



Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: Islamic Narrative and Policy Lessons on Disability Employment

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Abstract. Employment for persons with disabilities continues to show a serious challenge to inclusive development, especially in many developing economies. Although Sustainable Development Goal 8 emphasizes decent work for all, which advocates for decent work and economic growth for all, persons with disabilities continue to experience systemic barriers that limit their access to employment opportunities, particularly in developing countries. This paper explores how Islamic narratives and ethical thought can inform labor policies in Muslim-majority societies such as Indonesia. Drawing on the Qur'an, Hadith, and early Islamic history, the discussion situates values of justice, compassion, and human dignity as moral foundations for inclusion. It also considers how these principles can strengthen both personal resilience and policy design for persons with disabilities. Using Indonesia as a case study, the paper identifies policy gaps and opportunities to align faith-based ethics with national strategies. The central argument is that economic participation of persons with disabilities is not only a policy concern but also a moral responsibility within Islam. Interpreting disability through an Islamic lens may therefore help shift social attitudes and promote a future in which participation is shared by all.

Keywords: Islamic narratives, disability inclusion, Islamic policy, Islamic psychology.

1 Introduction

Different regions and cultures have long shaped how societies view disability. Religious teachings, legal systems, and traditions, all play a role in forming those attitudes. This paper explores Islamic sources such as the Qur'an, Sunnah, and classical scholarship to understand how these frameworks shape public perception and policy toward disability, religion has played a significant role in shaping these disparate views and behaviors. By analyzing the Qur'an, the Sunnah (the collection of the Prophet Muhammad's sayings and deeds), and legal writings by Islamic scholars, this paper offers a broad overview of the Islamic perspective on disability. The issue of disability employment remains one of the most pressing challenges in many societies, particularly within the Muslim world. As most Islamic countries are categorized as developing, and as religion continues to play a central role in shaping social norms and cultural practices,

the intersection between Islamic values and local traditions becomes especially significant. In this context, studying disability through an Islamic lens is not only necessary but urgent, as it allows us to understand how faith and culture influence policy, inclusion, and public attitudes toward people with disabilities.

tradition, is a core foundation for identity, belonging, and a deep sense of life's purpose. When its teachings are incorporated into how we develop public policy, Islamic narratives become highly effective in promoting genuine inclusion and establishing environments that truly honor the rights and self-respect of disabled persons. By integrating these spiritual viewpoints directly into our governmental and corporate hiring structures, we can often resolve existing issues that conventional secular methods fail to address, ultimately forging a more compassionate and equitable societal structure.

Moreover, this paper proceeds from the conviction that Allah is sovereign over all creation includes the strong and capable as well as the fragile and vulnerable. Islam does not confine its concern to those who are healthy and able-bodied. Rather, it extends protection, dignity, and rights to every member of society. Islamic legislation thus ensures that individuals with mental, sensory, or physical impairments are granted equal rights alongside others, while also being afforded special considerations that reflect their circumstances. This balance demonstrates Islam's deep attentiveness to human diversity and its insistence on fairness and compassion in social relations. In contrast to many pre-modern legal systems and even contemporary man-made laws, Islamic Sharia offered pioneering principles in the treatment of people with special needs, commanding not only their inclusion but also their respect, protection, and care.

In doing so, this paper seeks to highlight the ways in which Islamic teachings can serve as both a moral compass and a practical framework for developing disability-inclusive employment policies. By revisiting Islamic narratives and comparing them with modern policy approaches, this paper aims to demonstrate how faith-informed perspectives can contribute to breaking barriers and building futures for people with disabilities.

Building an inclusive society demands more than advanced infrastructure or digital modernization. It requires a commitment to social systems that enable every citizen to participate fully in national life. The World Health Organization (2011) recognizes disability as both a public-health and human-rights concern. Yet in many countries, persons with disabilities remain excluded from education, employment, and other productive assets that shape well-being. Persons with Disabilities can meaningfully participate in various spheres of life. However, their enjoyment of rights and access to services, as well as productive assets, is often limited, hindering their participation in national development. The barriers faced by Persons with Disabilities affect their lives and well-being. However, Persons with Disabilities continue to have limited capacity in terms of human, financial, social capital and access to land.

