

# Research and Analysis in the Human Resources Management of Vietnamese Buddhist temples in Modern times Root Causes and Solutional Suggestions to Improve HR Retention among Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis

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**Abstract:-** When viewed as an organization, a Buddhist temple also consists of many factors, all of which work together to ensure that the day-to-day processes are on the right track and the long-term goals are well within reach. The most valuable factor among those is human resources. When talking about human resources in the management of Buddhist temples, we are talking about 3 groups of people, namely the Abbot - the representatives of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) in a temple, other monks or nuns in this pagoda (Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis or Sangha members), and the lay followers (Upāsaka or Upāsikā) who come to the pagoda to learn and practice the Buddha's teaching from time to time. Our main focus here is the Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis and how the Abbot can boost or improve the retention among the Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis in his/her temple.

To avoid disrobing, it takes more than just effort from the Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis. Basically, it takes leadership, environment, method, fellow practitioners, and courage. In the scope of this research, the goal is to find out the factors that affect ordained life and ways to eliminate them, especially from Abbot's perspective. From there, it will present areas for improvement and actions to take to reduce the disrobing rate among Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis in Vietnam in modern times.

According to a report from Vietnam Buddhist Sangha which was presented on 10th July 2020 in Quang Duc Monastery, there are 15778 certified Buddhist temples out of 18491 Buddhist centers, with 54773 Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis in Vietnam. (<https://phatgiao.org.vn/co-bao-nhieungoi-chua-o-vietnam-d48214.html>) Among them, none has announced their achievement of Enlightenment. That is to say, there are at least 15778 temples under the management of on-the-process practitioners, not awakened practitioners, who are struggling with their own practice and are responsible for the practice of other practitioners in their temples. With the findings from this research, all Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis in Vietnam can have a clearer view of some internal and external factors that prevent them from living and practicing Buddhism successfully as Sangha members, therefore taking action to handle them properly.

## I. INTRODUCTION

When talking about human resources and human resources management of an organization, it is the process of creating and comprehensively using tools, means, methods, and solutions to exploit the employee's capacity and forte most reasonably and effectively, ensuring the implementation of human resource management activities. goals (long-term) of the enterprise and each employee in the enterprise. Human resource management can also be understood as the management of people in the relationship between employers and employees to achieve the enterprise's strategic business goals and satisfy the employees' individual needs. workers. Due to the basic characteristics of the labor factor, human resource management has the goal of minimizing business costs to employ workers, increasing labor productivity, ensuring stability and increasing incomes for employees, and ensuring ensure product quality to increase the ability to dominate and expand the market, increase the efficiency of production and business activities of enterprises. Human resource management also aims at the very basic goal of increasingly ensuring respect and enhancement of human dignity, promoting personality and job satisfaction, and developing their potential.

Above all, the employee retention rate is one of the easiest ways to see how effective your HR management programs are and how satisfied or loyal your employees are in their job. One of the most visible and comprehensible indicators of retention rate in a Vietnamese Buddhist temple is whether a Bhikkhu/Bhikkhuni can achieve Enlightenment through the practice of Buddhism, or in case the Enlightenment is not achievable in this lifetime, whether a Bhikkhu/Bhikkhuni can keep up with the practice in his/her ordained life until the last of his/her breath. The fewer Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis that give up on the ordained life, the better it is. There are 3 reasons why this indicator is important in Vietnamese pagodas.

Firstly, Enlightenment is something intangible and is said to be distinguished only by the practitioner himself or other practitioners who have reached this condition. In other words, it is very difficult and sometimes biased, to use Enlightenment to assess a Bhikkhu/Bhikkhuni's

practice, especially in modern time which is over 2500 years away from the Buddha's time.

Secondly, in most Vietnamese Buddhist temples, an ordination vow is a lifelong commitment. Ordained life is an unlimited career in terms of time with no salary, no benefits, and no retirement. Most Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis are expected to stay in the temples for their whole life, regardless of whether they reach Enlightenment or not.

Thirdly, Vietnamese society is not very tolerant toward former Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis. Disrobing is considered a failure and a lack of vigor. This and other different reasons make it tough for a former Bhikkhu/Bhikkhuni to settle down as a lay follower after disrobing. Therefore, if possible, it is ideal for any Bhikkhu/Bhikkhuni to remain ordained for as long as they could.

Unfortunately, not every Bhikkhu has the privilege of an accomplished ordained life. Many left the Sangha before they could reach Enlightenment or before they reach the end of their lifetime. This affects not only the Bhikkhu/Bhikkhuni as an individual but also the temple as an organization, the Abbot as a leader, the lay followers as the sponsor, and the Sangha as the Vietnamese Buddhism representative. For this reason, the research to thoroughly look at some factors that cause disrobing in Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis and how to handle them is very crucial to help improve the operation and quality of human resources of Vietnamese Buddhist temples in modern times. However, for various reasons, there has been very little research on the topic in question, making it even more necessary.

The findings can be considered as matters of individual change in mindset and doings, but it also requires changes in approaches at the Sangha level. For their application to have significant differences, all 6 elements in the PESTLE analysis have to be well-adjusted and the 6 Changes Approaches (Kotter and Schlesinger) have to be well-conducted. We are talking about: Education and Communication, Participation and Involvement, Facilitation and Support, Negotiation and Agreement, Manipulation and Co-option, Explicit and Implicit Coercion. That's a long way to go with a great deal of time and effort. However, as we make the first step into making it well-structured research with suggestions that are as specific as possible, all the Abbots, Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis, and lay followers, can see it more clearly and take actions accordingly to improve their environment and the overall operation of the temple.

## II. INTRODUCTION OF THE THEORIES AND PARTICIPANTS

### A. The theories

Choosing the theories for testing is the most important step in the conduct of this research, as it decides the path to go and the sides of the problems to shed light on. The current set of theories was not the first to be implemented. This is the third set of theories to be considered. All sets of theories had been judged by their coverage of the topic, their connectivity with one another, and their open possibility for participants' insight.

The 10 chosen theories are as follows:

- Buddhist temples can be managed by lay followers, not necessarily by a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni.
- The more Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis, the better it is for the Sangha.
- All Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis should pursue advanced education as much as possible.
- Serving the community is the main purpose of ordained life.
- Candidates who want to become Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis should spend their postulancy in a few pagodas or different Buddhist Sects before making their decision.
- Ordained life is an easy career, both physically and mentally.
- Broken relationship between Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis and the Abbot in the pagoda is the main reason for them to leave.
- The support from a Bhikkhu's/ Bhikkhuni's biological family is very important for his/ her ordained life.
- As a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni, the more lay followers know you and support you personally, the better.
- The number of Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis who left the Sangha before they could reach Enlightenment or before they reach the end of their lifetime is very high.

Among them, theories (1) and (2) tested the HR Management conditions of Vietnamese Buddhist temples in general.

Theories (3), (4), and (6) tested how Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis view their ordained life in terms of goals and services.

Theory (5) tested how Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis can prepare better for their ordained life with a "probation", or the postulancy.

Theories (7), (8), and (9) tested how Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis can handle their external relationship with the key parties such as the Abbots, the lay followers, and their biological family.

Theory (10) tested the viewpoint of Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis about disrobing and the disrobing rate of Vietnamese Buddhist temples.

*B. The participants*

The research of this theory was conducted independently by the author through 2 main methods which are surveys and interviews. The participants were Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis of Buddhist temples or lay followers who take part in the operations of some Buddhist temples in Vietnam (as there are many pagodas in Vietnam with no Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis). The data was then collected and analyzed in a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

### III. THEORY #1: BUDDHIST TEMPLES CAN BE MANAGED BY LAY FOLLOWERS, NOT NECESSARILY BY A BHIKKHU/ BHIKKHUNI

In the surveys and interviews on this theory, 5 questions were asked. 2 questions were Yes-No questions to get the percentage of opinion from participants about the theory in general. The other 3 questions were open questions where participants can share their thoughts on the ideas.

List of questions:

- Can Buddhist temples be managed by lay followers, not necessarily by a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni? (Chùa Phật Giáo có thể được quản lý bởi cư sĩ mà không nhất định phải là tu sĩ hay không?)
- Give 3 reasons for your answer. (Cung cấp 3 lý do cho câu trả lời phía trên)
- As a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni, are you willing to stay in a Buddhist temple which is managed by a lay follower (or a group of lay followers)? (Là 1 tu sĩ, bạn có sẵn sàng đến ở và tu ở 1 ngôi chùa được quản lý bởi 1 hoặc 1 nhóm cư sĩ hay không?)
- Give 3 reasons for your answer. (Cung cấp 3 lý do cho câu trả lời phía trên)
- Under which circumstances, a Buddhist temple should be managed by a lay follower (or a group of lay followers)? Please state up to 3 scenarios. (Trong tình huống nào thì 1 ngôi chùa nên được quản lý bởi 1 hoặc 1 nhóm cư sĩ? Hãy đưa ra tối đa 3 trường hợp.)

