



Advancing Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 Through The Formulation of a Rahmatan Lil-'Alamin-Based Fiqh for Person with Disabilities: An Endeavor Toward an Inclusive Haramain

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Abstract. Recent reports reveal that persons with disabilities continue to face substantial barriers in accessing religious facilities and participating in public life within the Haramain, particularly in relation to mobility, spiritual services, and religious literacy. This reality underscores the limitations of classical fiqh, which generally does not comprehensively address the rights of individuals with disabilities, except within the broad legal framework of *'udzur syar'i* (legal excuses). This study seeks to formulate a disability-oriented Islamic jurisprudence grounded in the principle of *rahmatan lil-'alamin* (a mercy to all creation), while evaluating its compatibility with Saudi Arabia's official Vision 2030 policy framework—particularly the *Vibrant Society* and *Quality of Life* pillars, which emphasize enhancing accessibility and participation for persons with disabilities in religious and social spheres. Employing a qualitative approach through library research and normative legal analysis, the study critically engages with classical and contemporary fiqh literature, the *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* framework, and official Vision 2030 documents and policy instruments related to disability inclusion. The findings suggest that inclusive values embedded within Islamic jurisprudence not only align with the overarching objectives of sharia but also open pathways for the reconstruction of Islamic legal thought as a means of social engineering rooted in justice and accessibility. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach that bridges normative fiqh with universal human rights principles in the context of Saudi Arabia's socioreligious transformation. It recommends the formulation of an inclusive fiqh that recognizes persons with disabilities as full legal subjects and advocates for the development of religious guidance and services that are responsive to accessibility needs.

Keywords: Disability Fiqh, Rahmatan lil-'Alamin, Saudi Vision 2030, Haramain, Four Sunni Schools of Law.

1 Introduction

Haramain—comprising the Masjid al-Haram in Makkah and the Prophet’s Mosque in Madinah—functions as the central spiritual hub for Muslims worldwide, welcoming millions of worshippers for Hajj, Umrah, and daily rituals. Nevertheless, international reports indicate that approximately 16% of the global population lives with disabilities and faces significant barriers in accessing places of worship, religious services, and equal social participation [68]. This reality underscores the urgency of creating globally inclusive religious spaces, particularly in the Haramain, which holds profound religious and symbolic significance.

Although the Masjid al-Haram and the Prophet’s Mosque have structurally provided accessibility facilities for persons with disabilities—such as six designated worship areas equipped with tayammum mats, white canes for the visually impaired, Braille Qur’an manuscripts, and sign language interpreters for deaf pilgrims [37], [54]. Field realities reveal that service execution remains far from optimal. Reports indicate that physical infrastructure, including ramps, elevators, bridges, wheelchairs, and golf carts, is available [18], [42]. Yet, deaf worshippers still struggle to follow sermons due to the absence of interpreters in several locations, blind pilgrims face inadequate guiding blocks or tactile signs, and persons with physical disabilities often encounter mobility challenges that sometimes result in conflicts with staff—as experienced by the informant “Anas.” This illustrates a gap between existing formal facilities and their effectiveness in practice.

In classical fiqh tradition, disability has generally been discussed within the framework of *‘udhr shar‘ī*—that is, legal dispensations such as concessions in prayer, fasting, or pilgrimage—without incorporating dimensions of accessibility or social equality [58]. While this approach demonstrates sensitivity to individual circumstances, it tends to be reactive and legally formalistic, thereby neglecting the substantive inclusivity required to ensure rights and equality. Contemporary developments, however, reflect a paradigm shift: for instance, in Indonesia, the emergence of *Fikih Difabel* developed by Muhammadiyah after the ratification of the CRPD offers a more holistic approach, incorporating the voices of persons with disabilities and harmonizing fiqh with national norms [59]. Moreover, recent theological and philosophical perspectives advocate for inclusivity in fiqh, emphasizing egalitarianism and human dignity in the Islamic worldview [72]. Nevertheless, such inclusive principles have yet to be fully integrated into the Haramain context, leaving a gap between modern Islamic norms and the lived reality of accessibility in the two holy sites.

Initiatives such as the Quality of Life Program and the Vibrant Society pillar within Saudi Vision 2030 emphasize accessibility, social participation, and the enhancement of quality of life for persons with disabilities (Vision 2030, 2018; Society, n.d.). However, the success of these reforms depends not only on physical infrastructure but also on the renewal of practical fiqh—particularly one grounded in

the principle of *Rahmatan lil-'Alamin*—to ensure spiritual inclusivity within the Haramain. Such reformulation would integrate policy changes and facilities with the universal values of Islam and the implementation of Vision 2030.

This article aims to analyze classical and contemporary fiqh constructions on disability, evaluate the gaps between fiqh principles and Saudi Vision 2030 policies in the management of the Haramain, and formulate a disability-centered fiqh model rooted in the principle of *Rahmatan lil-'Alamin*. The objective is to develop an Islamic legal framework that not only grants individual dispensations but also establishes theological and normative foundations for inclusive religious policy. In doing so, this study seeks to provide a conceptual basis for transforming the Haramain into a fully disability-friendly worship space that aligns with Saudi Arabia's broader agenda of spiritual inclusivity within national development.

