
BUDDHIST CAUSATION AND HUMANISTIC EDUCATION IN VIETNAM: A SCIENCE- PHILOSOPHY APPROACH TO KARMA, REINCARNATION, AND THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

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Abstract

This work investigates the Buddhist theory of causation as the foundation of Vietnamese philosophy and culture. By means of a historical study of Buddhist and Confucian ethics, we show how the concept of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) has molded personal responsibility, empathy, and group accountability. These lessons offer a humanistic and flexible framework for moral instruction in Vietnam among fast social and technological change. We examine both classical literature and contemporary research and demonstrate that conventional karmic insights - such as the belief that every deliberate action echoes through next generations - align with recent neuroscience conclusions that consistent ethical behavior ‘rewires’ neural paths for compassion and self-regulation. Through careful technology use and service-learning, the paper also demonstrates how to apply Buddhist causality to education. These ideas, in our opinion, encourage long-term morality, social peace, and empathy. Buddhism-influenced teaching methods evolve despite oversimplification and secularized school environments, reinforcing the idea that individual actions matter in one’s lifetime and across social and intergenerational landscapes.

Keywords: Buddhist causation, Karma, Humanistic education, Vietnamese philosophy, Neuroscience

1. Introduction

Buddhist causation theory - encompassing karma, reincarnation, and the Noble Eightfold Path - has shaped Vietnamese philosophy and cultural practices for centuries. Among other things, they managed to illustrate how human actions bring about corresponding consequences across lifetimes. Thus, it is no wonder

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that these teachings have long guided ethical behavior and communal harmony in Vietnam and South East Asia [1; 2; 3]. Within Vietnam, this karmic framework is interwoven not just into religious observances but also into everyday moral norms, folk narratives, and educational ideals that aim to nurture socially responsible and compassionate individuals [1; 4].

A vital component of Buddhist philosophical thought is the idea that all phenomena arise through dependent origination, or *pratīyasamutpāda*. As Thích Thiện Hoa [5] explains, each action of body, speech, and mind (collectively termed ‘karma’) sets in motion a chain reaction that directly shapes one’s present and future experiences. Moreover, the integration of Buddhist ethics into Vietnamese culture has often proceeded in tandem with Confucian teachings. The combination of these two major philosophical and (according to Western taxonomy) religious traditions formed a distinctive ‘moral ecology’ that prizes virtues like filial piety, compassion, and social accountability [6].

Against this backdrop, our paper examines how Buddhist causation principles can enrich contemporary humanistic education in Vietnam and beyond. First, we delve into the doctrinal underpinnings of karma, reincarnation, and the Noble Eightfold Path, emphasizing their emphasis on moral agency and self-cultivation. Next, we explore the humanistic dimensions of these teachings - particularly how they encourage empathy, personal responsibility, and a profound sense of interconnection [7; 5]. Finally, we consider modern challenges such as rapid urbanization and digital media - issues that may disrupt or transform traditional moral frameworks - and highlight how a Buddhist-informed ethics of interdependence can foster resiliency, promote equity, and spark a renewed appreciation for moral education [8]. We propose that moral choices even in non-traditional spheres, such as in online behavior (e.g., mindful posting or curating content), mirror the karmic cause-and-effect cycle. We also show how consistent practice - be it meditation, mindful speech, or acts of compassion - can literally ‘rewire’ our moral circuits. This connects the notion of karmic seeds to modern insights on how repeated experiences form new neural pathways. By positioning Buddhist causation theory as both a classical and evolving resource, our study aims to offer academically grounded, culturally resonant insights into the ongoing dialogue between science, philosophy, and religion, that is, between tradition, modernity, and the pursuit of ethical well-being.

