017; Junaidi et al., 2025), and food waste management (Hassan et al., 2022; Jabłońska-Karczmarczyk, 2024; Long et al., 2024). Its reflected in Christian and Islamic teachings, which place a strong emphasis on stewardship and accountability to the natural world. In Islam, the concept of *wast'iyyah* (moderation) encourages believers to avoid excess and waste, aligning with the Quranic principle that states, "Eat and drink, but do not be extravagant" (Quran 7:31). This perspective fosters a sense of communal responsibility, urging Muslims to share resources and support those in need, thereby

addressing food waste. Similarly, Christianity advocates for compassion and care for the less fortunate, as reflected in the teachings of Jesus, who emphasized feeding the hungry and caring for the marginalized (Matthew 25:35-40). Both faiths encourage their followers to engage in practices that minimize waste, such as sharing surplus food with those in need and participating in community services.

Efforts include promoting the food waste hierarchy, which encourages reducing, reusing, and recycling food waste (Kattiyapornpong et al., 2023; Mokjatturas et al., 2025). This action aimed at raising awareness about food waste and its environmental impact is also gaining traction. These initiatives encourage individuals and communities to adopt more sustainable practices, such as meal planning and proper food storage, to minimize waste. Collective action at both individual and community levels is essential for creating a more sustainable food system. Religiosity combined with personal social responsibility (PSR) signals authentic ethicality behind the philanthropic activities and a source of engagement between people (Manzano-Sánchez & Gómez-López, 2023; Rahmawati et al., 2025). Personal social responsibility (PSR) refers to an individual's ethical obligation to contribute positively to society, going beyond their personal interests and obligations (Davis et al., 2020). However, previous quantitative studies have only established positive correlation between religiosity and food waste reduction. For instance, Islamic religious teaching plays an important role to influences Muslim to subjective norm and fall to strengthen the relationship between religiosity and the desire to be anti-food waste in Indonesia (Asyari et al., 2024), whereas religiosity has a significant effect on Muslim pro-environmental intentions including food waste in Iran (Karimi et al., 2022) and Pakistan (Begum et al., 2021). Furthermore, some studies encompass actions like responsible consumption, ethical purchases, volunteer work, and supporting positive social and environmental changes towards mixed religion such as buddhism, Christian and Islam. For instance, Filimonau et al. (2022) found that religious values play an important role influencing personal social responsibility and environmental motives to avoid food waste in Poland, China (Qian et al., 2022) Romania, Italy, and Turkey (Baran et al., 2024). Although, Buddhism teaches people to participate in global issue including environment sustainability towards food waste. Lack of study investigates how Buddhism temples and monks' contribution to food

management.

Monastic institutions often engage in practices that promote conservation, such as organic farming and waste management (Zheng & Liu, 2024). Furthermore, Buddhist principles encourage reducing desires and overindulgence, which can lead to more responsible consumption habits. In urban areas like Bangkok, tech startups are also emerging to tackle food waste, aligning with Buddhist values of compassion and stewardship for the environment. These combined efforts reflect a growing awareness and proactive stance against food waste within Buddhist communities in Thailand. Hence, the outcome of this action needs to be evaluated. Thailand can significantly reduce food waste, contributing to global efforts to combat hunger and environmental challenges towards fostering a personal culture of responsibility and sustainability (Schrank et al., 2023). In Thailand, initiatives like food waste hierarchy in hotels and educational programs aim to address this challenge, reflecting a growing awareness of the need for effective waste management strategies. As with most religions, Buddhism in Thailand addresses food waste through various community initiatives and teachings that emphasize mindfulness and sustainability (Liu et al., 2025; Siriwong et al., 2025). Does Buddhist action promote food waste management? Does Buddhist action enhance Bangkokian behavior?

To answer these questions, this study contributes to providing theoretical and practical contributions towards providing a comprehensive examination of food waste management practices within the context of Thailand, particularly through the lens of Buddhist principles and community initiatives. This study also highlights how Buddhist teachings can inform and inspire effective strategies to reduce food waste towards exploring the intersection of cultural values and environmental sustainability. The result of the study also provides a valuable insight into the role of local communities, including Bangkokians and globally, in addressing food waste through grassroots efforts, educational programs, and innovative solutions. It emphasizes the importance of collective action and personal responsibility in fostering a culture of sustainability. Furthermore, it also contributes to the broader discourse on food waste management by offering practical recommendations for policymakers, encouraging the adoption of mindful consumption practices. It becomes a resource for other regions facing similar challenges, promoting the idea that cultural and ethical considerations can play a pivotal role in environmental stewardship.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Social Identity Theory (SIT) offers a compelling framework for understanding the correlation between religion and food waste management. Developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), SIT posits that individuals derive their identity and self-esteem from group memberships, including religious affiliations. In religious communities, members often identify strongly with their group (in-group) and feel a responsibility to uphold its values. If a religious group emphasizes sustainability and responsible consumption, individuals may adopt these practices to align with their group's identity (Todd & Faour-Klingbeil, 2024; Wenzel & Süßbauer, 2021). This creates a sense of belonging and reinforces positive behaviors, such as minimizing food waste (Irene et al., 2024; Rasool et al., 2024). Moreover, social norms within religious communities significantly influence behavior. A group's members may feel pressured to follow the rules when they all support food conservation because they see waste as going against their ideals. Moreover, SIT highlights collective efficacy, where individuals believe their group can achieve common goals. The religious organizations' members may feel inspired to act towards banding together to address food waste issues. This means that Social Identity Theory illustrates how religious affiliation shapes behaviors related to food waste management through in-group dynamics, normative influences, and a sense of collective efficacy, promoting responsible food consumption practices within communities.