Recent scholarship has sought to bridge fiqh and disability inclusion, though its scope remains largely normative and limited in practical application to mosques and state policy. For example, inclusive digital technology in Islamic education was examined and found that tools such as screen readers and the Universal Design for Learning support accessibility in line with *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, though their application remains confined to online education [8]. Similarly, the legal framework in Islamic higher education was analyzed and identified weak accessibility policies despite supportive fiqh principles, particularly within educational institutions [48]. Meanwhile, Hikam (2023), in his doctoral dissertation, proposed an “inclusive *taklīf*” paradigm based on *al-ahliyyah* and *maqāṣid*, affirming persons with disabilities as *mukallaf* with rightful access. Yet, his work remains largely conceptual and does not directly engage with mosques or state-level policies such as Saudi Vision 2030 [49].

This study goes beyond normative fiqh analysis by offering an integrative model of disability fiqh—combining classical jurisprudence across four schools, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, the principle of *Rahmatan lil-'Alamin*, human rights perspectives, and modern state policies. The novelty of this article lies in aligning Islamic law with inclusive development programs under Vision 2030, thereby providing a conceptual framework for religious authorities in the Haramain. Its practical contribution lies in proposing a replicable model of disability-friendly mosques at the global level, while its academic contribution enriches fiqh discourse with paradigms of inclusivity and social justice.

2 Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research and normative analysis. This design was chosen to examine both classical and contemporary fiqh concepts while also analyzing relevant regulations and policy documents within the framework of Islamic law and modern social development visions. The data sources are categorized into three main groups: (1) classical fiqh literature from the four major schools (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali), which provide historical perspectives

on inclusivity and the protection of vulnerable groups; (2) contemporary fiqh literature addressing issues of social justice, the rights of persons with disabilities, and the development of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* in modern contexts; and (3) official documents from Saudi Vision 2030, particularly the Vibrant Society pillar and the Quality of Life Program, which serve as policy frameworks for building an inclusive society. Data analysis was conducted using the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* framework, encompassing its five overarching objectives: *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (protection of life), *ḥifẓ al-'aql* (protection of intellect), *ḥifẓ al-dīn* (protection of religion), *ḥifẓ al-nasl* (protection of progeny), and *ḥifẓ al-māl* (protection of wealth). This framework was further integrated with the principles of justice, accessibility, and universal compassion, ensuring that the analysis moves beyond normative-textual considerations and critically engages with contemporary social realities.

3 Results & Discussion

3.1 Disability in Classical Fiqh: The Udzur Shar'ī Paradigm

In classical fiqh tradition, disability is viewed through the framework of *udzur shar'ī*—a condition that provides the basis for legal concessions (*rukhsah*) in the performance of religious obligations. Scholars recognized that when a Muslim is unable to fulfill an act of worship in its prescribed form due to physical or mental limitations, the Sharī'ah grants practical dispensations as an expression of divine mercy and facilitation (*al-mashaqqah tajlibu al-taysīr*) [82]. For example, those unable to stand may perform prayer while sitting or even lying down; those unable to use water may perform *tayammum*; and the obligation of Hajj may be waived or delegated if physical conditions render it impossible [45]. Thus, classical fiqh explicitly positioned persons with disabilities as individuals with limitations, yet simultaneously granted them fundamental legal ease in fulfilling religious duties.

Within this paradigm, *udzur shar'ī* primarily emphasizes dispensations (*rukhsah*) and deficits experienced by persons with disabilities, framing them more often as passive objects of law rather than active legal subjects. Vardit Rispler-Chaim (2007) explains that Islamic legal literature commonly portrays disability as a reality to be accepted as “divine will”, without emotional reflection or recognition of the social potential of persons with disabilities [71], [56], . Similarly, Isra Bhatti et al. note that while fiqh provides clear dispensations—allowing worship to be performed in adapted ways—it rarely discusses the participation of persons with disabilities as imams, witnesses, or community leaders [31]. This view is reinforced by Akbar Ali and Geraldene Codina in their study *Representations of Disability in Qur'anic Narratives* (2024), who argue that although the four Sunni schools (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali) permit alternative modes of worship due to physical limitations, “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” [19]. This pattern underscores how the *udzur shar'ī* paradigm tends to highlight what individuals

“cannot do,” rather than celebrating their contributions and potential as active agents of law and religion.

The *udzur sharʿī* paradigm, centered on *rukhsah*, also reflects methodological limitations of classical *fiqh*, as it prioritizes *fiqh al-ʿibādāt* over the social and structural dimensions of disability. According to Maftuhin, traditional Islamic legal constructions often stop at the level of “legal exceptions” without articulating principles of substantive equality that position persons with disabilities as active participants in the public sphere [57]. Consequently, disability is reduced to a biological condition that impedes worship, rather than a matter of social justice requiring legal innovation to ensure full participation. Rabea Benhalim makes a similar critique, noting that classical *fiqh* texts rarely extend the discussion to domains such as politics, courtroom testimony, or religious leadership[30]. The implication is that persons with disabilities continue to be marginalized within Islamic legal discourse. While the *udzur sharʿī* paradigm embodies *rahmah*, it simultaneously reduces the role of persons with disabilities to limited ritual compliance, rather than comprehensive empowerment.