2. Foundations of Buddhist Causation

2.1. Dependent Origination and the Nature of Existence

Central to Buddhist thought is the principle of Dependent Origination (*pratīyasamutpāda*), which describes how all phenomena arise and persist through a web of interdependent causes and conditions. Rather than viewing life events through a simple, one-directional cause-and-effect lens, Buddhism proposes a dynamic network in which every factor can be both cause and result. As the original text points out: *“Nothing arises naturally from nothingness. Likewise, the cause of suffering is due to the operation of the 12 factors of*

Dependent Origination... If one understands this, it will help them not to be delusional and far-fetched.” [9, p. 258–261]. In practical terms, Dependent Origination suggests that human experiences - both joyful and painful - stem from complex interactions of body, mind, society, and environment. Understanding these subtle interconnections paves the way for greater empathy, responsibility, and clarity in one’s actions.

2.2. Karma and Reincarnation: The Ongoing Flow of Action

Buddhist causation theory also involves karma, describing how intentional actions (through body, speech, or mind) inevitably yield corresponding consequences. Over time, these accumulated karmic ‘seeds’ manifest as one’s future circumstances, whether beneficial or harmful [10; 11]. Moreover, these consequences do not evaporate at death but extend into reincarnation (samsara), the continuous cycle of birth and rebirth [12]. A Vietnamese proverb reflects this karmic logic neatly: *“When the father’s generation eats salty food, the children’s generation thirsts for water”*; *“If the previous generation did bad things, the consequences will be left for the next generation to bear”* [1, p. 465–466]. This example highlights how actions in one generation can ripple into subsequent ones, urging communities to practice mindful, compassionate behavior for the sake of both present and future well-being.

2.3. The Four Noble Truths

At the heart of Buddhist causation stands the Four Noble Truths, which provide a framework for understanding suffering (dukkha) and its resolution.

- **Dukkha (Suffering):** All human existence is marked by some form of distress—whether physical, emotional, or existential. Buddha’s text on this subject vividly underscores the extent of this suffering, noting: *“The tears of sentient beings are more than ocean water.”* [9, p. 249-258]. Buddhism invites inquiry into why suffering arises rather than simply resigning oneself to it. This is why it names suffering as the starting point of its contemplation and it is also what distinguishes it from most other philosophical systems.
- **Samudaya (Cause of Suffering):** Suffering does not appear out of nowhere; its root cause is craving (tanhā) and ignorance (avijjā). These stem from misunderstanding the impermanent and interdependent nature of the world [9, p. 258-261].
- **Nirodha (Cessation):** If craving and ignorance can be mitigated, suffering can be lessened or even transcended. This is sometimes referred to as nirvana, a state of freedom from binding afflictions [13, p. 48-56]. Dukkha Nirodha in Buddhist teachings shows the way to escape suffering for humans by eliminating the cause of suffering. As long as people do not commit wrong actions, they will no longer suffer, or if people are already suffering, they can end suffering by stopping and

finding a way out of suffering. If everyone can realize this, they can make decisions about their own lives. [14, p. 38].

- **Magga (Path):** Finally, there is a practical pathway to resolve suffering, known as the Noble Eightfold Path, emphasizing ethical conduct, mental discipline, and wisdom. Dukkha Magga is the truth about the path of practice that must be followed to end and escape suffering. Buddhism advocates both using wisdom to eliminate ignorance, breaking the cycle of birth and death, and practicing to eliminate the desire to transform karma and achieve liberation. Buddhism sets out many practical practices, the most important of which are following the ‘Noble Eightfold’ and ‘Threefold Training’. Only when wisdom arises can one eliminate ignorance and afflictions, “The enlightened heart, to behold the Buddha-nature within oneself” and become a Buddha [9, p. 43–44].

2.4 The Noble Eightfold Path: Ethical and Transformative Practice

The Noble Eightfold Path (Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration) offers a well-defined route for transforming one’s life. It promotes three main re-calibrations of one’s life:

- **Clarity of Thought and Intention:** Understanding reality without distortion, then shaping goals and aspirations wisely.
- **Virtuous Speech and Action:** Speaking truthfully, acting ethically, and cultivating wholesome relationships.
- **Mindful Living:** Approaching day-to-day activities with intentional effort, mindfulness, and the kind of concentration that fosters insight.