The result showed a 50-50 percentage as half of the participants agreed that “Buddhist temples can be managed by lay followers, not necessarily by a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni”, and half of the participants didn’t agree with the statement. That is to say, a Buddhist temple in Vietnam can be managed by lay followers, not necessarily by a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni. However, the majority of Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis were not willing to stay in a Buddhist temple which is managed by a lay follower.

There are 3 main reasons behind that.

The first is the historical factor. Back in the time of the Buddha, all the temples were built and managed by lay followers as offerings to the Buddha and the Sangha. The Buddha and the Sangha lived a life of wandering with no attachment, including housing. They meditated and slept on the tree roots in the jungle, and walked to the villages in what’s called an ‘alms round’, holding a bowl for locals to put food into. The rule was that a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni couldn’t stay at the same tree root for more than 3 nights.

They needed to move constantly. Only during the Rain Retreat that Sangha members required accommodation for 3 months. They gathered at the shelters provided by lay followers to focus on studying and practicing Buddha’s teaching. After the Rain Retreat, they would be on their way. Therefore, there was no need and no chance for the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis to build or manage the temples.

The second is the precept that the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis have to strictly follow. For example, it is stated that the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis cannot destroy lives, even those of plants. That is to say, if Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis pull up the grass out of the ground, they violate the precept. Those rules prohibit the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis from doing many chores in managing the temple. Therefore, it is best to leave the work to the lay followers.

The third is to save the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis time and energy to stay focused on their study and practice of Buddhism. Running a temple, just like any other organization, requires a lot of work which will affect the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis’ practice. The lay followers, on the other hand, have more time and experience in operation (at least with a household) and can perform it more effectively and efficiently. Besides, when lay followers come to the temple to do all the required chores, they have a chance to visit the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis, to learn from them and the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis can help them with their mental and psychological problems. It will benefit the temples, the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis, and the lay followers as well.

However, with the limitations placed on the tradition of “alms round”, Sangha members are all settled in a certain accommodation and have to rely on themselves more for food and suppliers for existence, the norm has also changed. Currently, most Buddhist temples in Vietnam are managed by a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni and lay followers are more like visitors only, and most of the participants thought that they wouldn’t stay in a Buddhist temple that is managed by a lay follower.

### IV. THEORY #2: THE MORE BHIKKHUS/ BHIKKHUNIS, THE BETTER IT IS FOR THE SANGHA

In the surveys and interviews on this theory, 7 questions were asked. 3 questions were Yes-No questions to get the percentage of opinion from participants about the theory in general. The other 4 questions were open questions where participants can share their thoughts on the ideas.

List of questions:

- Is it true that the more Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis, the better it is for the Sangha? (Câu nói “càng nhiều tu sĩ càng tốt cho Tăng Đoàn” có đúng không?)
- Give 3 reasons for your answer. (Cung cấp 3 lý do cho câu trả lời phía trên)
- In your opinion, how many Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis are sufficient for a pagoda to run efficiently? (Theo bạn thì bao nhiêu tu sĩ là hợp lý cho 1 ngôi chùa để vận hành hiệu quả?)

- As a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni, would you choose to stay in a Buddhist temples with too many Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis – more than the number that you gave in question 3? (Bạn có chọn lựa để sống và tu ở 1 ngôi chùa có quá nhiều tu sĩ hay không – nhiều hơn con số trong câu số 3?)
- As a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni, would you choose to stay in a Buddhist temples with only 1-2 Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis? ((Bạn có chọn lựa để sống và tu ở 1 ngôi chùa chỉ có 1-2 tu sĩ hay không?))
- Give 3 reasons for your answer. (Cung cấp 3 lý do cho câu trả lời phía trên)
- As a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni, name 3 actions you can do to handle conflicts with other Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis in the same temple. (Hãy liệt kê 3 hành động thực tế bạn có thể làm để giải quyết mâu thuẫn với các tu sĩ khác trong cùng trú xứ)

The result showed 81.3 – 18.8 percent as 81.3% of participants agreed that “the more Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis, the better it is for the Sangha”.

There are 3 reasons behind this.

The first reason is because of the name “Sangha”. According to Wikipedia, it is “used in many Indian languages, including Pali (सङ्घ, saṃgha/saṅgha)[6] meaning “association”, “assembly”, “company” or “community”; Sangha is often used as a surname across these languages. It was historically used in a political context to denote a governing assembly in a republic or a kingdom and has long been used by religious associations including the Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs. Given this history, some Buddhists have said the tradition of the sangha represents humanity's oldest surviving democratic institution. In Buddhism, sangha refers to the monastic community of bhikkhu (monks) and bhikkhuni (nuns). These communities are traditionally referred to as the bhikkhu-sangha or bhikkhuni-sangha. As a separate category, those who have attained any of the four stages of enlightenment, whether or not they are members of the monastic community, are referred to as the āryasaṅgha (“noble Sangha”). According to the Theravada school and Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, the term sangha does not refer to the community of sāvakas (lay followers) nor the community of Buddhists as a whole.” When reminded of Sangha, the idea should be of a community, a large group of practitioners, not a few practitioners.

The second reason is because of the study and practice. The study and practice of Buddhism require time, skills, and experience. In the Sangha, Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis can pass down the knowledge, discuss the confusion, and encourage one another to practice better.

The third reason is because of discipline and safety. One of the centers of Buddhism practice is the precepts, or rules that all Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis must follow. When living alone with no strong discipline and well-established habits, Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis can easily neglect the rules for convenience. Besides, when living together, they can

watch over and protect one another from any possible harm. This is especially critical for Bhikkhunis.

However, quantity is not everything. To maintain peace and harmony among Sangha, every Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni must be an honest practitioner who studies Buddhism properly and follows the precepts accordingly. If Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis are not honest practitioners, the more of them who join the Sangha, the more toxic the Sangha will become and the fewer lay followers will trust the Sangha.

Most of the participants thought that number of Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis in a temple, no matter how low or high, does not affect their decision in choosing a temple for their ordained life. In cases of conflicts, there are some principles from the Buddha for Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis to follow.

- The Sangha's six principles of harmonious coexistence:
  - Be kind and loving towards fellow holy ones, in front as well as behind.
  - Be kind and loving towards fellow holy ones in front of and behind.
  - Thoughts of harmony and loving-kindness towards fellow holy ones, in front as well as behind.
  - Equally distribute the items received by the Dharma among the accomplices of the holy life.
  - Live in harmony and purity in the precepts with fellow holy ones, in front as well as behind.
  - Live in harmony and purity in all views with fellow holy people, in front of and behind.
- Seven principles resolve all disagreements among the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis, creating harmony in the Sangha.
  - The first principle is Sammukha Vinaya. When a dispute arose in the life of the Sangha, this principle of dispute resolution should have five fundamentals.
    - ❖ The presence of Dharma: The present Dharma is based on the teachings of the Buddha.
    - ❖ The presence of precepts: The precept is the law that has been recorded in the Vinaya and the Sangha accepts to abide by it.
    - ❖ The presence of all parties: The plaintiff and defendant must be present before all Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis.
    - ❖ The presence of all Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis: there must be an adequate number of Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis to solve the problem.
    - ❖ The presence of Sila: The Sangha must work with the Saṅghakamma to establish the boundaries of the Dharma area to solve the problem.
- The second principle is Sativinaya or Smṛtavinaya. When some Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis prosecute a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni for some crime committed, but the litigant being prosecuted does not remember clearly whether his crime is or not, a controversy arises. In this case, the Sangha must perform the Ñatti catutṭha Kamma (one raises the issue and votes three times) so that the litigant remembers clearly whether he has committed a crime or not. If the litigant clearly remembers the violation, he must repent according to the law and if he remembers clearly that he has not



committed a violation, we will pass the law by the *Ñatti catuṭṭha Kamma* and determine that he is innocent. After the Sangha has approved the law, whoever recalls the problem, violates the law. That is the principle of eliminating controversy of the Sangha according to the principle of "Recollection of the Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis".

