
From Compliance to Internalization: Buddhist Chanting and Character Formation through Kelman's Theory and the Abhidhamma

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ABSTRACT

Character education increasingly draws on religious and contemplative practices, yet how repeated ritual practice becomes internalized as character remains underexplored. This study examines character formation through chanting practice among students at the Institut Nalanda Jakarta dormitory by integrating Kelman's theory of attitude change with the Abhidhamma perspective. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with six purposively selected students, participant observation, and documentation, and analyzed interpretively. The findings show that chanting fosters character development through three processes: compliance, identification, and internalization. Students first participate because of institutional norms, then build social bonds through shared participation, and finally internalize the values as personally meaningful. From the Abhidhamma perspective, this transformation is interpreted through *citta* and *cetasika*, which underpin mindfulness, self-control, and ethical conduct. The study proposes an Attitude Change Pyramid modelling the movement from external practice to internalized character, offering a transferable lens for religiously grounded character education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Because education is not only about academic competence, character education has become a necessary part of human resource development, emphasizing the development of integrity, responsibility, self-control, and social awareness. Character: the collection of moral values, attitudes, and habitual patterns of behavior that emerges over time through education and ordinary daily interaction (Lickona, 2009). Character formation is especially valued in higher education, where young adults actively pursue autonomy, seek purpose, and cultivate their individuality, and where the cultivation of virtue has re-emerged as a legitimate institutional aim (Carr, 2017; Kristjánsson, 2013; Lamb et al., 2022). Character development occurs not only through traditional learning activities but also through the social environment and disciplines encountered in daily practices (Langer, 2007). Educational environments that enforce rules, common rituals, and students' behavior significantly affect the development of values. Human behavior changes under the influence of personal factors, the environment, and social experience (Field) Bandura, 2001). Hence, it evolves over time in a process rooted in learning and interaction with the environment.

In relation to character formation, studies have shown that religious education is associated with a more consistent practice of spiritual practices (Perry et al., 2022). Apart from symbolic activity, religious practices can also be seen as a way of cultivating morality, abstract reasoning, self-discipline, and awareness. According to the teachings of the Buddha, mental qualities that give rise to wholesome (*kusala*) behavior arise through control over thoughts, speech, and actions (Bodhi, 2005). One of the practices that plays an essential role in the Buddha's teachings is chanting, the repeated recitation of Buddhist teachings through the verbalization of Dhamma texts such as *paritta* or sutta. Chanting (*Sanskrit: Vāc*) in the Buddhist tradition is more than just spoken words; it is viewed as a form of mindfulness practice, Dhamma respect, and mental discipline (Shulman, 2024). With consistent practice, reciting prayers or mantras can cultivate a certain mindset for the practitioner.

Ritual chanting we do in the lives of students living at the Institut Nalanda Dormitory has become a regular, shared part of the culture. This program is not only related to religious life but also organizes the students' lives through playing exercises based on discipline and unity, developing Buddhist characters. It is this condition that renders ritual chanting an important phenomenon in studying the character formation of the students. The formation of character in the Buddha is inextricably linked to mental conditions preceding actions. A mind precedes all phenomena (*manopubbaṅgamā dhammā*), and the basis of behavior is the mind (Dhp 1) (Woodward, 2021). This principle shows that we should not understand character transformation by our understanding of external *behaviors*, but instead understand the process of transforming the consciousness behind what we are doing. The idea of repeated chanting practice is grounded in the principle of mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*). The Buddha describes in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10) that cultivation of awareness through mindfulness of body, feelings, mind, and mental phenomena must be practiced continuously (Nanamoli & Bodhi, 2009).

Someone can get involved in a ritual, even if the beliefs embedded in it are only partly part of their character. A person participates actively because of certain rules or obligations, or based on a role or social group. How external practices can become part of value acceptance. Although there might be more effective ways to explain this change

process, Kelman's (1958) attitude change theory at least partially describes its mechanistic features; Kelman mentions the concept of attitude change, namely compliance, which happens when someone follows a behavior because they are forced to. Identification occurs when someone resonates with a behavior because of its connection to a social group. Meanwhile, internalization happens when the value has already been integrated into a person's belief system. Over time, it can create social bonds among people and, at the next level, lead them to adopt the values contained in the chanting practice as a personal need.

According to Abhidhamma, human experience can be understood in terms of the interaction between *citta* (consciousness) and *cetasika* (mental factors). Every mental process occurs with the factors that determine the quality of experience (Anuruddha, 2006). Repeated practice can help positive mental qualities like *Sati* (mindfulness), *Saddhā* (faith), and *Paññā* (wisdom) flourish. *Citta* and *cetasika* point out the idea that character is not a product of something fabricated in an instant, but rather formed over time through processes of behavioral conditioning. Certain mental patterns strengthen when we perform; a peaceful mind continuously engages in activities with attention and understanding. This may bring about changes in mindset, *behavior*, and attitudes. This corresponds to the *Vitakkasaṅṭhāna Sutta* (MN 20), which states that thoughts are naturally directed and can be trained through proper means, allowing humans to cultivate better mental qualities (Nanamoli & Bodhi, 2009).

