



# Buddhist Leadership and Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in Contemporary Organizational Management

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**Abstract:** This academic article presents the integration of Buddhist leadership and Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in the context of contemporary organizational management. In an era where organizations face challenges from rapid technological, social, and environmental changes, applying Buddhist principles together with Sufficiency Economy Philosophy has become a management approach that creates sustainability and balance. This article analyzes the concept of Buddhist leadership that emphasizes virtue, compassion, and wisdom, alongside the principles of sufficiency comprising moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity. This study demonstrates that the integration of both concepts can create a management framework suitable for Thai and Eastern contexts, particularly in developing leaders with consciousness, consideration of long-term impacts, and the ability to balance business success with social responsibility. The article presents the "Buddhist Sufficiency Leadership Model" (BSLM) consisting of four main dimensions: Consciousness and Morality Dimension, Wisdom and Decision-Making Dimension, Relationship and Participation Dimension, and Sustainability and Immunity Dimension, which can be applied in developing leaders and organizations in the 21st century.

**Keywords:** Buddhist leadership, Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, contemporary organizational management, sustainability, Buddhist Sufficiency Leadership

## 1. Introduction

Organizational management in the 21st century faces more complex and multidimensional challenges than ever before, from rapid technological changes, environmental crises and climate change, to economic and social uncertainty. Organizations therefore need leaders who not only possess technical and strategic capabilities but also have morality, ethics, and responsibility toward society and the environment (Jampawal, 2023). In the context of Thailand and Southeast Asia, applying Buddhist concepts to organizational management has gained increasing attention as it aligns with traditional cultural values of society. Meanwhile, the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy bestowed by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great has become a sustainable development approach recognized internationally, emphasizing moderation, reasonableness, and building good immunity in living and management.

Buddhist leadership is a concept that integrates Buddhist principles with modern leadership theories, emphasizing both internal and external self-development, mindfulness and

concentration in work, decision-making with wisdom, and leading with compassion and justice (Nivatvongs, 2023). Buddhist leaders prioritize creating balance between organizational success and employee and societal well-being, while considering the long-term impacts of decisions. This concept aligns with contemporary management trends emphasizing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sustainable Development, which have gained increasing attention in both business and non-profit sectors.

Sufficiency Economy Philosophy is a concept rooted in Buddhist principles, particularly the Middle Way (*Majjhimā Paṭipadā*), but has been developed into a development philosophy applicable at all levels, from individuals, families, communities, to organizations and nations (Piboolsravut, 2023). This concept does not mean poverty or non-development but rather balanced and equilibrated development that is moderate and reasonable with good immunity against various changes, under the conditions of knowledge and morality. In the organizational management context, sufficiency principles can be applied in strategic planning, resource management, risk management, and human resource development.

The integration of Buddhist leadership and Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in contemporary organizational management is therefore an interesting and high-potential approach, as both concepts share a common foundation in Buddhist principles and complement each other in multiple dimensions. Buddhist leadership emphasizes developing leadership quality in terms of mind, wisdom, and ethics, while Sufficiency Economy Philosophy provides a framework for sustainable decision-making and operations. Combining both concepts can create a management model suitable for Thai and Eastern contexts that emphasizes balance, sustainability, and responsibility toward all stakeholders (Srisathan et al., 2023). Moreover, applying both concepts helps create differentiation and competitive advantage for organizations, especially in an era where consumers and stakeholders increasingly value social responsibility and sustainability.

This academic article aims to analyze and synthesize the concepts of Buddhist leadership and Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, as well as present approaches for integrating both concepts in contemporary organizational management by presenting the "Buddhist Sufficiency Leadership Model" (BSLM) that can be applied in developing leaders and organizations in the context of Thai society and Southeast Asia. This study is important for developing management knowledge consistent with local culture and context, as well as supporting balanced and sustainable development in all dimensions: economic, social, and environmental.