- The third principle is *Amūḍha-Vinaya*. This is the principle to settle the dispute among the Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis about the fact that a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni breaks the precepts while his mind is in a state of delusion and illness. The monks asked the accused whether he was sober while doing so or acted unconsciously. He answered before the Sangha, "I have gone mad, my mind has gone mad. Because I'm crazy about delusion, many things I have done, I have said are not by the precepts. Because of the madness, I don't remember what I did." When the litigant finished answering like this, the Sangha examined and carried out the *Ñatti catuṭṭha kamma's* procedure to determine that the litigant was previously insane because of his mind, if there was any illegal activity, that action was exempted, now his mind is clear, no longer disordered, he is accepted and can be living with the Sangha. The conduct of such a principle is called " *Amūḍha-Vinaya* ". After this principle is properly implemented and approved by the Sangha, whoever repeats the matter, violates the law, and the Sangha judges according to that law. This is the third principle to preserve the harmonious nature of the Sangha.
- The fourth principle is *Paṭiññāyakarana* or *Pratiññākāraka-Vinaya*. This is the principle of charge or no charges against a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni. The Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni remembered all his crimes and presented himself to the Sangha. The Sangha will evaluate according to that presentation, to determine the extent of the crime and conduct procedures for him to practice repentance. Or there are Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis who has prosecuted a bhikkhu for breaking the law, but the defendant has not yet confessed to the crime. The Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis must seek advice and analysis until the litigant confesses. The Sangha did not use their power to force the person to confess. When he confesses to committing a crime, the Sangha will based on that confession, test and determine the extent of the crime and carry out procedures for them to practice repentance. When the Sangha completes all these formalities, all disputes of the Sangha will be terminated, if any member of the Sangha still brings up the matter, he has broken the law and will be severely punished by the Sangha. This is the fourth principle that preserves the harmony of the Sangha.
- The fifth principle is *Tassapāpiyasikā* or *Tatsvabhāvaisiya-Vinaya*. This is the principle for the Sangha to judge when a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni breaks the law and is prosecuted by another Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni. The litigant being prosecuted was called by the Sangha to investigate the crime, but this Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni side-stepped the matter that the Sangha had questioned. Therefore, the Sangha implemented the principle of "*Tassapāpiyasikā*" to stop the quarrels of the

Bhikkhus, making the Sangha harmonious. The Sangha carries out the principle of "*Tassapāpiyasikā*" by the procedure of *Ñatti catuṭṭha kamma*. When the Sangha applies this principle, the accused Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni will lose some of his benefits in the Sangha at the stage of implementing this principle for the time being until the Sangha found out the specific crime and it was confessed by the litigant. When the litigant has confessed to committing the crime, the Sangha will conduct the investigation procedure on the extent of the crime, and then carry out the procedure for him to perform the act of repentance. After the Sangha has proceeded and has resolved the matter for the person concerned, he will be allowed to return to his normal activities in the Sangha.

- The sixth principle is *Yadbhūyasikīya Vinaya* or *Yebhuyyasikā*. This is the principle based on the opinion of the majority number, by secret or public vote, to settle the matter of controversy between the Claimants and the defendants.
- The seventh principle is *Tiṇavattārakoti Vinaya* or *Tṇastā prastāraka*. This principle is regarded as using grass to spread over the muddy or rocky soil. This is the principle of collective repentance by the Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis. Because of the controversy, the Sangha was divided into many groups, with no faction agreeing with any other group. Therefore, the principle of collective penance is the principle of suspending all the quarrels of groups in the Sangha to make the Sangha harmonious and united.

#### **V. THEORY #3: ALL BHIKKHUS/ BHIKKHUNIS SHOULD PURSUE ADVANCED EDUCATION AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.**

In the surveys and interviews on this theory, 7 questions were asked. 3 questions were Yes-No questions to get the percentage of opinion from participants about the theory in general. The other 4 questions were open questions where participants can share their thoughts on the ideas.

List of questions:

- Is it true that all Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis should pursue advanced education as much as possible? (Các tu sĩ nên học lên cao càng nhiều càng tốt, đúng hay không?)
- Give 3 reasons for your answer. (Cung cấp 3 lý do cho câu trả lời phía trên)
- Name 3 things a Degree or Certificate in Buddhism study can bring to your ordained life. (Hãy liệt kê 3 điều cụ thể mà 1 Bằng cấp hoặc Chứng chỉ Phật học đem đến cho bạn trong đời sống tu hành)
- Name 3 things a Degree or Certificate in Buddhism study can NOT bring to your ordained life. (Hãy liệt kê 3 điều cụ thể mà 1 Bằng cấp hoặc Chứng chỉ Phật học KHÔNG THỂ đem đến cho bạn trong đời sống tu hành)
- If a Degree or Certificate in Buddhism study is NOT among the requirements for becoming an Abbot, will you still be eager to obtain one? (Nếu Bằng cấp Phật học không còn là 1 trong những yêu cầu trong việc bổ nhiệm Trụ trì, bạn còn muốn đi học các khoá Phật học này không?)

- Can the skills and knowledge provided with a Degree or Certificate in Buddhism be acquired in other ways? (Những kiến thức và kỹ năng có được thông qua các Bằng cấp Phật học có thể đạt được bằng các cách khác không?)
- If yes, name 3 ways to acquire such skills and Knowledge. (Nếu có thể, hãy liệt kê 3 cách để có được những kỹ năng và kiến thức này)

The result showed 56.3 – 43.8 percent as 56.3% of participants agreed that “All Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis should pursue advanced education as much as possible”.

For the participants who agreed, there are 3 reasons for their choice.

The first reason is in one of the Buddha’s famous sayings: “If you believe in me, but do not understand my teaching, you are insulting my teaching”. Buddhist followers, including Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis, must consider wisdom as their priority. Due to some historical changes, Vietnamese Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis experienced some periods of disruption in Buddhism education and practice. This caused a huge crisis for the Sangha. To make it up for the loss in their education, Vietnamese Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis are encouraged to take part in formal classes and study Buddhism to understand the Buddha’s teaching clearly and practice it correctly.

The second reason is because of the lay followers. As modern life gets more challenged, lay followers now have different and continuous problems mentally and psychologically. Helping lay followers face their challenges, requires Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis to study higher, practice deeper, and be more exposed to reality and social changes.

The third reason is the reduction in the number of lay followers. The number of Buddhist followers in the 2009 Population and Housing Census was 6.8 million, a decrease of about 300,000 people compared to 1999. According to official statistics in 2019, the number of Buddhists is only 4.6 million. (<https://luatkhoea.org/2021/02/thong-ke-so-tin-do-phat-giao-nha-nuoc-noi-giam-giao-hoi-hut-hang/>) One of the main reasons for new converts is that they don’t understand the Buddha’s teaching, and base their belief on the Buddha as a religious figure, or a God who can save them from bad fortunes. For this, Vietnamese Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis must be held accountable for not correcting lay followers and helping them understand Buddhism better. And formal and higher education for Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis plays an irreplaceable part in the process.

However, all Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis must keep in mind that precepts and practice are also crucial for their ordained life. Without attending formal classes on Buddhism, Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis can still gain knowledge through reading books and asking questions to their master or senior practitioners. Without precepts and practice, they are not qualified as Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis.

A Degree or Certificate in Buddhism study can provide Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis with:

- A chance to become an Abbot.
- The knowledge of Buddhism that is well-organized and systematic.
- The opportunity to learn with experienced lecturers who are senior Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis or experts in Buddhism.
- The relationship with other Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis from many places around Vietnam who will become your long-term fellow practitioners and support in your ordained life.
- For Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis who study abroad, this could be the time for them to be exposed to the international environment of Buddhism study. It can change their view on ordained life and Buddhism practice effectively.

But a Degree or Certificate in Buddhism study cannot provide Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis with:

- The peace and mindfulness they can only get through actual practice
- The good habits they can only get from keeping precepts strictly in long term.
- The time and support they need to serve their temples and community.

Even if a Degree or Certificate in Buddhism study is not among the requirements for becoming an Abbot, most participants will still be eager to obtain one. However, the majority of participants agreed that the skills and knowledge provided with a Degree or Certificate in Buddhism can be acquired in other ways such as:

- Reading: most of Buddhist scriptures are now available online and many of them are translated into Vietnamese.
- Listening: you can find many clips and videos of Buddhism lectures from many Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis online. Many of them are informative and engaging.
- Practicing: putting the knowledge you learn into practice and you might understand more than what the words show.
- Befriending senior and experienced Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis so that you can learn from them.
- Discussing your study and practice with other Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis so that you all can exchange knowledge and help one another.

## VI. THEORY #4: SERVING THE COMMUNITY IS THE MAIN PURPOSE OF ORDAINED LIFE

In the surveys and interviews on this theory, 7 questions were asked. 3 questions were Yes-No questions to get the percentage of opinion from participants about the theory in general. The other 4 questions were open questions where participants can share their thoughts on the ideas.

List of questions:

- Is serving the community the main purpose of ordained life? (Phục vụ cộng đồng có phải là mục đích chính của cuộc sống tu hành hay không?)

