



PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR REPRESENTATION IN PUBLIC SPACES: A CASE STUDY OF POST-WAR JAFFNA

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ABSTRACT

People with disabilities have become an important topic for discussion in the post war Sri Lanka due to many reasons. Over three decades of war changed the traditional views of disability and replaced it with a view of disability as a social oppression in Sri Lanka. This study, therefore, looks to understand the social background of people with disabilities. The main objective of this study is to consider the meaning of disabilities in public spaces in post-war Jaffna. The chosen field was undertaken in Thenmaradchi Divisional Secretariat of Jaffna district. This paper has reported on the experiences of 53 people with disabilities who were disabled in the war period. The selected respondents were used for in-depth interviews, non- direct and participant observation and key informant interviews (7) as the ways of collecting primary data through the purposive sampling. It is in this context, an attempt is made to understand the meaning of people with disabilities through their day-to-day life events, situations, and their experiences. This paper discussed the meaning of disabilities fewer than three factors namely, Religious Discourse, Family Structure and Women Status based on grounded theory method. Moreover, these socio-cultural interpretations of people with disabilities are linked with other important factors such as an economic and political aspect. The finding of the study is that the people with disabilities are usually crippled, and socially excluded or hidden in the limited public spaces in post war Jaffna. Since disability issues have become a central part of the development and social work discourse in the post-war Tamil society, I hope that this research will contribute to policy formation for people with disabilities and the effective implications of the post-war reintegration process and development process. Finally, it is hoped the study will create social awareness and mobilize people with disabilities and strengthen the disabled in society.

Keywords: People with Disabilities, Post-War, Public Spaces