Ritual chanting has planes of solidarity and collectiveness. In and of itself, chanting gives students time to cultivate calmness, mindfulness, and introspection. On a social level, chanting generates collective experiences which reinforce togetherness and group identity. The relationship between spirituality and the social environment suggests that character is neither easy to teach nor immune to environmental influence. Who we are is forged not only in the recognition of what proper moral behavior entails, but through traversing those experiences over and over. One of the experiential spaces where they undergo this transformation is ritual chanting.

This study analyzes the formation of character through chanting practices among students at the Institut Nalanda Dormitory by integrating Kelman's theory of attitude change with the Abhidhamma perspective. From a perspective that sees chanting as not just a religious practice confined within the bounds of a Buddhist community but, more so, as an act of faith, one whose performance has implications for education (the formation of values and attitudes about what is right or wrong), this study sought to understand how value delivers on discursive materialization in everyday *behavior*. The study is an analysis of the dimensionality of the process of student engagement, along with the compliance, identification, and internalization stages that cover *citta* (consciousness) and *cetasika* (mental factors) for character development. Examining the association between inter-religious division engagement, religious practice, and profile assessments, this paper also informs broader debates on character education and spirituality in human development by addressing questions related to values-based living, social responsibility, and spiritual practices as a vehicle for moral insight across varied cultural and faith settings.

Chanting is a practice rooted in the Buddhist tradition, involving the repeated recitation of Dhamma teachings. Buddhist doctrine was first widely recorded and rewritten only after it had been preserved in memory and recited communally for

centuries. Thus, in addition to being a way of keeping alive the teaching of Buddhism, chanting was also a means by which sound, memory, and practice could bring the Dhamma to the forefront (Malasart, 2021). Recitation of *paritta* and *sutta* remains an important part of Buddhist ceremonies in the Theravāda tradition and community life. However, chanting is also not simply a religious ritual involving attention, discipline, and activities of Buddhist values. Chanting individually also requires control of breathing, posture, and rhythm while maintaining concentration. If the sound and meaning had a relationship, it would make an experience that affects our alertness physically and mentally (Fedricks, 2022). The core feature of *paritta* is that its recitation is always expected in Theravāda ceremonies, such as blessing or death ceremonies (Langer, 2007). This demonstrates that chanting performs a critical social role and creates a collective experience, bonding community members. In Buddhist dormitories or other similar environments, students may engage in combined chanting practices repeatedly, making it become their daily habits, influencing the ways they respond to actions of goods and relationships that they have with other people around them.

In terms of character formation, chanting may help foster discipline, mindfulness, and ethical living. This practice of repeating Dhamma gives students multiple opportunities to encounter Buddhist values and contemplate their interpretations. In fact, the *Saṅgīti Sutta* (DN 33) describes how the Buddha's teachings were systematically organized to aid memorization, learning, and practice (Walshe, 1995). Similarly, in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10), the Buddha explained that mindfulness is developed through the practice of discerning the body, feelings, mind, and mental phenomena (Nanamoli & Bodhi, 2009). This may be why scriptures preserve teachings and perhaps help become a process of self-development through chanting.

However, much of the literature on chanting has been centered on its ritual, cultural, and spiritual significance (Malasart, 2021). These studies illuminate the textual preservation, communal function, and cognitive or devotional effects of recitation, yet they stop short of explaining how repeated chanting gradually reshapes a practitioner's attitudes and character. Less researched is how chanting affects students' changing attitudes and character, particularly how the activity shifts from an externally prescribed requirement to a personally endorsed value. Comparable recitative practices in other religious traditions, such as the Catholic rosary and Hindu mantra repetition, have been shown to produce analogous physiological and psychological effects (Bernardi et al., 2001), yet the process by which such practices become internalized as character has rarely been theorized in any tradition, despite growing empirical attention to how universities cultivate character (Brant et al., 2020). Positioning Buddhist chanting within this broader literature allows the present findings to speak to religiously grounded character education beyond the Buddhist context. This transformation, however, must explain how people gradually adapt to and internalize values. This is the process that Kelman tries to adapt in his theory about the change of attitude. Kelman, (1958) describes that attitude change occurs in three stages: compliance, identification, and internalization. Compliance is the first phase in which people engage in specific *behaviors* in response to external demands, institutional rules, or social pressure. Dormitory students participate in chanting at scheduled times due to dorm regulations. Identification, people start to feel it is a good practice because of their association with some group. Sharing experiences, students could foster a sense of ownership and identify the social significance of the practice. The

last step, internalization, is when acceptance of the values as important to oneself takes place, and this change becomes part of self-knowledge.

Kelman sounds as if he is explaining the process of moving from external pressure to internal acceptance, but his theory tells us little about political mobilization and repression because it focuses primarily on socialization and psychology. It does not adequately describe what happens in human consciousness to facilitate these changes, nor how repeatedly having certain experiences gives rise to mental qualities. Buddhism offers an even fuller account of character formation: It contends that in addition to social influence, we shape ourselves (and our children) through cultivation of the mind. The inner dimension is explained within the framework of *citta* (consciousness) and *cetasika* (mental factors) from an Abhidhamma perspective.