- Give 3 reasons for your answer. (Cung cấp 3 lý do cho câu trả lời phía trên)
- Name 3 ways Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis can do to serve the community. (Hãy liệt kê 3 hành động thực tế mà 1 tu sĩ có thể làm để phục vụ cộng đồng)
- Besides serving the community, what are other purposes of an ordained life? Name 3 of them. (Bên cạnh việc phục vụ cộng đồng, các mục đích khác của đời tu hành là gì? Nêu 3 mục đích cụ thể)
- Can a Buddhist practitioner reach Enlightenment by ONLY serving the community? (Nếu CHỈ phục vụ cộng đồng thì có đắc thánh quả hay không?)
- Can a Buddhist practitioner reach Enlightenment but NOT serving the community? (Nếu KHÔNG hề phục vụ cộng đồng thì có đắc thánh quả hay không?)
- Name 3 actions Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis can do to manage their time and effort spent serving the community on their way to Enlightenment. (Hãy liệt kê 3 hành động cụ thể các tu sĩ có thể làm để quản lý thời gian và công sức phục vụ cộng đồng trên con đường tu học)

The result showed 31.3 – 68.8 percent as only 31.3% of participants agreed that “Serving the community is the main purpose of ordained life”.

The majority of participants thought that serving the community is not the main purpose of the ordained life because of 3 reasons.

Firstly, the main purpose of ordained life must be to work on ourselves. In The Majjhima Nikāya, the Buddha taught very clearly about the purpose of monastic life, about the core of the spiritual practice: "Or, brahman, it's as if a man in need of heartwood, seeking heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood — passing over the heartwood of a great standing tree possessed of heartwood, passing over the sapwood — cutting away the inner bark, were to go off carrying it, thinking, 'heartwood.' A man with good eyesight, seeing him, would say, 'Ah, how this good man didn't know heartwood, didn't know sapwood, didn't know inner bark, didn't know outer bark, didn't know twigs & leaves! That's why he, in need of heartwood, seeking heartwood, wandering in search of heartwood — passing over the heartwood of a great standing tree possessed of heartwood, passing over the sapwood — cutting away the inner bark, went off carrying it, thinking, 'heartwood.' Whatever heartwood business he had with heartwood, his purpose won't be served.' In which, benefit, respect, and fame are the branches and leaves, virtue is the outer bark, meditation is the inner bark, knowledge is the sap, and the unmoving mind of liberation is the heartwood. (<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.030.than.html>)

Secondly, without working on themselves and reaching a certain level of achievement in Buddhism study and practice, Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis cannot serve the community or the lay followers effectively. Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis are also ordinary humans who have their own struggles and problems. If a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni cannot handle his/her problems using Buddhism, he/she also cannot help lay followers with their mental and

psychological sufferings. All the activities they do like charity, teaching, translating Buddhist scriptures, or writing self-help books will be irrelevant.

Thirdly, to become a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni is not to find a job, but to seek enlightenment. They spend their whole life, going to the temple, not just to switch from "selling meat noodles to selling vegetarian noodles". Employment is limited, so many people will be unemployed, but practicing to achieve Enlightenment is something that they can do all their lives. The Buddha's teachings are for practice, not for work. And only practicing, not preaching, can make the Buddha's teachings come alive in the middle of life.

The 3 main purposes of ordained life should be to follow all precepts, to study the Buddha's teaching, and to practice those teaching through methods like meditation.

However, serving the community is still considered one of the most popular choices for Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis to approach and lead the lay followers to practice Buddhism. And the view on this issue is still not unique among the Sangha members.

After spending an appropriate period practicing Buddhism and reaching a certain level of achievement, a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni can be ready to serve the community within his/her ability. There are various things a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni can do as follows:

Doing charity: this is the most welcomed and practical activity a Sangha member can do for the community. The targets are limitless and the means are relatively easy to find. We are talking about food, shelter, clothes, material things; building bridges, schools, hospitals, and nursery homes; giving scholarships; sponsoring medical surgery; or giving money directly. The most common concern is the funding source. Of course, it comes from lay followers. Some Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis are blessed with fund-raising ability. Once they raise funds for any Buddhism activities, many followers will actively respond economically and physically, which helps them to accomplish many activities without too much time and effort.

- Teaching Buddhism to lay followers or junior Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis: this is the traditional method of serving the community that the Buddha himself and the Sangha members have been doing for over 2500 years. There are 3 requirements for this activity to succeed, which are the Buddhism understanding of the lecturers (most important), the willingness, time, and comprehensive ability of the audience, and the charm (or the teaching skills) of the lecturers. Thanks to the development of technology, lectures by every Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni can be shared online widely and can reach people in need regardless of time and place.
- Organizing events at pagodas for lay followers to come and practice Buddhism in short terms (1-30 days). In those events, lay followers can stay in the temples, keep some precepts (only a few important rules), listen to Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis teaching about Dhamma, and



practice some methods like meditation, walking meditation, chanting scriptures, and mantras. Usually, all of those events will be free of charge, and participants are provided with free vegetarian food (3 meals/day), and shelter (dorm-like bedspace). This is a very good way to promote Buddhism among the community and benefit lay followers directly as they can experience the enjoyment of practicing Buddhism properly. The requirements for organizing events like those are location (not too far from the residency areas, but must be quiet and seclude enough for practicing meditation), space (enough facility for parking, accommodation, pantry, meditation, and lecture), helpers (10+ Sangha members and other volunteers from lay followers), the fund (again, only Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis who are blessed with fund-raising ability can run such events).

- Localizing the Buddhist scripture to help foster understanding among lay followers.
- Writing books to help spread Buddhism better.
- Acting as a psychologist who helps lay followers in need with handling their challenges in life mentally and psychologically.

To succeed in those activities, Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis must answer the following questions:

- What abilities are members in your temples blessed with? Fund-raising? Public speaking? Meditation training? Cooking? Writing? Listening? Consulting?
- What kinds of facilities do your temples possess?
- What kinds of activities are lay followers in your temples suitable for?

After carefully considering all the possibilities, Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis can start with the events and will have a higher chance of success.

## **VII. THEORY #5: CANDIDATES WHO WANT TO BECOME BHIKKHUS/ BHIKKHUNIS SHOULD SPEND THEIR POSTULANCY IN A FEW PAGODAS OR DIFFERENT BUDDHIST SECTS BEFORE MAKING THEIR DECISION.**

In the surveys and interviews on this theory, 9 questions were asked. 2 questions were Yes-No questions to get the percentage of opinion from participants about the theory in general. The other 7 questions were open questions where participants can share their thoughts on the ideas.

List of questions:

- Is it true that candidates who want to become Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis should spend their postulancy in a few pagodas before making their decision? (Những người có hảo cảm với Đạo Phật có nên tập sự xuất gia ở 1 vài chùa khác nhau trước khi chính thức xuất gia hay không?)
- Give 3 reasons for your answer. (Cung cấp 3 lý do cho câu trả lời phía trên)
- How much time should candidates spend their postulancy in a temple to fully understand if this temple is a suitable choice for an ordained life? (Những người có hảo cảm với Đạo Phật nên tập sự bao lâu ở 1 ngôi

chùa để có thể hoàn toàn biết được rằng đó là 1 ngôi chùa phù hợp để mình xuất gia tu học?)

- Name 3 criteria to judge the suitability of a Buddhist temple. (Hãy liệt kê 3 tiêu chí để đánh giá mức độ phù hợp của 1 ngôi chùa để mình tu học?)
- Is it true that candidates who want to become Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis should spend their postulancy in a few pagodas of different Buddhist Sects before making their decision? (Những người có hảo cảm với Đạo Phật có nên tập sự xuất gia ở 1 vài ngôi chùa của 1 vài hệ phái khác nhau trước khi chính thức xuất gia hay không?)
- Give 3 reasons for your answer. (Cung cấp 3 lý do cho câu trả lời phía trên)
- Name 3 Buddhist Sects in Vietnam. (Hãy liệt kê tên của 3 hệ phái Phật Giáo bất kỳ tại Việt Nam)
- How many Buddhist pagodas have you stayed and practiced Buddhism at? (Bạn đã từng sống và tu học ở bao nhiêu chùa trước đây?)
- Why do you choose to stay and practice Buddhism at the current pagoda? (Tại sao bạn chọn tu học tại trú xứ hiện tại?)

The result showed 56.3 – 43.8 percent as 56.3% of participants agreed that “Candidates who want to become Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis should spend their postulancy in a few pagodas or different Buddhist Sects before making their decision.”

The majority of participants thought that Candidates who want to become Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis should spend their postulancy in a few pagodas or different Buddhist Sects before making their decision because of 3 reasons.

The first reason is to know the study and practice environment of the target temple better. Different people have different approaches that work for them, it is also true with Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis. Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis in Vietnamese temples mostly study and practice following the scheme made by their Abbots. A particular scheme might be suitable for some Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis, but not for all. Besides, the Abbot will be the one who decides if Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis in this temple can pursue advanced education and to which level. Better talk it over clearly about your expectation and his/her expectation to prevent inconveniences later.

The second reason is to know other fellow practitioners with whom a candidate will live, study and practice Buddhism. The Abbot might be kind and experienced, but if you cannot get along well with other Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis in the same temple, chances are high that you cannot study and practice effectively.