2.2. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

This psychological theory posits that individual behavior is driven by three key components: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Schrank et al., 2023; Singh et al., 2025). It proves that TPB is a suitable theory to explore the correlation between religion and food waste management. In the context of food waste management, religious beliefs can significantly influence these components. Firstly, some religions advocate for stewardship of the Earth and emphasize the ethical treatment of resources (Karimi et al., 2022). For instance, teachings in Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism often highlight the importance of gratitude for food and the moral obligation to avoid waste (Qian et al., 2022; Rahmawati et al., 2025). This can shape positive attitudes toward minimizing food waste. Secondly, subjective norms, which refer to the perceived social pressures to engage in certain

behaviors, can be influenced towards religious community actions. Hence, people may feel more obligated to follow sustainable practices and discourage wastefulness when religious leaders and communities advocate for them, which will reduce food waste (Davis et al., 2020; Filimonau et al., 2022). Lastly, perceived behavioral control is the belief in one's own ability to carry out an activity. Religious teachings frequently offer helpful advice on how to manage waste and consume food, enabling people to make meaningful changes in daily lives (Asyari et al., 2024; Duong et al., 2025). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) effectively illustrates how religious beliefs and community norms can shape attitudes and behaviors related to food waste management. Religion can play a crucial role in promoting sustainable practices and reducing food waste, including personal sense of responsibility and community support.

2.3. Religious Ethical Approach

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and religion, particularly Buddhism, in the context of food waste management, have significant insights into how religious beliefs influence sustainable practices (Liu et al., 2025; Mokjatturas et al., 2025). SIT posits that individuals derive their identity from group memberships, including religious affiliations. The religious communities often foster a strong sense of identity that emphasizes ethical consumption and environmental stewardship. Buddhist teachings advocate for mindfulness and respect for all living beings, which can translate into reduced food waste. The concept of "ahimsa" (non-harm) in Buddhism encourages followers to minimize waste and treat resources with care, aligning with SIT's emphasis on in-group norms that promote sustainable behaviors (Long et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2025). On the other hand, TPB suggests that behavior is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the context of Buddhism, the teachings on compassion and interconnectedness can shape positive attitudes toward food conservation. The individuals perceive strong social norms within their religious community regarding food waste reduction, and they are more likely to engage in sustainable practices (Ajzen, 1991). Furthermore, the emphasis on mindfulness in Buddhist practices enhances perceived behavioral control, empowering individuals to make conscious choices about food consumption and waste. Combining insights from SIT and TPB provides a comprehensive understanding of how religious identity and community norms influence food waste

management. A collective identity centered on sustainability and promoting positive attitudes and norms, religious communities, particularly within Buddhism, can play a crucial role in encouraging responsible food consumption and reducing waste. This integrated approach highlights the potential for religious teachings to drive meaningful change in food waste management practices.

Buddhism influences behavior regarding food management through its core teachings of mindfulness, compassion, and interconnectedness (Liu et al., 2025a; Zhang & Shi, 2024). Central to Buddhist philosophy is the concept of "right intention," which encourages individuals to act with awareness and consideration for the consequences of their actions. This mindfulness fosters a deeper appreciation for food, prompting practitioners to consume only what is necessary and to avoid waste. The principle of "ahimsa," or non-harm, further shapes attitudes toward food management. Buddhists believe that all living beings deserve respect, which extends to the resources used for sustenance (Liu et al., 2025b). This belief encourages followers to minimize waste and treat food as a precious resource, leading to more sustainable consumption practices. Additionally, communal practices in Buddhism, such as sharing meals and participating in almsgiving, reinforce the importance of food management within the community. These practices promote a sense of responsibility toward food resources and encourage individuals to be mindful of their consumption habits. Overall, Buddhism cultivates a holistic approach to food management by instilling values that prioritize sustainability, compassion, and mindfulness, ultimately leading to behavioral changes that reduce food waste and promote responsible consumption.

