

Developing *Sīla* Character through *Mindfulness* and *Kalyāṇamittā*: Evidence from Buddhist Students in a Multicultural School

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e-ISSN: 2964-2981

ARMADA : Jurnal Penelitian Multidisiplin

<https://ejournal.45mataram.ac.id/index.php/armada>

Vol. 04, No. 09 September, 2026

Page: 4968-4982

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.55681/armada.v4i9.3695>

Article History:

Received: Juli 02, 2026

Revised: Agustus 27, 2026

Accepted: September 19, 2026

Abstract : Formation of *sīla* character among adolescents represents an aspect of Buddhist education, particularly within multicultural school environments that present social influences. This study aims to analyse the effects of mindfulness and *kalyāṇamittā* on *sīla* character among Buddhist students at Xin Zhong Junior High School Surabaya. The research employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design involving 72 students through total sampling. Data were collected using a Likert scale questionnaire that fulfilled validity and reliability tests, then analysed through descriptive statistics, classical assumption tests, and multiple linear regression. The results indicate that mindfulness has a significant effect on *sīla* character ($\beta=0.396$; $p=0.009$), while *kalyāṇamittā* also has a significant effect ($\beta=0.501$; $p=0.001$). Simultaneously, both variables significantly contribute 77.2% ($R^2=0.772$). These findings show that *sīla* character development is influenced by self-awareness and social support. Integration of mindfulness and *kalyāṇamittā* becomes a strategy for strengthening Buddhist character education in multicultural environments.

Keywords: Mindfulness; *Kalyāṇamittā*; *Sīla* Character; Buddhist Education; Character Education; Adolescents

Abstrak : Pembentukan karakter *sīla* pada remaja merupakan aspek penting dalam pendidikan Agama Buddha, terutama di lingkungan sekolah multikultural yang menghadirkan berbagai pengaruh sosial. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh mindfulness dan *kalyāṇamittā* terhadap karakter *sīla* pada siswa Buddhis di SMP Xin Zhong Surabaya. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain korelasional yang melibatkan 72 siswa melalui teknik total sampling. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan angket skala Likert yang telah memenuhi uji validitas dan reliabilitas, kemudian dianalisis melalui statistik deskriptif, uji asumsi klasik, dan regresi linier berganda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mindfulness berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap karakter *sīla* ($\beta=0,396$; $p=0,009$), sedangkan *kalyāṇamittā* juga berpengaruh positif dan signifikan ($\beta=0,501$; $p=0,001$). Secara simultan, kedua variabel berpengaruh signifikan dengan kontribusi sebesar 77,2% ($R^2=0,772$). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pengembangan karakter *sīla* dipengaruhi oleh kesadaran diri dan dukungan hubungan sosial yang positif. Integrasi mindfulness dan *kalyāṇamittā* menjadi strategi penting dalam penguatan

pendidikan karakter Buddhis di lingkungan multikultural.

Kata kunci: *Mindfulness; Kalyāṇamittā; Karakter Śīla; Pendidikan Agama Buddha; Pendidikan Karakter; Remaja.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed many aspects of adolescents' lives, particularly in communication, information access, social interaction, and identity formation. While technological progress has expanded learning opportunities, strengthened social connectivity, and facilitated access to knowledge, it has also introduced significant challenges to adolescents' moral development. The widespread use of social media, exposure to unverified information, and the predominance of virtual interactions have contributed to impulsive behaviour, weakened self-control, reduced empathy, increasing peer conflicts, and declining commitment to moral values in everyday life (APJII, 2024; OECD, 2021; UNICEF, 2021). These challenges highlight the need for educational approaches that cultivate not only academic competence but also moral integrity and ethical responsibility among young people.

Character education has increasingly been recognized as an essential strategy for preparing adolescents to respond ethically to these contemporary challenges. Rather than focusing solely on the acquisition of moral knowledge, character education promotes the integration of cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions that enable individuals to translate ethical principles into everyday practice. Lickona (2012) proposed that character develops through the interaction of *moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action*, while Malti et al. (2021) argued that adolescents' moral development depends on the interaction between psychological maturity, self-regulation, and the quality of the social environment. Insani et al. (2025) further emphasized that moral intelligence serves as a fundamental capacity for developing responsible individuals who are capable of addressing the increasingly complex challenges of the modern world. Collectively, these perspectives indicate that effective character education requires the integration of individual self-regulation with supportive social environments that facilitate the internalization of moral values.

