

Negotiating Bad Karma

Case Study: Lived Experiences on Employment Process of Disability in Lao PDR

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Abstract

The fact that three (5, 8, and 10) of the 17 SDGs directly or indirectly relate to the necessity for promoting the inclusiveness of individuals and groups across all spheres of society as an essential prerequisite for societal and global harmony emphasizes its importance in achieving the objectives of the SDGs 2030. The promotion of inclusiveness for people with disabilities had long been a complex issue, especially in developing nations. Physically disabled people in Laos are marginalized in all essential domains. The employment domain is a vital domain that significantly determines the quality of a person.

Given the foregoing, this study aims to contribute towards bridging this gap by adopting a life history approach to analyze the challenges and the negotiation process of the physically disabled people in the labor market of Laos with a focus on negotiating Buddhist karma and employment. The main results were that participants strongly agreed that Buddhist karma is causing more harm than benefits for the majority of the disabled population in modern Laos concerning employment prospects and employment practices. Participants came up with their unique ways of navigating themselves in the labor market, some were more substantially more successful than others.

Keywords: *Disability Studies, Marginalization, Life-history Research, Laos PDR, Ethnography*

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1. Introduction

In the context of contemporary Laos, research on physical disability and especially employment-based marginalization is uncommon. Most research on the subject in the Lao context had largely adopted the generalized approach (Buchner, 2011; Thoresen, Fielding, Gillieatt & Campbell, 2014; Hinton & Rutherford, 2013). According to these studies, physical disability is grouped into one unified group with generalized causes and effects regarding marginalization. In many cases, the

causes, effects, and experiences are vastly different for the individuals. Therefore, in the modern Lao context, it is important to explore the particular experiences concerning the marginalization of physically disabled individuals.

Even though within the past three decades Laos had undergone a substantial amount of economic development and modernization (Manolom & Promphakping 2016, p. 74). Laos as one of the poorest developing nations in the world still faces numerous challenges in

attempting to achieve development. Provided that the country severely lacks infrastructure combined with the strong stigma against the notion of disability, disabled communities in modern Laos are among the most vulnerable and marginalized (Khamvongsa & Russell, 2009; Buchner, 2011; Thoresen et al, 2014; Hinton & Rutherford, 2013).

Some various laws and initiatives prohibit discrimination based on disability such as the signing of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009 (Hinton & Rutherford 2013, p.1) and the 9th Five Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2021-2025 (Ministry of Planning and Investment, 2021). Nevertheless, people with disabilities continue to have limited opportunities to participate in education, employment, and many other aspects of life open to people without disabilities.

Inclusive employment in Laos is now more relevant than ever as the country is trying to achieve sustainable development in all domains including social and economic development (Phimphanthavong, 2014). Because of the foregoing, this study aims to contribute towards bridging this gap by adopting a life history approach to analyze the challenges and the negotiation process of the physically disabled people in the labor market of Laos.

When left in a situation where the state is not a sufficient source of assistance, physically disabled people must develop alternative ways of negotiating marginalization. Thus, there is a phenomenon where certain disabled people are better able to navigate thru the labor market challenges than others.

This phenomenon can be observed in contemporary Laos, in the ways personal perception, the will to succeed, and personal environment may mediate the experiences of the disabled. This goes beyond structural challenges such as traditional and religious barriers. There has been so much emphasis on structural factors

as an impediment to labor market participation without paying attention to the personal motivation, attributes, and environment of disabled people to succeed. This is a novel contribution to the literature on disability and employment in the Lao context.

There is no centralized official governing body for disability-related affairs in Laos. This means that depending on the affair, disabled people have to refer to the relevant ministry. For instance, the Ministry of Labor and social welfare oversees all the employment affairs of disabled people in Laos, while the Ministry of Education oversees the educational affairs of disabled people.

According to the Lao Disability Act (2019), Article 4, Section 36 incorporates Vocational education, training, and human resource development. This means that disabled individuals in Laos should be entitled to vocational education or training to assist them with income generation.