3. METHODS

This study applied a thematic approach that involved immersive observation and participation within Buddhist communities' actions in three areas of Bangkok. It can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of Buddhist teachings in promoting responsible food management and reducing waste within the community. This location was chosen for its monks' and Buddhist action to teach local people. As a qualitative design, this study included semi-structured interviews and a historical perspective from ten participants from the Bang Yai, Bang Phlat, and Chatuchak areas around Bangkok, Thailand. It can explore how Buddhist teachings, such as mindfulness and compassion, shape individual and communal attitudes toward food

through interviews and focus groups. In addition, participant observation allows researchers to witness firsthand the rituals, communal meals, and teachings that reinforce sustainable practices. This approach also enables the collection of rich, contextual data that highlights the nuances of how Buddhist principles are integrated into daily life and decision-making regarding food. The qualitative data analysis involves a systematic process of gathering, organizing, and interpreting qualitative information, including interview transcriptions, audio recordings, field notes, and documents. This method facilitated the identification of key patterns, relationships, and emergent themes such as food waste management that align with the study's research objectives. The analysis process followed several structured phases. The first stage involved an in-depth review of all collected data, including transcribed interviews, focus group discussions, and observational notes (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

3.1. Data Collection

The data collection process for studying food management behaviors among Buddhists in Bangkok involves several key steps. First, participants, including monks and lay practitioners recruited through purposive sampling, utilizing informational flyers and announcements at temple gatherings where interaction occurred among local

people and Buddhists on food waste management and sustainable practices. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to explore participants' beliefs and behaviors regarding food consumption and waste, focusing on the influence of Buddhist teachings. Furthermore, focus group discussions will facilitate dialogue among participants, revealing shared experiences and collective norms. The authors also engage in participant observation during communal meals and temple activities to witness firsthand the practices that embody Buddhist principles of mindfulness and sustainability. Finally, the collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and insights, providing a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Buddhism and food waste management in Bangkok. The interviews lasted for 30 to 45 minutes and were recorded with participant consent. The interview subjects were intentionally selected to reflect diverse perspectives. The participant checks to confirm the accuracy of theme interpretations and triangulation to compare findings across different data sources (interviews, focus groups, and observational data) to enhance data credibility and minimize researcher bias. The final phase involved synthesizing the categorized data into meaningful themes that directly addressed the research questions. Table 1 presents the background of the participants.

Table 1: Interview Participants.

No	Initial name	Identity
1	CW (Participant 1)	The leader of Zero Food Waste activism
2	JW (Participant 2)	Monk and a volunteer of food waste management
3	AD (Participant 3)	Monk and a volunteer of food waste management
4	AP (Participant 4)	Director of the office of public health
5	LE (Participant 5)	Environmental study researcher
6	CS (Participant 6)	Employees of government of public health
7	CM (Participant 7)	Local people which applied urban farming
8	CE (Participant 8)	Local people which applied urban farming
9	CT (Participant 9)	Tourist of food management activity
10	CV (Participant 10)	Tourist of food management activity

3.2. Instrument

The research instrument comprised interview guidelines and historical materials. The following texts were analyzed: 1) the Buddhist role in influencing local people attitude and behavior on food waste management and is directly linked to the teachings of profound enlightenment that were the foundation of Buddhism doctrines; 2) the Buddhism value, which contributed to the establishment of moral and cosmological values within a cross-cultural context; 3) the Thailand and global pandemic where a significant amount of food is wasted,

contribution to environmental issue and economic losses, as well as social problem due to in the other location some people faced to hunger and nutrition lost; 4) Buddhism cross-cultural manuscripts, which detail the local adaptation of Buddhist teachings, as practiced by the Monks; and 5) religious policies in Thailand that govern the functions of institutions like the Buddhism temple of cultural diplomacy and as an agent of change of Buddhist teachings. Furthermore, the interview guidelines encompassed three primary components: (1) mindfulness and awareness, (2) interconnectedness and community, and (3) ethical consumption and practices. The

questions for the three components are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Interview Questions.

Component	Interview question
Mindfulness and awareness	1. How do you define mindfulness in the context of food consumption and waste management?
	2. In what ways do you believe Buddhist teachings encourage mindfulness regarding food waste in your daily life?
	3. Can you share any personal experiences where mindfulness has influenced your decisions about food waste?
Interconnectedness and community	4. How does the Buddhist principle of interconnectedness shape your views on food waste and its impact on the community?
	5. In what ways do you see community members collaborating to reduce food waste, and how is this influenced by Buddhist values?
	6. Can you provide examples of community initiatives or practices that reflect Buddhist teachings on sharing and reducing waste?
Ethical consumption and practices	7. How do Buddhist ethics influence your choices regarding food purchasing and consumption?
	8. What role do you think local temples or monks play in promoting ethical consumption and food waste management in your community?
	9. How do you perceive the relationship between food waste management and spiritual well-being in the context of Buddhism?

3.3. Validity And Reliability

Ensuring data reliability and validity in qualitative research on food management behaviors among Buddhists in Bangkok is crucial for producing credible and meaningful findings. Reliability refers to the consistency of the data collection process. An interview, focus groups, and participant observation to triangulate findings were used for cross-verification of information, reducing the likelihood of bias or inaccuracies. Moreover, maintaining a clear and detailed research protocol, including standardized interview questions and observation guidelines, helps ensure that data collection is systematic and replicable. Validity, on the other hand, pertains to the accuracy and authenticity of the data in capturing the intended phenomena and checking the participants' reviews and providing feedback on the findings or interpretations. This process ensures that the researchers accurately represent the participants' perspectives and experiences. This process can enhance the reliability and validity of their qualitative data, leading to a more robust understanding of the relationship between Buddhism and food waste management in Bangkok.

