An Evaluation of the Availability of Recommended Books for the Buddhist Psychology Degree Program: A Case Study

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Abstract

This study assesses the accessibility of recommended texts for the Buddhist Psychology degree program at the University of Kelaniya, emphasizing the sufficiency of the Main Library's collection. The study utilized a descriptive design, incorporating the official recommended book list of 255 titles sourced from the Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies. We used the Main Library's Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) to see if each title was available. The results show that there is a big gap in the Main Library's collection: only 78 books (30.6%) were available, while 177 books (69.4%) were not. Most of the available titles (67.9%) were published before 2000, which shows that there aren't many new books. The collection had a fairly even split between languages, with 51.3% in Sinhala and 48.7% in English. Most titles (90.2%) could be found in both the lending and reference sections. However, the number of copies varied, with more than half of the books only having one or two copies.In conclusion, the study reveals a significant disparity between the suggested reading materials and the existing library collections, creating obstacles for students and researchers. It says that the university Main Library should focus on getting missing books, adding new ones, and getting more copies of popular books to improve the quality of resources and academic support for the degree program.

Keywords: Academic library collection, Book availability, Buddhist Psychology, Library resources

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Introduction

Buddhist psychology, as an emerging academic field, integrates Buddhist philosophical thought with modern psychological perspectives. Rooted in the Abhidhamma and other canonical texts of the Tipiṭaka, it offers a sophisticated model of the human mind by analyzing processes such as *citta* (mind), *vedanā* (feeling), *saññā* (perception), *saṅkhāra* (mental formations), and *viññāṇa* (consciousness). These concepts provide not only a theoretical foundation but also practical tools for addressing psychological suffering, cultivating ethical behavior, and fostering mental well-being. Scholars such as Bodhi (2000) and Analayo (2016) emphasize that Buddhist psychology presents a systematic account of mental phenomena that long predates the development of modern psychological theories.

Unlike Western psychology and traditional medicine, which often emphasize behavior modification, Buddhist psychology focuses on identifying the underlying causes of suffering and offering pathways to liberation. Core principles such as the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) form the foundation of its psychological analysis (Olendzki, 2010). As global interest in mindfulness and contemplative practices has expanded, Buddhist psychology has increasingly influenced counseling, psychotherapy, and mental health interventions (Germer et al., 2013).

The growing recognition of Buddhist Psychology has led to its incorporation into university curricula worldwide, bridging traditional Buddhist knowledge with modern therapeutic approaches. In Sri Lanka, it has developed as an important subfield within Buddhist and Pali Studies, reflecting both cultural heritage and international academic trends. The University of Kelaniya has played a pioneering role by introducing a Buddhist Psychology Honours degree program through its Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies. This program equips graduates with a dual grounding in Buddhist and psychological principles, preparing them for careers in education, counseling, clinical psychology, spiritual care, and community-based mental health programs, as well as for contributing to policy development and educational reforms.

However, the success of such academic programs depends heavily on the adequacy of library resources. University libraries serve as essential infrastructures for knowledge dissemination, research, and independent learning. Prior studies on library collections emphasize that access to recommended textbooks and reference materials is crucial for ensuring program quality, supporting research capacity, and sustaining institutional competitiveness (IFLA, 2015). In Sri Lanka, challenges such as budgetary limitations, acquisition delays, and outdated holdings have often restricted libraries' ability to meet these demands.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to address a critical gap by evaluating whether the Main Library of the University of Kelaniya possesses the recommended books for the Buddhist Psychology degree program. Specifically, it assesses the availability, publication year, language distribution, library location, and number of copies of the recommended titles. The findings are intended to guide collection development strategies, ensuring that the library adequately supports the academic and research needs of students and faculty.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design as the primary research strategy to evaluate the adequacy of the University of Kelaniya Main Library in providing the recommended books for the Buddhist Psychology Honours degree program.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of the entire set of 255 recommended titles prescribed for the Buddhist Psychology curriculum by the Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies. Since the number of titles was finite and manageable, the study employed a census approach, meaning the entire population of recommended books was taken as the sample without further sampling reduction.

Data Collection and Sampling Technique

The official recommended book list was obtained directly from the Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies. Each title was systematically checked against the University of Kelaniya Main Library's Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). The search was conducted using bibliographic details such as title, author(s), edition, and ISBN (when available). Only titles that matched or closely corresponded with the recommended references were marked as available. Books not appearing in the OPAC were considered unavailable.

Analytical Techniques and Tools

The collected data were systematically coded and tabulated for analysis. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software was used to conduct the descriptive statistical analysis. The data were evaluated through:
Frequency counts and percentages of available vs. unavailable books.
Distribution of books by year of publication (before vs. after 2000).
Classification of books by language (Sinhala vs. English).
Categorization of books by location in the library (lending, reference, or both).
Distribution of number of copies per title (1–2, 3–5, 5 or more).
Results were presented using SPSS-generated tables.

Limitations

The scope of this study was restricted to:
The official recommended reading list of the Buddhist Psychology Honours degree program.
The OPAC records of the University of Kelaniya main library.
Books located in other university branches, interlibrary networks, or digital repositories were excluded from the analysis.