Inclusive employment remains one of the most pressing global development issues, particularly for persons with disabilities (PWDs). Despite international commitments such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8), which advocates for "decent work and economic growth for all," PWDs continue to face disproportionate barriers in accessing the labor market. These include attitudinal stigma, lack of accessible infrastructure, and implementation gaps in inclusive policy.

This research aligns with three of the UNCRPD 2025 thematic priority areas Livelihood and Economic Empowerment, Governance and Public Participation, and Cultural Beliefs and Traditions by focusing on how inclusive employment policies in Indonesia can be strengthened through the integration of Islamic ethical narratives. These three areas provide an interdisciplinary entry point for addressing both structural and cultural barriers to the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Islamic ethical narratives rooted in values of justice (*'adl*), compassion (*rahmah*), and human dignity (*karāmah*) can offer a culturally resonant foundation for disability-inclusive employment strategies in Muslim majority societies. Through a literature-based analysis, this study explores how Islamic teachings can contribute to both personal motivation for economic independence and public policy reform, using Indonesia as a case study while drawing insights from global practices. Aligning with the vision of UNCRPD 2025, that “A nation where Persons with Disabilities enjoy equal opportunities that are fundamental for independent living and development”

2 Methodology

This study draws on a qualitative review of literature and relevant policy documents. Qur'anic and Hadith sources are examined alongside national laws, WHO and ILO reports, and peer-reviewed studies on disability inclusion in Islamic settings (e.g., Ali & Codina, 2024; Gouvea & Li, 2021). This comparative reading highlights how religious ethics and policy frameworks intersect in shaping inclusive employment initiatives. The UNCRPD 2025 thematic areas also serve as a guiding framework for identifying barriers and opportunities. This method allows for both descriptive mapping of policy gaps and normative analysis through Islamic ethical values. A thematic analysis approach is used to extract core concepts, focusing on both policy and motivational dimensions of inclusive employment. Comparative literature from other Muslim-majority countries and global frameworks to identify policy gaps and value-based opportunities.

3 Results and Findings

What we see in the last years are people with disabilities live in a world full of scared. Looking at the last few decades, it's clear that people with disabilities navigate a life often defined by deep anxiety and fear. They feel a heavy burden, as if they are cursed by their physical condition and judged harshly by society. This intense feeling of isolation is caused by numerous factors, and we must admit that all of us, as members of the human community, contribute to this sense of oppression and societal rejection.

This analysis seeks to shed light on a subtle but critical subject which is the Islamic perspective on disability, based on an in-depth review of the Qur'an, ahadith, and legal rulings (*fiqh*). Historically, global attitudes toward disability have been negative and isolating. In sharp contrast, the Islamic philosophy, as articulated by Chaim [2007], is compassionate, fair, and progressive. Key Islamic teachings stress that disability and difference are normal parts of life with no moral implication, and they outline specific,

affirmative rights for disabled individuals, including mandatory community support. However, while some progress has been made, Muslim nations today must still intensify their efforts to address disability needs and increase public awareness.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2011) officially acknowledges disability as a triple challenge: a public health issue, a major human rights concern, and a priority for global development. Unfortunately, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) confront disadvantages on multiple fronts, often finding themselves caught in a self-perpetuating cycle of disability and poverty (Mitra, 2018). Their limited access to vital services like education, healthcare, and job opportunities only deepens their social and economic exclusion. While employment is crucial for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 8 (United Nations, 2015), securing a job remains one of the single most difficult barriers PWDs face worldwide.