The Abhidhamma states that human experience arises when consciousness is manifested in association with accompanying mental factors (Nyanaponika, 1949). It comes from these mental factors, which determine the quality of experience and promote patterns of thought or behavior. Another implication is the potential for repetitive experiences to bolster certain types of mental habits, whereby ongoing practice can facilitate the cultivation of beneficial characteristics (*kusala*), including mindfulness (*sati*), faith (*saddhā*), and wisdom (*paññā*) (Anuruddha, 2006). Hence, we can think of chanting as an exercise that enhances a kind of mental conditioning. It is possible that the regular recitation of such teachings, when practiced with awareness, may modify the quality of consciousness and facilitate changes in *behavior* over time. The *Vitakkasaṅṭhāna Sutta* (MN 20) describes how mental tendencies are successfully diverted through proper training and practice (Nanamoli & Bodhi, 2009).

Taken together, these two perspectives expose a clear gap. Kelman's theory explains the social mechanism of attitude change: how external pressure gives way to social belonging and finally to personal conviction, but it says little about what happens within consciousness to make this shift possible. The Abhidhamma, conversely, offers a fine-grained account of inner mental cultivation through *citta* and *cetasika*, yet it does not specify the social processes by which a practice first takes hold. Neither framework alone explains how a repeated ritual such as chanting is transformed from an externally prescribed routine into internalized character, even though contemporary character-education research identifies this habituation through practice and reflection as central to virtue formation (Lamb et al., 2022). This study therefore integrates the two frameworks to address a single question: through the dynamics of compliance, identification, and internalization, how does chanting reshape students' attitudes and character, and what specific shifts in consciousness (*citta*) and mental factors (*cetasika*) underlie these changes? Answering it yields the study's principal contribution, an Attitude Change Pyramid that links the social mechanism of attitude change to the inner cultivation of consciousness, providing a transferable model of religiously grounded character education.

This research draws on Kelman's attitude change theory and insights from the Abhidhamma to examine mantra reading as a means of character building. Combining these approaches links character development to understanding social experiences and inner growth. Reading mantras isn't just a Buddhist ritual; it's also seen as hands-on learning that teaches values, morals, and ethics, while also touching on faith within a religious context.

2. METHODS

This article used a qualitative, phenomenological design to investigate students' experiences and meanings of chanting practices in character formation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenological approach was chosen because the study seeks to uncover how participants experience changes in their attitudes, values, and self-awareness. Participants were selected through purposive sampling (Patton, 2015) using three criteria: students who had lived in the Institut Nalanda Jakarta dormitory for at least two semesters, who regularly joined chanting sessions, and who could articulate how chanting had affected their character development. Six participants were deemed sufficient, as they provided rich, clear, and relevant accounts of the phenomenon (Crossman, 2021).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Open and semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore students' experiences practicing spell chanting, so that the results of interviews, observations, and recordings of chanting activities could be obtained. The data were analyzed using descriptive phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Analyzing qualitative data involves reading interview transcripts line by line, identifying key statements, spotting emerging themes that reflect the phenomena, and interpreting them in light of participants' life experiences. The point of this interpretive process is to understand how people make sense of their own experiences.

This study used data triangulation through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. Triangulation was used to ensure the information was consistent and to gain a fuller understanding of the participants' experiences. Data were collected from interviews with 6 students, each lasting around 30–60 minutes. The interviews were done in Indonesian and then transcribed word for word. Special terms related to Buddhist concepts were retained in the original context to preserve the meaning of the participants' experiences. This study also used member checking by discussing the initial interpretation results with participants to make sure the findings accurately reflected their experiences. Data analysis was conducted through manual coding, with stages including identifying units of meaning, assigning codes, grouping categories, and developing themes. During the analysis process, the researchers maintained reflexivity by being aware of the influence of their interpretations, positions, and assumptions to ensure that the research results remained transparent and based on the students' experiences. Throughout, the analysis was guided by established markers of quality in phenomenological research (Nizza et al., 2021).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Students' Experience of Chanting Practices

The practice of chanting mantras in the Nalanda Institute dormitory has become an integral part of students' lives and education. As an important dormitory activity, chanting is performed collectively; students gather to chant as part of their daily routine. Students become accustomed to this practice and gradually adapt to the process. The number of participants who join in the chanting is also recorded. This chanting activity is incorporated into the dormitory regulations, so some students chant to adapt, while others are influenced by their peers and perceive the chanting more as an institutional obligation

of self-awareness. This reflects what Kelman's theory calls compliance, the initial stage of behavior change, in which behavior can be influenced by external pressure.

As a result of ongoing engagement, students experienced chanting not as a discrete activity but as an opportunity to observe and engage with participants and to reflect on practice. Students indicated that these chants helped them to feel relaxed and cope with academic pressures and daily obligations. This made for ease of focus, collective practice, and stability with mindfulness and mental strength. Multiple participants reported that chanting helped them manage stress, mitigate their emotional responses, and think more intentionally about their thoughts and behavior in everyday life. This maturity reflects some level of growth in virtue and integrity, which we can also map onto the changes associated with *citta* (consciousness) and *cetasika* (the mental factors in the Abhidhamma) (Anuruddha, 2006).