4. RESULT

4.1. Mindfulness And Awareness

All the participants emphasized the importance of being aware of what they consume, including the sources of their food and the impact of their choices on the environment, and highlighted the need to make intentional choices about food, focusing on quality over quantity and being conscious of portion sizes to minimize waste. Furthermore, some

respondents linked understanding of mindfulness to Buddhist teachings, noting that mindfulness encourages a deeper appreciation for food and the effort that goes into producing it. It expressed that mindfulness involves reflecting on the consequences of food waste, including its environmental impact and ethical considerations related to wastefulness among participants. As a participant's statement:

Participant 1: "Mindfulness means being aware of what I eat and avoiding waste."

Participant 3: "It's about appreciating the effort behind food, which makes me careful not to waste."

Participant 7: "Mindfulness for me means being fully aware of what I eat. I try to think about where the food comes from and how much I really need. It helps me avoid buying too much and wasting it."

Participant 8: "In Buddhism, we learn to appreciate everything we have. When I eat, I remind myself of the effort that went into growing the food. This awareness makes me more careful about not wasting anything."

The participants in this study consistently emphasized the importance of being aware of food choices, which aligns with findings from previous research that highlight the growing trend of conscious consumerism. Studies have shown that individuals who are more aware of food sources tend to make healthier and more sustainable choices (Claessens et al., 2023; Baran et al., 2024). This awareness not only pertains to the nutritional value of food but also extends to its environmental impact, echoing the sentiments expressed towards participants regarding the need for intentionality in consumption habits. The focus on quality over quantity is a significant finding that resonates with the principles of sustainable eating. Prior studies

have indicated that prioritizing quality can lead to reduced food waste, as individuals are more likely to appreciate and utilize high-quality ingredients (Casonato et al., 2023; Pandey et al., 2023). Participants' reflections on portion sizes and minimizing waste suggest a shift towards more mindful eating practices, which have been linked to better health outcomes and environmental sustainability.

Participants noted that Buddhist teachings promote mindfulness through principles of gratitude, interconnectedness, and ethical consumption, and they expressed that recognizing the effort involved in food production encourages them to waste less. Participants also felt that understanding personal and social connection to the community and environment fosters a sense of responsibility towards food waste. Participant Statements:

Participant 2: "Buddhism teaches me to appreciate food, which helps me waste less."

Participant 5: "Understanding our connection to all living things makes me more responsible with food."

The significant influence of Buddhist teachings on participants' attitudes towards food consumption. The principles of gratitude and interconnectedness can enhance awareness of food sources and ethical consumption (Ghorbanzadeh et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2025a). Individuals who cultivate gratitude are more likely to appreciate the resources involved in food production, leading to reduced waste (Davis et al., 2017; Shen et al., 2022). Furthermore, the participants' recognition of personal and social connections to the community aligns with findings from environmental psychology, which suggest that a sense of belonging can foster a greater sense of responsibility towards sustainable practices (Filimonau et al., 2022; Teng et al., 2023). Prior studies have demonstrated individuals who feel connected to their community are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviors, including reducing food waste (Claessens et al., 2023). The participants' reflections on the effort behind food production and their commitment to minimizing waste underscore the importance of integrating mindfulness and ethical considerations into food consumption.

Participants' personal experiences and mindfulness have a crucial role in influencing people's decisions on food waste and management through shared personal anecdotes illustrating how mindfulness has shaped their behaviors regarding food waste. It persuades people to make practical changes and provides specific actions to take to

reduce waste, such as meal planning and sharing excess food. In addition, the individuals reported having reflective moments that led them to modify their habits. The practical adjustments made by participants, like meal planning and sharing extra food, reflect research showing how effective proactive measures are at cutting down on food waste. Meal planning has been shown to help individuals make more intentional food purchases, thereby minimizing waste. Participant statements:

Participant 8: "I started meal planning to avoid buying too much food, which has significantly reduced my waste."

Participant 10: "After reflecting on a wasteful experience, I began composting and sharing leftovers with neighbors."

The connection between mindfulness and Buddhist teachings is particularly noteworthy. Furthermore, the personal mindfulness practices can enhance one's appreciation for food and promote sustainable eating behaviors (Liu et al., 2025a; Rasool et al., 2024). The participants' statements reflect a deeper understanding of the effort involved in food production, which is a core tenet of mindfulness. This aligns with studies that suggest mindfulness can lead to greater awareness of the ethical implications of food waste and consumption (Asyari et al., 2024; Duong et al., 2025). The findings underscore those individuals who are mindful of food sources not only make healthier choices but also contribute to environmental sustainability. The emphasis on prioritizing high-quality ingredients can significantly reduce food waste. Participants' insights into portion control and waste minimization indicate a shift towards more mindful eating practices, which are associated with improved health outcomes and ecological responsibility. Furthermore, the connection between mindfulness and Buddhist teachings enriches the understanding of how cultural perspectives can influence food consumption behaviors. The mindfulness also encourages individuals to reflect on the ethical implications of their consumption patterns towards fostering a deeper appreciation for the effort involved in food production.