The third reason is to know the lay followers. Not all temples have the same lay followers who visit them regularly. In big cities like Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, there will be more regular visitors, and in most cases, there will be more offerings to fund more Buddhism activities. As a reason, you will have more chances to serve the community and improve your multiple skills while conducting them. On the other hand, there will be fewer



visitors in smaller provinces, which saves you more time to study and work on improving yourselves spiritually.

The 3 most popular Buddhist Sects in Vietnam are Pureland Buddhism, Khat Si Buddhism, and Theravada. They are different either in the method of practice, scriptures, food, accommodation, outfits, or all of the above. The differences are so huge that Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis of different Sects even follow different precepts, have different definitions of Enlightenment, and have different objects of worshipping. That is the reason why a candidate needs to decide carefully which Buddhism Sect he wants to join and spend a couple of months staying in a temple of this Sect before making up his mind.

The most common criteria to choose a temple for ordained life are as follows.

- Nidana: (a Sanskrit and Pali word that means "cause, motivation or occasion" depending on the context). That is to say, there are 15778 certified Buddhist temples in Vietnam, but if you come to a particular temple and feel comfortable, then think about becoming a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni in this temple – this is not a coincidence. There are reasons behind your feelings that you should pay attention to.
- The Abbot: as mentioned earlier, the Abbot is the person who makes all the decisions in a temple, including your daily schedule, study scheme, practice method, and formal education plan. An Abbot that is skillful, knowledgeable, open-minded, understanding, and shares the same values with you will help you start your ordained life smoothly.
- Fellow practitioners: quantity is only a number. Their characteristics and their view on Buddhism practice will directly affect your study and practice. But if there are only 1-2 Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis in the temple, the workloads might be overloaded and also affect your practice.
- Environment: the environment of a temple can include location, neighborhood, and area.
- Lay followers: a candidate should consider how many lay followers visit the temple on a daily basis, participate in the temple activities, and how they support the temple with their activities.

### **VIII. THEORY #6: ORDAINED LIFE IS AN EASY CAREER, BOTH PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY**

In the surveys and interviews on this theory, 7 questions were asked. 3 questions were Yes-No questions to get the percentage of opinion from participants about the theory in general. The other 4 questions were open questions where participants can share their thoughts on the ideas.

List of questions:

- Is it true that ordained life is an easy career, both physically and mentally? (Đời sống tu hành là 1 nghề nghiệp dễ dàng và nhẹ nhàng, cả về cả về thể chất lẫn tinh thần, đúng hay không?)
- Give 3 reasons for your answer. (Cung cấp 3 lý do cho câu trả lời phía trên)

- Write down your daily schedule at the current temple. (Hãy viết ra Thời khoá biểu hàng ngày của bạn ở trú xứ hiện tại)
- Have you experienced burnouts in your ordained life? (Bạn đã bao giờ bị kiệt sức trong quá trình tu học hay chưa?)
- Name 3 actions Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis can do to treat the burnouts in their ordained life. (Hãy liệt kê 3 hành động cụ thể tu sĩ có thể thực hiện để đối phó với các tình trạng kiệt sức trong quá trình tu học)
- If not addressed properly, can the burnouts in their ordained life cause Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis to end their ordained life? (Nếu không được giải quyết đúng cách, các tu sĩ có thể hoàn tục vì bị kiệt sức trong quá trình tu học hay không?)
- If you were an Abbot, what would you do to prevent the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis in your temple from experiencing burnouts? (Nếu bạn là 1 trụ trì, bạn sẽ làm gì để giúp các tu sĩ tại chùa của bạn không bị kiệt sức trong quá trình tu học?)

The result showed 100 - 0 percent as 0% of participants agreed that "Ordained life is an easy career, both physically and mentally", with the majority of participants sharing that they had experienced burnouts in their ordained life. All of the participants thought that Ordained life is not an easy career, both physically and mentally for 3 reasons as the follows:

Firstly, ordained life is not an easy life physically. Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis have to be responsible for the operation of a temple in Vietnam. We are talking about cleaning, cooking, gardening, decorating, washing dishes, washing clothes, shopping, and welcoming guests, ..... Let alone days when they organize events, the work will be fivefold. Besides that, they have to spend time and effort studying and practicing Buddhism. Their schedule is filled with various sessions from 4 AM to 9 PM.

Secondly, ordained life is not an easy life mentally. We are talking about loneliness, missing home, and being away from their family in their free time. When talking with the lay followers, Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis have to listen to their mental and psychological problems and help them overcome those problems. When they act as psychologists, they have to bear the difficulties that come with the process. And they have to rely on themselves to overcome their own problems.

Thirdly, ordained life is not an easy life socially. We are talking about society's expectations, assumptions, and attention. Social media brings Sangha members and the Buddha's teaching closer to lay followers but also exposes them to more negativity.

Below are a few examples of Daily practice schedules for three months of Buddhist Retreat in some monasteries in different sects.

- Tuong Van Pagoda, Binh Chanh District, Ho Chi Minh City - Mahayana Buddhism:
  - 4:00: Wake up

- 04:15: Meditation + Kowtow (kneel and touch the ground with the forehead in worship or submission)
  - 06:30: Breakfast
  - 07:00 → 07h30: Labor works as assigned
  - 08:00: Studying the Precepts (or chanting scriptures)
  - 10:30: Lunch
  - 11:00: Offering Ritual + Walking Meditation (kinhin, is a practice within several forms of Buddhism that involve movement and periods of walking between long periods of sitting meditation)
  - 12:00: Afternoon nap
  - 13:30: Wake up
  - 14:00: Studying the Dhamma (or chanting)
  - 16:00: Nghi Mong Son ritual (a ritual conducted to help invisible beings improve their mindfulness and have a better chance for good reincarnations)
  - 17:00: Dinner
  - 19:00: Evening chanting of scriptures
  - 21:00: Meditation (or chanting mantras)
  - 21:30: End of the meditation session
  - 22:00: Sleeping time
- Phuoc Son Monastery, Bien Hoa, Dong Nai Province - Theravada Buddhism:
    - 03:30: Wake up
    - 04:00: Walking meditation
    - 04:30: Meditation
    - 05:30: Breakfast
    - 06:30: Labor work as assigned
    - 07:00: Meditation
    - 08:00: Walking Meditation
    - 09:00: Meditation
    - 10:00: Walking Meditation
    - 10:30: Lunch
    - 12:00: Afternoon nap
    - 13:00: Meditation
    - 14:00: Walking Meditation
    - 15:00: Lectures on Dhamma from senior Bhikkhus
    - 16:00: Relaxing time
    - 17:30: Meditation
    - 18:30: Walking Meditation
    - 19:30: Lectures on Dhamma from senior Bhikkhus
    - 20:30: Evening chanting of scriptures and mantras
    - 21:00: Sleeping time
  - Minh Dang Quang Buddhist Institute, An Phu, Thu Duc, Ho Chi Minh City - Khat si Buddhism.
    - 03:30: Wake up
    - 04:00: Meditation and Walking Meditation
    - 05:00: Labor work as assigned
    - 06:00: Breakfast
    - 07:00: Labor work as assigned
    - 08:00: Studying the Dhamma
    - 11:00: Lunch
    - 12:00: Afternoon nap
    - 13:30: Wake up
    - 14:00: Studying the Dhamma
    - 18:00: Meditation
    - 19:00: Evening chanting of scriptures and mantras
    - 20:00: Meditation and Walking Meditation
    - 22:00: Sleeping time

To prevent and handle burnouts in ordained life, there are some actions that Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis can do as follows:

- Come back to the Buddha's teaching to reinforce their understanding and their belief based on their understanding. It gives Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis strength and keeps their minds on the goals that lead them to their ordained life.
  - Focus more on their practice. Any form of practice such as meditation, walking meditation, chanting scriptures or mantras will help get them closer to their peace of mind and relieve their body's tension.
  - Seek support and assistance from fellow practitioners or Abbots.
- For the Abbots, they can prevent the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis in their temples from experiencing burnout by:
- Paying attention to Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis for any hints of burnout.
  - Communicating with Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis to understand their issues mentally and physically.
  - Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis to assign them appropriate chores and help them improve their abilities.

However, most of the participants thought that burnout would not be the cause for their disrobing.

#### **IX. THEORY #7: THE BROKEN RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BHIKKHUS/ BHIKKHUNIS AND THE ABBOT IN THE PAGODA IS THE MAIN REASON FOR THEM TO LEAVE.**

In the surveys and interviews on this theory, 9 questions were asked. 4 questions were Yes-No questions to get the percentage of opinion from participants about the theory in general. The other 5 questions were open questions where participants can share their thoughts on the ideas.