## **2. Buddhist Leadership: Concepts and Key Components**

Buddhist leadership is a concept that integrates Buddhist principles with modern leadership theories, rooted in Buddha's teachings that emphasize self-development in wisdom, morality, and concentration, as well as living and working with compassion, kindness, and justice (Nivatvongs, 2023). This concept differs from Western leadership theories that typically emphasize success and efficiency as primary goals. Buddhist leadership prioritizes the process of developing leaders' minds and virtues, creating good relationships between leaders and followers, and considering the impacts of decisions on all parties involved. In the Tripitaka, Buddha demonstrated good leadership approaches through various principles such as the Ten Royal Virtues (*Dasa-rāja-dhamma*) emphasizing giving, morality, sacrifice, honesty, and non-harm to others, as well as the Four Sublime States (*Brahmavihāra*) comprising loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity, which are important qualities of quality leaders.

The first important principle of Buddhist leadership is self-development. Buddhist leaders must prioritize continuous self-development in knowledge, skills, and morality, especially cultivating the mind through mindfulness and concentration practice to achieve

calmness, focus in work, and the ability to make wise decisions carefully (Suwanrada et al., 2024). This self-development is not limited to learning new knowledge but includes understanding oneself, controlling emotions, reducing defilements, and cultivating wisdom. Leaders who continuously develop themselves will have stability, good judgment, and can be good role models for others. Additionally, self-development helps leaders become flexible and adapt well in various situations.

The second important principle is leading with compassion and fairness. Buddhist leaders have compassion toward colleagues and all stakeholders, considering the well-being and happiness of employees, not just business success (Roengnapha & Thongchai, 2023). Leading with compassion means caring for subordinates, providing opportunities for learning and development, and creating work environments conducive to growth. Simultaneously, leaders must be fair in decision-making and treatment of everyone, non-discriminatory, and emphasize fair rules. This fairness creates trust and confidence in the organization, making employees more committed and dedicated to their work.

The third principle is decision-making with wisdom and judgment. Buddhist leaders use wisdom to analyze situations and make decisions by considering causes and effects comprehensively, both short-term and long-term (Chaikaew & Narenthirakul, 2023). Decision-making with wisdom does not mean using only knowledge and data but includes using mindfulness in consideration, seeing the interconnection of things, and understanding the law of karma or causality. Leaders must be able to see the big picture, understand context, and anticipate potential outcomes. Furthermore, wisdom in Buddhism means understanding the true nature of things and the ability to solve problems correctly and appropriately. Wise leaders do not make decisions based on bias, greed, anger, or delusion, but consider with reason and neutrality.

The fourth principle is building relationships and teamwork. The concept of the Four Bases of Success (Iddhipāda) in Buddhism—desire, effort, thoughtfulness, and wisdom—can be applied in creating motivation and teamwork (Thongpakdee & Khamphrong, 2024). Buddhist leaders emphasize building good relationships with everyone, listening to opinions, valuing and respecting others, and creating an atmosphere of creative collaboration. Building good relationships is not limited within the organization but includes customers, partners, communities, and other stakeholders. Leaders must be able to create trust, cooperation, and good mutual understanding. Additionally, leaders should promote participation in decision-making and operations, not just top-down commands. Participation helps increase sense of ownership, responsibility, and commitment among organizational members.

The final principle is considering sustainability and long-term impacts. Buddhist leaders do not aim only for profit or short-term success but consider the sustainability of the organization, community, society, and environment (Jampawal, 2023). The concept of karma and its effects in Buddhism makes leaders understand that current actions will affect the future, so they must be careful in decisions and actions. Considering sustainability means considering impacts on all stakeholders, not just shareholders or business owners, but including employees, customers, communities, society, and the environment. Leaders must create balance between business goals and social responsibility and the world we live in.

The application of Buddhist leadership in contemporary organizations has gained increasing attention, especially in organizations wanting to create organizational culture emphasizing morality, ethics, and social responsibility. Several research studies have found that applying Buddhist principles helps increase job satisfaction, reduce stress, and enhance employee work efficiency (Suwanrada et al., 2024). Moreover, leaders with Buddhist characteristics receive more trust and respect from colleagues than leaders focusing only on business success. However, applying Buddhist leadership in business organizations still

requires understanding and appropriate adaptation to context and situations, without neglecting the necessity of competition and creating business value. Therefore, integrating Buddhist leadership with modern management concepts is an appropriate and potential approach.