4.2. Interconnectedness and Community

Participants revealed that the Buddhist principle of interconnectedness significantly shapes their views on food waste, fostering a sense of collective responsibility towards minimizing waste and recognizing its broader impact on the community and environment. It emphasized cooperative initiatives that embody the compassion and sharing

found in Buddhism, such as community gardens and food-sharing programs. Specific initiatives, including food donation drives and composting programs, illustrate the practical application of these teachings in community members. Overall, the findings emphasize the vital role of Buddhist principles in promoting community engagement and sustainable practices related to food waste management, encouraging individuals to work together for the greater good. Participants expressed that the Buddhist principle of interconnectedness profoundly influences their understanding of food waste. It also underlined that an awareness of how all living things are interconnected cultivates a sense of accountability for reducing waste. It proves that food waste not only affects individuals but also the broader community and environment. Participant Statements:

Participant 3: "Understanding that we are all connected makes me realize that wasting food harms not just me but everyone."

Participant 7: "When I think about interconnectedness, I feel responsible for how my waste impacts the community and the planet."

The insights gathered from participants reveal that the Buddhist principle of interconnectedness significantly shapes their views on food waste, fostering a sense of collective responsibility. Participants emphasized that understanding their connection to others encourages them to minimize waste, recognizing its broader impact on the community and environment. Collaborative efforts, such as food-sharing programs and community gardens, reflect Buddhist values of compassion and sharing. Specific initiatives, including food donation drives and composting programs, illustrate how these teachings are practically applied in local people's communities. Overall, the findings highlight the vital role of Buddhist principles in promoting community engagement and sustainable practices related to food waste management. This aligns with studies that suggest religion plays an important role in influencing community engagement, including the ethical implications of food waste and consumption (Hassan et al., 2022; Junaidi et al., 2025). The insights from participants underscore the profound influence of the Buddhist principle of interconnectedness on their perceptions of food waste. Participants expressed a heightened sense of collective responsibility, understanding the food waste impacts. This awareness has led to practical actions, such as participating in food-sharing programs and community gardens, which embody the values of compassion and sharing inherent in Buddhist

teachings.

Participants highlighted various collaborative efforts within their communities to address food waste, often rooted in Buddhist values such as compassion and sharing. For instance, some local peoples organize food-sharing events, where surplus food is distributed to those in need, fostering a sense of community and support. These initiatives not only reduce waste but also strengthen social bonds among participants. Moreover, community gardens were frequently mentioned as spaces where individuals come together to grow food collectively, promoting sustainable practices and encouraging mindfulness about food production. These collaborative efforts exemplify how Buddhist principles can inspire practical actions that address food waste, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and interconnected community.

Participant 6: "In our neighborhood, we have a food-sharing program where people donate excess food. It's a beautiful way to help each other."

Participant 9: "Buddhist values of compassion inspire us to work together to reduce waste and support those in need."

The significant role that community collaboration plays in addressing food waste, particularly through the lens of Buddhist values such as compassion and sharing. Participants' experiences with local food-sharing programs and community gardens reflect a growing trend in sustainable practices that emphasize collective action. The importance of collaborative efforts rooted in Buddhist principles in addressing food waste. These initiatives not only mitigate waste but also enhance social bonds among participants towards fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility. This aligns with existing literature that highlights the effectiveness of community engagement in promoting sustainable practices. Ultimately, integrating values of compassion and sharing into food waste management can lead to more resilient and interconnected communities, paving the way for a more sustainable future.

Participants provided specific examples of initiatives that embody Buddhist teachings, showcasing practical applications of these values in their communities. Food Donation Drives: Some mentioned organized efforts to collect and distribute surplus food to those in need. Composting Programs: Some communities have established composting initiatives that encourage residents to recycle food waste. Participant Statements:

Participant 7: "We have a monthly food donation drive at the temple, where we collect food for the less

fortunate. It's a great way to practice sharing."

Participant 8: "Our community started a composting program that not only reduces waste but also brings people together to learn about sustainability."

4.3. Ethical Consumption and Practices

The findings indicate that Buddhist ethics profoundly influence participants' choices regarding food purchasing and consumption, guiding them towards sustainable and compassionate practices. Local temples and monks play a crucial role in promoting ethical consumption and food waste management, with their teachings inspiring community members to adopt mindful eating habits. Participants also perceive a strong relationship between food waste management and spiritual well-being, suggesting that mindful consumption fosters inner peace and a deeper connection to economic and social values. Overall, these insights highlight the integral role of Buddhist principles in shaping ethical consumption practices and enhancing community awareness around food waste. The effect of Buddhist ethics on people's decisions regarding food purchasing and consumption. Participants indicated that Buddhist ethics significantly shape their food purchasing and consumption choices, emphasizing values such as compassion, mindfulness, and sustainability. The preference for locally sourced and organic foods reflects a commitment to ethical consumption. Participant Statements:

Participant 2: "Buddhist ethics remind me to choose food that is produced sustainably and with care for the environment."

Participant 5: "I try to buy from local farmers because it feels more aligned with my values of compassion and supporting the community."