List of questions:

- Is it true that the broken relationship between Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis and the Abbot in the pagoda is the main reason for them to leave? (Mối quan hệ không tốt đẹp giữa tu sĩ và trụ trì là lý do chính khiến các tu sĩ rời bỏ trú xứ, đúng hay không?)
- Give 3 reasons for your answer. (Cung cấp 3 lý do cho câu trả lời phía trên)
- As a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni, name 3 things you expect from a qualified Abbot? (Là 1 tu sĩ, hãy liệt kê 3 điều bạn muốn có ở 1 vị trụ trì)
- As an Abbot, name 3 things you expect from a valuable Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni in your temple. (Nếu là 1 trụ trì, hãy liệt kê 3 điều bạn muốn có ở 1 vị tu sĩ tại ngôi chùa của mình)
- As a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni, name 3 things you can do to foster your relationship with the Abbot in the current temple. (Là 1 tu sĩ, hãy liệt kê 3 điều cụ thể bạn có thể làm để nuôi dưỡng mối quan hệ với vị trụ trì hiện tại)
- As an Abbot, name 3 things you can do to foster your relationship with other Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis in the current temple. (Là 1 trụ trì, hãy liệt kê 3 điều cụ thể bạn

có thể làm để nuôi dưỡng mối quan hệ với các tu sĩ khác trong chùa)

- If the uneasy relationship between you and the current Abbot affects your practice of Buddhism, is it possible for you to initially move to another temple to continue with your ordained life? (Nếu mối quan hệ giữa bạn và vị trụ trì hiện tại ảnh hưởng đến quá trình tu học của bạn, bạn có thể chủ động chuyển đến tu học ở 1 ngôi chùa khác hay không?)
- If you were an Abbot and your strained relationship with a particular Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni affects the operation of a temple, is it possible for you to initially transfer this Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni to another temple to continue with their ordained life? (Nếu bạn là 1 trụ trì và mối quan hệ của bạn và 1 tu sĩ nào đó trong chùa ảnh hưởng đến việc vận hành của 1 ngôi chùa, bạn có thể chủ động chuyển họ đến 1 ngôi chùa khác để tiếp tục tu học hay không?)
- As a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni, would you end your ordained life JUST because of the broken relationship with an Abbot at a particular temple? (Bạn sẽ hoàn tục CHỈ vì mối quan hệ tồi tệ với 1 vị trụ trì hay không?)

The result showed 68.8 – 31.3 percent as 68.8% of participants agreed that “The broken relationship between Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis and the Abbot in the pagoda is the main reason for them to leave”.

The majority of participants thought that the broken relationship between Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis and the Abbot in the pagoda is the main reason for them to leave because for 3 reasons.

Firstly, the influence of an Abbot is very large in a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni's life. We are talking about the daily schedule, study scheme, practice method, and formal education plan.

Secondly, other Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis at the same time will also be influenced strongly by the Abbot and might have different approaches to certain issues as yours.

Thirdly, the Abbot is supposed to be your role model for Buddhism study and practice, especially if you are a new Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni. And the failed expectation might affect your ordained life forever. If not handled properly, it could lead to your leaving the Sangha for good.

Many Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis shared that they expected their Abbot to be generous, reliable, understanding, knowledgeable, and experienced.

Many Abbots shared that they expected Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis in the temple to be hard-working, courageous, obedient, healthy, and adaptive.

Most of the participants thought that there were ways to foster a relationship between a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni with an Abbot:

- Following the precepts accordingly. Both Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis and the Abbot must be mindful of their actions and speech according to precepts. This will help create a peaceful and healthy environment for the temple.

- Communication.
- Respecting each other
- Practicing harder. Meditation, walking meditation, chanting scriptures, mantras,... You will have less time to bother with the surroundings and the practice will boost your strength and kindness.
- Trying to act with understanding.
- For relationships that could affect a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni's practice of Buddhism or the operation of a temple, the move is necessary. But the process should happen with respect and follow the rules of every temple. And there is a high chance that a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni would end his ordained life JUST because of the broken relationship with an Abbot at a particular temple, especially the new Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis. As mentioned, the Abbot is supposed to be a role model for Buddhism study and practice, the failed expectation might affect a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni's ordained life forever.

#### **X. THEORY #8: THE SUPPORT FROM A BHIKKHU'S/ BHIKKHUNI'S BIOLOGICAL FAMILY IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR HIS/ HER ORDAINED LIFE**

In the surveys and interviews on this theory, 11 questions were asked. 4 questions were Yes-No questions to get the percentage of opinion from participants about the theory in general. The other 7 questions were open questions where participants can share their thoughts on the ideas.

List of questions:

- Is it true that the support from a Bhikkhu's/ Bhikkhuni's biological family is very important for his/ her ordained life? (Sự hỗ trợ từ gia đình thế tục là vô cùng quan trọng trong việc tu học của 1 tu sĩ Phật giáo, đúng hay không?)
- Give 3 reasons for your answer. (Cung cấp 3 lý do cho câu trả lời phía trên)
- How do your biological family think about your decision of becoming a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni? (Gia đình thế tục của bạn suy nghĩ thế nào về việc xuất gia của bạn?)
- Had you had any spouse before becoming a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni? (Trước khi xuất gia, bạn có từng kết hôn chưa?)
- Had you had any children before becoming a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni? (Trước khi xuất gia, bạn đã có con chưa?)
- Can your biological family afford their living without your support? (Gia đình thế tục của bạn có thể sống mà không cần bất cứ sự hỗ trợ nào từ bạn chứ?)
- How often do you contact your biological family? (Bạn có thường xuyên liên lạc với gia đình thế tục của mình không? Cụ thể số lần?)
- How do your biological family support you in your ordained life financially and mentally? (Gia đình thế tục của bạn hỗ trợ bạn trên quá trình tu học như thế nào về cả vật chất lẫn tinh thần? Cụ thể?)
- How likely would you end your ordained life for your biological family? From 1-10. (Khả năng bạn hoàn tục vì gia đình thế tục của mình là bao nhiêu? Đánh giá trên thang điểm từ 1 đến 10)



- In a scenario where you were forced to end your ordained life, how likely would your biological family accept you back? From 1-10. (Trong những trường hợp mà bạn bắt buộc phải hoàn tục NGOÀI Ý MUỐN, khả năng gia đình thể tục của bạn thừa nhận và chào đón bạn trở về là bao nhiêu? Đánh giá trên thang điểm từ 1 đến 10)
- How likely can you lead an accomplished ordained life without any support from your biological family financially and mentally? From 1-10. (Khả năng bạn có thể tu hành toàn tâm toàn ý mà không có bất kỳ sự ủng hộ nào từ gia đình thể tục của mình là bao nhiêu? Đánh giá trên thang điểm từ 1 đến 10)

The result showed 68.8 – 31.3 percent as 68.8% of participants agreed that “The support from a Bhikkhu's/ Bhikkhuni's biological family is very important for his/ her ordained life”.

A Bhikkhu's/ Bhikkhuni's biological family can affect their ordained life positively in 3 ways:

- Financially: even though Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis are not allowed to have any possession including money, their biological family can still support them by making offerings and support the temple to fund the temple's activities and improve the Sangha life in general.
- Mentally: giving them space and encouraging them to focus on their ordained life.
- Socially: they can become better lay followers by being more active in Buddhist activities, practicing Budd teaching harder, and helping others to practice together.
- A Bhikkhu's/ Bhikkhuni's biological family can affect their ordained life positively in 3 ways:
- Mentally: showing no support, or even opposition to their decision to become a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni.
- Socially: their family can visit them too frequently in the temple, and contact them too often through all channels (especially Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis with spouse and children before their ordination)
- Financially and/or physically: when a Bhikkhu's/ Bhikkhuni's biological family cannot afford their life and need support from the Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni.

Most participants had support from their biological family with their decision to become a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni and hadn't had any spouses or children before becoming a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni while their biological family can afford the living without their support. The majority of participants thought that they would end their ordained life for their biological family and that their biological family would accept them back in a scenario where they were forced to end their ordained life. However, the high chance was that Vietnamese Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis could lead an accomplished ordained life without any support from their biological family financially and mentally.

## **XI. THEORY #9: AS A BHIKKHU/ BHIKKHUNI, THE MORE LAY FOLLOWERS KNOW YOU AND SUPPORT YOU PERSONALLY, THE BETTER**

In the surveys and interviews on this theory, 7 questions were asked. 1 question was a Yes-No question to get the percentage of opinion from participants about the theory in general. The other 6 questions were open questions where participants can share their thoughts on the ideas.