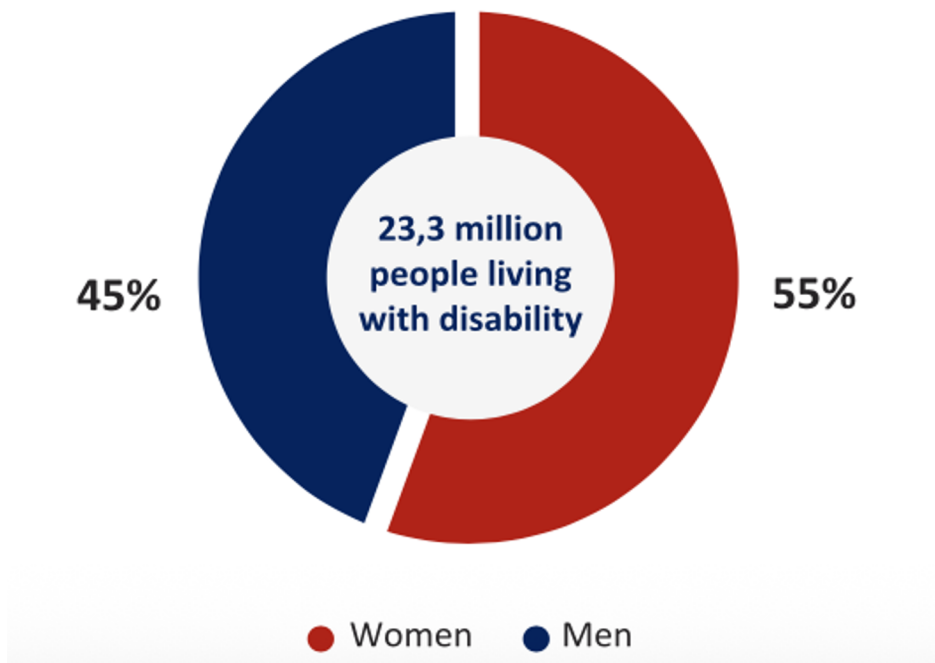


Fig. 1. Estimated number of people living with disability in Indonesia (million)

In Indonesia, home to more than 23 million persons with disabilities, significant legal strides have been made through Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities. However, enforcement gaps, inaccessible infrastructure, and enduring stigma continue to hinder inclusion in the labor market [ILO, 2020]. These challenges highlight the need for a multidimensional approach that integrates both policy reform and cultural transformation. This study emphasizes the role of Islamic ethics as a culturally resonant framework for advancing disability inclusion in Muslim-majority contexts. The Qur'anic values of 'adl (justice), rahmah (compassion), and karāmah (dignity) provide moral imperatives that complement international frameworks such as the UNCRPD.

Narratives such as the story of ‘Abd Allah ibn Umm Maktum in Surah ‘Abasa, Surah An-Nisā’ (4:75), and Surah Al-Fath (48:17) demonstrate Islam’s emphasis on inclusion and advocacy for the marginalized. Aligning these principles with the UNCRPD 2025 thematic areas which is Livelihood & Economic Empowerment, Governance & Participation, and Cultural Beliefs & Traditions.

Although the current study doesn't aim to fully explore historical Muslim efforts in providing services for those in need, it's essential to recognize that such care initiatives have existed since the beginning of Islam. These historical explorations offer a quick look at the established precedent. For instance, Omar Ibn Al-Khattab, the third Muslim leader, relocated a blind man to housing near the main mosque after the man's father expressed concern that his son couldn't reach the place of worship. A later, powerful example comes from the Umayyad caliph, al Walid ibn Abd al Malik, in Damascus. He not only established the first care home for intellectually disabled individuals but also built a hospital that included services for them. Furthermore, he systematically appointed a dedicated caregiver for every needy or disabled person [Aljazoli, 2004].

Despite the presence of national legislation such as Indonesia’s Law No. 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities real progress has been slow. Policy gaps, limited enforcement, and lack of accessible infrastructure continue to marginalize people with disabilities. At the same time, the role of religious values, particularly Islamic ethics, remains underexplored in policy discourse, even though Islam plays a big role in shaping individual behavior and public norms in Indonesia.

For persons living with different forms of disability, religiosity and spirituality often serve as tightly interwoven foundations that provide meaning and resilience in their lives. Mugeree [2020] highlights that individuals with disabilities attach profound importance to faith in a supreme being, which offers them strength to persevere and to make sense of life’s adversities, especially when confronted with persistent challenges.

The Qur’an itself underscores the moral responsibility of believers in their actions and attitudes toward others. Among its explicit teachings is the prohibition of ridicule and mockery, behaviors to which people with disabilities are often subjected. As the Qur’an commands:

“O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule (another) people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after (one’s) faith. And whoever does not repent – then it is those who are the wrongdoers.” (Al-Ḥujurāt 49:11)

This ayah illustrates that human worth is not defined by ability, status, or appearance but by piety and righteousness. Indeed, what we accomplish as humans is not by our own power or wisdom, but ultimately by the grace of God. For persons with disabilities, being rooted in religious belief can therefore serve as a profound source of identity, resilience, and spiritual connection with the Divine.