Although the *udzur sharʿī* framework demonstrates compassion through *rukhsah*, it inadvertently reinforces a hierarchy between the so-called “normal” and those perceived as “weak.” Empirical findings show that social stigma against persons with disabilities remains prevalent—for example, in Makassar, persons with disabilities frequently experience harassment, negative labeling, and marginalization, despite Islam’s emphasis on protecting intellect, dignity, and human worth (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*, *ḥifẓ al-ʿaql*, *ḥifẓ al-dīn*) under the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharʿīʾah* [33]. Such stigma reveals a gap between the normative ideals of *fiqh* and social realities, where a paradigm intended to facilitate worship often reinforces paternalistic views—casting persons with disabilities as objects of compassion rather than empowered subjects. The *maqāṣid* framework, particularly in Auda’s reformist reading that emphasizes holistic human welfare and development, suggests that mere legal concessions are insufficient ; rather, true inclusivity requires positioning persons with disabilities as active agents within society [28], [46].

The classical *fiqh* paradigm of *udzur sharʿī* thus possesses a protective character by granting dispensations to safeguard worship, but remains insufficiently inclusive. Persons with disabilities are treated as recipients of legal exemptions rather than as equal rights-holders in religious authority or social participation. This aligns with Maftuhin’s critique that the *rukhsah* framework frames them only as “beneficiaries of exceptions” rather than empowered agents. In modern contexts, such an approach is no longer adequate, as *maqāṣid al-sharʿīʾah* demands the protection of human dignity and equality without discrimination. Accordingly, there is an urgent need for a reinterpretation of *fiqh* that transcends the *udzur* paradigm toward a rights-based framework grounded in equality and the full participation of persons with disabilities in religious life.

3.2 Contemporary Discourse: Toward an Inclusive Fiqh

In the contemporary era, it has become increasingly evident that traditional fiqh often provides insufficient space for marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, as it tends to prioritize generic normative rulings. However, contemporary discourse has begun to develop a more inclusive paradigm that is responsive to the lived realities of Muslim communities. A concrete example can be seen in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where Islamic authorities explicitly permitted the use of sign language interpreters during Friday sermons [22], thereby ensuring that deaf congregants can fully grasp the message of the *khutbah*. More broadly, the development of contemporary fiqh—such as the concept of *fiqh al-aqallīyāt* (minority fiqh) introduced by Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Tāhā Jābir al-‘Alwānī—has expanded the scope of Islamic law to guarantee equal religious access and contextual relevance for diverse Muslim communities [41]. This trajectory highlights the principle of inclusivity through an “Inclusive Worship” approach, whereby fiqh is reinterpreted to emphasize the collective responsibility of the Muslim community in facilitating religious access for persons with disabilities. This underscores that the spirit of the Sharī‘ah extends beyond mere concessions, advancing justice and full participation [76].

Contemporary debates increasingly manifest a movement toward an inclusive fiqh that positions persons with disabilities not as mere recipients of dispensations but as full legal subjects with equal rights and capacities. Ainul Yaqin and Khariri (2022) argue, based on Islamic legal analysis, that persons with disabilities possess legitimate standing as full legal subjects entitled to perform legal acts and receive rights, even if dispensations (*rukhsah*) apply in worship practices according to individual capacity [81]. Similarly, Zanuvar Mubin and Masykur Rozi (2024) propose a new socio-religious model that challenges normative biases in Islamic legal epistemology by integrating the principle of *ahliyah al-wujūb* (legal capacity to hold rights) and *maqāṣid*-based strategies. This approach ensures not only legal concessions but also access and dignity for persons with disabilities as integral members of the Muslim community [62].

At this juncture, contemporary fiqh may be positioned not merely as a “legal product” prescribing obligations and dispensations, but also as an instrument of social equality designed to ensure participatory justice for all congregants, including persons with disabilities. This requires linking *ijtihād* with the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* and *qawā‘id fiqhiyyah*. Conceptually, al-Shātibī emphasized that the law seeks to realize human welfare (*taḥqīq al-maṣlaḥah*), thus fiqh should be directed toward safeguarding the five fundamental objectives of the Sharī‘ah. In the context of disability, this affirms *ḥifẓ al-dīn* (ensuring access to worship) and *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (protection of life) through inclusive regulation [17]. Ibn ‘Āshūr further reinforced *maqāṣid* as a methodology of legal renewal, arguing that religious authorities must design modes of worship governance that remove barriers rather than merely granting concessions, thereby preserving human dignity and ensuring equal participation [25].

Operationally, major *qawā'id fiqhiyyah* such as *al-mashaqqah tajlib al-taysīr* (“hardship necessitates facilitation”) and *al-ḍarar yuzāl* (“harm must be eliminated”) provide a normative foundation for accommodations in worship—such as the provision of sign language interpreters, wheelchair-accessible facilities, and adapted rituals—while remaining fully valid in Sharī'ah terms [77]. This path aligns with resolutions of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (OIC), which affirm equal rights and dignity for persons with disabilities and legitimize the removal of practical barriers to enable full religious participation [2].