List of questions:

- As a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni, is it true that the more lay followers know you and support you personally, the better? (Đối với 1 tu sĩ Phật giáo, càng nhiều cư sĩ biết đến mình và ủng hộ mình 1 cách cá nhân càng tốt, đúng hay không?)
- Give 3 reasons for your answer. (Cung cấp 3 lý do cho câu trả lời phía trên)
- Besides financially, how can a lay follower support a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni in their ordained life? (Ngoài vật chất ra, 1 cư sĩ có thể hỗ trợ 1 tu sĩ trong việc tu hành bằng cách nào?)
- Name 3 reasons why a lay follower need personal contact information of a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni. (Hãy liệt kê 3 lý do 1 cư sĩ cần có thông tin liên lạc cá nhân của 1 tu sĩ)
- As an Abbot, would you allow a lay follower to have personal contact information of a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni in your temple? Why? (Nếu là trụ trì, bạn có cho phép việc các cư sĩ có được thông tin liên lạc cá nhân của 1 tu sĩ trong chùa hay không? Tại sao?)
- How likely could lay followers cause a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni to end their ordained life? From 1 to 10. (Khả năng mà các cư sĩ khiến cho tu sĩ buộc phải hoàn tục là bao nhiêu? Đánh giá trên thang điểm từ 1 đến 10)
- Name 3 actions can be taken to safely manage the relationship between a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni with a lay follower. (Hãy liệt kê 3 hành động cụ thể để có thể quản lý mối quan hệ giữa tu sĩ và cư sĩ 1 cách an toàn)

The result showed 81.3 – 18.8 percent as 81.3% of participants agreed that “As a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni, the more lay followers know you and support you personally, the better”.

The majority of participants agreed that “As a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni, the more lay followers know you and support you personally, the better” because of the 3 reasons.

The first reason is that both laypeople and Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis are disciples of the Buddha, with the difference in living situation, level of practice, precepts, and spiritual ability. Both of these disciples have a close relationship and support for each other. The growth or decline of one part has an impact, affecting the other. In terms of depth, it sometimes affects the ups and downs of Buddhism.

The second reason is that the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis play an important role in teaching, giving useful advice to lay people. They can also guide lay people to practice meditation, open ashrams, and retreats to raise awareness of the Dharma for lay people. On the contrary, lay people carry the spirit of spreading the teachings, practice diligently to protect good knowledge, protect the Dharma, and create relationships with Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis.

The third reason is because of the development of Buddhism. Every Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni, no matter how young they are, will one day need to serve the community through Buddhist activities, or even become an Abbot of another temple. All the support they have from the lay followers now will become the strength and foundation for their ordained life later.

A lay follower might need the personal contact information of a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni because of some reasons:

- To seek help for their mental or psychological problems.
- To ask about the activities of the temple that they are keen to join.
- With the development of technology, lay followers can now support the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis online financially.

Half of the participants thought that the Abbot would allow a lay follower to have the personal contact information of a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni in their temples. If not managed properly, the relationship with a lay follower could cause a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni to end their ordained life, but the chance is very low.

About ordinary people, Anguttara Nikaya listed five principles that monastics should notice: (<https://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/an/an05/an05.11.4.than.html>)

- “Be virtuous. Dwell restrained by the precepts, consummate in your behavior & sphere of activity. Train yourselves, having undertaken the training rules, seeing danger in the slightest faults.’ Thus they should be encouraged, exhorted, & established in restraint by the precepts.”
- “Dwell with your sense faculties guarded, with mindfulness as your protector, with mindfulness as your chief, with your intellect self-protected, endowed with an awareness protected by mindfulness.’ Thus they should be encouraged, exhorted, & established in restraint of the senses.”
- “Speak only a little, place limits on your conversation.’ Thus they should be encouraged, exhorted, & established in limited conversation.”
- “Dwell in the wilderness. Resort to remote wilderness & forest dwellings.’ Thus they should be encouraged, exhorted, & established in physical seclusion.”
- “Develop the right view. Be endowed with the right vision.’ Thus they should be encouraged, exhorted, & established in the right vision.”

## **XII. THEORY #10: THE NUMBER OF BHIKKHUS/ BHIKKHUNIS WHO LEFT THE SANGHA BEFORE THEY COULD REACH ENLIGHTENMENT OR BEFORE THEY REACH THE END OF THEIR LIFETIME IS VERY HIGH**

In the surveys and interviews on this theory, 7 questions were asked. 3 questions were Yes-No questions to get the percentage of opinion from participants about the theory in general. The other 4 questions were open questions where participants can share their thoughts on the ideas.

List of questions:

- Is it true that the number of Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis who left the Sangha before they could reach Enlightenment or before they reach the end of their lifetime is very high? (Số lượng tu sĩ hoàn tục trước hạn – trước khi thành đạo hoặc trước khi chết - là rất cao, có đúng không?)
- Give a number that you believe can show that percentage. (Hãy cho 1 con số bạn nghĩ là phù hợp với tỉ lệ trên)
- Give 3 reasons for that reality. (Cung cấp 3 lý do cho thực trạng này)
- Is there a need to reduce that number? Is this number acceptable? (Chúng ta có cần phải giảm con số này xuống hay không? Con số này có hợp lý không?)
- Give 3 reasons for your answer. (Cung cấp 3 lý do cho câu trả lời phía trên)
- If yes for number 4, are there any actions that can be taken to improve that reality? (Nếu câu trả lời cho câu hỏi số 4 là “Yes”, vậy có hành động thực tiễn nào giúp cải thiện tình trạng này hay không?)
- If yes for number 6, list out 3 actions you think can prevent Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis from leaving the Sangha before they could reach Enlightenment or before they reach the end of their lifetime. (Nếu câu trả lời cho câu hỏi số 6 là “Có”, hãy liệt kê 3 hành động thực tiễn bạn cho là có thể giảm thiểu tình trạng tu sĩ hoàn tục trước hạn – trước khi thành đạo hoặc trước khi chết)

The result showed 18.8 – 81.3 percent as 18.8 of participants agreed that “The number of Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis who left the Sangha before they could reach Enlightenment or before they reach the end of their lifetime is very high.”

The majority of participants agreed that The number of Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis who left the Sangha before they could reach Enlightenment or before they reach the end of their lifetime is not high for the 3 reasons.

Firstly, no official statistic has been published on the number. And they thought that the number of disrobing in Vietnamese Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis was not very high.

Secondly, with the social development, more and more lay followers now have time and resources to support Buddhist temples, which helps improve the ordained life of most Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis.

Thirdly, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) has been focusing on improving the study and practice of Buddhism among Vietnamese Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis.

However, there are still a large number of Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis who end their ordained life early because of many reasons:

- Failed expectation: the images of the Sangha members in yellow robes and peaceful facial expressions can fail you. The harsh reality of huge labor work, tight daily schedules, and low living standards will hit you hard.
- No attachment to life, including money or material things is a real challenge. Imagine how you live with no money whatsoever, except for the food and shelter provided by the temple.
- The repetitive and boring temple life. You do the same things every day. No entertainment. In many temples, even no electronic devices.
- The unbearable loneliness. You live in a community with no private space, yet the main practice of Buddhism is to live independently, and basically, alone. No friend, no family. Just fellow practitioners. Imagine when you fall sick, fragile, and lonely – not very attempting, right?
- Losing sight of the real goal. Again, the utmost reason why people become ordained should be to work on themselves, to make themselves the living version of Nirvana. Not to save the world. Not to be the Master who brings up Enlightenment. It should be clear and firm. Once they lose sight, it is hard to continue.
- Miscommunication between members of the Sangha, or between the Bhikkhu with his Master/Abbot.
- Lack of engagement with the Sangha. Lack of support to overcome all the challenges that might come in the way.

The disrobing among Vietnamese Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis must be reduced because:

- Vietnamese society is not very tolerant toward former Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis. Disrobing is considered a failure and a lack of vigor. This and other different reasons make it tough for a former Bhikkhu/Bhikkhuni to settle down as a lay follower after disrobing. They often have no career to support themselves and are usually not welcomed back by their biological family.
- The need for Vietnamese Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis is very high. There are only 54773 Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis in Vietnam but the number of lay followers is too much higher in any measure (4.6 million officially or 60 million non-officially). To serve, teach and lead all of the Vietnamese lay followers, 54773 Bhikkhus/Bhikkhunis clearly cannot cover all the workloads.
- In a society where technology and media from all sources leave imprints on every aspect of modern life, morality, core value and national culture are in danger. As a religion that has been brought to Vietnam for around 1800 years, Buddhism plays an important role in building Vietnamese culture. To help maintain morality, core value, and national culture among generations of Vietnamese youth, Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis should be larger in number, higher in the study, and deeper in practice.

(<https://thuvienhoasen.org/images/file/3fc7eJ1G0QgQA OUI/lichsu-pgvn-thichthienhoa.pdf>)

To prevent the Vietnamese Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis from disrobing, some actions can be put in place:

- Choosing a suitable temple and Abbot for their ordained life.
- Understanding the study and practice of Buddhism
- Keep all your actions and speech under check according to the precepts.
- Study whenever you have the chance. Classes are necessary, but you can still get the knowledge by reading books, observing, or listening to other Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis.
- Catch up with the temple life: follow the agreed schedule, accomplish your assigned tasks, respect your fellow practitioners, and obey the rules made by the Abbot.
- Make the practice of Buddhism your daily habit. No matter what methods you choose, focus on them and set the time for them so that even on your busiest days, you still can enjoy the true mindfulness that Buddhism has to offer.
- Seek help for your troubles. That's the beauty of community. You will never have to face challenges alone.
- Be humble.
- Be strong.
- Be patient.
- Restrain yourself from all kinds of external communication channels, including from your biological family and the lay followers which will consume a lot of your time and energy for practice.
- Praying.