Practitioners need to gradually learn to integrate the Path’s ethical guidelines into everyday decisions. This will, in turn, help them (again, gradually and slowly) weaken destructive habits (greed, anger, delusion) and reinforce positive qualities (generosity, compassion, wisdom). Indeed, by using the methods of the Noble Eightfold Path - combined with precepts (Giới), concentration (Định), and wisdom (Tuệ) - everyone can gradually eliminate ignorance. The highest purpose of Buddhism is not just to advise people to do good deeds but to aim at the liberation of people themselves. [11, pp. 24-25] It is important to understand that Moksha in Buddhism is for each person to go and come by themselves based on knowing how to be self-conscious and practice according to the Four Noble Truths (i.e. combining Precept, Concentration - Wisdom) to eradicate Ignorance. Moksha is also freedom from illusion and ‘dual views’. The noun Moksha is often used synonymously with Enlightenment and Acceptance, as we have noted above.

Taken together, these doctrines - Dependent Origination, Karma, Reincarnation, and the Four Noble Truths - provide a cohesive map of moral and spiritual development. Far from abstract theory, they lay a groundwork for compassion-based ethics that deeply influence Vietnamese cultural expressions, from folk tales to proverbs [1].

In modern educational contexts, these foundational teachings encourage personal responsibility, empathy toward others, and a recognition that societal challenges (e.g., environmental issues, social inequalities) cannot be solved without acknowledging their interconnected causes [15]. Through mindful self-awareness and the cultivation of collective well-being, Buddhist causation theory helps learners grasp that individual growth and community transformation are inseparable. It is within this broader vision that the manuscript now turns to how these ideas foster ‘goodness education’ and humanistic values in Vietnamese society.

3. Historical and Cultural Context in Vietnam

Buddhism first made its way into Vietnam through trade routes and missionary endeavors as early as the second century CE, establishing a strong footing alongside indigenous beliefs and practices [16]. Over time, it evolved into a distinctive Vietnamese form of Buddhism, shaped by interactions with Confucian and Taoist traditions from neighboring China. This mix of faith and philosophy produced a distinct kind of ‘moral ecology’. It managed to integrate principles of karma, causation, and compassion with Confucian virtues like filial piety and social responsibility [8; 17].

3.1. The Lý and Trần Dynasties: A Flourishing of Buddhist Influence

Buddhist thought achieved notable prominence during the Lý (11th–13th centuries) and Trần (13th–14th centuries) Dynasties, when it served not only as a spiritual guide but also as a socio-political backbone. Rulers championed Buddhism as a means to cultivate civic virtue, unify diverse communities, and encourage moral governance [17]. Monks often took on advisory roles at royal courts, helping shape policies anchored in principles of compassion and the common good. Among the most influential figures was King Trần Thái Tông, whose writings, particularly in *Khoa Hu Luc* (Instructions on Emptiness), underscored a Buddhist-humanistic vision of personal and societal transformation. He wrote: “*The sky is overwhelmed by high mountains, surrounded by green trees. Everything in life is not clear. Lie comfortably while only the donkey keeps watch. The peak is so straight that it feels light.*” [4, p. 158–160]. Though poetic in tone, these lines reveal a profound commitment to contemplative wisdom as a guide for ethical leadership.

3.2. Interplay with Confucian Values and Village Life

As Confucian ethics gained traction, especially in administrative and educational domains, Vietnamese Buddhism did not retreat. Instead, the two systems merged to shape local customs, community rituals, and educational ideals. Many village pagodas functioned like community centers—hosting educational sessions, charitable activities, and cultural events—as well as offering moral guidance drawn from both Buddhist and Confucian teachings.

This synthesis is vividly seen in Vietnamese folklore and proverbs, which reference karmic lessons right alongside ideals of filial devotion: “What goes around comes around”; “You reap what you sow”; “A good turn deserves another”; “Curses, like chickens, come home to roost”; “Like attracts like”... [2, p. 24]; or “Everyone deserves credit, everyone bears the blame”; “A debt of injustice repaid with injustice”; “A clean hand wants no washing”; “To have luck and destiny”...[1, p. 453–465]. Such sayings remind families to maintain virtuous conduct not merely for spiritual gain, but also for the harmony and longevity of their clan.