Within Buddhist education, the concept of *śīla* character provides an ethical foundation for moral development by regulating thoughts, speech, and actions according to the Dhamma. Harvey (2013) and Bodhi (2005) explained that cultivating *śīla* is a conscious process of self-discipline that nurtures honesty, responsibility, compassion, self-control, and respect for all living beings. Previous studies further indicate that the development of Buddhist character is influenced not only by individual moral awareness but also by family, school, and educational environments that consistently reinforce ethical values (Gunawan, 2022). Sankichcha Mahathero (2025) further emphasized that *śīla* serves as the basis for developing wisdom and inner tranquillity, whereas Nasrin (2023) demonstrated the continuing relevance of Buddhist ethical values in fostering the moral character of younger generations. Similarly, Nyaupane et al. (2024) reported that a stronger understanding of Buddhist ethics is associated with higher levels of moral behaviour among secondary school students. These findings suggest that *śīla* character extends beyond its spiritual dimension and represents an important educational construct for cultivating ethical behaviour within contemporary multicultural societies.

The development of *śīla* character is influenced by the interaction between intrapersonal and interpersonal factors. Developmental psychology suggests that moral behaviour is shaped not only by an individual's understanding of ethical norms but also by the ability to regulate thoughts, emotions, and behaviour while interacting within supportive social environments. Accordingly, the internalization of moral values depends on the continuous interaction between self-regulation and constructive social relationships, allowing *śīla* character to develop through both personal discipline and social reinforcement.

Among the intrapersonal factors that contribute to *śīla* character, *mindfulness* has received considerable scholarly attention because it strengthens awareness of thoughts, emotions, and behavioural responses. Kabat-Zinn (2003) defined *mindfulness* as the awareness that arises through intentionally paying attention to present-moment experiences in a non-judgmental

manner. Brown and Ryan (2003) further explained that *mindfulness* enables individuals to observe internal experiences more objectively, thereby reducing impulsive reactions and improving moral decision-making. Creswell (2017) added that *mindfulness* enhances emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, attentional control, and self-regulation, all of which contribute to adaptive and ethically responsible behaviour. Beyond its psychological perspective, *mindfulness* is increasingly recognised as a practice rooted in religious and spiritual traditions. Within Buddhism, *sati* functions not only as a means of developing awareness but also as a foundation for ethical cultivation and spiritual development (Gargiulo, 2023). These theoretical perspectives position *mindfulness* as a fundamental psychological and spiritual mechanism supporting the development of *sīla* character through enhanced self-management.

Accumulating empirical evidence supports this theoretical perspective. Silva Lemos *et al.* (2025) demonstrated that *mindfulness* interventions consistently improve executive functioning, attention, and decision-making abilities. Jobin *et al.* (2025) reported positive effects of *mindfulness* programmes on adolescents' mental health, emotional regulation, and psychological well-being. Phan *et al.* (2022) found that school-based *mindfulness* interventions enhance students' social-emotional competence, whereas Su and Luo (2024) highlighted their contribution to psychological resilience and overall well-being. Santi *et al.* (2024) further demonstrated that *mindfulness* practices improve the quality of classroom learning by increasing students' engagement and learning experiences. Likewise, Mayani *et al.* (2026) found that learning *sīla* combined with loving-kindness meditation contributed to positive behavioural changes among elementary school students. Duda *et al.* (2024) further demonstrated neurophysiological changes associated with improved attention and self-control following *mindfulness* practice. Similarly, Sharma and Gupta (2021), Monsillion *et al.* (2023), Lin and Zhao (2025), Noor *et al.* (2025), and Rahmad (2025) consistently reported that *mindfulness* enhances concentration, self-discipline, decision-making, and character development among students. Collectively, these findings indicate that the benefits of *mindfulness* extend beyond psychological well-being to the development of moral behaviour and responsible character.

From a Buddhist perspective, *mindfulness* is understood as *sati*, or Right *Mindfulness*, one of the elements of the Noble Eightfold Path. Anālayo (2003) explained that *sati* enables individuals to observe thoughts, feelings, and experiences with clarity, thereby preventing the mind from being dominated by greed, hatred, and delusion. Consequently, *mindfulness* functions not merely as a cognitive process but also as a spiritual discipline that cultivates wisdom and behaviour consistent with the Dhamma. Empirical evidence from Buddhist education further reinforces this perspective. Partono *et al.* (2020), Chowmas *et al.* (2021), Chandra *et al.* (2023), Ferry *et al.* (2023), Anna *et al.* (2023), Medhācitto *et al.* (2024), Fendy *et al.* (2025), and Lie *et al.* (2025) consistently reported that *mindfulness* practice contributes to spiritual development, emotional intelligence, prosocial behaviour, learning satisfaction, self-efficacy, discipline, and ethical conduct among Buddhist students. Taken together, these theoretical and empirical findings suggest that *mindfulness* functions as a fundamental intrapersonal mechanism that facilitates the development of *sīla* character.