Article 4, Section 38 states that a disabled individual is entitled to be employed in the government sector, NGOs, foreign organizations, companies, and other organizations based on their knowledge and capability.

The 9th Five Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025) is the main umbrella policy that acts as the main guideline for all socioeconomic development-related policies in the country. It is essentially a national strategy that all related organizations and stakeholders should follow.

One component of the contemporary Health Sector Development Plan is to establish a quality labor force (Ministry of Planning and Investment 2021, p. 67). The focus is to develop the labor force in the orientation of industrialization and modernization with one of the end goals of developing opportunities for disadvantaged laborers via integrating the disabled population into the labor force (Ministry of Planning and Investment 2021, p. 67).

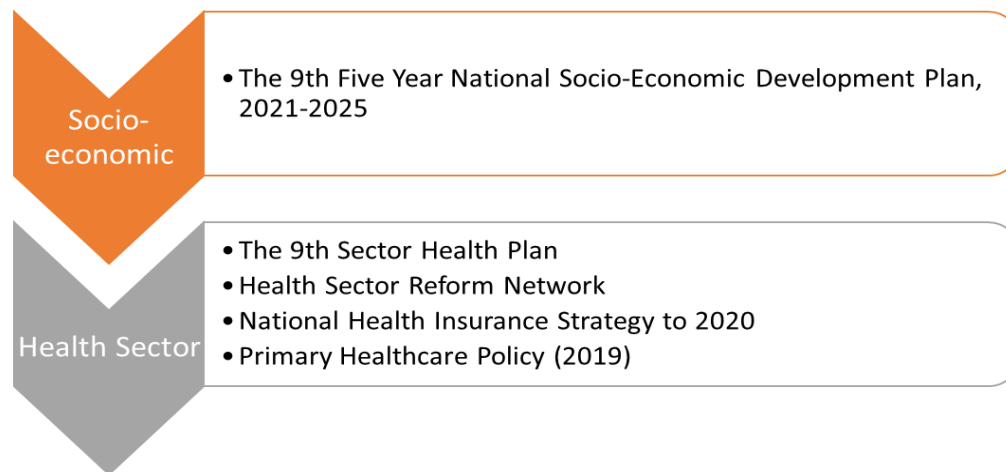


Figure 1: Visualization of the policies extracted from the Lao 9th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan, 2021-2025, page 67

This research aims to analyze the relationship between Buddhist karma and the negotiation process of physically disabled people in the employment domain. To introduce the relationship between the social model and Buddhism and the employment of disability in Laos, this study incorporates a comprehensive field research life history method, including interviews with physically disabled individuals and some of their close family members. The long history between Buddhism and the Lao society in many ways justified the prevalent fear of Buddhism karma. The ramifications are mostly detrimental for disabled individuals in the nation. Interestingly there was a clear polarization between the participants and the potential employers. None of the participants, even the ones who benefitted from the idea of bad karma, agreed with the fear of bad karma. The general reception of the participants was that they to a certain extent understand why it is still relevant for the modern Lao society. However, all the participants stated that this reasoning is misunderstood and misused.

The main research question is: How are they negotiating marginalization, disability, and employment about the social barriers mainly traditional and religious belief?

The findings from previous studies (Buchner 2011; Thoresen et al, 2014; Hinton & Rutherford, 2013) were undoubtedly valuable and provided a solid base for further research in

the Lao context. However, they had two main limitations. First, the studies were too generalized concerning marginalization. This limitation is well justified as data related to disability in Laos is severely limited.

2. Materials and Methods

This research adopted a qualitative ethnographic approach. The main research instrument is semi-structured interviews based on life history research. This research is based on the interviews and ethnographic data acquired in Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR between March 2020 and May 2021.

The sampling method chosen was purposive sampling in which the researcher selects the participants based on the determined characteristics of the population over-generalizing (Bryman, 2016, p.201) All participants are chosen based on the physical disability of all conditions and severity levels. There were three causes of disability. These include the accident from Unexploded Ordnances (UXOs), traffic accidents, and disability from birth. A purposive sampling technique was utilized for this research. Furthermore, they are selected based on the assumption that the individual holds specific knowledge or experience about being discriminated against and marginalized by the disability condition.