Communal chanting also shaped students' social lives in the dormitory. By chanting together, students interacted regularly and developed relationships with one another. Although students came from vastly different geographic areas and economic circumstances, the activity provided inclusive commonalities that enhanced communication, cooperation, and community ties. Before and after each session, students' informal interactions and group activities fostered social bonds. Although this might appear to be simply students becoming less individualistic through collective chanting, it in fact reflects Durkheim's (1915) belief that meaning creation through collective rituals helps keep society together/bolster group identity, and act as a source of solidarity. In this light, chanting served as much more than a personal spiritual tool; it was a social practice that helped bolster solidarity among students. Recent empirical studies likewise link participation in collective religious gatherings to perceived emotional synchrony and social solidarity (Wlodarczyk et al., 2021).

The findings also indicate that, over time, chanting enabled students to progressively arrive at the meanings of core societal values related to discipline, respect, mindfulness, and compassion. While some students initially attended chanting because their families expected it, they later came to see the value of chanting more personally. The practice began to be correlated with tranquillity, emotional control/process, and overall interpersonal betterment in relation to one another. It shows how the dualism between the dynamic nature of behavioral patterns (external elements) and socio-experiences affects an individual's internal processes through a cycle of bodily-mindful experiences, thereby demonstrating that chanting plays a role in character development.

Students going through the experience of chanting spells show a gradual change. It starts with external participation, shaped by institutional norms and social expectations, then grows through interactions and shared memories, and eventually leads to internalization. This shows a shift from following rules to identifying with them and then internalizing them, according to Kelman (1958), in which behaviors that were once outside personal values begin to become part of one's own value system and awareness.

2. Compliance in Chanting Practice

Many students dwelling in the Institut Nalanda Jakarta Dormitory actively practice chanting mechanisms within their formalized living ground, where regulations around daily activities must be adhered to through institutional rules and collective routines. Periodic participation in morning chanting is one of the biggest requirements that students say they do because it is a responsibility of accepting being a part of the dorm. At this

initial level, chanting arises in a regulatory context because students do not chant primarily for personal conscious awareness but rather of accommodate an institutional rule (Collins, 2004). This condition is representative of the step of compliance in Kelman's attitude-change theory, where people exhibit behaviors due to external influences (Kelman, 1958), such as rules, sanctions, or expectations from their society. The reason why the students go to chanting is that it is compulsory, and if they fail to do so, there will be consequences. At this stage, they are adapting to the current existing system rather than boldly expressing a fully formed personal commitment. This may look like an external locus of control, but it actually serves as a first exposure to the practice that slowly becomes less strange.

Students do not yet fully grasp of the deeper significance of chanting at this compliance stage. Instead, they engage in the practice because it has become institutionalized within the dormitories and because they feel an obligation to meet expectations consecutively. People initially act at this stage as the result of external factors and later develop into a more internally accepted value (Kelman, 1958). Such a case occurred with participant PD, who said, "The sanction given to students who did not participate is, I think, a light punishment appropriate for the lazy and still get such sanctions." This shows, in part, that the initial perception of chanting has been that it is an obligation associated with hostel rules. Because this practice was required in their living environment, students did participate, but their early involvement seems to have been more attributable to institutional expectations than personal motivation.

Compliance was also described by some other participants as tied to social consequences. Identifying non-participation in chanting as a breach incurred by punishment, students were nudged towards repeated practice. Chanting here serves as a form of social control because students adhere to the routine to avoid penalties and maintain their ties to the dorm community.

3. Identification Stage in Chanting Practice

Students residing at the Institut Nalanda Jakarta Dormitory seem to exhibit a tiered pattern of engagement with chanting practices once they have successfully navigated compliance requirements. A practice that was originally undertaken out of a sense of duty begins to be appreciated in terms of community. Chanting is no longer seen by students as a completely top-down exercise. They begin to feel this practice in the form of social relations in the dormitory. A social milieu, compared to the prior stage and thus a different experience, begins with a different basic method of practice, so that chanting becomes participatory in collective life. This condition is equivalent to the identification stage of attitude change, in which people start to adopt a behavior because they want to be accepted by the social group. External pressure is not the only factor behind behavior; some of it arises as people lean into the values and norms within a group. That students join in the chanting partly because of their bond with the dorm-mate community. This participation represents a shift in motivation from external compulsion to social connection, in which chanting is increasingly perceived as intrinsically valuable within the context of unity.

This is the stage where students start to become aware of a gradual change in their view of chanting practices. Now, the practice is no longer viewed simply as a duty, but as a collective practice that binds people to the group. Chanting introduces students to the concept of togetherness. This experience goes through a series of social interactions. Not

only do students physically show up, but they also become emotionally invested, fostering a social attachment when chanting occurs. The results of the interviews reveal that students come to find ease in collective practice. As participant AM put it: “Chanting makes us feel close to one another. We have our cleaning time together right after chanting, and that becomes a moment for us to joke around while we sweep together.” These shared social experiences solidify participation and expand the practice into something of broader social significance. The stage of identification also requires social interaction. Students watch and mimic the observing *behavior* of peers engaged in chanting. Through this, the result is enforcement that aligns conformity with group norms. Having developed norms, students adapt themselves to the patterns that arise within their classroom; chanting is a form of social learning.