### **3. Sufficiency Economy Philosophy: Principles and Application in Organizations**

Sufficiency Economy Philosophy is a philosophy bestowed by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great as a sustainable development approach for Thailand, rooted in Buddhist principles, particularly the Middle Way (*Majjhimā Paṭipadā*) that avoids extremes (Piboolsravut, 2023). This concept does not mean poverty or non-development but rather balanced and equilibrated development, considering moderation, reasonableness, and good immunity against impacts from internal and external changes. Sufficiency Economy Philosophy has been internationally recognized, with the United Nations adopting this concept for application in Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and many countries have studied and applied it in their own contexts. This concept emphasizes development that creates balance among economy, society, and environment, with knowledge and morality as foundations.

The main principles of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy consist of three main characteristics and two conditions. The first characteristic is moderation, meaning appropriateness, not too little and not too much, not harming oneself and others. In organizational context, moderation means setting appropriate goals and resource use, not over-ambitious but not complacent (Jampawal, 2023). Organizations must be able to assess their own capabilities and determine development plans consistent with potential and available resources. Business expansion or investment must be prudent, considering risks and returns in balance, not seeking maximum profit without considering sustainability. Moderation also includes fair compensation, economical use of natural resources, and creating balance between work and employees' quality of life.

The second characteristic is reasonableness, meaning making decisions based on reason, data, and careful analysis, considering related factors and potential impacts (Srisathan et al., 2023). Organizations must have reasonable decision-making systems based on accurate and reliable data, comprehensive alternative analysis, and consideration of risks and opportunities. Reasonableness does not mean using only logic and quantitative data but includes using judgment, experience, and considering social and ethical factors. Reasonable decisions must be transparent, verifiable, and able to explain reasons to those involved. Additionally, organizations must learn from experiences and mistakes to continuously improve decision-making processes.

The third characteristic is good immunity, meaning preparing for impacts and changes that may occur from both internal and external factors (Thanalerdsopit & Sapsomboon, 2024). Organizations must have good risk management, contingency plans, reserve resources, and flexibility in adaptation. Good immunity does not mean avoiding all risks but understanding and managing risks appropriately. Organizations should diversify risks, not depend on a single revenue source or customer, have crisis response plans, and build capability to recover from problems. Additionally, immunity includes building strong organizational culture, developing employee skills and capabilities, and creating good relationships with stakeholders.

Sufficiency Economy Philosophy has two important conditions that must always go together. The first condition is knowledge, meaning knowledge and capability in operations, understanding business and industry, and continuous learning of new things (Piboolsravut, 2023). Organizations must prioritize learning and development at both individual and organizational levels, have knowledge management, knowledge sharing, and innovation creation. Important knowledge is not limited to technical or business knowledge but includes

knowledge about society, environment, and change trends. The second condition is morality, meaning honesty, integrity, responsibility, and consideration for others. Organizations must conduct business with transparency, fairness, and social responsibility, not seeking profit by destroying the environment or exploiting others. Morality is an important foundation that makes operations according to Sufficiency Economy principles successful and sustainable.

Applying Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in organizational management can be done in multiple dimensions. In strategic planning, organizations can use moderation principles in setting goals appropriate to potential, use reasonableness in analyzing situations and determining strategies, and build immunity through risk analysis and contingency planning (Jampawal, 2023). In financial management, organizations should spend economically and reasonably, have emergency reserves, and not incur debt beyond repayment capacity. In human resource management, organizations should continuously develop employees, provide fair compensation, and create good work environments. In operations, organizations should use resources efficiently, reduce waste, and consider environmental impacts.