The cohort of participants was asked both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The

data collected were ethnographic data about living with a disability in daily life, how the disability condition affects the employment prospect, and how the disability condition affects the employment setting for the employed participants.

Participants are selected since they are of working age, which is defined in the context of this paper as being 18 years old or over. Four sectors of employment were chosen, these sectors include the private sector, the public sector, the self-employed sector, and the unemployed sector. These four sectors represent the employment scene in contemporary Laos. To fully represent the private sector, participants from the business sector and the NGO sector were selected. The cohort of participants was asked both open-ended and closed-ended questions.

2.1 Life history research

The discussion of this research is based on the narrative approach. This is the approach that emphasizes the telling of events and stories via communication between the interviewer and interviewee. The process of narrative analysis is suitable for revealing the core thoughts entrenched in stories and the broader culture that generates the narratives (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2019, p.3). Under this method, the focus is to identify and analyze how people infer their daily lived experiences.

Narrative analysis has historically been utilized in the realm of feminist studies to explore oppressed and unheard voices (Chase, 2005; Reinhartz, 1992). This is highly suitable for this particular research as the core idea of the research is to analyze one of the most marginalized and silenced sectors of the Lao population.

Narrative analysis enables the researcher to better explore the unique and diverse perspectives of each particular case. Furthermore, the power between the researcher and the participant was not concentrated purely on the researcher. Yet the power relation was notable, especially among the woman participants.

2.2 Positionality in qualitative research

As the research utilized a life history method, it is vital to analyze my position as a researcher. Upon analyzing the interviews, it is essential to note that my position as a researcher affected the participants' responses. Two main factors caused the influence of positionality on my research. The first factor is the influence of power relations due to the perceived disparity of the educational background between me and the participants. The second-factor deals with gender relations. A certain number of women participants were in a way intimidated by the fact that the interviewer was a man. Once critically analyzed, most responses were so peaceful due to my status as a researcher.

3. Result

Figure 2 illustrates the basic information concerning the life and employment of the participants.

Participant's label	Participant's number	Occupation	Sector	Disability type	Gender	Age	Marital status
Participant A	1	Administration	Private (NGO)	One-legged disabled	Women	35	Married
Participant B	2	Lawyer	Public	One-legged disabled	Men	48	Married
Participant C	3	Handicraft worker	Private (Company)	Both arms disabled	Women	25	Single
Participant D	4	Self-employed (Massage parlor)	Private (Self-employed)	Partially blind	Women	35	Married
Participant E	5	Unemployed (lives in rural Laos)	NA	One-legged disabled	Men	46	Married
Participant F	6	Unemployed (lives in rural Laos)	NA	One arm was disabled and one eye was permanently blinded	Women	50	Married

Participant G	7	Unemployed (lives in rural Laos)	NA	Wheelchair-disabled	Women	33	Single
Participant H	8	Unemployed (lives in rural Laos)	NA	Wheelchair-disabled	Men	45	Single
Participant I	9	Administration	Private (NGO)	One-legged disabled	Men	46	Married
Participant J	10	Handicraft worker	Private (self-employed)	Wheelchair-disabled	Women	32	Single
Participant K	11	Unemployed (lives in Vientiane capital)	NA	Wheelchair-disabled	Men	43	Married
Participant L	12	Freelance painter	Private (self-employed)	Both arm disabled	Men	30	Single

Figure 2: Basic profile of the 12 participants

Figure 3 illustrates the general findings of all 12 participants. The most important findings are further discussed in the discussion chapter.