The findings indicate that principles such as compassion, mindfulness, and sustainability guide individuals towards more ethical consumption practices and towards Buddhist ethics in participants' food purchasing and consumption choices. This aligns with existing literature that highlights how religious and ethical frameworks can influence consumer behavior, particularly in the context of food (Irene et al., 2024; Kattiyapornpong et al., 2023). Participants' preferences for locally sourced and organic foods reflect a commitment to sustainability and community support that aligns with people's values (Liu et al., 2025b; Pandey et al., 2023). It means that the direct application of Buddhist teachings in everyday decisions reinforces the idea that ethical consumption is not merely a personal choice but a communal responsibility. Moreover, the

role of local temples and monks in promoting these values is significant. The Buddhist teachings serve as a catalyst for community engagement in mindful eating practices, which participants associate with spiritual well-being. Mindful consumption can enhance individuals' alignment with social values, a concept supported by studies linking mindfulness to improved well-being (Qian et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2025). It underscores the integral role of Buddhist principles in shaping ethical consumption practices and enhancing community awareness around food waste. By fostering the values of compassion and mindfulness, participants are not only making informed choices about food but also contributing to a more sustainable and interconnected community.

Participants acknowledged the influential role of local temples and monks in promoting ethical consumption and food waste management. They noted that teachings from monks often encourage mindful eating and sharing resources. Participant Statements:

Participant 3: "Monks often speak about the importance of reducing waste and being mindful of our consumption. Their teachings inspire many in our community."

Participant 7: "Temples organize events that educate people about sustainable practices, which helps raise awareness about food waste."

Participants also expressed a strong connection between food waste management and spiritual well-being, suggesting that mindful consumption and waste reduction contribute to a sense of inner peace and harmony. Participant Statements:

Participant 1: "Managing food waste mindfully brings me a sense of peace, knowing I am living in accordance with my values."

Participant 8: "I believe that reducing waste is part of my spiritual practice; it helps me feel more connected to the world around me."

The findings suggest that mindful consumption and waste reduction are not merely practical actions but are deeply intertwined with participants' sense of inner peace and harmony. This aligns with existing research that emphasizes the psychological benefits of mindfulness practices, which have been shown to enhance well-being and promote a sense of connectedness to oneself and the environment (Todd & Faour-Klingbeil, 2024; Zhang & Shi, 2024). Managing food waste mindfully reflects a broader trend in which individuals seek to align people's actions with values, leading to greater life satisfaction. This notion is supported by studies indicating that individuals who engage in pro-environmental behaviors often report higher levels of

well-being and fulfillment (Qian et al., 2022; Siriwong et al., 2025). Similarly, reducing waste as part of spiritual practice underscores the idea that ethical consumption can serve as a form of mindfulness, fostering a deeper connection to the world and enhancing spiritual fulfillment. Moreover, the participants' insights resonate with the concept of "ecological mindfulness," which posits that awareness of one's consumption patterns can lead to more sustainable behaviors and a greater sense of responsibility towards the environment (Manzano-Sánchez & Gómez-López, 2023; Schrank et al., 2023). This connection between mindfulness, ethical consumption, and spiritual well-being suggests that integrating these principles into daily practices can lead to a more harmonious existence.

5. KEY FINDINGS

5.1. Discussion

Participants in the study underlined the significance of mindfulness in shaping attitudes about waste and consumption practices. People emphasized how important religion principle to address what they consume, where food comes from, and how the choices impact the environment. The mindfulness involves a deep appreciation for food and the effort that goes into its production, which aligns with Buddhist teachings that promote gratitude and interconnectedness. The mindfulness of Buddhist principles encourages a sense of responsibility towards food waste. Moreover, participants shared personal experiences illustrating how mindfulness has influenced their decisions regarding food waste. These findings resonate with existing literature that highlights the effectiveness of mindful practices in fostering sustainable behaviors and reducing waste. It indicates that gratitude can enhance pro-environmental behaviors towards fostering a sense of responsibility and connection to the community.

The participants articulated that understanding their connection to all living beings encourages people to adopt more sustainable practices. It suggests that ethical frameworks, such as those found in Buddhism, can enhance pro-environmental behaviors by fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility. A collaborative effort within their communities, such as food-sharing programs and community gardens, which reflect Buddhist values of compassion and sharing. A food-sharing program that allows residents to donate excess food, illustrating how these initiatives promote community engagement and support. Moreover, specific initiatives like food donation drives and

composting programs were highlighted as practical applications of Buddhist teachings. It indicates that community-led sustainability initiatives can enhance environmental awareness and collective action. The vital role of Buddhist principles in promoting community engagement and sustainable practices related to food waste management.