Students also show that participation in chanting relates to the need for social inclusion. They would like to feel like they belong in the dormitory. You get this honor by taking part in the collective feasts. Chanting also fosters stronger bonds among students. That sense of connectedness fosters their drive to keep practicing. This is why chanting creates a social bond, and this condition has been linked to the emergence of solidarity (Durkheim, 1915). Dormitory life immerses students in common practices and values. Distinction between Similarities: All these similarities bond social connections among individuals. A sense of solidarity arises from a history of walking together. Chanting symbolizes this bond, and the practice serves an integrative function in social life.

From the findings of interviews, we observed that students start applying values they get from chanting in their daily lives. They learn to manage conflict and be more socially competent. It shows that this experience goes beyond the practice itself; it transforms *behavior*. Some values are socialized; students begin to internalize them, and identification guides everyday social interactions. Chanting experience also fosters a sense of emotional similarity among students. Every day, students are together in the same atmosphere. This shared feeling reinforces social bonding. It infiltrates your identity process, a big part of which is emotional experiences. As the chant vocal cords on the outside, students begin to feel inward communication with the group, together effectively intensifying an emotional dimension of social relationships.

Social Identity Theory (Islam, 2014) predicts that people will identify themselves by their membership in the social groups. It was a perfect way to start paying attention to the ways that students started to think of themselves as part of the dorm. More importantly, students gradually adapt to the cultural and social environment of dormitory life, in which the shared experience of chanting becomes a marker of group membership

This behavior becomes a badge of belonging: students develop a strong attachment to and identification with their in-group, which facilitates social identity formation. The study shows how students begin to adapt their *behavior* to group norms. They participate in chanting not only because of the rules but also because they feel they belong. Their behavior becomes more aligned with the values that emerge within the group, and this adjustment occurs gradually: behavior is no longer coerced but is increasingly sustained by belief. This marks the transition to the Abhidhamma dimension of the process. This is where *cetasika* plays its role, whereby *citta* begins to create a more developed quality of consciousness and is no longer completely reactive; rather, it is now accompanied by higher mental factors (Nyanaponika, 1949). Training students to carry mindfulness (*sati*)

into their practice of chanting. This participation means a shift in quality of consciousness, and experience starts to move into deeper levels.

The mental factors (*cetasika*), such as *saddhā*, will begin to flourish as soon as students experience the benefits of practice. Faith is not immediate; it comes over time. Over time, students begin to trust the power of chanting. The purpose of this transition is to reinforce engagement in the activity and to make consciousness more concentrated. So, *cetasika* is part of enhancing experience. Second, *mettā* also starts to develop in students' social relationships. Students tend to have more positive attitudes towards their classmates. Chanting to strengthen interpersonal relationships. This attitude is indicative of a better mind. Interactions are more harmonious; chanting helps develop the quality of social relationships. In the *Upaddha Sutta* (SN 45.2), the Buddha stressed that a good friend is an indispensable factor of spiritual life (Bodhi, 2020a). The practice is carried out by the students with support from the community. This endorsement solidifies their participation in chanting, and thus, a community becomes an essential variable in the enhancement of awareness. More recent work extends this view, showing how shared ritual experience can foster identity fusion and durable group bonding (Reese & Whitehouse, 2021).

Repetition of collective practice is also related to *anussati*, which means that both practices are about always remembering the teachings. Chanting contains values that students repeat and reflect on over time. This repetition helps strengthen understanding. It makes it easier to remember the values and also shows how we can apply them. This continuous process and chanting are exercises to increase awareness. One common reason for the questions asked to ES participants in interviews is that institutional rules affect how consistently I chant every day at 6 a.m. But over time, it's not just because of the rules; it also comes from self-awareness of the benefits I get from this practice. From this ES quote, it can be seen that students who initially saw chanting as a requirement slowly start to integrate it into their daily lives.

Identification facilitates social integration in dormitory life. From different backgrounds, students come to share practices. Similar experiences reduce existing differences. Shared activities build stronger ideas of integration. The action of chanting becomes a bonding tool for the community, and as such, has a key social role. The identification stage, according to the above explanation, can be understood as the way chant practice moves from more mundane compliance toward a deeper form of social engagement. From Kelman's view, students start chanting not necessarily due to regulatory pressure, but primarily for the reason of wanting to belong to a social group. This process is further supported by social interaction (which creates opportunities to perform the desired behavior), social modeling, and the construction of a collective identity that fosters solidarity and/or connectedness within the group. The Buddha also explained the development of consciousness, one aspect of life, in an entirely different light from what we are told today by the Abhidhamma view. The presence of *cetasika* (i.e., *sati*, *saddhā*, and/or *mettā*) is seen to signify the evolutionary nature of the quality of consciousness, accompanying *citta* more so without being manifestly involved in a state not previously observed. This stage tracks with the importance of community in Buddhist teaching for spiritual development, addressed in the *Upaddha Sutta* (SN 45.2). Identification is thus not only socially embodied but also an initial fusion through collective experience free of conscious inner development.