The Sunnah further emphasizes social responsibility and compassion toward individuals in society, including those with vulnerabilities. In Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the Prophet Muhammad SAW drew a vivid analogy:

“The similitude of believers in regard to mutual love, affection, and compassion is that of one body; when any limb aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever.” (Muslim, 32:6258)

Similarly, in Sunan al-Tirmidhī, he stated:

“He is not one of us who does not show mercy to our young ones nor respect to our elders.”

The Islamic traditions highlight that core principles like respect, cooperation, and compassion are not just ideals, but are necessary for achieving the Qur’anic vision of a society where individuals uphold mutual responsibilities toward one another.

Importantly, the Qur’an does not employ terms such as “deficient” or “disabled” in its description of human beings [Ghaly, 2010]. As Bazna argues, what appears instead is the notion of socially constructed disadvantage conditions imposed by society on those who may not embody the socially or economically dominant attributes of a given time. The Qur’an, in response, places the duty of correcting such injustice upon society, affirming that “disability” is less a biological deficiency than a construct arising from exclusionary social systems. Thus, the Qur’an erases barriers to inclusion and calls believers to ensure that those in need are embraced as integral members of the community, not marginalized because of difference.

Having established that the Qur’an and Sunnah profoundly shape the perspectives and behaviors of Muslims, it is important to note that these two primary sources also provide the foundation from which jurists have derived laws and regulations concerning human well-being. Within Islamic jurisprudence, these regulations encompass both preventative and responsive measures toward disability. Preventative measures are often framed in terms of maintaining health and well-being through medicine, proper lifestyle choices, and practices that protect the body and mind from harm. At the same time, Islam recognizes diverse forms of treatment for disability, ranging from medical interventions and physical rehabilitation to spiritual healing and communal support.

What is most significant for this study, however, is not merely the medical dimension, but the ethical framework these texts establish. The Qur’an and Sunnah emphasize that individuals with disabilities are entitled to protection, care, and inclusion as integral members of the community. By grounding laws and regulations in principles of dignity, compassion, and justice, Islamic jurisprudence laid an early foundation for social responsibility toward those with differing abilities. These foundations are directly relevant to contemporary policy discourse: they provide not only theological legitimacy but also a normative basis upon which modern disability employment policies can be constructed.

Dubois [2019] found that field operations reveal the need for a better understanding of how disability affects the quality of life and aspirations of people through their social interrelations, particularly in developing countries. Knowing more about this would help us to design appropriate policies in order to improve the capability of people with disabilities. Global disability discourse emphasizes the structural, cultural, and attitudinal barriers faced by persons with disabilities. The WHO [2011] highlights how poverty and disability are mutually reinforcing. In Indonesia, despite progressive laws, challenges persist in enforcement, accessibility, and employment equity [ILO, 2020]. These barriers align with the UNCRPD 2025 thematic areas increasing the participation of

people with disability in the work force is estimated to have a positive impact on GDP. Further, there is emerging evidence from the region that adds weight to the argument that disability inclusion makes business sense.

3.1 Defining Disability

To properly implement any disability policy, a foundational conceptual framework must first be established to guide its analysis and execution. Drawing on the capability approach, Amartya Sen (1985) highlights that a person with a disability (PWD) cannot achieve the same outcomes as an able-bodied person, even when given the exact same resources ("bundle of commodities"). For this reason, the focus must shift to their functioning, what a person can actually accomplish within their specific environment. As Dubois (2019) explains, a person's capability set encompasses not only their actual achievements but also the range of potential functions they could choose, which represents their degree of freedom. Therefore, the essential challenge is to lessen environmental barriers that restrict a person's impairment, thereby expanding their capability set and enabling them to live the life they value. From this perspective, disability is defined as a lack of capability, resulting from the restricted opportunities available in a particular setting (Dubois, 2019).

Historically, defining disability for legal and policy purposes has proven troublesome globally. In Indonesia, the official legal definition is drawn from the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2007), which classifies PWDs as individuals who possess "long term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

The Arabic terminology used in classical and contemporary Islamic law, however, presents a stark contrast to these broad modern definitions, as it generally lacks a single, comprehensive term for disability (Bazna, 2005; Chaim, 2007). Instead, the Qur'an and hadith employ specific, descriptive terms for various conditions, such as *a'ma* (blind), *asamm* (deaf), and *majnun* (insane). Despite the absence of a direct Arabic equivalent, classical sources frequently use the broader term *marid* (ill) and its noun form *marad* (illness) to encompass conditions that today would fall under the disability umbrella, like paralysis or amputation (Bhatti, 2009). The Qur'an exemplifies this classification in An Nur :61: "There is no blame on the sick" (Ali, 1992). The words *marid* and *marad* (illness) are frequently invoked in fiqh literature when describing exemptions or adjustments to religious duties such as fasting, prayer, and Hajj.