As awareness of inclusive fiqh expands, Muslim-majority countries have adopted concrete measures to enhance religious accessibility for persons with disabilities. In Egypt, for instance, during the 2000s, Grand Shaykh of Al-Azhar, Shaykh Tantawi, issued a flexible and inclusive fatwa permitting the use of sign language interpreters alongside the preacher during Friday sermons [55]. This fatwa overturned earlier rulings that had prohibited interpreters on the grounds that they might distract other worshippers. The implementation of Tantawi's fatwa took place for the first time in 2015, when Al-Azhar pioneered a Friday sermon accompanied by a sign language interpreter—bridging communication for deaf congregants and demonstrating that accessibility is not a compromise but a fundamental right of worship [83]. In Indonesia, although the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) has yet to issue a specific fatwa on disability fiqh, inclusive initiatives have grown significantly through Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which published *Buku Fiqih Penyandang Disabilitas* as a concrete response to real needs [36]. A notable example is Masjid Istiqlal in Jakarta, which for the first time allowed wheelchair users to join the front prayer rows and installed dual screens displaying both the preacher and a sign language interpreter for deaf congregants—a development described as a “revolution in fiqh and culture” [74]. In Malaysia, institutions such as the National Council for the Blind Malaysia (NCBM) have been proactive in providing high-quality Braille printing services to guarantee equal access to religious materials for the visually impaired, affirming that such access constitutes a fundamental right [64]. These initiatives collectively position inclusive fiqh as a cross-national model that not only grants dispensations but affirms religious access as an essential human right.

The development of inclusive fiqh now strongly resonates with international human rights discourse, particularly the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which seeks to shift the paradigm of disability from mere compassion to recognition as equal rights-holders in all spheres of life [52]. From an Islamic perspective, this approach aligns with efforts to integrate fiqh with human rights principles, as articulated by An-Na'im (2002), who emphasizes the importance of harmonizing religious norms with universal norms to fulfill social justice—including for persons with disabilities [20]. This is further supported by Bielefeldt (2012), who argues that human rights principles not only complement but can also enrich contemporary fiqh interpretations by reinforcing equality, participation, and human dignity in both public and spiritual contexts [32]. Such dialectics provide normative space for inclusive fiqh as a bridge between Sharī'ah and

global policy, strengthening inclusivity as a substantive foundation for modern Islamic legal development.

Nevertheless, some conservative scholars approach inclusive fiqh with skepticism, viewing it as excessive modernization that risks undermining the authority of classical texts and threatening the purity of traditional *ijtihād*. This resistance often arises in reaction to reinterpretations of fiqh that are perceived as overly contextual and responsive to modern social pressures [63]. Yet the *maqāṣid* framework provides strong justification for inclusivity, affirming that inclusive fiqh is in fact a profound realization of *rahmatan li-l-‘ālamīn*—prioritizing the humanistic, just, and universal dimensions of the Sharī‘ah. From this perspective, inclusivity is not a compromise of the texts but a faithful expression of Islam’s fundamental values. The dialogue between traditional and contemporary fiqh thus reflects the dynamic evolution of Islamic thought—a productive dialectic for the development of modern Islamic law.

In addressing contemporary realities that demand comprehensive social justice, inclusive fiqh is not merely a normative option but an imperative. The reformulation of fiqh to incorporate disability and other marginalized groups enhances the legitimacy of Islamic law in modern society, positioning it as a substantive response to the aspirations of the Muslim community rather than as a text detached from lived experience. Jasser Auda supports this approach through his systemic analysis of *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*, which stresses the adaptation of Sharī‘ah to universal welfare values and contemporary needs [75]. Likewise, Mohammad Hashim Kamali offers deeper normative visibility through his critique of classical approaches as overly technical and literalist, calling instead for a more adaptive fiqh—particularly through the application of *istihsān* and *maqāṣid*—as tools for modern Islamic legal reform [39]. Collectively, these perspectives affirm that the future of fiqh must be inclusive, adaptive, and socially relevant—forming a robust foundation for the development of a disability fiqh in the *Haramayn* that is not merely normative, but deeply responsive to the real needs of the Muslim community.

3.3 Accessibility and Inclusion in the Haramain: Challenges and Gaps

The *Masjid al-Ḥarām* in Mecca and the *Prophet’s Mosque* in Medina represent not only the spiritual epicenter of the global Muslim community but also a universal symbol of Islamic inclusivity. Each year, these two sanctuaries welcome millions of pilgrims from across the world. Recent statistics from the 2024 Hajj season recorded a total of 1,833,164 pilgrims, consisting of 1,611,310 international and 221,854 domestic pilgrims [9]. The magnitude and complexity of this flow underscore the urgent need for adequate accessibility, particularly for vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, the elderly, and those with special needs.