Examples of successful application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in Thai business organizations include community enterprises using local resources sustainably, organic agriculture businesses emphasizing safety and quality over quantity, and small and medium enterprises focusing on stable growth rather than rapid expansion (Srisathan et al., 2023). These organizations typically have financial stability, good relationships with communities, and can overcome various crises better than organizations focusing only on growth and maximum profit. Additionally, many organizations have applied sufficiency principles in employee development by encouraging diverse knowledge and skills, savings and financial planning, and work-life balance, resulting in happy employees, organizational commitment, and higher work efficiency.

#### **4. Integration of Buddhist Leadership and Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in Contemporary Organizational Management**

Integrating Buddhist leadership and Sufficiency Economy Philosophy in contemporary organizational management is a high-potential approach for creating sustainable, efficient, and socially responsible organizations. Both concepts share a common foundation in Buddhist principles, particularly the Middle Way (Majjhimā Paṭipadā), self-development, and considering the impacts of actions (Nivatvongs, 2023). Buddhist leadership emphasizes developing leadership quality in terms of mind, wisdom, and ethics, while Sufficiency Economy Philosophy provides a framework for balanced and sustainable decision-making and operations. Combining both concepts can create a management model suitable for Thai and Eastern contexts that emphasizes balance, sustainability, and responsibility toward all stakeholders, especially in an era where organizations face complex and diverse challenges, from technological changes, environmental crises, to increasing societal expectations for organizational responsibility.

The first important connection between Buddhist leadership and Sufficiency Economy Philosophy is self-development and knowledge. Both concepts emphasize the importance of continuous self-development in knowledge, skills, and morality (Jampawal, 2023). Good leaders must have regular learning and self-development, have up-to-date knowledge appropriate to business and social contexts. Simultaneously, they must develop morality and ethics to be able to lead organizations in correct and responsible directions. This self-development is not limited to the leadership level but should extend to employees at all levels. Organizations should support lifelong learning, knowledge sharing, and development of necessary skills for future work. Knowledge and morality are important conditions of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and the foundation of Buddhist leadership. Therefore,

creating a learning and development culture is an important starting point for integrating both concepts.

The second connection is balance and the Middle Way. Both Buddhist leadership and Sufficiency Economy Philosophy emphasize balance and avoiding extremes (Piboolsravut, 2023). In organizational management, balance means creating equilibrium between business goals and social responsibility, between profit and employee well-being, between growth and sustainability, and between needs of different stakeholder groups. Leaders must be able to create these balances appropriately, not leaning too much in any direction. The moderation principle in Sufficiency Economy Philosophy helps leaders set goals and use resources in balance, not over-ambitious but not stagnant. Meanwhile, the Middle Way concept in Buddhism helps leaders avoid extremes, both in indulgence and self-mortification, greed and negligence.

The third connection is decision-making with wisdom and reasonableness. Both concepts emphasize the importance of reasonable decision-making based on data and considering impacts comprehensively (Chaikaew & Narenthirakul, 2023). Buddhist leaders use wisdom to analyze situations, see interconnections of things, and make careful decisions without bias or emotions. Meanwhile, Sufficiency Economy Philosophy emphasizes reasonableness in decision-making by considering data, alternatives, risks, and returns. Integrating both concepts makes the decision-making process have both technical prudence and ethical dimensions. Leaders not only consider whether decisions are efficient or profitable but also whether they are correct, appropriate, fair, and consider impacts on all parties. Good decisions must have both wisdom and morality as foundations.

The fourth connection is building immunity and flexibility. Sufficiency Economy Philosophy emphasizes having good immunity against changes, while Buddhist leadership emphasizes developing stable minds, mindfulness, and ability to cope with difficulties (Suwanrada et al., 2024). Organizations with leaders who have stable minds and good immunity will be able to overcome crises and challenges better. Building immunity does not mean avoiding all risks but understanding and managing risks appropriately, being prepared, having flexibility in adaptation, and having capability to recover from problems. Leaders developed according to Buddhist approaches will have calmness, mindfulness, and can make good decisions even in crisis situations. Simultaneously, applying sufficiency principles makes organizations have good risk management, reserve resources, and not depend too much on single factors.