4. Internalization Stage in Chanting Practice

More evidence of these students living in the Institut Nalanda Jakarta Dormitory displays a maturation of their collective chanting experiences through compliance and identification. Whereas the practice was performed out of obligation and social norms, it eventually translates into an inner need. The students no longer rely on external motivation in their chanting activities. They start to recognize the practice as a component of self-management. This change suggests a new orientation of experience, with the practice of chanting coming to be seen as personally significant. According to Kelman's theory of attitude change, this condition corresponds to the stage of internalization (Kelman, 1958). People adopt a value when the expectation aligns with their belief system. Behavior is beyond controlling with external pressure or in the name of social needs. Students who practice chanting, however, know what it is and how to benefit from it. The actions are no longer merely instrumental to the practice, but reflect it as part of an individual's conscious choice.

According to one interview with ES: "I think that sanctions are a way of creating discipline which teaches me about responsibility. Besides that, a sanction in the form of a cleaning activity also produces an awareness of the importance of cleanliness and strengthens discipline to fulfill obligations." Hence, students engage not out of compulsion anymore, but because it has become a need. This experience shows how motivation shifts from an external motivating force to adoption as part of one's awareness. The stage of internalization is related to psychological research and refers to how well the value has been integrated into the self-structure of a person. Internalization Ryan & Deci, (2000) generally refers to the process by which individuals accept a set of values or beliefs as part of their self-concept. Students show this through the changes taking place in the way they see chanting practice. The character of values shifts from something outside yourself to simply being the way they orient themselves in life. With no external pressure, behavior becomes more natural, and doing the right thing becomes instinctive. More recent self-determination research similarly describes how externally regulated behavior can become autonomously internalized over time (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

The students also report that chanting allows them to gain control over their emotions and mitigate academic stress. In this way, participants say that students become better able to self-control in difficult situations and have stopped responding reflexively with behavior problems. This shows behavior and emotional regulation, as students start to practice it for reflection. Thus, a chant is practiced along the path of mastering will. This condition corresponds to *kusala citta*: in the Abhidhamma sense, consciousness at this point is no longer merely reactive but is accompanied by a number of wholesome (*kusala*) mental factors (Nyanaponika, 1949). *Citta* manifests together with *cetasika* that help cultivate wholesome inner qualities. For students, these include mental factors such as *paññā*, *samādhi*, and *passaddhi*. Awareness clears and grows, and the practice becomes more subtle, operating at deeper levels of the mind (Whitehouse & Lanman, 2014).

The mental factor *paññā* indirectly helps the students to make it clear what this practice means. Students not only chant but also understand the messages in it. And this is a learned sense through experience. Students start seeing the link between practice and their mental states. Attention to the subtleties of life comes clearer in performance, while knowledge within wisdom fills and creates confidence. The fourth and last mental factor *samādhi* (concentration), where attention is focused in practice. Students are better able

to stay focused when engaging in activities. The data show that students have been more prepared to engage in study activities after chanting. The level of concentration you develop does not just manifest in the time that you reserve for practice but spills over into your everyday life. It is shown to convey experience, whereby chanting reinforces mental states (Keng et al., 2011). Recent meta-analytic evidence among university students confirms that mindfulness practice supports mental health and sustained attention (Zuo et al., 2023).

The mental factor *passaddhi* directly aids in the cultivation of inner serenity. Students indicate that after chanting, they experience greater tranquility, which serves as an effective buffer against the academic pressures of college life (Teo, 2014). By fostering emotional regulation, this practice enables students to respond to challenging situations with greater self-mastery. This shift in the quality of experience underlies a more stable pattern of wholesome psychological behavior. *Kusala citta usually arises because there is a lot of repetition of practice.* This condition proves that mental habits have grown. They do not rely on outside sources to inspire them to practice. Consciousness emerges more independently. It merges into a structure of positive mental auto-conditioning, producing durable mental habits through internalization.

This transformation also translates into the character development of students. The results suggest that they become more serious in their punctual performance of daily activities. Instead of façades and laws, you are now governed by your own inner recognition of discipline. Closer to home, students have more independence over their time and activities. Train up behavior, and a disciplined character will become more consistent. And students are becoming more socially aware. They become able to articulate the states that they feel and what is going on in their brains. The findings indicate that students become more deliberative in making decisions. That knowledge allows them to organize social connections (Gethin, 2011). They develop wisdom in their dealings with others, which strengthens their capacity for reflection.

It is also linked to the constant practice of chanting as the incremental development of mindfulness. Mindfulness is cultivated through practice, as explicated in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10) by the Buddha. Through regular practice of reciting chants (Nanamoli & Bodhi, 2009). Awareness becomes stronger through repetition. The practice helps students stay present in their everyday lives. Internalization becomes evident when students successfully transfer the values of the practice beyond the residential setting. It is important to note that students not only chant in the dormitory but also live the values they learn in everyday life. Your data show that students remain disciplined and on course post-dorm days, and this change reflects an internalization of values and has long-term implications.

From the above explanation, we can see that internalization at this stage shows that chanting practice has seeped into the consciousness and character of students. Kelman argues that the students chant because those values have been internalized as their own beliefs. Supporting theories conceptualize this condition as the internalization of values into one's self-identity, which fosters sustained behavioral stability. Abhidhamma also discusses kama, called kusala citta. This stage is made up of the strength of *kusala citta* with *cetasika*, which are influenced by *paññā*, *samādhi*, and *passaddhi*, strengthening the quality. Thus, the internalization stage is not merely the acquisition of values but a manifestation of character that is permanently integrated into the students' self-concept.