In addition to intrapersonal self-regulation, the development of *sīla* character is strongly influenced by the quality of adolescents' social relationships. During adolescence, peer groups become increasingly important as contexts in which individuals construct their identities, develop interpersonal competencies, and internalize social and moral values. According to Social Learning Theory, behaviour develops through processes of observation, imitation, and reinforcement within the social environment (Bandura, 1977). Consequently, positive peer relationships provide adolescents with opportunities to learn appropriate social norms, receive emotional support, observe moral role models, and strengthen behaviours consistent with ethical values.

Empirical evidence consistently supports the importance of peer relationships in adolescents' moral and psychosocial development. Positive peer interactions have been associated with improvements in social-emotional competence, problem-solving abilities, learning motivation, classroom engagement, interpersonal relationships, prosocial behaviour, and psychological well-being (Mitic *et al.*, 2021; Malti *et al.*, 2021; Shao *et al.*, 2024; Putri & Yendi, 2024; Duncan *et al.*,

2009; Main et al., 2025). Duncan et al. (2009) further suggested that mindful relationships promote constructive communication, emotional support, and prosocial behaviour, indicating that peer interactions contribute not only to social adjustment but also to adolescents' moral development. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that supportive peer environments facilitate the internalization of moral values that underpin the development of *sīla* character.

Within Buddhist education, supportive peer relationships are conceptualized through *kalyāṇamittā*, commonly translated as spiritual friendship. Rather than referring merely to interpersonal closeness, *kalyāṇamittā* emphasizes relationships grounded in virtue, moral exemplarity, mutual encouragement, and shared commitment to the practice of the Dhamma. The *Upaddha Sutta* identifies spiritual friendship as an indispensable element of the holy life because good friends encourage the cultivation of wisdom and virtue (Bodhi, 2000). Likewise, Keown (2005) argued that moral development in Buddhism is nurtured within communities that collectively practice and reinforce the values of the Dhamma. Accordingly, *kalyāṇamittā* functions not only as a social relationship but also as an educational process through which ethical values are continuously strengthened through guidance, mutual support, and moral exemplification.

Evidence from Buddhist educational settings further reinforces the significance of *kalyāṇamittā* in developing *sīla* character. Previous studies have shown that spiritual friendship enhances students' discipline, responsibility, learning motivation, and ethical behaviour (Dahlia et al., 2022; Amaliana & Mujiyanto, 2025). Tiani et al. (2024) further reported that students' learning responsibility is positively associated with discipline in Buddhist education, suggesting that supportive peer relationships strengthen students' commitment to ethical behaviour. Nyaupane et al. (2024) reported that greater understanding of Buddhist ethics is positively associated with moral behaviour among secondary school students, whereas Sankichcha Mahathero (2025) and Tudu and Tiwari (2025) emphasized that the cultivation of *sīla* character requires a supportive social environment in which virtues are continuously reinforced through positive role models and mutual encouragement. Collectively, these theoretical and empirical findings position *kalyāṇamittā* as a fundamental interpersonal mechanism that complements *mindfulness* in fostering the development of *sīla* character among Buddhist adolescents.

Taken together, existing studies consistently identify *mindfulness* as an intrapersonal mechanism that strengthens self-regulation, emotional regulation, and moral behaviour, whereas positive peer relationships conceptualized in Buddhist education as *kalyāṇamittā* serve as an interpersonal mechanism that facilitates moral development through social learning, ethical guidance, and virtuous role modelling. Although substantial evidence supports the contribution of each construct independently, the relationship between these two complementary mechanisms has received limited attention within an integrated framework of Buddhist character education. This limitation reveals three important research gaps. First, an empirical gap exists because previous studies have predominantly examined *mindfulness* and peer relationships separately, while their combined contribution to the development of *sīla* character has rarely been investigated. Second, a conceptual gap remains because existing literature has not adequately integrated intrapersonal self-regulation and interpersonal moral support into a unified theoretical framework grounded in Buddhist educational philosophy. Third, a contextual gap persists because empirical evidence involving Buddhist students in multicultural schools in Indonesia remains limited despite the growing importance of inclusive character education in culturally diverse educational settings.

To address these gaps, this study proposes an Integrated Buddhist Moral Development Model, which conceptualizes *mindfulness* as an intrapersonal mechanism and *kalyāṇamittā* as an interpersonal mechanism that operate synergistically to foster the development of *sīla* character among Buddhist students. Unlike previous studies that have investigated these constructs independently, the proposed model explains how self-awareness and spiritually supportive peer relationships interact to strengthen the internalization of Buddhist ethical values. By integrating contemporary psychological perspectives on self-regulation with Buddhist ethical principles and spiritual friendship, the model provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding the development of *sīla* character within multicultural educational contexts.