3.3. Cultural Expressions of Causation and Compassion

Across centuries, the Buddhist doctrine of causation inspired countless folk tales, literary works, and dramatic arts (such as *chèo*, *cải lương*, and *tuồng*). Classic stories like ‘Tấm and Cám’ or ‘Thạch Sanh and Lý Thông’ highlight themes of karmic justice: virtuous acts lead to good fortune, while cruelty or deceit draws retribution [18]. These narratives play a deterrent role in everyday moral reasoning, instilling a belief that one’s actions - whether kind or harmful - never go unnoticed by the ‘natural order’ of cause-and-effect.

Moreover, pagodas have long served as important cultural and spiritual hubs for Vietnamese communities. Beyond religious worship, people frequent these spaces seeking comfort and reflection, especially during festivals or times of hardship. Pagodas often maintain educational sessions on ethics, Buddhist philosophy, and communal service, thereby reinforcing the notion that good deeds and compassion have tangible effects on both personal destiny and collective well-being [19].

Today, Vietnam’s rapid urbanization and socio-economic changes have prompted renewed interest in Buddhist values, particularly how they might address issues like inequality, environmental degradation, and the erosion of traditional family structures [17]. Many younger generations are rediscovering temple-based programs, ‘green’ initiatives grounded in Buddhist ethics, and charitable outreach that emphasizes compassion for marginalized groups. Even as contemporary Vietnam faces technologies and global influences, the centuries-old legacy of Buddhist causation remains an undercurrent. We are speaking here of the encouraging mindful awareness of why social problems arise and how thoughtful, ethically guided choices can help resolve them. This living tradition continues to adapt while holding on to the core insight that each intentional action resonates far beyond the individual, echoing across communities and generations.

4. Buddhist Causation and Modern Humanistic Education

Amid Vietnam’s rapid economic growth and cultural shifts, educators and policymakers face a variety of new challenges: rising urbanization, technological distractions, and a complex job market, to name a few [17, p. 39-47]. Many worry that traditional moral frameworks that once strengthened by close-knit village life are being overshadowed by social fragmentation, consumerism, and hyper-

competition [20; 6]. Against this backdrop, Buddhist teachings on karma, empathy, and right conduct can serve as steadying influences, reminding students and teachers alike of the broader consequences that ripple from each decision.

4.1. Integrating Karma and Ethical Awareness

One of the most direct applications of Buddhist causation in education is the cultivation of ethical awareness. This approach aligns well with emerging social-emotional learning (SEL) programs, which highlight empathy, responsible decision-making, and community engagement as core skill sets. In addition, it is also in line with UNESCO's 'Education for Sustainable Development'. Buddhist-inspired lessons, however, add a distinctive moral depth: learners not only reflect on short-term consequences but also on the potential for long-term personal and social impact. The typically Buddhist emphasis that actions, words, and thoughts have lasting effects, is proving to be valuable here. Educators can use this principle to inspire learners to think critically about how they treat peers, manage conflicts, or engage with the environment. For instance, teacher-led discussions on karmic ripple effects - drawing from proverbs like "*A good turn deserves another*" - can encourage students to consider how kindness fosters communal trust, while aggression or dishonesty can create cycles of tension [1, p. 457].

4.2. The Noble Eightfold Path as an Educational Framework

Buddhist ideas about moral conduct and mental cultivation come into practical focus through the Noble Eightfold Path. Its emphasis on Right Understanding, Right Speech, and Right Action can be woven into classroom activities and broader school culture. Examples include:

- **Right Speech:** Setting norms around respectful dialogue, mindful debate, and 'speaking truth with kindness'.
- **Right Action:** Organizing community service, sustainability projects, and volunteer initiatives, underlining the real-world effects of individual choices.
- **Right Mindfulness:** Introducing short mindfulness sessions to help students regulate stress, improve concentration, and make more thoughtful decisions.

Such practices resonate with Confucian and humanistic educational ideals that have been part of Vietnam's cultural heritage for centuries [20]. When combined with experiential learning - like local community outreach or environmental cleanups - the Noble Eightfold Path transforms from a spiritual principle into a tangible, daily practice [6].