The demand for inclusive services becomes even more pressing in light of global data indicating that approximately 15% of the world’s population—over one billion individuals—live with some form of disability, with nearly 80% residing in developing countries [29]. Statistically, this suggests that millions of pilgrims with

disabilities are likely to be part of the annual pilgrimage stream to the Haramain. The presence of such a large demographic necessitates not only physical infrastructure but also religious policies and services that ensure equality in worship experiences. From this perspective, disability in the Haramain cannot be reduced to a mere technical concern; it is integral to the fulfillment of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, particularly the preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*) and life (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*) through equitable access to worship.

As a barometer for global Islamic worship practices, the quality of accessibility at the Haramain reflects the Muslim world's collective commitment to the principle of equality. The Haramain often serves as a model for mosque construction and worship spaces worldwide, meaning that Saudi policies on disability services carry broader implications for how Islamic inclusivity is perceived globally. Gaps in accessibility—whether in architecture, technology, or human-centered services—not only affect pilgrims' comfort but also bear upon the normative legitimacy of the Haramain as a universal sacred space. Enhancing accessibility, therefore, holds strategic significance not only for Saudi Arabia but also for the global Muslim community.

At the level of strategic policy, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has identified the service of pilgrims as a central component of **Vision 2030** through the *Pilgrim Experience Program (PEP)* [21]. The program prioritizes enhancing capacity, safety, and service quality during Hajj and Umrah, including ambitious targets for increasing pilgrim numbers while ensuring more accessible services for diverse groups. The annual PEP reports and Vision 2030 documents reaffirm this commitment by emphasizing the goal of “facilitating the entire pilgrimage journey” through both infrastructural upgrades and digital service innovations aimed at improving accessibility and the spiritual experience of visitors [69].

In practical terms, large-scale physical projects—such as the King Abdullah expansion and the development of supporting infrastructure—have reshaped the topography of the Haramain. These include the expansion of the *Mataf* area, the construction of new pathways and pedestrian tunnels, and the installation of elevators and corridors designed to facilitate smoother crowd circulation while increasing overall capacity [61]. Reports from the Haramain authorities highlight that the new architectural layouts and circulation systems were specifically engineered to accommodate high volumes of pilgrims while also providing designated routes and mobility support at critical points—an indispensable measure for pilgrims with special needs [9].

At the level of direct service provision, the General Presidency (custodian/administrator of the Haramain) and the PEP unit have introduced a range of special facilities: the installation of access ramps, dedicated elevators, wheelchair lanes, Braille Qur'an service points, tactile information boards, and the provision of both manual and electric wheelchairs/“electric carts” to assist pilgrims' mobility

within the courtyards and corridors of the mosques [10]. Official reports and media coverage highlight the addition of thousands of wheelchairs (e.g., reports of 9,000 units) and the allocation of designated prayer areas for persons with disabilities at various locations in the Grand Mosque—measures that are clearly remedial and infrastructural in nature [65].

In addition, digital transformation has become a central component of accessibility strategies: official applications and platforms (e.g., *Eatmarna*, *Tawakkalna*, *Nusuk*), the development of “virtual paths” for *tawaf* management and Umrah scheduling/permit systems, interactive maps of the Grand Mosque, as well as real-time crowd density services and AI-based monitoring to guide pilgrims toward safer and more navigable routes [13]. These digital tools facilitate pilgrimage planning, provide scheduled visitation slots for persons with special needs, and allow authorities to dynamically allocate mobility services [12]. Nevertheless, such technologies are primarily designed as operational or technical solutions for crowd management.

At the institutional and regulatory levels, the Kingdom has also advanced reforms: the promulgation of Royal Decree No. M/27 of 11/2/1445 Hijri enacting Cabinet Resolution No. 110 of 6/2/1445 (August 22, 2023) on the *System of Rights of Persons with Disabilities*; the establishment of a specialized Authority for the Care of Persons with Disabilities [73]; the issuance of universal accessibility guidelines [1]; and collaborative MoUs (e.g., between the King Salman Center for Disability Research and the General Presidency) collectively demonstrate an intention to create a more inclusive service ecosystem [70]. These documents adopt principles of technical accessibility and administrative regulation (physical access, service rights, subsidies, and service prioritization), aligning with Vision 2030 targets regarding services for pilgrims.

Despite these initiatives—most of which remain technical and operational (architecture, mobility, digital booking/permits, crowd management)—a normative gap persists between technical capacity and the existence of a *fiqh*-based normative framework explicitly affirming spiritual equality and religious roles (e.g., eligibility to serve as imam, witness, or other ritual rights) for persons with disabilities. In other words, while the state provides physical access and services, systematic *ijtihād* or institutional *fatwas* explicitly affirming the spiritual equality and ritual rights of persons with disabilities within the Haramain context remain absent. Although international *fiqh* bodies (e.g., IIFA, OIC) have emphasized the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities, formal integration between institutional *ijtihād* and operational Haramain policies requires further strengthening [3].