Accordingly, this study investigates the effects of *mindfulness* and *kalyāṇamittā*, both individually and simultaneously, on the development of *sīla* character among Buddhist students at SMP Xin Zhong Surabaya, a multicultural private school in Indonesia. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically by extending the literature on Buddhist character education through an integrated conceptual framework that combines intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of moral development. Practically, the study provides empirical evidence to support the design of more holistic character education programmes that cultivate self-awareness while strengthening morally supportive peer relationships to promote the development of *sīla* character in multicultural school environments. This recommendation is consistent with previous findings that the quality of educational services and the professionalism of Buddhist education teachers contribute to students' learning outcomes and character development (Tansel et al., 2022).

METHODS

The study was conducted at SMP Xin Zhong Surabaya, a multicultural private junior high school in Surabaya, Indonesia, during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The school provides religious education according to students' respective faiths within a multicultural learning environment. The present study focused exclusively on students who identified as Buddhists. The target population comprised all Buddhist students enrolled in Grades VII, VIII, and IX. Because the population consisted of only 72 students, a total sampling technique was adopted, whereby all eligible students were included as research participants. This approach ensured complete representation of the target population while eliminating sampling bias associated with participant selection. Data were collected using three structured self-report questionnaires designed to measure *mindfulness*, *kalyāṇamittā*, and *sīla* character. All instruments employed a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating higher levels of the respective construct.

The *mindfulness* instrument was developed based on the theoretical frameworks proposed by Kabat-Zinn (2003) and Brown and Ryan (2003). The questionnaire assessed students' awareness of present-moment experiences, intentional regulation of attention, non-reactive observation of thoughts and emotions, and non-judgmental acceptance of ongoing experiences. Within this study, *mindfulness* was conceptualized as an intrapersonal mechanism that supports self-regulation and ethical behaviour. The *kalyāṇamittā* instrument was developed from the Buddhist concept of spiritual friendship. The questionnaire assessed students' perceptions of peer relationships characterized by moral guidance, positive role modelling, mutual support, empathy, and encouragement to practice Buddhist values. Accordingly, *kalyāṇamittā* was conceptualized as an interpersonal mechanism through which positive social relationships facilitate moral learning and ethical development. The dependent variable, *sīla* character, was measured using an instrument developed from the ethical principles embodied in the *Pañcasīla*. The questionnaire assessed students' practice of Buddhist moral values in everyday life, including honesty, responsibility, self-discipline, respect for others, self-control, and compassion. Higher scores indicated stronger internalization and implementation of Buddhist ethical principles. The operationalization of the research variables is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Operationalization of Research Variables

Variable	Operational Definition	Main Indicators	Scale	References
<i>Mindfulness</i>	Awareness of present-moment experiences accompanied by intentional attention and non-judgmental acceptance.	Present-moment awareness, attention regulation, non-judgmental acceptance	Five-point Likert	Kabat-Zinn (2003); Brown & Ryan (2003)
<i>Kalyāṇamittā</i>	Spiritual friendship that supports moral and personal development through positive social relationships.	Moral guidance, positive peer influence, mutual support, encouragement in ethical practice	Five-point Likert	Buddhist concept of spiritual friendship

<i>Śīla</i> <i>character</i>	Internalization and practice of Buddhist moral values based on the <i>Pañcasīla</i> in everyday life.	Honesty, responsibility, self-discipline, respect for others, self-control, compassion	Five-point Likert	Buddhist ethics (<i>Pañcasīla</i>)
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The research instruments were developed through a literature-based process using the theoretical frameworks underpinning each construct. Before the main survey was conducted, a pilot study involving 22 respondents with characteristics comparable to those of the target population was undertaken to evaluate the psychometric quality of the instruments. Construct validity was examined using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation, whereas internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. Only questionnaire items that met the predetermined validity criteria were retained for the main study. The detailed results of the validity and reliability analyses are presented in the Results section. Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the school administration before data collection commenced. Participants were informed about the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of their responses.

The questionnaires were administered during scheduled classroom sessions under the supervision of the researcher using standardized administration procedures. Participants were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaires, and clarification was provided whenever necessary to ensure that all items were clearly understood. No personally identifiable information was collected, and all responses were anonymized prior to analysis. Data were analysed using *IBM SPSS Statistics*. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, minimum values, and maximum values, were calculated to summarize the characteristics of the research variables. Before hypothesis testing, the assumptions of multiple linear regression were evaluated through tests of normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity. These diagnostic procedures were performed to verify that the data satisfied the assumptions required for regression analysis.