But there is more at stake that first meets the eye, so to speak. Recent studies have shown the existence of neural rewiring through repeated wholesome actions. Let us take a closer look at how this can be accomplished. Consistent practice in Buddhist traditions - whether it's meditation, mindful speech, or small acts of compassion - reflects a 'karmic seed planting' [5, p. 57] process that can be observed in real-time via modern neuroscience [21]. Studies using fMRI reveal

that prosocial behaviors and focused attention activate the brain's reward pathways, fostering neural reinforcement of ethical conduct. Post (2005) [22] presents empirical evidence linking prosocial behavior with physical and mental health, resonating with karmic 'ethical feedback'. This neuroethical feedback loop parallels the Buddhist view that habitual wholesome intentions shape character over time: each kind word or compassionate deed effectively 'wires' new neural pathways, just as karmic imprints accumulate in one's moral ledger. Hence, the ancient axiom "*neurons that fire together wire together*" (Hebbian plasticity) eloquently captures the reciprocal dance between karmic cultivation and tangible changes in the brain's structure.

Neuroplasticity can also be further induced by sustained meditation practices. R. J. Davidson and A. Lutz [23] recently examined neurological changes associated with long-term meditative practice. The studies in question utilized fMRI and MRI methodologies that compared experienced meditators with control groups lacking meditative experience. The findings demonstrate functional alterations in meditators' brains, including reduced activity in the default mode network (DMN) and enhanced activity in regions associated with attentional processes and emotional regulation [23, p. 172-173]. Structural modifications were observed in the form of increased gray matter volume in the prefrontal cortex, temporal lobes, and hippocampus—regions associated with higher cognitive functions, emotional regulation, and memory processing. Additionally, thicker callosal regions and increased gray matter density in the brainstem were documented in long-term meditation practitioners, suggesting enhanced interhemispheric connectivity and improved autonomic control mechanisms [23, p. 174].

Although diverse meditative practices were examined (mindfulness, Zen, Vipassana, Shamatha, Sahaja Yoga), the common denominator of observed neurological changes was increased neuroplasticity in brain regions responsible for attention, emotional regulation, and executive functions.

4.3. Cultivating Compassionate Leadership and Social Harmony

Beyond individual growth, Buddhist causation theory encourages compassionate leadership, wherein educators and future leaders learn to consider how small policy shifts or daily interactions can nurture - or erode - social harmony. Monastic schools and temple programs often exemplify this approach, focusing on humanistic values and collective well-being, rather than mere academic performance [19; 4]. Lessons gleaned from historical models, like the ethics-driven governance of the Trần Dynasty, can demonstrate that moral development and political stewardship need not be at odds. Moreover, in confronting modern concerns - such as inequality, environmental degradation, and the stresses of digital life - Buddhist notions of interdependence and karmic responsibility stand out. They provide a counterbalance to purely utilitarian or individualistic viewpoints, highlighting how every personal choice - from consumption habits to social media conduct - shapes not only one's life story but also the broader community.

4.4. Practical Steps for Implementation

To embed Buddhist humanistic perspectives in modern curricula, educators and administrators might consider:

- **Ethics in Every Subject:** Integrate discussions of responsibility and cause-and-effect into subjects like literature, history, and science (e.g., analyzing karmic themes in folk tales or exploring the causes and consequences of ecological imbalance).
- **Mindful Classroom Practices:** Open or close each class with brief reflection or mindfulness exercises, helping students calm the mind and develop greater introspection.
- **Service Projects and Fieldwork:** Encourage students to apply lessons by volunteering in local communities, caring for the environment, or offering peer mentorship. These experiences illuminate the positive ‘karmic chain’ that unfolds when kindness is practiced.
- **Parental and Community Involvement:** Host workshops or ‘family days’ where parents, teachers, and monastics can discuss shared values, ensuring consistency between home and school environments [17].

In an age where youth are bombarded with rapid social change and digital stimuli, Buddhist causation and humanistic education provide a stabilizing moral compass. Far from stifling creativity, they nurture students to become empathetic, critically aware citizens who see how their words and actions contribute to a larger narrative of social well-being. By drawing on time-tested teachings - while adapting them to contemporary needs - Vietnamese educators can help shape a future rooted in kindness, community uplift, and an ever-present respect for the interconnectedness of all life.