Interview Question	Overall Findings of the 12 Participants
Most significant barriers	Social Barriers
Perceived level of marginalization	Highly marginalized
Success rate in negotiating marginalization	Not successful
Most important factor in negotiation success	Willpower
Accessibility in the workplace	Minimal accessibility
Job satisfaction	Moderately satisfied
Knowledge on disability related policies in Laos	Minimal knowledge
Significance of family members in life story	Significant
Reasons for marginalization	Poor socioeconomic condition
Negotiation strategies	Self-reliance
Level of religious (Theravada Buddhism)	Moderately religious
Had the belief of karma provided more harm or benefits	More harm

Figure 3: Overall findings of the 12 participants

3.1 Main findings: The negotiation process of bad karma

One of the most prominent examples can be observed from the lived experience of Participant C. She encountered a UXO accident that led to the complete loss of both hands. However, she finished her vocational education and made a living by specializing in handicrafts and sewing despite having no hands.

The analysis of the life story of Participant C elucidated that her strong personal will in combination with being in the right environment had essentially resulted in a very unlikely success. It is important to note that Participant C was the youngest participant in the cohort. Participant C stated that her life before becoming disabled was an ordinary rural life. Unfortunately, she encountered a UXO accident

when she was 16 while she was playing in the rice field.

The accident had permanently maimed both hands and the majority of her arms. She had to quit school because it was too challenging for her physically and mentally. She had to quit school because her disability condition had affected her prospect for labor participation. She had to rely on her siblings and parents for financial support. She decided to migrate to the capital city, Vientiane, and enrolled in a vocational workshop.

While enrolled in the workshop, she had unconventionally specialized in making handicrafts and sewing without using her hands. The decision to migrate was not taken well by her family but she decided to do it regardless. It took her two years to settle in the capital city. She is

now a full-time employee of the Xonphao Disabled People Handicrafts Center. The center provides accommodation where she currently resides.

The negotiation process of Participant C can be summarized as the unconventional process of turning disability into a life-changing opportunity. She turned her disability condition into an opportunity to migrate to the capital. This opportunity might not have been possible should she had not been disabled. The challenges she encountered were multi-dimensional. There were structural challenges, physical challenges, and social challenges.

Since becoming disabled, she was faced with the structural issue of not having access to education due to the lack of inclusive education.

The physical challenge was the main reason she had to quit school. She was never trained or encouraged to write without hands. The social challenges were most significant for her life story. Besides being traumatized by the verbal abuses she had encountered during her time at school, participant B had also suffered immensely from damage to her self-esteem.

How Participant C handled the challenges was based on two main goals: obtaining employment and maintaining a sense of self and dignity. These actions shaped her pathway in 4 main ways: accepting her disability condition, being proactive in seeking opportunities, specializing in a set of niche skills, and deciding to migrate to the capital city.



Figure 4: Participant C specializes in sewing at her workplace despite having no hands

Her attributes and environment played a substantial role in the outcome of the situation. The age and gender factors shaped her actions. She stated *"I was very depressed for two years and had no motivation or intention to do anything. When the vocation workshop was introduced, I was hesitant but at the time, I realized I can't be like this forever so I applied and luckily met one instructor who specialized in training limb-disabled individuals. I was only 20 years old at the time and I thought I still have so much that I can achieve and can't let my*

disability rob me of my life. So I decided to give in the workshop training hoping that I will make a living from it regardless of my physical disability."

She affirmed that it was mainly because of her disability that she was able to live and work in the capital city as she explained *"One of the officers told me there is a handicraft center owned by a disabled person that was recruiting and providing free accommodation to a disabled employee and that was my perfect opportunity. If I had applied to migrate to the capital as a non-*

disabled person, it would be almost impossible, my family was not able to afford the traveling cost let alone living costs. Not to mention the competition in the labor market, being disabled in contrast significantly reduces the competition and I took it to heart to make the most of it."

The narrative of Participant C elucidated how she had utilized the environment and her disability status to optimize her opportunity tactically. This negotiation process is most appropriate for a young disabled woman in contemporary Laos. However, to further explore

the negotiation process the opposite case needs to be analyzed.