3.2 Islamic Ethical Foundations for Inclusion

In stark contrast to historical and pre-Islamic notions, which wrongly viewed disease and disability as punishment or the result of wrongdoing, Islam maintains a positive theological stance. Within this framework, disability is neither considered a curse nor a consequence of sin by the Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) or their parents. Instead, it is understood as a divinely ordained test from God, Who is the ultimate source of health, disease, and recovery (Chaim, 2007). This means that those afflicted are never

to be stigmatized, rejected as impure, or deemed evil; rather, affliction is seen as a natural component of the human experience and the health continuum. As the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught, such tests are a means for a believer's sins to be removed and their rank to be elevated.

However, the application of this humane philosophy in the contemporary world is influenced by a complex set of factors. Attitudes and practices concerning disability are shaped by an individual's faith, socio-economic standing, education, and most significantly, the surrounding cultural context. Cultural norms and values play an essential role in framing societal responses to disadvantaged groups. For example, some affluent countries, driven by available resources, place a strong emphasis on integrating PWDs by providing comprehensive services and creating mainstream opportunities. Ultimately, while the Islamic philosophy itself views disability with moral neutrality and compassion, the lived experience of PWDs in Muslim societies varies greatly based on the local interpretation and implementation of these core principles.

This reflects a broader commitment to inclusivity and support within these communities. The 2025 revision of the UNCRPD highlights how cultural beliefs and traditions can significantly influence the inclusion or exclusion of persons with disabilities. While cultural identity plays a central role in shaping community values, certain long-standing beliefs such as associating disability with curses, misfortune, or spiritual impurity have perpetuated stigma and violence. These negative cultural constructs often evolve into institutionalized social norms, undermining the implementation of inclusive laws and programs. In many Muslim-majority contexts, including Indonesia, this dynamic is also evident while Islam promotes justice and dignity for all, local cultural practices sometimes override religious principles, contributing to discrimination. By re-centering Islamic ethical teachings such as *karamah al-insan* (human dignity), '*adl* (justice), and *rahmah* (compassion) this paper argues that Islamic values can function as corrective cultural narratives, offering a faith-based approach to challenge stigma and reframe disability as part of human diversity. This aligns directly with the UNCRPD's call to re-examine how belief systems shape inclusion.

Islamic tradition provides a rich ethical foundation that upholds the dignity, worth, and social inclusion of all human beings, including persons with disabilities. The Qur'an emphasizes justice ('*adl*) and compassion (*rahma*) as central moral imperatives. Verses such as Al-Hujurat (49:13) highlight human equality, while Al-Baqarah (2:286) reinforces the principle that individuals are not burdened beyond their capacity. To Muslims, stretched over 14 centuries, the Qur'an has always been God's direct, personal and unadulterated address to mankind, which he revealed, in the Arabic language, through his last prophet, Muhammad. To Muslims, the Qur'an represents "the ultimate manifestation of God's grace . . . , the ultimate wisdom, and the ultimate beauty of expression: in short, the true word of God" [Asad, 1980]. It also, to Muslims, is a message appropriate for all human beings, times, and places.

The noblest of human beings in the sight of God is the most deeply conscious of Him. God's measure of a human being's worth relies not on physical attributes or material achievements, but on spiritual maturity and ethical development. The Prophet most explicitly communicates this message when saying: "Verily, God does not look at your bodies or your appearances, but looks into your hearts" (Muslim, 2564). The

Qur'an and the Hadith take an extra step to stress the necessity of applying the above-stated attitude towards people with disabilities. For example, what could be seen as a minor act of discourtesy on the part of the Prophet towards a person who was blind caused a "sharp Qur'anic rebuke" [Asad, 1980] to further stress lessons that expand beyond the verse's immediate cause how God created everyone as equal with disability as non-determinant of a person's identity. It is however unfortunate, that the Jurists of present times have largely restricted the role of disabled people in the process of leading prayers or taking the role of lead Imams [Qadri, 2019].