5. Students' Attitude Transformation through Chanting Practice

The chanting experiences of students who resided in the Institut Nalanda Jakarta Dormitory exhibited evidence of a gradual transformative process that consisted of behavioral, social, and inner dimensions. These results suggest that students' engagement proceeds based on the compliance, identification, and internalization, which represent a shift from an external point of view to an internal affirmation (Kelman, 1958). Chanting serves as a practice that links institutional conditions with the personal experiences and character development of students in this process. According to Kelman's theory, there are three major ways in which attitude change happens: compliance, identification, and internalization. Compliance is participation motivated by external pressure and expectations; identification is acceptance shaped by social connections; and internalization occurs when values become personally meaningful (Kelman, 1958). But this is a social approach to transformation and does not internalize processes of consciousness itself. This explains the Abhidhamma perspective with *citta* and *cetasika*, which also describes the development of consciousness and mental qualities.

According to Nyanaponika (1949), *citta* in Abhidhamma is consciousness in relation to an object, while *cetasika* are mental factors that simulate the quality of experience. By practicing chanting repeatedly, students get to realize and also feel the variations in the quality of their mental states. The process is the cultivation of positive mental qualities, like *sati*, *saddhā*, and *mettā*; you have to cultivate your ability to control your mind; *sīla*. What this explanation does not imply is that Kelman's stages correspond exactly to Abhidhamma terms, which, in turn, reveal perspectives on the process of transformation. The repetition of chanting also creates habits. A stable environment reinforces repeated behaviors and enables some actions to become part of a daily routine (Wood & Neal, 2007). The results showed students became more disciplined, focused, and organized in handling their day-to-day responsibilities. These habits gradually lead to character formation as the students connect repeated acts with their values and self-awareness.

Buddhist practice teaches that we can cultivate the mind by engaging in repeated acts of mindfulness. *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (MN 10) establishes the role of establishing continuity and practice in mindfulness, and the *Kālāma Sutta* (AN 3.65) is understood through experience and reflection (Bodhi, 2020b). Such principles lend credence to the conclusion that transformation is an outcome of living experience, not mere pedagogy. This study proposes the Attitude Change Pyramid, drawing of empirical evidence, Kelman's theory, and the Abhidhamma framework. It depicts students as moving through stages, starting out with chant practice as an external experience and, through awareness development, to fully internalized values manifested in the attitude and everyday behavior of the student (Oman et al., 2022).

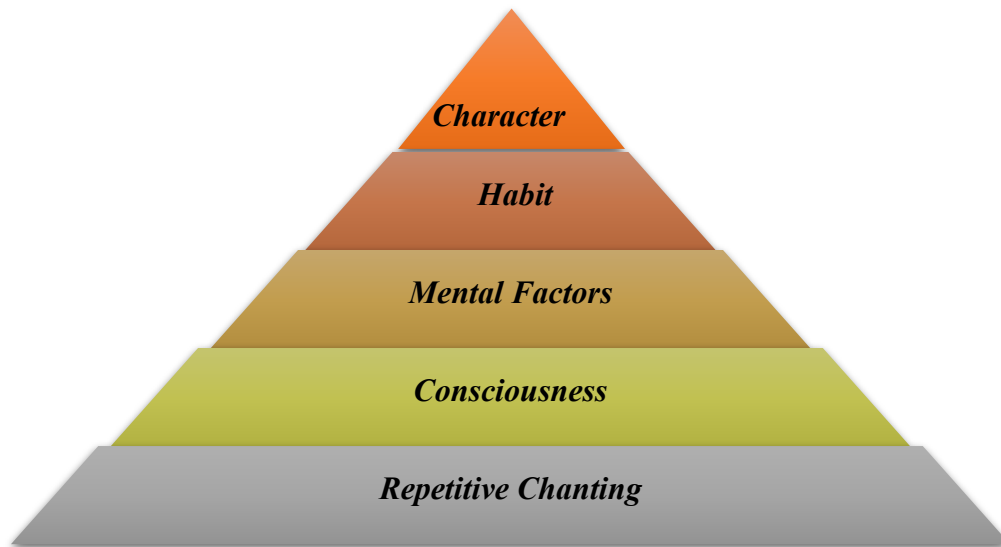


Figure 1. Attitude Change Pyramid (Researcher, 2026)

The Attitude Change Pyramid Model shows that chanting experiences become more intrinsic, building internal character in our students from the outside in. The design sees the pyramid take on a notion of emergence, where surface meets substance in an ascending relationship. Chanting at the lowest layer is positioned as a cyclical practice that then forms the basis for the entire process. The practice is repeated regularly and within the housing system's structure, so it is a key factor facilitating students' participation. Through repetitive participation, it creates stable patterns of activity and provides the conditions for the emergence of deeper mental processes. Not only does the chanting repeat, but it also plays a role in establishing behavioral patterns and routines while giving students an opportunity to practice awareness and reflection at their own pace through the activity (Bernardi et al., 2001). The subsequent layer corresponds to *citta* (consciousness) as the first level of reaction after the chant experience has manifested itself. Every time a person chants, the consciousness related to the experience and action is created. Accordingly, while you are still at this relatively primitive level and subject to conditioning by external circumstances such as dorm rules, timetables, and social forces. But through constant repetition and active engagement, awareness is very slowly built towards a more desirable course. Instead of just being physically present during the activity, students are starting to recognize and reflect on the experiences that occur as part of the practice. And this is where the chanting assumes a form of mediation; an interaction of external faculties directly affecting our internal awareness functions (Analayo, 2024).