The recurring theme for the significance of personal attributes is based on age and gender. Similar to Participant C and all the participants, the age and gender factors substantially affected Participant H (aged 41) negotiated marginalization in the employment domain. Participant H is considerably older than Participant C. Hence, his outlook on the issue of disability and marginalization leans more toward the pessimistic side.



Figure 5: Participant H is struggling to traverse around his sister's apartment

The general perception of the issue of disability and employment is primarily negative. The perception of the participant towards himself over different periods was noticeably different. Before the traffic accident, he had a neutral perception of himself and his employment prospects. He moved to the capital city during his late 20s and was employed at a timber processing factory. After a traffic accident that made him wheelchair-bound, he had to quit his job immediately. As he was suffering severely from depression, he had no motivation to do anything, and he perceived his future and career to be hopeless. Luckily his siblings were able to help him purchase a wheelchair and provide accommodation.

The challenges that Participant H encountered were somewhat different in

comparison to Participant C. Being a wheelchair user; the social challenges were of extreme significance for his particular case because the visibility of his disability is more pronounced. He cited that he was rejected from a job four times in the employment realm as they perceived his disability condition to be a significant hindrance. Physical challenges were also substantial, mainly because the significant majority of roads and buildings even in the urban capital city are considered to be very lacking in accommodating wheelchair users. Since becoming disabled participant H had never had proper employment. Fortunately, he was able to rely on his siblings who also migrated for financial support and care.

Participant H had participated in 4 different workshops, however, none of them were helpful

in his current situation as he is currently unemployed. His actions to negotiate marginalization in the employment domain were to diversify. The workshops attended were all different workshops aimed to develop specific vocational skills. Instead of specializing in a particular skillset in the case of Participant C, participant H decided to diversify. He tried seeking help via different NGOs and was provided the opportunity to participate in vocational workshops and training, he was also provided free maintenance costs for his wheelchair. However, none of these assists proved to be helpful in the employment domain as he had always been unemployed since becoming disabled.

Because he is wheelchair-bound, participation in many of the light industries is not a suitable option for him. Furthermore, being in his 40s, it was difficult for him to learn a new skill set. In combination with the intense experience of being discriminated against based on his apparent disability condition, his age had made it very difficult for him to acquire employment. Despite all his efforts and actions, he was never able to acquire proper employment. The strategy of diversifying over specializing did not work out for Participant H.

3.2 Analysis of the negotiation process

From the perspective of disabled people, compassion and integrity are hurting them rather than helping, this is highly unusual as compassion and integrity would be associated with positive effects. One interesting point to note is that both the fear of karma and the hope for good karma led to the same result for disabled people in the employment domain

The long history between Buddhism and the Lao society in many ways justified the prevalent fear of Buddhism karma. The ramifications are mostly detrimental for disabled individuals in the nation. Interestingly there was a clear polarization between the participants and the potential employers. None of the participants, even the ones who benefitted from the idea of bad karma agreed with the fear of bad karma. The

general reception of the participants was that to a certain extent, they understand why it is still relevant for the modern Lao society. However, all the participants stated that this reasoning is misunderstood and misused.

Besides Participant C and Participant H, two more participants mentioned that the belief in karma had significantly influenced them in the employment domain. The experience of Participant I is said to be highly influential in this regard. Before an accident that maimed him, he was physically active and was employed in a labor-intensive job.

Like the majority of the participants, he grew up in poverty and received minimal education. The main difference for Participant I was that he had no ambitious plan. After finishing high school he just wanted to work as a helper at a meat vendor in an open market. He got the job, and the main roles were helping out with physical tasks such as carrying meat around and transporting meat. He encountered a UXO accident that left him wheelchair-bound. He had to quit his job immediately and it took one year and a half for him to acquire a wheelchair free of charge courtesy of an international NGO.