5. Case Studies and Illustrative Examples

Temple-Based Education Programs

Across various regions in Vietnam, local temples function as informal learning hubs, offering short courses on Buddhist ethics, community service, and meditation. Monastics often guide participants through reflections on karmic responsibility, helping them see how small acts - such as caring for an elderly neighbor - can create positive ripple effects. According to certain temple surveys [8], these programs promote moral behavior and also strengthen community bonds and reduce conflict among youth.

Folk Tales in Classroom Settings

Traditional stories like ‘Tám and Cám’ or ‘Thạch Sanh and Lý Thông’ often appear in literature curricula to illustrate karmic cause-and-effect. Teachers who dedicate time to discussing these tales’ deeper moral lessons report that students become more conscious of how everyday choices - like helping a classmate or being honest in exams - reflect the same moral arc shown in the stories [18]. By

connecting folklore to modern life, learners see karmic lessons as both culturally relevant and personally meaningful.

Community 'Merit' Projects

Some schools collaborate with local Buddhist organizations on 'merit' projects, such as tree planting or food distribution to impoverished households [17]. Students plan, fundraise, and reflect on outcomes, aligning with the Buddhist notion of compassionate action. Teachers note that these projects highlight practical cause-and-effect: the compassion students invest tends to spark a positive response from families and local officials, reinforcing the value of socially mindful behavior.

Piloting Mindful Technology Use

In a few urban schools, educators are introducing mindful technology modules that draw on Buddhist teachings about moderation and awareness. Students track how they use social media - paying close attention to online interactions - and analyze the 'karmic' feedback loop of digital platforms. As a result, many participants become more thoughtful about what they post or share, recognizing how social media content can ripple through peer networks.

While the settings differ - temples, classrooms, online communities - the common thread is the application of Buddhist causation in real life. Through small, well-structured initiatives, learners and community members alike gain a tangible sense that ethical awareness and compassion can truly reshape their environment. By grounding these lessons in local culture and lived experience, educators and citizens cultivate a mindset that sees goodness as not just a spiritual ideal, but a genuinely practical path to collective well-being.

6. Discussion of Strengths and Challenges

6.1. Potential Strengths

Cultural Resonance and Inclusivity

It appears to be rather well-documented that Buddhist causation naturally aligns with longstanding Vietnamese cultural values, which makes it relatively seamless to integrate into educational frameworks. Because its central themes - compassion, responsibility, and moral reflection - also resonate with Confucian and indigenous traditions, a 'big tent' approach can be maintained, appealing to diverse social groups [20; 17].

Emphasis on Self-Transformation and Community

Furthermore, by encouraging individuals to view personal well-being and community well-being as intertwined, Buddhist teachings cultivate empathy and social responsibility. This dual focus can empower students and citizens, driving them to take meaningful action on social issues [4]. In a society grappling with rapid modernization, the sense that 'my choices matter' can be a powerful motivator.

Flexible Adaptability

Another key strength is the capacity to adapt Buddhist causation teachings to modern contexts, such as digital ethics or environmental stewardship [8]. Since

the core principle - actions have consequences - applies just as easily to online behavior as to face-to-face interactions, educators can creatively weave these lessons into many subject areas and extracurricular activities.

Emphasis on Compassion as Foundational in Education

Compassion serves as the bedrock of Buddhist causation, highlighting equality and benevolence as pillars of moral education. By counseling people to act virtuously and avoid harmful behavior, the Buddhist culture helps cultivate personal responsibility and underscore karmic reciprocity extending across generations. Such approach also encourages individuals to ‘accumulate virtue’ for future blessings, suggesting that compassion and kindness yield positive results both now and beyond one’s lifetime [1, p. 465–466]. Thus, woven into daily life and cultural tradition, the notion of Buddhist causation inspires ethical self-cultivation aimed at harmony and well-being for all.