This awareness is then refined into the stage of *cetasika* (or mental qualities) or what some refer to as mental states in conjunction with every conscious experience. Now, at this point, you no longer experience chanting as just something boring but instead are affected by specific states of mentality. The practice gradually associates consciousness with such factors of mindfulness (*sati*), faith (*saddhā*), and loving-kindness (*mettā*) through continuous engagement with it (Nyanaponika, 1949). The change shows that students are beginning to experience chanting at the next level, where consciousness that was earlier more reactive becomes more premeditated, meaningful, and grounded in self-

reflection. *Cetasika* (mental factors) is the significant part of their development that growing mindful practice brings out in addition to awareness (Gu et al., 2015).

The next layer shows how habits are formed as a consequence of the constant interplay of *citta* and *cetasika*. When you act on mindsets repeatedly, these tend to become your go-to patterns and behaviors. They not only engage in chanting because of external expectations; rather, they begin to perform it simply as a daily routine of their lives. Now the situation has moved from being situationally involved to being habituated: behavior is becoming increasingly natural and integrated into students' lives. Discipline is cultivated through repetition, and routine shapes day-to-day behavior. At the top of the pyramid, character formation is a product of the end result of that transformation. Character is a manifestation of mental habits that are now almost fixed in the person. Students show improvements in self-control, behaviors, social competence, and emotional regulation (McMahan, 2008). The values taught through chanting practice are evident in the climate of our dormitory and are also reflected in daily life across broader society. The character gets more solid and lasting as these values become more woven into the personal awareness of students.

More generally, this is consistent with the idea that chanting is not simply a ritual activity but a transformational mechanism with an orderly external-to-internal pathway. It first goes from chanting as of practice to developing the mind, building good qualities, then through habitual repetition, and ultimately establishing your character. The pyramid structure reinforces the idea that every layer relies on the previous one and therefore cannot be built autonomously, since character is formed through history. It illustrates how a simple practice like chanting can bring out beneficial changes in the consciousness, behavior, and character of your students. Using this explanation, the chanting transformation model illustrates that learners progress from external involvement to internal transformation during this process. According to Kelman, there are three processes of attitude change: compliance, identification, and internalization. The process of establishing habits goes beyond repeated behaviours crystallising into patterns, as habit formation theory explains; however, the Buddhist view elaborates this process via *citta* and *cetasika*, which inform or even dictate the quality of consciousness during this process. Practicing repeatedly is the foundation for awareness and understanding through direct experience (Gethin, 2010).

Thus, the primary significance of this study lies in its description of the way by which chanting functions as a systematic mechanism in the projection of students' consciousness and character. I reviewed how external religion is transforming internal values, personal awareness, and sustainable character formation through a data-driven view informed by Kelman's attitude transformation theory and the Abhidhamma perspective.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the character development of students at the Nalanda Institute Dormitory develops through the routine practice of chanting mantras, with gradual transformations in behavior, social interaction, and inner awareness. In short, chanting mantras is no longer just a personal religious aspect. Character education has a big impact on every habit, every value in life, and mental quality. According to Kelman's Attitude Change Theory, this process happens in three stages: compliance, identification,

and internalization. Students start by meeting the institution's expectations; over time, through repeated experience, chanting mantras becomes a practice that strengthens care, emotional regulation, responsibility, discipline, and awareness.

The nature of character formation is elaborated through the Abhidhamma concepts of *citta* and *cetasika*, which are the processes by which consciousness and mental properties are cultivated over time. Chanting regularly helps with the growth of beneficent mental factors like: mindfulness (*sati*), faith (*saddhā*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), one-pointedness or concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Thus, it is not only the outward behavior that changes, but chanting also cultivates inner awareness and a resilient character. This research contributes to integrating Kelman's view on attitude change intertwined with the Abhidhamma view that character is a process of social experience (dependent origination) and development (inner experience). Kelman talks about moving from outside influence to internal acceptance, and Abhidhamma gives us knowledge of the evolution of consciousness and mental qualities.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that chanting practice fosters character change through the interlocking mechanisms of habit, social interaction, and mental cultivation. The study's principal contribution is the Attitude Change Pyramid, which integrates Kelman's social account of attitude change with the Abhidhamma analysis of consciousness to model the movement from externally prescribed practice to internalized character. This integrated lens advances the study of Buddhist character education and offers a transferable framework for understanding religiously grounded character formation in other traditions. The study is not without limitations: it draws on a small, single-site sample of six students and relies on self-reported experience, so its findings are analytically rather than statistically generalizable. Future research could test the proposed model with larger, more diverse samples, extend it to other religious and contemplative traditions, and adopt longitudinal designs to trace the internalization process over time.

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