The literature on *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* and *uṣūl al-fiqh* supports bridging this gap. Contemporary *maqāṣid* scholars such as Ibn ʿĀshūr and Jasser Auda argue that the higher objectives of Sharīʿa (preservation of religion, life, intellect, dignity, and property) require not only technical facilitation but also the safeguarding of dignity and full participation of the community. A more constructive and normative

application of *fiqh* to disability would therefore reinforce rather than undermine the spiritual legitimacy of Haramain services [24]. Conversely, field studies suggest that without normative engagement (targeted *fatwas*, inclusive worship guidelines, training of preachers/imams), technical facilities risk being reduced to administrative altruism that does not alter the socio-theological status of persons with disabilities within sacred spaces [60].

Simultaneously, while modernization of Haramain facilities has progressed significantly, non-physical barriers remain the most persistent challenges faced by disabled pilgrims. A critical issue is the limited availability of inclusive worship services, such as the absence of Friday sermons consistently accommodating the needs of persons with sensory disabilities. The report *Accessible Tourism in the Gulf* reveals that religious inclusivity in the Gulf region remains largely focused on physical aspects rather than spiritual integration [34]. This is evident in the scarcity of permanent sign language interpreters to ensure that deaf pilgrims can fully comprehend sermons and collective prayers. Consequently, adequate infrastructure alone does not guarantee spiritual equality, which should constitute an integral component of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* in preserving access to religion (*hifẓ al-dīn*).

Beyond communication barriers, limited dissemination and education regarding disability services in the Haramain deepen the inclusion gap. A study by the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue (2021) emphasizes that the diversity of pilgrims' backgrounds requires a multidimensional approach—one that includes not only physical development but also cultural and religious awareness-raising [38]. In practice, however, many pilgrims with disabilities remain unaware of designated lanes, supporting digital applications, or assistance procedures because information is not distributed equitably. This highlights weak coordination between modernization policies under the Vision 2030 framework and the role of religious authorities in guaranteeing equal access. The gap demonstrates that the Haramain has not yet fully become an inclusive worship space, either materially or normatively.

Compared with other Muslim-majority countries, the Haramain reveals a normative shortfall in integrating inclusive *fiqh* with public policy. In Egypt, Grand Sheikh al-Azhar Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi issued a *fatwa* in the early 2000s permitting the use of sign language interpreters during Friday sermons, reasoning that the principle of *da'wa* dissemination must encompass all worshippers without exception [15]. This *fatwa* explicitly legitimized the needs of disabled worshippers, dispelling the notion that interpreters disrupt devotional solemnity.

Indonesia provides another example through the *Lajnah Bahtsul Masail Nahdlatul Ulama* (LBM NU), which emphasized the state's and Muslim society's obligation to facilitate worship access for persons with disabilities. This *fatwa* not only stressed the availability of physical facilities but also underscored that spiritual equality constitutes part of Islam's principle of justice. Malaysia has taken a further practical step: since the mid-2010s, the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) has provided Friday sermon texts in Braille, enabling visually impaired

worshippers to independently access religious messages [14]. This initiative illustrates that inclusive fiqh can be both normative and institutionalized within official religious policies.

From these three cases, clear normative benchmarks emerge that Saudi Arabia could draw upon to strengthen inclusivity in the Haramain. Egypt provides formal fiqh legitimacy, Indonesia institutionalizes religious obligations through fatwas, and Malaysia delivers technical innovation via Braille sermon texts. Together, these approaches demonstrate how fiqh and public policy can synergize to create more equitable worship spaces. By adopting similar frameworks, Saudi Arabia could reinforce the modernization of the Haramain beyond infrastructure, ensuring spiritual equality for disabled pilgrims [50].

Nevertheless, clerical conservatism and social attitudes toward disability pose tangible obstacles to inclusive policy implementation in the Haramain. Certain traditionalist elements within religious institutions contend that Sharīʿa already provides mechanisms of dispensation (*ʿudhr/rukhsah*), and thus “facilitations” (e.g., permission to pray while seated) are considered sufficient, while specialized services may be deemed excessive or even potential *bidʿah* (religious innovation)—an argument highlighted in studies on Islamic legal authority and continuity that often resist normative innovation [47]. Such perspectives reflect a conservative legal tendency emphasizing juridical continuity and textual authority, thereby delaying initiatives that appear to alter ritual roles (e.g., acceptance of disabled persons as imams or witnesses) due to juridical caution and concerns over disrupting liturgical order [7]. Moreover, empirical studies of public attitudes in Saudi Arabia reveal persistent stigma and limited disability awareness [5], resulting in low demand or usage of inclusive facilities despite their physical availability. Resistance thus stems not only from legal texts but also from socio-cultural patterns that render reforms “non-urgent” in the eyes of parts of society.

Doctrinally, obstacles also arise from the classical fiqh’s historical focus on exemptions (what the law permits not to do) rather than access rights or agency recognition (what the law must actively guarantee). Transitioning toward an inclusive fiqh therefore requires methodological reinterpretation. The *maqāṣid* dialectic promoted by reformists offers normative arguments for inclusion, but implementation remains obstructed by institutional and political constraints. *Maqāṣid* theorists (e.g., Dusuki, Auda) argue that the objectives of Sharīʿa (protection of religion, life, intellect, dignity, property) necessitate policies enabling full participation—an argument compelling at the theological level but weak at the practical level due to the gap between theoretical *ijtihād* and institutional fatwa authority [40], [28]. Politically and administratively, Vision 2030 modernization dynamics produce a paradox: while the state advances service modernization (infrastructure and digital), it must also navigate the entrenched power of traditional clerics and social sensitivities [53]. This slows the absorption of pro-inclusion *ijtihād* into Haramain policies, even as technical standards advance—a key reason why normative reforms (fatwas, inclusive sermon

guidelines, permanent sign-language interpreters) lag significantly behind physical and digital renovations.