The proposed regression model was specified as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$$

Where Y represents *śīla* character, X_1 denotes *mindfulness*, X_2 denotes *kalyāṇamittā*, β_0 is the intercept, β_1 and β_2 are the regression coefficients, and ε represents the random error term. Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the individual and simultaneous effects of *mindfulness* and *kalyāṇamittā* on *śīla* character. The significance of the regression coefficients was evaluated using the t -test, whereas the overall model fit was assessed using the F -test. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated to estimate the proportion of variance in *śīla* character explained jointly by the two independent variables. All statistical analyses were conducted using a significance level of $\alpha = .05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participant Characteristics

The study involved 72 Buddhist students enrolled in Grades VII, VIII, and IX at SMP Xin Zhong Surabaya. Because the target population consisted of only 72 students, a total sampling technique was employed, ensuring that all eligible students were included in the study. This approach provided complete representation of the study population and minimized sampling bias. The distribution of participants by grade level is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Grade	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Kelas VII	24	33
Kelas VIII	31	43
Kelas IX	17	24
Total	72	100

Source: Authors' data processing (2026).

Grade VIII students constituted the largest proportion of participants (43%), followed by Grade VII (33%) and Grade IX (24%). The inclusion of students from all three grade levels ensured that the sample adequately represented the Buddhist student population at SMP Xin Zhong Surabaya, thereby providing a comprehensive basis for subsequent statistical analyses.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the distribution of the three research variables: *mindfulness*, *kalyāṇamittā*, and *śīla* character. Table 3 presents the minimum values, maximum values, means, and standard deviations for each variable.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<i>Mindfulness</i>	72	70	131	101,47	17,08
<i>Kalyāṇamittā</i>	72	70	124	96,63	14,90
<i>Śīla</i> Character	72	78	151	112,32	17,07

Source: Authors' data processing (2026).

The results indicate that the mean score for *mindfulness* was 101.47 (SD = 17.08), whereas *kalyāṇamittā* had a mean score of 96.63 (SD = 14.90). The highest average score was observed for *śīla* character (M = 112.32, SD = 17.07). Across all variables, the observed minimum and maximum scores demonstrate adequate score variation among participants. Moreover, the standard deviations were substantially lower than their corresponding mean values, indicating a moderate level of score dispersion. These findings suggest that the data were reasonably distributed across respondents and provide an appropriate basis for subsequent inferential analyses.

Regression Assumption Tests

Before conducting multiple linear regression analysis, the assumptions of normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity were examined to verify the suitability of the regression model. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Regression Assumption Tests

Assumption Test	Indicator	Result	Interpretation
Normality	Asymp. Sig. (K-S)	0.200	Normal distribution
Multicollinearity	Tolerance	0.154	No multicollinearity
	VIF	6.496	No multicollinearity
Heteroscedasticity	Sig. (<i>Mindfulness</i>)	0.879	No heteroscedasticity
	Sig. (<i>Kalyāṇamittā</i>)	0.947	No heteroscedasticity

Source: Authors' data processing (2026).

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test produced an Asymp. Sig. value of 0.200, exceeding the significance threshold of .05, indicating that the regression residuals were normally distributed. The multicollinearity assessment yielded a Tolerance value of 0.154 and a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of 6.496, both of which satisfied the commonly accepted criteria for the absence of multicollinearity. The Glejser test further indicated no evidence of heteroscedasticity, with significance values of 0.879 for *mindfulness* and 0.947 for *kalyāṇamittā*, both exceeding .05. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that the assumptions underlying multiple linear regression were satisfied, supporting the validity of the subsequent hypothesis testing.

Effect of *Mindfulness* on *Śīla* Character

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis examining the effect of *mindfulness* on *śīla* character are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Multiple Linear Regression Results for *Mindfulness*

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	16.790	6.439	–	2.607	.011
<i>Mindfulness</i>	0.395	0.147	0.396	2.698	.009

Source: Authors' data processing (2026).

The regression analysis revealed that *mindfulness* significantly predicted *sīla* character ($B = 0.395$, $\beta = 0.396$, $t = 2.698$, $p = .009$). The positive regression coefficient indicates that higher levels of *mindfulness* were associated with higher levels of *sīla* character. Accordingly, Hypothesis 1, which proposed that *mindfulness* has a significant effect on *sīla* character, was supported. The present findings indicate that *mindfulness* plays a significant role in the development of *sīla* character among Buddhist students. The positive regression coefficient suggests that students who demonstrate greater present-moment awareness are more likely to exhibit ethical behaviours consistent with Buddhist moral values. These findings imply that *mindfulness* functions as an intrapersonal mechanism that facilitates self-regulation by enabling individuals to monitor their thoughts, emotions, and actions before responding to everyday situations.