The fifth connection is social responsibility and sustainability. Both concepts emphasize social responsibility and sustainable development (Jampawal, 2023). Buddhist leaders have compassion and kindness toward all parties, considering the impacts of actions on others and society. Meanwhile, Sufficiency Economy Philosophy emphasizes development that creates balance among economy, society, and environment with morality as foundation. Integrating both concepts makes organizations not aim only for profit but consider responsibility toward employees, customers, communities, society, and environment. Organizations conduct business with honesty, transparency, and fairness, not exploiting others, not destroying the environment, and aiming to create shared value for all involved parties. Social responsibility is not just supplementary CSR activities but should be integrated into core organizational strategy and operations.

Applying both concepts in developing leaders and organizations can be done in multiple dimensions. At the leadership level, organizations should arrange leadership development programs emphasizing both management skills and mind development, such as meditation training, developing emotional intelligence, and strengthening morality and ethics (Roengnapha & Thongchai, 2023). Additionally, leaders should receive training on sufficiency

principles and applying them in decision-making and management. At the organizational level, organizational culture should be created consistent with both concepts' principles, such as culture of learning, sharing, transparency, responsibility, and mutual respect. Management systems and work processes should reflect these values, such as participatory decision-making systems, fair and multidimensional evaluation systems, and reward systems supporting desired behaviors.

Measuring and evaluating success of integrating both concepts should consider both business outcomes and social impacts. Indicators should cover multiple dimensions such as financial performance, employee satisfaction and engagement, customer satisfaction, community and environmental impacts, and organizational sustainability (Srisathan et al., 2023). Additionally, leadership quality should be assessed in various dimensions including technical capability, leadership, and morality and ethics. Evaluation should be done continuously and results used for improvement development, not just measurement for reporting or control. Organizations should create systems for learning from experience and continuous improvement to make application of both concepts effective and appropriate to changing contexts.

## 5. The "Buddhist Sufficiency Leadership Model" (BSLM)

From analyzing and synthesizing concepts of Buddhist leadership and Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, this article presents the "Buddhist Sufficiency Leadership Model" (BSLM), a conceptual framework that integrates both approaches for developing leaders and organizations in contemporary contexts. This model consists of four main dimensions that are interconnected and mutually reinforcing systematically, with knowledge and morality as important foundations. Each dimension has clear sub-components that can be applied in developing leaders and organizational management (Jampawal, 2023). This model is suitable for Thai and Southeast Asian contexts with Buddhist cultural and religious foundations but can also be adapted for other contexts, especially organizations emphasizing sustainability, ethics, and social responsibility. This model is not a rigid formula for success but a flexible conceptual framework that can be adapted to suit each organization's context and situation.

**Dimension 1: Consciousness and Morality Dimension** This dimension is an important foundation of Buddhist Sufficiency Leadership, emphasizing developing leaders' minds, consciousness, and morality. Leaders must cultivate their minds through mindfulness and concentration practice to achieve calmness, focus in work, and emotional control (Nivatvongs, 2023). Having mindfulness helps leaders be aware in the present moment, understand themselves, and respond appropriately to situations, not react emotionally. Additionally, leaders must have important virtues according to Buddhist principles such as honesty and integrity, loving-kindness and compassion, justice, and responsibility. These virtues are not just personal characteristics but must be demonstrated in decision-making and work practices. Leaders with consciousness and morality will be good role models, create trust, and be respected by colleagues. Sub-components of this dimension include developing mindfulness and concentration, cultivating wisdom, having loving-kindness and compassion, having honesty and integrity, and having social responsibility.

**Dimension 2: Wisdom and Decision Making Dimension** This dimension emphasizes using wisdom and reasonableness in decision-making and management. Leaders must be able to analyze situations comprehensively, see interconnections of various factors, and make decisions based on data, reason, and impact consideration (Chaikaew & Narenthirakul, 2023). Decisions must have moderation, not over-ambitious but not stagnant or satisfied with current conditions. Leaders must accurately assess their own capabilities and resources, set appropriate goals, and plan operations reasonably. Simultaneously, decisions must consider risks and

potential impacts, have contingency plans and risk management. Wisdom here is not limited to technical knowledge but includes understanding the nature of things, ability to see the big picture, and good judgment. Sub-components of this dimension include analyzing and synthesizing data, systems thinking, having judgment, making decisions with moderation and reason, and risk management.