Building a genuinely inclusive Haramain therefore requires a dual approach: modernization of physical infrastructure alongside the reformulation of fiqh frameworks responsive to the principle of *rahmatan lil-'alamin*. Disability-friendly infrastructure such as dedicated lanes, wheelchairs, and digital applications already mark progress, but spiritual and normative legitimacy can only be achieved if fiqh frameworks are also adapted to affirm equal worship rights for persons with disabilities. This demonstrates that *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* is a dynamic system responsive to contemporary needs, and that Islamic law must orient itself toward social justice and the protection of vulnerable groups. Reformulating inclusive fiqh would not only strengthen Saudi Arabia's domestic acceptance of these policies but also affirm its position as the custodian of the global Muslim community. Accordingly, integrating technical and normative dimensions is essential if the Haramain is to stand not merely as a center of worship but as a symbol of Islamic civilization embodying the values of equality and universal inclusion.

3.4 Toward an Inclusive Haramain: A Rahmatan lil-'Alamin Framework and Fiqh Policy Formulation for Persons with Disabilities

Within the normative framework of *rahmatan lil-'alamin*, Islam positions divine mercy (*rahmah*) as the teleological horizon of law, underpinning respect for human dignity, substantive justice, and universal accessibility to worship. Contemporary interpretations of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* emphasize that the objectives of the law have expanded beyond the five classical *darūriyyāt* toward an open-ended list that includes welfare, freedom, dignity, and social solidarity—all manifestations of *rahmah* aimed at maximizing benefit and removing hardship [27], [51]. Accordingly, fiqh regarding disability should not be confined to individual dispensations (*rukhsah*) but should evolve toward institutional design and worship arrangements that guarantee experiential equity and equal spiritual reward for all *mukallaf* according to their capacities—concrete applications of *hifẓ al-dīn* (preservation of religion), *hifẓ al-nafs* (preservation of life), and the principle of *lā ḍarar wa-lā ḍirār* [23].

Recent scholarship on disability in Islamic thought reflects a shift from justifying *rukhsah* to adopting a social model that calls for dismantling structural barriers, ensuring that flexible worship practices affirm rather than diminish spiritual value [43]. At the policy level, the *rahmatan lil-'alamin* horizon aligns closely with the socio-legal agenda of Vision 2030, which prioritizes inclusivity and quality of life. This is evident, for example, in pilgrimage service programs that provide accessible transportation, specialized accommodations, and round-the-clock assistance to ensure that worshippers with diverse abilities can perform their rites “with dignity and ease” [16].

Nevertheless, these policy achievements and facility provisions leave fundamental epistemological challenges within fiqh unresolved. Persons with disabilities may have secured formal access in some respects, yet the underlying normative framework of such services still tends to reflect a *rukhsah*-oriented paradigm rather than a vision of substantive equality. This underscores the urgent need to shift the discourse from merely providing technical accommodations to reformulating fiqh in a way that consciously regards persons with disabilities as full legal subjects. Such reform would allow operational policies and the spirit of *rahmatan lil-‘alamin* to mutually reinforce one another.

Reformulating fiqh toward an inclusive framework requires robust collaboration among religious authorities, Haramain administrators, and state policymakers. Services for pilgrims with disabilities have so far remained fragmented, driven more by the logic of individual dispensations than by the recognition of collective rights as an integral element of social justice. This approach reproduces a defensive classical fiqh paradigm and fails to articulate substantive equality in worship spaces. As an alternative, *rahmatan lil-‘alamin* should serve as the primary normative foundation that prioritizes human dignity without discrimination, resonating with Abou El Fadl’s concept of ethical fiqh, which calls for a moral reconstruction of Islamic law, as well as Ramadan’s emphasis on contextualizing sharia in the modern public sphere [6], [67]. Integrating inclusive fiqh into policy will not only enhance the Haramain’s spiritual legitimacy but also project Saudi Arabia’s international image as a pioneer of religious inclusivity.

The need for inclusive fiqh reform gains greater relevance when linked to Saudi Arabia’s tangible achievements in infrastructure and service provision. While physical and digital foundations have been laid to facilitate pilgrim accessibility, the normative dimension of fiqh still requires strengthening to ensure these policies do not remain at a merely technical level. Hence, integrating an ethical fiqh paradigm rooted in *rahmatan lil-‘alamin* with Vision 2030 policies becomes crucial so that persons with disabilities are acknowledged not only as service recipients but as full legal subjects with equal spiritual rights in the Haramain.