Social inclusion requires a broadening and deepening of disabled people's interpersonal relationships in the community, and this includes the categories of religion and culture. The breadth and depth of disabled people's access to mainstream religion occurs on a number of levels, from congregational presence right through to strategic leadership. A further point to note is the extent to which disabled people's community participation facilitates bonding relationships which are built from authentic reciprocity, and bridging relationships which bring disabled people into contact with a diverse range of individuals. [Ali, 2018]

The Qur'anic verses point to the importance of moving beyond tokenism and assigning disabled people to authentic leadership roles, a point identified by Mackelprang and Salsgiver [1999] as a significant area for disability equality helping Muslims to recognize the potential of disabled people, and support people from other faith or no-faith to better understand the Qur'an's stance on disability. The Qur'anic reprimand addressed to the Prophet Muhammad in Surah 'Abasa has been interpreted by scholars as a profound ethical directive underscoring the necessity of swift and attentive engagement with persons with disabilities.

This narrative signal that when individuals are hindered by environmental, social, or communicative barriers, it is a moral and institutional obligation particularly of those in positions of authority to respond without delay. Within an Islamic ethical framework, this aligns with the principle of *rahmah* (compassion as actionable care), emphasizing that inclusion is not merely an aspirational ideal, but a mandated responsibility grounded in divine guidance. In contemporary policy discourse, this imperative resonates with global disability rights frameworks that call for the removal of barriers and the implementation of reasonable accommodations, reflecting the need for sustainable and accountable systems of care. The Prophet Muhammad actively included individuals with disabilities in social and religious life. Notably, Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum, a blind man, was appointed as a muezzin and even led the Muslim army on occasion. Such examples illustrate that disability was never a reason for exclusion in early Islamic society.

From this discussion on the perceptions of health and illness in Islam, we can extrapolate one preliminary but powerful conclusion about Islam's view of disability: it is a normal and morally neutral aspect of the human condition. This perception is quite unlike several of the common social and cultural perceptions of disability throughout history, as discussed earlier. Not only is disability not an abnormality among humans, it is also not a sign of evilness or impurity. Instead, like disease and health, disability is simply one element in a natural continuum of well-being for humans. On historical

view, the historical treatment of people in Islamic society who have disabilities would be generally marked with tolerance and humanity

3.3 Disability and Employment in Indonesia: Legal and Social Landscape

Governments can play a meaningful role through laws, acts, and guided policies and strategies. Multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations, via its Convention on the Rights of Peoples with Disabilities, also help nations to establish a more inclusive and equitable socio-economic environment [Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020]. It is important for governments to coordinate efforts with the private sector, academic environment, and NGOs. Public Private Partnership initiatives can create the right environment and incentives for private companies to hire more people with disabilities [Wesgren, 2018]. Without an active role of the private sector, there will be small gains in employment for people with disabilities. NGOs also work as conduits and bridges between the government, private sector, and the academic ecosystem. Top-down and bottom-up efforts must be in place in order to foster and empower the system [United Nations, 2020].

Furthermore, government programs, such as Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income, can potentially contribute to the higher self-employment rates among the disabled for two reasons. Often eligibility requirements for cash and health insurance benefits include limits on earnings, which may be easier to satisfy when self-employed. Additionally, health insurance provided by these programs may relax the need to obtain such insurance from an employer and consequently facilitate creation of own business. The potential impact of government programs and health insurance provided by these programs on the observed self-employment rates among workers with disabilities have not been addressed so far. Assuming occurrence of a disability to be random or approximately random, people with disabilities are not likely to differ in their innate predispositions to be self-employed.

At the cultural level, Indonesia is deeply rooted in Islamic values and civilization, which shape its conservative and traditional societal structures. This cultural backdrop necessitates a balance between modernity and tradition and between adhering to international standards and preserving local customs. Indonesia has made legislative progress through UU No. 8/2016, which includes employment quotas and mandates inclusive hiring practices. However, challenges remain: Employers often lack awareness or training on inclusive practices, Enforcement of quotas is weak or symbolic, Infrastructure remains inaccessible in many areas, and Cultural stigma persists, framing PWDs as dependent rather than capable. Al-Aoufi [2012] note that this gap is not unique to Indonesia. In many Muslim majority contexts, societal attitudes rooted in cultural misperceptions rather than Islamic teachings, undermine inclusion. This suggests a disconnect between normative Islamic values and their application in public life. Religious institutions such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, as well as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), have the potential to influence public attitudes and contribute to inclusion, yet their role remains underutilized in the employment sector.