This finding is consistent with the theoretical perspectives proposed by Kabat-Zinn (2003), who defines *mindfulness* as purposeful, present-moment awareness maintained without judgment, and Brown and Ryan (2003), who argue that *mindfulness* promotes reflective awareness that reduces impulsive behaviour. Similarly, Creswell (2017) explains that *mindfulness* strengthens emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, executive functioning, and decision-making, all of which contribute to ethical behaviour by enabling individuals to evaluate the consequences of their actions before acting. The present findings are also consistent with previous empirical studies demonstrating the positive contribution of *mindfulness* to students' personal and socio-emotional development. Silva Lemos et al. (2025) reported that *mindfulness* interventions enhance executive functioning, attention, working memory, and self-control. Likewise, Jobin et al. (2025), Monsillion et al. (2023), Phan et al. (2022), and Su and Luo (2024) found that *mindfulness* promotes psychological well-being, resilience, and socio-emotional competence. Other studies further indicate that *mindfulness* contributes to emotional regulation, reflective thinking, social responsibility, interpersonal relationships, and behavioural self-control (Lin & Zhao, 2025; Noor et al., 2025; Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021; Do & Giang, 2024; Duda et al., 2024). Collectively, these studies support the interpretation that *mindfulness* strengthens the psychological processes underlying ethical judgement and behavioural regulation.

From a Buddhist perspective, these findings reinforce the central role of *sati* as a foundation for ethical conduct. This interpretation is also consistent with Gargiulo (2023), who argues that mindfulness should be understood not merely as a psychological technique but also as a practice rooted in religious and spiritual traditions that supports ethical and spiritual cultivation. As explained by Anālayo (2003), mindfulness enables individuals to observe mental processes objectively, thereby preventing unwholesome mental states such as *lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha* from developing into unethical speech or behaviour. Likewise, Bodhi (2005) emphasizes that sustained mindfulness provides the basis for the cultivation of *sīla* by preserving the purity of thought, speech, and action. Consistent with this perspective, Medhācitto et al. (2024) demonstrate that the practice of *appamāda* through mindfulness strengthens ethical and spiritual development in contemporary life. Together, these perspectives suggest that the cultivation of *sīla* character depends not only on knowledge of moral principles but also on continuous mindful awareness in daily life.

The findings are further supported by studies in Buddhist education. Partono et al. (2020), Chowmas et al. (2021), Chandra et al. (2023), Ferry et al. (2023), Anna et al. (2023), Fendy et al. (2025), and Lie et al. (2025) reported that *mindfulness* contributes to spiritual development, ethical behaviour, social concern, learning satisfaction, emotional intelligence, and self-efficacy. Similarly, Rahmad (2025) found that *mindfulness* practices improve students' discipline and character development, whereas Syafiasani and Rahayu (2022) reported improvements in adolescents' psychological well-being following *mindfulness* training. Moreover, Donald et al. (2019) and

Dunning et al. (2019) demonstrated positive associations between *mindfulness*, empathy, prosocial behaviour, cognitive functioning, mental health, and academic achievement. Taken together, these findings strengthen the conclusion that *mindfulness* serves as a key intrapersonal factor in fostering the development of *sīla* character through enhanced self-awareness, emotional regulation, and behavioural self-control.

Effect of *Kalyāṇamittā* on *Sīla* Character

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis examining the effect of *kalyāṇamittā* on *sīla* character are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Multiple Linear Regression Results for *Kalyāṇamittā*

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	16.790	6.439	–	2.607	.011
<i>Kalyāṇamittā</i>	0.574	0.168	0.501	3.416	.001

Source: Authors' data processing (2026).

The regression analysis indicated that *kalyāṇamittā* significantly predicted *sīla* character ($B = 0.574$, $\beta = 0.501$, $t = 3.416$, $p = .001$). The positive regression coefficient demonstrates that higher levels of *kalyāṇamittā* were associated with stronger *sīla* character among Buddhist students. Moreover, the standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.501$) was larger than that of *mindfulness*, suggesting that *kalyāṇamittā* made a relatively stronger contribution to the prediction of *sīla* character within the proposed regression model. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported. The findings demonstrate that *kalyāṇamittā* plays a significant role in the development of *sīla* character among Buddhist students. Students who experience supportive peer relationships characterized by mutual encouragement, moral guidance, and positive role modelling tend to demonstrate stronger adherence to Buddhist ethical values in their daily lives. These findings suggest that *kalyāṇamittā* functions as an interpersonal mechanism through which social interactions reinforce the internalization and practice of ethical behaviour.