The significant role those local temples and monks play in promoting ethical consumption and food waste management within local communities. Monks often serve as moral and spiritual guides, emphasizing the importance of mindfulness in daily practices, including food consumption. The Buddhist monks' teachings encourage community members to reflect on people's consumption habits, fostering a culture of sustainability and resource sharing. Furthermore, temples often organize educational events that focus on sustainable practices. The teachings of Buddhism, which emphasize interconnectedness and compassion, naturally extend to the realm of food waste management, reinforcing the idea that individual actions have collective consequences. Furthermore, there is a strong connection between food waste management and spiritual well-being. It indicated that mindful consumption and waste reduction contribute to a sense of inner peace and harmony. It underscores the vital role of local temples and monks in fostering ethical consumption and food waste management while also highlighting the intrinsic link between these practices and spiritual well-being. This relationship not only promotes sustainability but also enriches the spiritual lives of community members, creating a holistic approach to living in harmony with both the environment and one another.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

The integration of Social Identity Theory (SIT) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in the context of mindfulness, food consumption, and waste management reveals profound implications for individual and collective behaviors. These theories provide a nuanced understanding of how social dynamics and psychological factors interplay to shape sustainable practices, particularly within communities influenced by Buddhist teachings. Furthermore, SIT posits that individuals derive a significant part of self-concept from local people's memberships. Participants who identified with a community that emphasizes mindfulness and ethical consumption, which is deeply rooted in Buddhist principles. It fosters a collective consciousness that transcends individual behaviors, creating a shared responsibility towards food waste. A collective

responsibility and a sense of duty not only to themselves but also to the community and the environment. It led to stronger social norms that promote sustainable practices. The social identity can reinforce positive behaviors through social validation. Community members' dedication to mindful consumption is strengthened when they witness others practicing it. This social reinforcement can create a feedback loop, where increased participation in sustainable behaviors further solidifies the group's identity and norms. The Buddhist principle of interconnectedness fosters empathy towards others and the environment. This emotional connection can enhance pro-environmental behaviors, as individuals recognize the broader impact of food waste actions. The implications here suggest that fostering a sense of interconnectedness can lead to more compassionate and responsible consumption patterns.

TPB provides a framework for understanding how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence intentions and behaviors. A positive attitude towards mindful consumption is shaped by their awareness of food sources and environmental impacts. This suggests that educational initiatives that enhance awareness can significantly influence attitudes, leading to more sustainable behaviors. The role of local temples and monks as moral guides illustrates how subjective norms can be cultivated within a community. This highlights the importance of leadership in shaping community norms and encouraging collective action towards sustainability. The participants' experiences with meal planning and food-sharing initiatives indicate that mindfulness enhances personal perceived behavioral control over food waste. This empowerment is crucial; when individuals feel capable of making sustainable choices, they are likely to act on personal intentions. Programs that provide practical tools and resources can further enhance this sense of control, leading to more effective waste reduction strategies.

The interplay between SIT and TPB suggests that fostering a community identity centered on mindfulness can lead to significant behavioral changes. The communities can cultivate a culture of sustainability that transcends individual actions towards promoting a shared understanding of interconnectedness and responsibility. The holistic approach not only addresses food waste but also contributes to broader environmental and social goals. It underscores the potential for community-led initiatives to create lasting change. The communities can effectively mobilize collective action towards

sustainability by leveraging the influence of social identity and enhancing perceived behavioral control through education and support. The implications of integrating SIT and TPB in the context of mindfulness and food waste management reveal that fostering a collective identity and enhancing individual empowerment are crucial for promoting sustainable behaviors. It also highlights those individuals can contribute to a more sustainable future, rooted in compassion and interconnectedness, towards aligning community values with ethical consumption practices.

5.3. Practical Implications

This study highlights the critical role of mindfulness in shaping food consumption habits and attitudes towards waste, particularly within communities influenced by Buddhist teachings. The government entities and Buddhist temples can play pivotal roles in promoting sustainable practices. Governments also should implement educational campaigns that emphasize the importance of mindfulness in food consumption and waste management. These campaigns can focus on raising awareness about the environmental impacts of food waste and the benefits of mindful eating practices. Collaborating with local schools, community centers, and religious institutions can enhance outreach and engagement. Furthermore, governments can provide funding and resources for community-based initiatives such as food-sharing programs, community gardens, and composting projects. Policymakers should consider developing regulations that promote sustainable food practices, such as incentives for businesses that reduce food waste or penalties for excessive waste generation. Furthermore, policies that encourage local food production and distribution can help minimize the environmental impact associated with food transportation. Furthermore, governments can collaborate with local temples and religious organizations to promote ethical consumption and waste management. It also can enhance community engagement and encourage individuals to adopt more sustainable practices. The Buddhist temples can organize workshops and seminars focused on mindfulness, ethical consumption, and waste management. These events can provide practical guidance on meal planning, food preservation, and composting, empowering community members to make informed choices. Temples also can facilitate community engagement through food-sharing initiatives and donation drives, fostering a sense of interconnectedness and compassion, aligning with

Buddhist teachings towards creating platforms for sharing excess food.