The UNCRPD 2025 further identifies Livelihood and Economic Empowerment as a critical area to improve the welfare of persons with disabilities. These programs aim to

enhance social and economic integration through training, grants, and access to financial services. However, persistent barriers such as inaccessible information, weak financial literacy, and urban-centric services continue to marginalize persons with disabilities. This reality reinforces the need for inclusive strategies that are culturally relevant and spiritually grounded.

The UNCRPD 2025 also recognizes good governance and public participation as essential components of disability-inclusive development. It emphasizes that including persons with disabilities in governance is not only a fulfillment of political rights but also a strategic pathway to realizing rights in employment, education, health, and justice. Yet, multiple barriers remain: limited civic education, stereotypes about disability and decision-making, and poor accessibility in political processes often lead to the systematic exclusion of persons with disabilities from the very systems that shape their daily lives.

In the context of Indonesia, where disability inclusion is rarely reflected in national decision-making forums, this insight reaffirms the need for a governance framework rooted in Islamic values of justice (*'adl*), compassion (*rahma*), and human dignity (*karāmah al-insān*). An Islamic moral imperative call for the active inclusion of marginalized voices in leadership and policymaking. Empowering persons with disabilities to shape the laws and services that affect them is not just a policy challenge it is a spiritual and ethical responsibility for a just society.

While some efforts have been made, Persons with Disabilities in Indonesia still face several challenges in the realization of aspirations of contributing to development and these include challenges in accessing essential services on an equal basis with others such as health, education, infrastructure, information, empowerment among others. This has perpetuated discrimination and inequity which result in vulnerabilities and poverty. There is therefore need to continue strengthening measures that aim at uplifting the welfare of persons with all forms of disabilities, where they can participate and contribute to the country's economic growth and poverty reduction for collective human dignity and respect. In addition, there was need to further strengthen alignment to the UNCRPD provisions, The Policy has therefore been developed to provide a comprehensive framework towards a just society which fosters inclusivity and encourages empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. The Policy directly addresses equality and non-discrimination, accessibility, health, education and employment. To achieve the ultimate goal of an inclusive society, the Policy also addresses the issues such as the right to life, home, family, recreation and independent living including the right to participate in the country's socio-economic development agenda.

3.4 The Challenge

The socioeconomic situations of Muslim countries especially Indonesia have significant implications for those with disabilities. Such a high occurrence of disease and disability, much of it preventable, makes it difficult for Muslim societies with limited resources and infrastructure to address disability needs and awareness in a meaningful way. Another roadblock to effective disability policy and practice in Muslim countries comes in the form of negative or apathetic social attitudes toward disability. Even in

the face of contrary evidence in Islamic theology, some assumptions about disability in Muslim countries are that disability is “hereditary” or that “mothers are fundamentally culpable” [Crabtree, 2007].

There is no doubt a need for stronger national responses and more support for local grassroots efforts to address the needs of disabled people in an internally driven, culturally and religiously competent, and government-sponsored fashion. Such efforts will help shift a prevalent, current belief that people with disabilities need to be sheltered because they cannot have a productive future. This finding suggests that the psychosocial impact of blindness in countries with lower levels of infrastructure may be related to the resultant dependency on others. Thus, a major focus of current efforts should be to support autonomy, allowing people with disabilities to function for themselves in the ways they desire.

Although Indonesia as a Muslim country may be simply too apathetic, or too occupied with other problems to devote the necessary attention to policies regarding disability, our country keeps showing definite signs of progress in developing services for people with disabilities. It will be beautiful and important for Indonesia government as a policy makers in various Muslim countries have taken Islam’s affirmative rights for individuals with disabilities and converted them into forms of accommodation. In the area of religious rights, modern accommodations for disabled people such as ramps, curb cuts, designated parking, and architectural considerations are beautiful things to create. However, in Muslim countries today there is much work to be done in the area of disability needs and awareness

Findings suggest that while Indonesia has taken significant legal steps toward disability inclusion, systemic barriers persist. Islamic ethical values offer a culturally rooted framework to complement international and national policies. By integrating Qur’anic imperatives of justice, compassion, and dignity into inclusive employment strategies, policymakers can address both structural and attitudinal barriers. Aligning Islamic ethics with UNCRPD thematic areas enhances both policy legitimacy and cultural acceptance, thereby strengthening pathways toward inclusive employment in Indonesia.