This finding is consistent with Bandura's (1977) *Social Learning Theory*, which proposes that behaviour is acquired through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within social environments. Positive peer relationships provide opportunities for students to observe ethical conduct, receive encouragement to maintain desirable behaviours, and gradually internalize moral values through repeated social interactions. Likewise, Santrock (2024) argues that peer relationships become increasingly influential during adolescence, making the quality of social interactions a critical factor in character development. Supportive peer environments foster responsibility, discipline, empathy, and respect for social norms, whereas negative peer influences may increase the likelihood of behavioural problems and weaken moral commitment.

The present findings are further supported by previous empirical research. Wang et al. (2026) reported that positive peer relationships contribute to adolescents' social-emotional development and school adjustment. Similarly, Zingora and Flache (2025) found that friendships and group norms significantly influence adolescents' attitudes and behaviours. Luo et al. (2023) demonstrated that positive school climates promote prosocial behaviour through social support and resilience, whereas Tefa et al. (2024) showed that supportive peer interactions facilitate the internalization of moral values through role modelling and everyday social experiences. In addition, Nyaupane et al. (2024) reported that students' understanding of Buddhist ethics is strengthened when supported by positive social environments. Collectively, these findings indicate that constructive peer relationships provide an important social context for the development of ethical behaviour.

The findings also align with the Buddhist understanding of *kalyāṇamittā* as an essential foundation for moral and spiritual development. The term *kalyāṇamittā* combines *kalyāṇa* (wholesome or noble) and *mitta* (friend), referring to relationships that encourage progress in ethical and spiritual practice. In the *Upaddha Sutta* (S.II.84), the Buddha emphasized that admirable friendship is not merely one aspect of the holy life but constitutes the whole of the holy

life because it supports the cultivation of wholesome qualities and the practice of the Dhamma. Good friends provide moral guidance, offer constructive feedback, encourage virtuous conduct, and help individuals remain consistent in observing *sīla*. Likewise, Harvey (2013) explains that Buddhist moral development is cultivated within supportive communities where ethical values are reinforced through shared practice and mutual encouragement. These perspectives reinforce the present findings by highlighting that the development of *sīla* character depends not only on individual awareness but also on the quality of the surrounding social environment. This interpretation is also supported by Tian et al. (2024), who found that students' learning responsibility was positively associated with discipline in Buddhist education. These findings suggest that supportive peer relationships may reinforce students' responsibility and discipline as essential components of *sīla* character.

Simultaneous Effects of *Mindfulness* and *Kalyāṇamittā* on *Sīla* Character

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis examining the simultaneous effects of *mindfulness* and *kalyāṇamittā* on *sīla* character are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Multiple Linear Regression Model

Statistic	Value
R	0.878
R ²	0.772
Adjusted R ²	0.765
Standard Error of the Estimate	8.272
F	116.616
p	.000

Source: Authors' data processing (2026).

The regression model demonstrated a strong relationship between the independent variables and *sīla* character ($R = 0.878$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.772$) indicates that 77.2% of the variance in *sīla* character was jointly explained by *mindfulness* and *kalyāṇamittā*, whereas the remaining 22.8% was attributable to factors not included in the present study. The adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.765$) further confirmed the robustness of the model after accounting for the number of predictors and sample size. The overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 116.616$, $p < .001$), indicating that *mindfulness* and *kalyāṇamittā* jointly predicted *sīla* character. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported. The present findings demonstrate that the development of *sīla* character among Buddhist students is influenced by the combined contributions of *mindfulness* and *kalyāṇamittā*. The relatively high coefficient of determination indicates that these two variables together explain a substantial proportion of the variation in students' ethical behaviour. Rather than operating independently, the findings suggest that intrapersonal self-regulation and interpersonal social support function as complementary processes in fostering the internalization and practice of Buddhist moral values.

The significant contribution of *mindfulness* indicates that ethical behaviour is strengthened through heightened self-awareness, emotional regulation, and reflective decision-making. At the same time, the significant contribution of *kalyāṇamittā* highlights the importance of supportive peer relationships that reinforce ethical conduct through role modelling, encouragement, and shared moral practice. Together, these findings suggest that the cultivation of *sīla* character is facilitated by the interaction between internal psychological capacities and external social environments. The present findings are consistent with the theoretical perspectives of Kabat-Zinn (2003), Brown and Ryan (2003), and Creswell (2017), which emphasize that *mindfulness* enhances self-regulation through improved attention, emotional regulation, and executive functioning. They are also supported by Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory, which explains that ethical behaviour develops through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within social environments. Considered together, these perspectives suggest that moral development is best understood as a dynamic process involving both individual self-regulation and social learning.