Results and Discussion

The descriptive analysis shows that only 30.6% of the recommended books are in the University of Kelaniya's main library, while 69.4% are not (Fig 1). This shows that there is a big gap in the collection, which could hurt the quality of learning materials and slow down students' academic progress.

Availability	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Available	78	30.6	30.6	30.6
Not Available	177	69.4	69.4	100.0
Total	255	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 01: Book Availability

These descriptive statistical results show that most of the recommended books for the Buddhist Psychology degree program (67.9%) were published before 2000. Only 32.1% were published after 2000 (Fig 2). This uneven distribution shows that the library has more older books than new ones. The absence of more recent publications indicates that students might have restricted access to updated information, modern viewpoints, and recent research advancements in the discipline. As a result, this lack of access to newer resources could have a negative effect on the program's academic rigor, quality, and relevance, highlighting the necessity of addressing this issue.

Publication Year	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Before 2000	53	67.9	67.9	67.9
After 2000	25	32.1	32.1	100.0
Total	78	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 02 : Publication Year Distribution

The descriptive findings show that the recommended books are almost evenly split between Sinhala (51.3%) and English (48.7%) (Fig 3). This means that the library at the University of Kelaniya has kept a bilingual collection that makes it easier to find resources in both local and international contexts. The fact that there are almost as many Sinhala materials as English ones means that students can find resources in both their native language and in academic writing from around the world. But even with this balance, there are still too few books available (78 out of 255), which shows a bigger problem of not having enough resources for the degree program.

Language	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Sinhala	40	51.3	51.3	51.3
English	38	48.7	48.7	100.0
Total	78	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 03 : Language of Available Books

The descriptive analysis shows that most of the recommended books (90.2%) can be found in both the Lending and Reference sections of the main library. Only a small number of titles (5.6% for Lending and 4.2% for Reference) are only available in one of these sections (Fig 4).

Library Section	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lending	4	5.6	5.6	5.6
Reference	3	4.2	4.2	9.8
Both Sections	71	90.2	90.2	100.0
Total	78	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 04 : Location in Library

This dual placement suggests that the library has worked to make core academic materials as easy to find and use as possible by making sure that most recommended titles can be borrowed or read on-site. But the fact that there are so few titles that can only be found in Lending or Reference shows that there aren't enough resources for each section, which could be a problem for students who only have one type of access.

The descriptive statistics show that only 1–2 copies of most of the recommended books (51.3%) are available in the library. 24.4% of books have 3 to 5 copies, and another 24.4% have 5 or more copies (Fig 5). This means that there aren't enough copies of each title.

Copies per Book	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
5 or more	19	24.4	24.4	24.4
3-5	19	24.4	24.4	48.7
1-2	40	51.3	51.3	100.0
Total	78	100.0	100.0	100.0

Figure 05 : Number of Copies per Book

This uneven distribution of copies suggests that there are enough copies of some core titles, but not enough copies of a lot of other books. As a result, students may have trouble getting to important resources at the same time, especially for books they use often, which makes it harder for everyone to get to learning materials.

Conclusion

This study examined the accessibility of required texts for the Buddhist Psychology Honours degree program offered by the Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies at the University of Kelaniya. The findings revealed a significant disparity between the recommended reading list and the actual collection of the main library. Fewer than half of the prescribed titles were available, demonstrating a notable gap in resources essential for teaching, learning, and research.

A considerable proportion of the available collection comprised works published before the year 2000. While this reflects the library's strength in preserving a valuable body of classical literature, it also highlights the lack of contemporary publications that represent current scholarship and developments in the field. On a positive note, the collection displays a balanced blend of Sinhala and English titles, thereby supporting both local and international academic engagement. In terms of accessibility, most of the available volumes are placed in the lending section, which facilitates borrowing, while a smaller number of rare or antiquarian texts are preserved in the reference section for on-site consultation.

Overall, the study demonstrates that the existing library collection falls short of meeting the academic and research requirements of the Buddhist Psychology program. Unless addressed, these limitations may constrain student learning, reduce opportunities for critical engagement with current knowledge, and affect the academic standing of the program.

Recommendation

Acquisition of Missing Recommended Books

The library should prioritize the acquisition of recommended titles that are currently unavailable. This task should be jointly undertaken by the Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies and the Main Library to ensure alignment with curricular needs.

Integration of Recent Publications

To enrich the collection with updated scholarship, the library should actively acquire publications released after 2000. Special attention should be given to authoritative and contemporary works in Buddhist psychology to ensure students' access to current knowledge and global perspectives.

Increase in the Number of Copies

Many recommended titles are represented by only one or two copies, restricting access during periods of high demand such as examinations, assignments, and thesis preparation. The library should increase the number of copies of high-demand titles to guarantee equitable access for all students.

By addressing these areas, the University of Kelaniya's main library can significantly strengthen its collection, thereby enhancing the quality, relevance, and accessibility of academic resources for students and researchers in the Buddhist Psychology degree program.

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