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Improving the Standard of Living for Disabled Individuals: An Islamic Perspective

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Abstract



This research article delves into the intricate and multifaceted issue of enhancing the quality of life for individuals with disabilities through the lens of Islamic perspective. Society often takes for granted the fundamental pillars of a fulfilling life, which encompass access to quality education, the support of a nurturing family, a conducive environment, and the companionship of a life partner. It raises the fundamental question: Do disabled individuals not equally require these life-enriching elements?

Disability, a multifaceted and evolving concept, encompasses various forms of individual impairments, including physical, sensory, cognitive, intellectual, and mental health challenges, as well as chronic illnesses. Despite being a substantial minority, disabled individuals often endure societal neglect, isolation, poverty, and dependence on charity, facing misconceptions that they are incapable of contributing to progressive tasks. The research further examines the profound connections between Islamic teachings and the inclusion of individuals with disabilities. This inclusivity extends to recognizing the unique talents, gifts, and leadership abilities of disabled individuals. In Islamic societies, individuals with disabilities have historically emerged as scholars and leaders, contributing significantly to their communities. In conclusion, this research not only highlights the challenges faced by disabled individuals but also underscores the profound role of society in their well-being. It emphasizes that serving humanity equates to serving God. Islam, with its historical support for the rights of disabled individuals, serves as a guiding principle for protecting the rights and dignity of all people with disabilities and illnesses.

Keywords

Disability, Islamic perspective, Inclusion, Rights, Community, Prophet Muhammad, Society, Well-being, Human condition, Moral values, Diversity.



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1. Introduction

The topic of this research is the improvement of the standard of living for disabled individuals from an Islamic perspective. Observing the lifestyle of an average person reveals the necessity of good home education, family, environmental support, and a life partner. The question arises: do disabled individuals not require these essential life-supporting elements? This article will discuss various challenges faced by disabled individuals in society.

Disability is a complicated, dynamic, multidimensional, and contentious subject. The phrase refers to individual functionality, which includes physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, intellectual impairment, mental illness, and many types of chronic disease.

Disabled people are large minority groups, starved of services and mostly ignored by society, live in isolation, segregation, poverty, charity and even pity. People think that they are unable to fulfill progressive tasks. People with disabilities are also more likely to face social isolation, which carries its own health risks, including increased risk of death. "When a person's disability includes mobility impairment, one issue that can arise is increased physical and social isolation.

In the following lines, we present a small historical incident from the biography of Hazrat Umar Farooq (R.A) about how he behaved with the disabled.

أن عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله عنه، مر برجل وهو يأكل بشماله وعمر يقوم على الناس وهم يأكلون، فقال له: كل بيمينك يا عبد الله" ، قال: إنها مشغولة، ثم مر به الثانية، فقال مثل ذلك، ثم مر به الثالثة فقال مثل ذلك، فقال: شغل ماذا؟ قال: قطعت يوم مؤتة، قال: ففزع عمر لذلك فقال: " من يغسل ثيابك؟ من يدهن رأسك؟ من يقوم عليك؟" قال: فعدد عليه بمثل هذا، ثم أمر له بجارية وراحلة طعام ونفقة، قال: فقال الناس: جزي الله عمر عن رعيته خيراً¹

One such role model is Hazrat Omar Farooq R.A., the third Muslim leader, who provided accommodation for a blind man near the mosque after the crippled boy's father complained to Omar about his son's inability to access the mosque. As a result, Islamic history is replete with stories of people who, despite having a disability, were included and held high social positions.

So Today We will try to enlighten all these aspects. This Topic is too much important because most of the people are unaware of the problems faced by disabled, so, they do not fulfill their rights. They don't know that disabled can also live a successful life if their environment and family support them.

I want to clarify in this Research that it's the duty of every person in our family, offices, and institutes to change their behavior with these Special People.

2. Objectives

- To give awareness to the society regarding disabled persons.
- To provide perception and information about the facilities that disabled need like Screen reading Software Jaws that cannot provide speaking activity. (Urdu and Islamiyah students do not get any benefit from these jaws) so this problem should be resolved.
- Acknowledgement related disabled's status of living.

3. Kinds of Disability

There are four kinds of disabled persons:

1. Blind/Visually Impaired People
2. Physically Handicapped
3. Deaf and Dumb
4. Mentally Retarded

3.1 Visually Impaired / Blind People:

The definition of visual impairment is “a decrease in the ability to see to a certain degree that causes problems not fixable by usual means, such as glasses.” Blindness is “the state of being unable to see due to injury, disease or genetic condition.”

Visual impairment is defined as a limitation or inability to perform visual tasks, such as reading, walking, or daily activities (World Health Organization, 2015). The most prevalent causes of visual impairment worldwide include uncorrected refractive errors, cataracts, and glaucoma (World Health Organization, 2015). The following are the categories of visual impairment as defined by the World Health Organization²

- **Category 0:** No or mild visual impairment – presenting visual acuity better than 6/18
- **Category 1:** Moderate visual impairment – presenting visual acuity worse than 6/18 and better than 6/60
- **Category 2:** Severe visual impairment – presenting visual acuity worse than 6/60 and better than 3/60
- **Category 3:** Blindness – presenting visual acuity worse than 3/60 and better than 1/60
- **Category 4:** Blindness – presenting visual acuity worse than 1/60 with light perception
- **Category 5:** Blindness – irreversible blindness with no light perception.