Previous empirical studies likewise support this integrated interpretation. Research on *mindfulness* has consistently shown positive associations with executive functioning, emotional regulation, psychological well-being, prosocial behaviour, and behavioural self-control (Silva Lemos et al., 2025; Jobin et al., 2025; Phan et al., 2022; Su & Luo, 2024; Lin & Zhao, 2025; Duda et al., 2024). In parallel, studies of peer relationships have demonstrated that supportive social environments promote moral development through social support, positive role modelling, and constructive group norms (Wang et al., 2026; Zingora & Flache, 2025; Luo et al., 2023; Tefa et al., 2024; Nyaupane et al., 2024). Collectively, these findings indicate that character development is strengthened when personal awareness and positive social interactions are cultivated simultaneously.

From a Buddhist perspective, the findings further illustrate the complementary relationship between *sati* and *kalyāṇamittā* in the cultivation of *sīla*. *Mindfulness* enables individuals to monitor and regulate their thoughts, speech, and actions in accordance with the Dhamma, whereas *kalyāṇamittā* provides the social conditions necessary to sustain ethical practice through mutual guidance and encouragement. Consequently, the cultivation of *sīla* character is not solely an individual endeavour but also a socially embedded process supported by wholesome relationships. This interpretation reinforces the Buddhist view that ethical development emerges through the integration of inner mental cultivation and participation in a morally supportive community.

The findings also provide theoretical support for the proposed *Integrated Buddhist Moral Development Model*. Rather than viewing *mindfulness* and *kalyāṇamittā* as separate determinants of ethical behaviour, the present study demonstrates that they represent complementary intrapersonal and interpersonal mechanisms underlying the development of *sīla* character. *Mindfulness* contributes to ethical self-regulation by cultivating awareness and behavioural control, whereas *kalyāṇamittā* reinforces moral development through supportive social relationships and shared ethical practice. Together, these mechanisms offer an integrated framework for understanding how Buddhist moral values are internalized and enacted within multicultural educational settings.

The findings also have practical implications for Buddhist education. School-based character education programs should therefore integrate activities that strengthen both mindful self-regulation and positive peer relationships. Mindfulness practices may help students develop greater awareness and behavioural self-control, whereas educational strategies grounded in *kalyāṇamittā*, such as peer mentoring, cooperative learning, and collaborative service activities, can reinforce ethical values through meaningful social interaction. Integrating these approaches may provide a more comprehensive strategy for fostering *sīla* character in multicultural school environments. These practical implications are consistent with Gunawan (2022), who emphasized that Buddhist character develops through educational environments that consistently reinforce moral values. In addition, Tansel et al. (2022) highlighted that high-quality educational services and disciplined Buddhist education teachers contribute positively to students' learning outcomes. Together, these findings reinforce the importance of supportive school environments for implementing mindfulness- and *kalyāṇamittā*-based character education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the effects of *mindfulness* and *kalyāṇamittā* on the development of *sīla* character among Buddhist students at SMP Xin Zhong Surabaya. The findings indicate that both *mindfulness* and *kalyāṇamittā* have positive and statistically significant effects on *sīla* character, both individually and simultaneously. The findings suggest that students with higher levels of *mindfulness* demonstrate stronger ethical behaviour through enhanced self-awareness, emotional regulation, and behavioural self-control. Likewise, supportive peer relationships characterized by the principles of *kalyāṇamittā* contribute significantly to the internalization and practice of Buddhist moral values through moral guidance, positive role modelling, and mutual encouragement. The simultaneous influence of both variables indicates that the development of *sīla* character is strengthened through the integration of intrapersonal and interpersonal processes.

These findings support the view that Buddhist character education is more effective when the cultivation of mindful awareness is accompanied by the development of positive and ethically supportive peer relationships within the school environment.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed. First, Buddhist education practitioners should integrate *mindfulness* practices into learning activities to strengthen students' self-awareness, emotional regulation, and ethical decision-making. Second, schools should promote educational environments that foster *kalyāṇamittā* through peer mentoring, cooperative learning, collaborative service activities, and other forms of positive social interaction that encourage students to practice Buddhist values in their daily lives. Future studies are encouraged to involve participants from different educational settings and broader populations to improve the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal or experimental research designs may also be employed to examine causal relationships between *mindfulness*, *kalyāṇamittā*, and the development of *sīla* character. In addition, future research may incorporate other relevant variables, such as family support, school climate, Buddhist religious practices, or teacher student relationships, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Buddhist moral development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the Principal of SMP Xin Zhong Surabaya and all participating students for their support and cooperation throughout the research process. The authors also extend their appreciation to all individuals and parties whose valuable assistance contributed to the successful completion of this study..

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