Saudi Arabia has already made significant strides in building both physical and digital infrastructure to make the Haramain more accessible—an initiative consistent with Vision 2030 targets and official PEP reports. The next academic and policy task is to integrate normative fiqh frameworks with formal policy that affirms ritual and spiritual equality for persons with disabilities rather than merely granting technical access. Practical recommendations for research and policy agendas include: (1) harmonizing institutional fatwas on the ritual roles of persons with disabilities (as imams, witnesses, or congregation leaders); (2) implementing training programs for imams, khatibs, and Haramain staff on inclusive communication (including sign language); (3) drafting *Guidelines for Inclusive Worship* that combine *maqāṣid*-based *ijtihād* with technical standards; and (4) conducting participatory evaluations

(surveys/FGDs) with disabled pilgrims to assess spiritual experience. These steps would bridge normative gaps and enhance substantive equality within the Haramain.

The normative measures outlined above must be translated into concrete technical and administrative interventions. Without bridging normative fiqh and operational policy, inclusivity risks remaining a rhetorical goal. Therefore, implementing an actionable package is essential to ensure that the values of equality and spiritual dignity are genuinely embodied in the worship experience of disabled pilgrims.

Translating a disability fiqh paradigm into operational practice requires normative, technical, and administrative interventions to secure equitable and dignified worship access. First, Friday sermon interpretation services (via live sign language and real-time captioning on large screens or monitors) must become standard in mosques and public worship spaces. Experience from Hajj programs demonstrates that sign-language interpretation and printed/audio materials (Braille or TTS) significantly improve understanding and participation. Second, visual signage and pictograms tailored to hearing-impaired pilgrims—including directional guides, clear male/female area distinctions, and visual alert systems—reduce uncertainty in navigation and social interaction, aligning with universal design principles for religious facilities. Third, tactile guiding blocks and luminous tactile pathways should be installed for visually impaired pilgrims to connect critical points (entrances, *tawāf* lanes, *sa'ī* paths, ablution areas, and service counters), ensuring independent mobility and minimizing reliance on attendants that compromise ritual autonomy. Technical standards and evidence of effectiveness strongly support their adoption. Fourth, designated spaces for disabled pilgrims in strategic locations—such as wider *tawāf* corridors, priority seating near pulpits during Friday sermons, and safe access to *sa'ī* zones—reduce crowd pressure, facilitate focused worship, and enable ritual adaptations without diminishing spiritual value. Modern Hajj/Umrah service guidelines illustrate the practical benefits of spatial allocations for special-needs pilgrims. Fifth, strengthening disability fiqh as a normative foundation must be mainstreamed into facility planning: drafting mosque accessibility checklists, embedding inclusivity in public-building regulations, and training mosque leaders so operational fiqh decisions (e.g., seating arrangements, ritual dispensations, and service protocols) are guided by *maqāṣid* principles—preserving religion, life, and dignity—rather than ad hoc individual concessions. This multidisciplinary approach ensures that physical engineering and spiritual policy complement one another in fostering worship inclusivity [35].

The overarching objective of these recommendations is to guarantee equal access to every aspect of worship at the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque, ensuring that rituals are not only jurisprudentially valid but also religiously meaningful. Under the *rahmatan lil-'alamin* paradigm, persons with disabilities are recognized not as passive recipients of individual dispensations (*rukhsah*), but as full participants in worship with equal rights to spiritual reward. This vision aligns with

maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, which prioritize the protection of religion, life, and human dignity [80]. Moreover, embedding accessibility within collective worship strengthens fiqh's legitimacy in modern society by demonstrating Islam's responsiveness to human rights, social justice, and inclusivity [66]. Geopolitically, Saudi Arabia's efforts to mainstream disability services in Hajj and Umrah also reflect Vision 2030's commitment to linking religious values with global social agendas, including Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on reducing inequality and advancing inclusive development [26]. This initiative not only enriches the spiritual experience of disabled pilgrims but also affirms Saudi Arabia's position as a progressive and humanistic center of Islam in harmony with the spirit of *rahmatan lil-'alamin*.

4 Conclusion

This study affirms that efforts to create an inclusive Haramain cannot remain limited to technical or infrastructural dimensions but must be accompanied by a fiqh reform grounded in the principles of *rahmatan lil-'alamin*. The limitations of classical fiqh, which frame disability merely as a legal excuse (*'udhr shar'ī*), must be expanded into a disability fiqh that affirms substantive equality in worship experiences, in line with the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*—particularly the preservation of religion, life, and human dignity. Such integration also supports the pillars of the Vibrant Society and Quality of Life Programs under Saudi Vision 2030, while aligning with global agendas such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Practical recommendations—including the provision of sign language interpreters for Friday sermons, visual signage, tactile pathways for visually impaired pilgrims, and designated spaces for persons with disabilities in strategic areas of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque—demonstrate that accessibility is not merely a demand of modernization but an integral element of fiqh legitimacy. By adopting inclusivity as an ethical and spiritual framework, the Haramain can emerge as a global mosque model that not only embodies social justice but also reflects Islam's character as a mercy to all creation. Accordingly, formulating a disability fiqh rooted in *rahmatan lil-'alamin* constitutes a vital foundation for Saudi Arabia's socio-legal transformation and reinforces its role as the custodian of the global Muslim community.

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