5.4. Conclusion

The Buddhist temples play an essential role in promoting mindfulness and sustainable practices related to food consumption and waste management. Furthermore, the Buddhist ethics towards local temples and monks play a vital role in fostering ethical consumption and food waste management, inspiring community members to adopt mindful eating habits. The correlation between mindful consumption and spiritual well-being lead to reducing food waste and aligns with Buddhist principles. It also insights underscore the integral role of Buddhist principles in enhancing community awareness of food waste and encouraging ethical consumption, ultimately fostering a more sustainable and interconnected community. The interconnectedness of Buddhist principle, profoundly influences people's perspectives on food waste, fostering a collective responsibility to against food waste campaign. Collaborative initiatives, such as food-sharing programs and community gardens, embody the compassion and sharing inherent in Buddhist teachings. Furthermore, food donation and composting, not only reduce waste but also strengthen social bonds among community members. Ultimately, integrating Buddhist values into food waste management promotes sustainable practices and encourages individuals to work together for a more resilient and interconnected community. It can lead to significant positive change, fostering a culture of responsibility and interconnectedness that benefits both individuals and the environment.

5.5. Limitations and Future Study Directions

While this study's qualitative approach offers valuable, in-depth perspectives on mindfulness and food waste, it is important to recognize that these insights are shaped by participants' cultural and demographic backgrounds. It provides a valuable insight to future policy towards highlighting a social barriers, motivations, and potential interventions that might not emerge from purely quantitative data. Future studies should expand larger and more diverse sample to capture a wider range of experiences and attitudes toward mindfulness and food waste. This study applied a qualitative approach and in-depth insights but may lack the quantitative data necessary to establish broader trends. Future research could incorporate mixed-methods approaches, combining qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys to validate findings and explore correlations based on other religions, such as Islam, Christianity, etc. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, as participants might present their behaviors and attitudes in a socially desirable manner. This could lead to overestimations of mindfulness practices on food waste reduction. Moreover, understanding the potential biases in self-reported data and the time-specific nature of the study underscores the need for longitudinal and multi-method research. It would better capture changes in attitudes and behaviors over time, ensuring that future policies are based on comprehensive and reliable evidence. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into how mindfulness influences food waste management across different life stages or in response to changing circumstances.



Figure 1: Phuttho Zero Waste Initiative At Suan Mokkh Bangkok.
(<https://Theactive.Thaipbs.Or.Th/News/Pollution-20230801>)

The “Puttho Zero Waste” initiative, highlighted by The Active, integrates Buddhist merit-making

with environmental action at Suan Mokkh Bangkok. During Asalha Puja, the project introduced a detailed waste separation system at the temple, including color-coded bins for food waste, recyclables, non-recyclables, and infectious waste, alongside washing stations to ensure cleanliness before disposal. This approach frames waste sorting as a form of merit, linking Buddhist teachings on rebirth to the recycling process, and encourages participants both adults and children to adopt zero-waste habits. The calm,

educational atmosphere of the temple supports learning and behavior change, making the process engaging and meaningful. The program serves as a scalable model for other temples across Thailand, leveraging religious communities to foster sustainable practices. By embedding environmental stewardship within cultural and religious contexts, “Puttho Zero Waste” demonstrates a powerful strategy for grassroots engagement and long-term behavioral transformation.



Figure 2: Wat Chak Daeng Waste Bank Project, Bangkok (<https://www.csrubber.co.th>).

CS Rubber Industry Co., Ltd. is a leading Thai manufacturer of natural and synthetic rubber compounds, serving sectors such as automotive, aerospace, electronics, and construction. Since its founding in 2004 as part of the Charoensin Group, the company has prioritized quality, innovation, and environmental responsibility, as demonstrated by its ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certifications. As a company based in Thailand, where Buddhism is deeply embedded in both social and corporate culture, CS Rubber Industry is likely influenced by Buddhist values such as mindfulness, ethical conduct, and compassion. While not always explicitly stated on

corporate websites, many Thai companies integrate Buddhist principles into daily operations—such as merit-making activities, temple visits, or support for local monasteries and encourage employees to practice mindfulness and ethical behavior in the workplace. These practices can foster a harmonious work environment, promote environmental stewardship, and support corporate social responsibility initiatives. Moreover, Buddhist values often shape the company’s approach to sustainability and community engagement. This may include supporting local communities, minimizing environmental impact, and promoting a culture of

respect and responsibility. By aligning business practices with Buddhist ethics, CS Rubber Industry

enhances its reputation and strengthens relationships with stakeholders, both locally and internationally.



Figure 3: A Monk Engaged in Recycling Process at Wat Chak Deang Bangkok (<https://readthecloud.co/our-khung-bangkachao/>).

Buddhism plays a subtle yet influential role in the “OUR Khung BangKachao” project, guiding both the community’s mindset and practical actions. Many activities draw inspiration from Buddhist principles such as mindfulness, compassion, and living in harmony with nature. For example, waste management and environmental stewardship are often framed as acts of merit good deeds that benefit society and the environment, aligning with Buddhist teachings on karma and interconnectedness. Community events may include merit-making

activities, temple collaborations, or the use of recycled materials to create monk’s robes, symbolizing the fusion of tradition and sustainability. By promoting mindfulness in daily practices—like sorting waste or caring for green spaces the project nurtures a culture of respect for the environment, self-restraint, and collective well-being. Integrating Buddhist values helps foster community participation, strengthens social cohesion, and ensures that conservation efforts are deeply rooted in local cultural and spiritual contexts.

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