**Dimension 3: Relationship and Participation Dimension** This dimension emphasizes building good relationships with all stakeholders and promoting participation. Buddhist leaders have compassion and kindness toward colleagues, listen to opinions, value and respect everyone, and create an atmosphere of creative collaboration (Roengnapha & Thongchai, 2023). Building good relationships is not limited within organizations but includes customers, partners, communities, and other stakeholders. Leaders must be able to create trust, cooperation, and good mutual understanding. Additionally, leaders should promote participation in decision-making and operations, not just top-down commands. Participation helps increase sense of ownership, responsibility, and commitment among organizational members. Simultaneously, leaders must be fair in treating everyone, non-discriminatory, and create opportunities for everyone to develop and grow. Sub-components of this dimension include building trust, communicating effectively, listening and valuing others, promoting participation, and building stakeholder relationships.

**Dimension 4: Sustainability and Immunity Dimension** This dimension emphasizes creating organizational sustainability and immunity. Leaders must consider long-term impacts of decisions, not aiming only for profit or short-term success but creating sustainable value for all parties (Jampawal, 2023). Sustainability covers economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Organizations must conduct business that creates profit and growth while being responsible to society and environment. Additionally, organizations must have good immunity against changes and crises through risk management, reserve resources, flexibility in adaptation, and capability to recover from problems (Thanalerdsopit & Sapsomboon, 2024). Immunity does not come from avoiding all risks but from understanding and managing risks appropriately, learning from experience, and continuous improvement. Sub-components of this dimension include considering long-term impacts, creating balance among economy, society, and environment, managing risks and building immunity, adaptation and innovation, and continuous learning.

**Knowledge and Morality: Foundation of the Model** Knowledge and morality are important conditions that must cover all four dimensions of the model. Leaders must have sufficient and up-to-date knowledge in various areas related to organizational management, including technical knowledge, business, management, and knowledge about society, environment, and change trends (Piboolsravut, 2023). Knowledge must be continuously updated through lifelong learning. Simultaneously, morality is the foundation that makes applying knowledge go in correct and beneficial directions. Important morality includes honesty, integrity, justice, responsibility, and loving-kindness and compassion. Knowledge without morality may lead to misuse, while morality without knowledge may make operations inefficient. Therefore, both knowledge and morality must go together and complement each other in developing leaders and organizations.

**Applying the Model** The BSLM model can be applied at multiple levels and purposes. At the individual level, the model can be used as a framework for self-development for leaders and those wanting to become leaders by self-assessing in each dimension and planning development in areas still lacking. At the organizational level, the model can be used in designing leadership development programs, evaluating leaders, and creating organizational culture consistent with principles (Srisathan et al., 2023). Organizations can adapt the model for defining desired leader characteristics, selecting and appointing leaders, setting goals and

performance indicators, and providing compensation and rewards. Additionally, the model can be used in analyzing and solving various management problems occurring in organizations by considering which dimension of leadership the problem relates to and which areas should be developed. Success in applying the model depends on commitment, support from top management, and appropriate adaptation to each organization's context.

**Model Advantages and Limitations** The BSLM model has several advantages. First, it is a model integrating concepts rooted in Thai culture and philosophy, making it suitable and acceptable in Thai and regional contexts. Second, it is a model covering multiple dimensions including mind, wisdom, relationships, and sustainability, enabling comprehensive leader development. Third, it is a model emphasizing both business success and social responsibility, consistent with contemporary management trends. However, the model has some limitations, such as potentially requiring long time for development, especially in consciousness and morality dimensions, may have challenges in measuring and evaluating in some dimensions, and may require appropriate adaptation to each organization's context. Therefore, those applying the model should be aware of these limitations and have flexibility in adaptation.



**Figure 1:** Buddhist Sufficiency Leadership Model (BSLM)

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