Two years after the accident he wanted to resume working, however, the old market vendor rejected him based on the fear of bad karma. The vendor told him that *"You are obviously very different now and most importantly I would feel extremely bad to hire a wheelchair-bound person to carry my vegetables around. It would be a substantial sin since it will be seen as taking advantage of a disabled person meaning this will bring me bad karma."*

This was not the only experience when the notion of bad karma was influential for the employment prospect of the participant. Participant L, after being rejected by a former employer, the next place he applied cited the same reason of bad karma. He applied to be a helper at a family-owned electric hardware shop, once he was at the shop the potential employer said *"Let me be honest besides the difficulties of moving around with a wheelchair I think it is*

immoral to hire a disabled person. I feel that it is unethical and in doing so I would commit a bad karma that can haunt me or even my children." The two consecutive rejections due to the fear of bad karma had essentially discouraged Participant L from seeking employment. As of the interview participant L applied for one more place but was rejected due to the lack of proper facilities for wheel-chair.

Participant L considered himself a highly conservative person having grown up in a poor rural Lao family. Hence, he expected the notion of bad karma to be influential in the lives of disabled people in Laos but he did not expect it to be significantly influential. Hence this phenomenon is even surprising for a highly conservative Lao individual.

4. Discussion

4.1 Negotiating the notion of bad karma in comparison to literature

One of the most unexpected findings was the significance of religious and cultural barriers. As Hinton and Rutherford (2014) stated that physical barriers for physically disabled people in Laos are among the worst globally, mainly the extremely poor infrastructure for accessibility, it would be expected that physical barriers would pose the most significant challenge for the participants.

Furthermore, as Laos is still developing, promoting inclusive institutions is highly challenging as the country lacks the required resources. Hence it is also expected that the majority of participants would cite structural barriers as the most significant. Both physical and structural barriers are substantial however the significant majority of participants stated that social barriers are the most substantial. This is unexpected as the participants are either employed or are seeking employment in the country's capital city, where it is most globalized and modernized yet social barriers in Vientiane's capital proved to be most challenging.

Upon analysis of the result, Buddhism's fear of bad karma in Laos can be extensive and applicable to practically any situation. It provides

more benefits than harm in most situations, such as the fear of bad karma from harming other people or committing sins such as stealing and cheating. However, in this research, this fear is causing more harm, especially to disabled people. The participants were more than keen to seek employment, but none could truly understand this fear. Therefore, this fear made social challenges the most difficult to negotiate. The significant majority of participants were not able to fully comprehend how the idea of Buddhism karma is restricting their opportunity to labor participation. In the cases of Participant C and Participant H, both had placed social barriers as their main challenges in negotiating employment marginalization. Chief among them was the challenge of good karma and bad karma.

Provided that the notion of bad karma is highly subjective, it would be impossible to come up with a universal solution to negotiate such a challenge.

Participant C stated the physical challenges were not so significant because from lived experience the struggles of not having hands are relatively less problematic than the lower limb disabled in terms of physical barriers. Her main negotiation tactic was to strictly follow the philosophy of the Xonphao Handicraft Center, the philosophy that interestingly changed the fear of bad karma into the merit of good karma.

Under her current job at the handicraft center, she had to negotiate various social challenges. The idea of karma was mentioned numerous times. For example, many customers came to the handicraft center and cited that they feel bad for buying the products at the center when they see that it was made by a physically disabled person, many of these cases were linked to the fear of bad karma as the customers perceived it to be a sinful act of exploitation.

Interestingly, the owner of the center who is also the boss of Participant C saw this fear of bad karma as an opportunity and essentially transformed a barrier into an opportunity. The whole philosophy of the center was that it is a handicraft center that hires physically disabled

employees exclusively, the center is owned by a disabled individual therefore the disability-centric philosophy is a unique selling point.

Whenever the notion of bad karma was mentioned, participant C and her co-workers who are all physically disabled would respond by telling the customers that on the contrary by being a patron of the center you are not exploiting the disabled people but are supporting them. The center functions more than just as a shop but also as a small vocational institute that trains physically disabled people in the art of handicrafts. Therefore, by buying and supporting the products at the center it is an act of good karma instead of bad karma.

On the other hand, participant H was not as successful. During the four times he was rejected, two of those times cited the fear of bad karma as the main reason.