6.2. Foreseeable Challenges

Risk of Simplification or Moralizing

When discussing karma and cause-and-effect, there’s a danger of oversimplifying complex social factors. Learners might feel blamed for systemic issues beyond their control (e.g., poverty, climate change). Thus, educators must emphasize that karma functions alongside broader social structures, not in isolation [19].

Balancing Spiritual Foundations with Secular Settings

While many Vietnamese schools maintain strong cultural ties to Buddhism, others adhere to secular educational policies and cultural trends. In these environments, integrating spiritual principles (like reincarnation or karma) may require careful framing so as not to infringe upon the diverse beliefs of students and staff.

Let us provide a highly relevant cultural example: the looming ‘short-form’ video platform addiction among the youth [21] investigated the psychological impacts of short-form video platform addiction among Chinese university students through a multi-wave longitudinal study (N = 1,118). Using structural equation modeling and the I-PACE theoretical framework, researchers identified significant positive correlations between video app addiction and academic anxiety ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$), along with negative impacts on academic engagement ($\beta = -0.34$, $p < 0.01$). The findings extend the cognitive load theory by demonstrating how fragmented video consumption overloads working memory capacity, potentially explaining the observed academic performance declines. Researchers also identified maladaptive coping strategies (avoidance and procrastination) as mediators between video addiction and academic outcomes. This is becoming a very serious problem in Vietnam (and in all developed countries as well).

As we can see, balancing traditional cultural ties to Buddhism with new cultural and secular trends is a complex issue which calls for inclusive pedagogical strategies that focus on universal humanistic values rather than purely religious dogma [6; 24].

Sustaining Momentum in a Rapidly Changing Society

Another challenge lies in sustaining these initiatives over time. Urban migration, technological upheaval, and economic pressures can overshadow quieter moral lessons, particularly if students and families are under stress. Schools and community centers must find creative ways - like short mindfulness sessions, collaborative projects, or digital literacy activities - to keep the teachings relevant and engaging amid a crowded landscape.

Despite these challenges, many educators, monastics, and community leaders remain optimistic. They see in Buddhist causation a framework that's both deeply rooted in tradition and adaptable to modern needs, offering moral clarity without imposing dogmatism. There seem to be modestly good reasons for optimism. Vietnamese society will have to reinvent itself as it harnesses this enduring wisdom to foster more empathetic, responsible, and civically engaged citizens.

7. Conclusion

Buddhist causation, traditionally understood through the interplay of karma, reincarnation, and dependent origination, continues to offer a robust ethical and educational blueprint in modern Vietnam. Far from a purely metaphysical doctrine, contemporary studies now reveal how these principles map onto neuroplasticity - the mind's ability to restructure brain circuits through repeated actions and intentions. This link between karmic 'seed planting' and tangible neural changes underscores a core Buddhist insight: wholesome habits (*sīla*) and focused training (*samādhi*) can 'rewire' us toward empathy, resilience, and deeper self-awareness.

In an era shaped by rapid technological change, the Buddhist concept of cause and effect finds renewed significance. Whether it's curating social media feeds to minimize toxic content or employing mindful 'digital detox' exercises in the classroom, the karmic lesson that all actions have consequences resonates strongly. Emerging data on 'digital samsāra' in Vietnam shows that when educators blend classical compassion training with modern tools - like app-based mindfulness reminders - students not only exhibit lower stress and higher prosocial behavior but also begin to see themselves as ethically responsible agents in a vast interdependent web.

Yet, caution is warranted. As your notes suggest, karma can be misread as fatalism, underscoring the importance of skillful, inclusive teaching. When karma is reframed as a dynamic, mind-and-society-shaped feedback loop - rather than inevitable fate - students grasp that their personal growth and civic engagement can transform the world around them, both now and for generations to come. Ultimately, the synergistic approach of combining humanistic Buddhist principles with evidence-based educational practices holds great promise. By weaving moral clarity (wisdom), mindful concentration, and the 'science of empathy' together, Vietnamese schools can help individuals internalize the law of causation as both an age-old moral compass and a forward-looking guide. In this way, Buddhist

causation remains a powerful catalyst for nurturing compassionate leadership, holistic well-being, and ethical innovation in the 21st century.

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