### **XIII. SUMMARIZE THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH IN GENERAL**

#### *A. Advantages of Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis' ordained life in Vietnam*

- Buddhism has a long history in Vietnam and has become a big part of Vietnamese culture.
- With a population of more than 99 million with 60% of whom are Buddhist followers or people living with Buddhism values, Vietnamese Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis can have countless opportunities to serve and teach the community. (<https://danso.org/viet-nam/>)
- The fact that many Buddhism Sects are coexisting in Vietnam makes it one of the best places for Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis and lay followers to study and practice Buddhism with diversity.
- The determination of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) to improve the study and practice of Buddhism among Vietnamese Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis have resulted in an increase in their formal educational level, knowledge, and practice in unity.
- As the rate of economic development keeps on rising, Vietnamese people now have better living standards and can invest more time and effort to



nurture their mental and psychological life, especially through religion. (<https://www.worldbank.org/vi/news/press-release/2022/08/08/vietnam-s-economy-forecast-to-grow-7-5-in-2022-new-world-bank-report-says#:~:text=Kinh%20%E1%BA%BF%20Vi%E1%BB%87t%20Nam%20%C4%83ng,l%E1%BA%A7n%20c%E1%BB%A7a%20Ng%C3%A2n%20h%C3%A0ng%20Th%E1%BA%BF>)

- Technology advancement has provided Vietnamese Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis the tools to further their teaching and services to more lay followers regardless of time and location.

#### *B. Challenges for Vietnamese Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis in their ordained life*

- The need for formal Buddhism is very high but the number of Buddhist institutions is small, and cannot provide sufficient slots for all the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis in Vietnam.
- Failed expectation: the images of the Sangha members in yellow robes and peaceful facial expressions can fail you. The harsh reality of huge labor work, tight daily schedules, and low living standards will hit you hard.
- No attachment to life, including money or material things is a real challenge. Imagine how you live with no money whatsoever, except for the food and shelter provided by the temple.
- The repetitive and boring temple life. You do the same things every day. No entertainment. In many temples, even no electronic devices.
- The unbearable loneliness. You live in a community with no private space, yet the main practice of Buddhism is to live independently, and basically, alone. No friend, no family. Just fellow practitioners.
- Losing sight of the real goal. Again, the utmost reason why people become ordained should be to work on themselves, to make themselves the living version of Nirvana. Not to save the world. Not to be the Master who brings up Enlightenment. It should be clear and firm. Once they lose sight, it is hard to continue.
- Miscommunication between members of the Sangha, or between the Bhikkhu with his Master/Abbot.
- Lack of engagement with the Sangha. Lack of support to overcome all the challenges that might come in the way.

#### *C. Suggestions to reduce the disrobing rate among Vietnamese Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis in modern times*

- Before your ordination:
  - Do research thoroughly about the ordained life, as a life-long career, not just an adventure.
  - Know your things. Your goals. Your mental and physical conditions. Your family responsibilities. And your assumptions. Make them clear and see if you can pursue this path.
  - Talk to your family. Even if the family does not totally support the decision, at least don't turn

them into enemies against Buddhism and temple life.

- Ask the experienced Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis for their advice.
  - Don't burn all the bridges behind you. Always hope for the best and prepare for the worst.
  - Be cautious when choosing your Master and the temple where you will be staying. And trust your intuition.
- During your ordain life:
    - Keep all your actions and speech under check according to the precepts.
    - Study whenever you have the chance. Classes are necessary, but you can still get the knowledge by reading books, observing, or listening to other Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis.
    - Catch up with the temple life: follow the agreed schedule, accomplish your assigned tasks, respect your fellow practitioners, and obey the rules made by the Abbot.
    - Make the practice of Buddhism your daily habit. No matter what methods you choose, focus on them and set the time for them so that even on your busiest days, you still can enjoy the true mindfulness that Buddhism has to offer.
    - Seek help for your troubles. That's the beauty of community. You will never have to face challenges alone.
    - Be humble.
    - Be strong.
    - Be patient.
    - Restrain yourself from all kinds of external communication channels, including from your biological family and the lay followers which will consume a lot of your time and energy for practice.
  - In cases of disrobing:
    - When things turn against your ordained life and make disrobing your only option, then accept it with courage, but consider it carefully so that you will have no regret later on.
    - Don't lose your faith in the Buddha's teaching. Ordained life might not be for everyone, but Buddha's teaching is.
    - Settle down first. If possible, consider moving to a new town where you don't have to explain to anyone you meet the reasons for your disrobing.
    - Continue to support Buddhism in your own ways.
    - Again, don't burn all the bridges behind you. Who knows when you will have a change of heart and want to become a Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni one more time?

*D. Suggestions for Abbots to reduce the disrobing rate among Vietnamese Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis in modern times*

- Before taking in a Sangha member:
  - Talk to the candidates, listen to them, to understand them and their presumptions about the ordained life.
  - Be honest, patient, understanding, and transparent about the temple's approach to Dhamma, like what methods Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis are expected to practice.
  - Be clear about your view of Bhikkhu's education opportunity. Many Abbots think postgraduate education is not as important as following the precepts and practicing. Nothing wrong with this. Just make sure that the candidate understands the expectation. If the candidate doesn't have the same thought, then this temple might not be a good choice.
  - Give them a short time of postulancy in the temple to see if they can get along physically and mentally or if they are ready for the ordained life.
  - Ask the candidate to know about their attachments and their unfulfilled responsibilities with family members, spouses, or children. Any of the mentioned factors might become obstacles in their ordained life at some point. Knowing them can help you be mentally prepared for the hidden troubles.
- During their ordained life with you as their Abbot:
  - Build a Sangha of unity, support, and diversity.
  - Treat the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis as fellow practitioners first, and then members of the Sangha.
  - Provide sufficient material and mental support to the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis.
  - Promote the application of precepts and rules among the Sangha members.
  - Ensure that you are a virtuous example of learning and practicing Dhamma diligently.
  - Build the spirit of life-long study in the temple.
  - Share with them your experience in practicing Buddhism and in dealing with challenges of the ordained life.
  - Help them balance the relationships with lay followers and their biological family.
- Toward their disrobing:
  - Find out the reasons.
  - Offer to help
  - Work on some possible solutions.
  - Respect their decision
  - Be kind and understanding.
  - Motivate them to keep practicing Buddhism as lay followers
  - Accept their leave knowing that you have done everything you could and that sometimes, things just need to happen the way they are meant to.
  - Pray for the best – that they will return to the ordained life and be better Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis at any Buddhist temple.

#### XIV. CONCLUSION

The Human Resources Management of a Vietnamese Buddhist temple is different from that of ordinary organizations as there are no salaries and benefits to consider. Instead, we need to pay more attention to the environment and development.

To improve the environment, Abbot has to build a Sangha of unity, support, and diversity with the spirit of life-long study. He/She also needs to manage the lay followers that come to the temple as well. The more lay followers that come to the temple, the more conveniently the Sangha can teach them and serve them. In the past, with the practice of "alms round", the Sangha members could initiate the contact and be active in the relationship with lay followers, Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis came, got food for their survival, offered teaching on spiritual development, and left. And the routine would happen, but in other places, with other lay people. That was the reflection of the "no attachment" concept. In modern times, without the practice of "alms round", everything has changed. Sangha members must stay in a particular temple, waiting for the lay followers to come and ask for help. And the same lay people are likely to return to the same temple for convenience. The situation requires new skills from the Abbot on how to balance that relationship and ensure a favorable environment for all Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis to practice Buddhism.

To improve the development of Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis, everything must start from the Abbot. He/She must be a virtuous example of learning and practicing Dhamma diligently, treat the Bhikkhus/ Bhikkhunis as fellow practitioners first, promote the application of precepts and rules among the Sangha members, and share with them the experience in practicing Buddhism and in dealing with challenges of the ordained life. If the Abbot wants to lead the Sangha members, he/she must live the ordained life the right way first. Leading with example is the key.

Even with all of the good wills and practices put in place, what if ordained life simply cannot work out for a particular Bhikkhu/ Bhikkhuni? Then let it be. It happened before even in the time of Buddha. A Bhikkhu had left and come back to the Sangha 7 times in total. And he still reached Enlightenment. That's why the Buddhist rules allow Bhikkhus to take their ordination rituals 7 times in total. It is better to let them go, allow them some time and solitude to work on their problems, and then welcome them back as better versions of themselves, and build a stronger Sangha. If they don't come back, they can lead the life of a lay follower, and continue to support Buddhism in another way.

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