His tactic to negotiate the social challenge was to diversify as much as possible in job hunting. Two times he was told by his potential employer that they would not hire him because they fear bad karma.

Another potential employer cited fear of bad karma as the reason for rejection. This time he applied to be a staff in a supermarket and was told that besides the potential employer, the customers would also fear bad karma if they were to see a wheelchair user stacking items at the supermarket.

Despite the rapid increase in globalization and modernization, especially in the capital city, certain traditional beliefs and religious beliefs are still prominent in modern Laos. This seems to contradict the notion of good karma mainly gained from employing a disabled individual should outweigh the notion of bad karma in Laos where the dominant religion is Theravada Buddhism (Ladwig, 2014, p.3). Upon analysis, Buddhism's fear of bad karma in Laos can be extensive and applicable to practically any situation. It provides more benefits than harm in most situations, such as the fear of bad karma from harming other people or committing sins such as stealing and cheating. However, in this

particular case, this fear is causing more harm, especially to disabled people. The participants were more than keen to seek employment, but none could truly understand this fear. Therefore, this fear made social challenges the most difficult to negotiate.

Once situated in the global literature, there are some similarities with other Asian countries. Bejoian (2006) explored the association between Tibetan Buddhism and disability. The author criticized that Tibetan Buddhism karma is wrongly used to interpret the notion of disability. Bejoian (2006) argued that the law of karma in Buddhism is highly complex and non-linear; people cannot simply justify that past deeds led to the current life of disability. Hence, the association between Buddhism karma and disability should not be significant.

Essentially the cases of Laos and Tibet have shown that people generally misinterpret religious belief; the significance along with the implications of this misinterpretation is surprisingly highly influential for disabled individuals and their families.

4.2 Discussion gap of previous studies

The data analysis of this research generated information that supported the broad argument on the significance of social challenges. Eckerman (2006, p. 379) suggested that the values of Buddhism and Animism considerably affected the understanding and practices of health and illnesses in modern Laos, the specific discussion on how karma significantly affected the employment prospect and practices strongly supported the claim of Eckerman. When explored specifically in the context of disability and the modern Lao culture, it had been founded that the attitudinal and cultural barriers are among the most significant barriers to accessing life necessities and social participation (Buchner, 2011, p.81; Hinton & Rutherford, 2014, p.2). One of the main findings of this research argued that in comparison to obvious barriers such as physical barriers and systematic barriers, participants generally agreed that the idea of Buddhist karma had mainly hampered their

employment prospects and practices. This main finding confirms the significance social barrier argument of existing literature in the modern Lao context (Buchner, 2011, p.81; Hinton & Rutherford, 2014, p.2).

To analyze deeper, data analysis on the topic of Southeast Asian Buddhist karma and disability employment is investigated, the closest relevant study is based on the study (Naemiratch & Madison, 2009). The main argument of this study was that in the general Thai society, Buddhist beliefs led to the feeling of empathy towards disabled people, yet the effects of this empathy are not always beneficial (Naemiratch & Madison, 2009). For instance, disabled individuals in Thailand have agreed with empathy but strongly argued that there should be more focus on the capability over the empathy of the disability condition (Naemiratch & Madison, 2009, p. 483). The general discussion of this research adds to the argument of Naemiratch and Madison (2009) where the effects on the employment domain are more harmful as disabled individuals are not able to fully understand how karma influences employability and employment, more importantly, it is substantially more difficult to mitigate and overcome this notion of karma.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, participants were tactical about negotiating disability in the employment domain. The social and cultural barriers were generally the most significant. The notion of Buddhist karma had proven to be more harmful to participants. Contrary to the global trend, physically disabled women were better able to negotiate marginalization in employment in the context of modern Laos. The viable vocations and industries in contemporary Laos are better suited for disabled women. The negotiation process was diverse and individualized, yet the main similarity lies in minimizing reliance on state assistance.

6. Conflict of Interest

I certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial organization regarding the material discussed in the manuscript.

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