Studies from the Gulf region reveal that while Islamic belief offers internal motivation and resilience for persons with disabilities, cultural stigma and institutional barriers often persist. Faith-based ethics are present in individual behavior but insufficiently integrated into public policy. individuals in need or disadvantaged situations [Al hendawi, 2024]. The Qur’an and the Hadith recognize disability as an inherent part of human diversity and provide not only moral principles but also practical suggestions for the care and inclusion of disabled individuals

Gouvea [2021] introduce the Quadruple–Sextuple Helix model, arguing that inclusive employment is best supported when government, academia, NGOs, and the private sector work in tandem, and when systems such as ICT, education, healthcare, infrastructure, and equity are well-developed in Indonesia, these insights highlight the importance of aligning Islamic moral narratives with system-level reforms. Bridging theological values and development strategies could fill current policy gaps and enhance both motivation and infrastructure for disability inclusion. True inclusion must move beyond programs and quotas it requires transforming governance structures to ensure that persons with disabilities are present, heard, and leading. This is where the ethical

call for justice (‘adl), compassion (rahma), and human dignity (karāmah al-insān) and in Islam intersects with the UNCRPD's global mandate.

Additionally, the UNCRPD 2025 emphasizes the importance of Governance and Public Participation. It notes that the inclusion of persons with disabilities in decision-making processes is critical not only to uphold political rights but to influence other domains such as employment, health, and education. However, barriers such as lack of civic education, institutional bias, and absence of representation persist. Embedding Islamic values like justice (‘adl), compassion (rahma), and human dignity (karāmah al-insān) into governance processes can encourage meaningful participation and co-creation of inclusive policies by and for persons with disabilities.

4 Conclusion

This paper reviewed Islamic perspectives on disability through Qur’anic and prophetic sources, highlighting that Islam recognizes the rights and responsibilities of every member of society, including those facing disadvantage. These teachings remain highly relevant for today’s policymakers seeking to promote inclusive employment and social justice in Muslim contexts. Based on the above review, it can be concluded that Islam has provided the term disadvantaged people as a generic term that includes disabled individuals under its umbrella. This term reflects a holistic notion of the Islamic philosophy in relation to disadvantage individuals based on main Islamic values of equality and justice. Moreover, distinguishing the Islamic perspective on disability as stated in both the Qur’an and the prophetic tradition from the Muslims’ practices toward persons with disability was central to previous discussion. Taking into account that most of Muslims people are religious, religion plays a crucial role in Muslims understanding and interpretation of having a disabled child in their families or societies. Thus, this understanding and interpretation could be seen as one of the most influential factors that affect the development of special needs provision. As different understandings of disability and its causes and treatment within the context of religious values, this can lead to very different views about educating disabled individuals. The theory and the practice of caring for people with disabilities, and of inclusion, existed during the Prophet Mohammed’s era. Islam urges non-disabled Muslims to deal equally with disabled people. The Islamic perspective declares the right of the disadvantaged individuals and establishes the responsibility and duty of society towards such disadvantaged members. Qur’an and Sunnah. However, several cultural practices that have been discussed previously exemplify that there is a contradiction between Islamic perspectives and local culture. Disadvantaged individuals’ current position can be explained by concerns of social embarrassment of having a disabled child, concerns of social exclusion and lack of adequate skills to respond to disabled child in the family that lead them to prefer special classes on regular schools [. Therefore, the current paper could be seen as an effort toward bridging the gap of establishing such understanding that differentiate between the real Islamic philosophy toward disability and disabled individuals and the Muslims’ understanding and the way they apply this understanding. Thus, much work remains to be done and more research is needed to enrich the literature in relation

to this specific religious perspective and to inspire the services providers with some practical techniques that could be adapted and which emerge from peoples understanding, to cope with the challenges of disability. Future research has to take into account the cultural backgrounds of disabled people and their families, which appear to be critical in deciding the way the parents, siblings, relatives and society respond to having a disabled individual.

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