It is helpful to remember that the Arabic term 'visual impairment' is roughly equivalent to the English word 'blind'. However, in Arabic, there is more than one word for visual impairment. In Arabic, terminology for visual impairment/blindness include darīr (ضَرِيرٌ), a'ma (أَعْمَى), and kaffīf (كَفَيْفُ الْبَصَرِ). 'Darīr' (ضَرِيرٌ) means blind in a physiological sense and is mostly used to refer to someone who has lost their sight.

The term comes from the root da-ra-ra (ضَرَر) (Baalbaki & Baalabaki, 2006), which means injury or handicap and has a negative meaning. A'amā (أَعْمَى) has several uses, one of which is for someone who is

medically blind. It comes from the root 'amā (أَعْمَى), which meaning not to see. For Arabs in the seventh century, the word a'amā (أَعْمَى) did not carry a negative connotation because it solely referred to the condition of not seeing. The Qur'an uses the term a'amā (أَعْمَى) to describe both physical blindness and spiritual blindness (Bazna & Hatab, 2005). In academics, the term 'kafif' (كَفِيفٌ) refers to visual impairment, while 'da'if baṣar' (ضَعِيفُ الْبَصَرِ) refers to partial sight or poor eyesight.

An example of an Islamic text promoting social inclusion and independent living is the story of a visually impaired man who came to the Prophet Muhammad and asked if he should come to the mosque.

عن أبي هريرة، قال: جاء اعمى إلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: فقال: إنه ليس لي قائد يقودني إلى الصلاة فسأله ان يرخص له ان يصلي في بيته فاذن له فلما ولى دعاه قال له: "اتسمع النداء بالصلاة" قال: نعم قال: "فاجب."

Abu Huraira reported: There came to the Apostle of Allāh (may peace be upon him) a blind man and said: Messenger of Allāh, I have no one to guide me to the mosque. He, therefore, asked Allāh's Messenger (May peace be upon him) permission to say prayer in his house. He (the Holy Prophet) granted him permission. Then when the man turned away, he called him and said: Do you hear the call to prayer? He said: Yes. He (the Holy Prophet then) said: Respond to it.³

The Prophet did not ask anyone to bring him to the mosque, but he put a rope around the edges of the building where the man needed to walk so, he knew his way.

3.2 Physically Handicapped

Loss of or failure to develop a specific bodily function or functions, whether of movement, sensation, coordination or speech, but excluding mental impairments or disabilities.

The physically handicapped are defined as individuals with physical disabilities or impairments that significantly impact their daily lives and ability to perform everyday tasks.⁴ This definition encompasses various physical limitations, including those requiring assistive devices, such as wheelchairs or prosthetics, as well as chronic conditions affecting mobility or dexterity.

Anyway, Islam came with the intention of protecting people, rich and poor, weak and strong, and those unable to care for themselves. It is part of the Maqasid or maqāṣid al-sharī'a, (the principal goals upon which Islamic law stand to protect) that God's law aims to benefit people regardless of their physical or mental state.

“Generally, the Shariah is predicated on the benefits of the individual and that of the community, and its laws are designed so as to protect these benefits and facilitate improvement and perfection of the conditions of human life on earth”.

Another incident related to this is narrated in Ahadiths which is given below

عَنْ مُصْعَبِ بْنِ سَعْدٍ، قَالَ رَأَى سَعْدٌ — رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ — أَنْ لَهُ فَضْلًا عَلَى مَنْ دُونَهُ، فَقَالَ
النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ " هَلْ تَنْصُرُونَ وَتُرْزَقُونَ إِلَّا بِضَعْفَائِكُمْ "

Once Sa`d (bin Abi Waqqas) thought that he was superior to those who were below him in rank. On that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "You gain no victory or livelihood except through (the blessings and invocations of) the poor amongst you."⁵.

3.3 Deaf and Dumb

The terms "deaf" and "dumb" are often considered outdated and offensive, but they have historically referred to individuals with hearing and speech impairments, respectively. A more contemporary and respectful definition is:

Deaf: A person with a hearing impairment who may use sign language or other visual communication methods.

Dumb: A person with a speech impairment, often using alternative methods of communication like writing or gestures.⁶

Of, for, or being a person unable to hear or speak

The word Deaf صَمٌّ mentioned 17 times in Quran in 14 verses.

In Islamic perspective, the child who is deaf and mute, when he reaches the age of puberty, is considered to be accountable and expected to fulfil the obligations of prayer, etc. He added that he may be taught what he needs to know by means of writing or signing, because of the general meaning of the shar’i evidence which indicates that these obligations apply to everyone who reaches the age of puberty and is of sound mind.

He also has to teach him what he does not know by all possible means so that he will understand what Allah requires of him and what Allah has forbidden for him.

We quote as evidence the words of Allah (interpretation of the meaning):

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ⁷

So keep your duty to Allah and fear Him as much as you can.

Therefore; that the accountable person who cannot hear or speak, or who becomes unable to hear or speak, should fear Allah and keep his duty towards Him as much as he can by doing that which is enjoined upon him and abstaining from that which is haram. He should try to learn as much of the religion as possible, by watching, writing and signing, so that he may understand what is required.

3.4 Mentally Retardation

Intellectual disability (ID), once called mental retardation, is characterized by below-average intelligence or mental ability and a lack of skills necessary for day-to-day living. People with intellectual disabilities can and do learn new skills, but they learn them more slowly.

OR

Intellectual disability: A condition characterized by significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviors, covering many everyday social and practical skills.⁸

The society according to Islam is obliged to assess, mentally retardation assist and respect the persons with intellectual disability and give the person an equal life chance.

Islam values the importance of good mental health and emotional wellbeing. The Qur'an can be used as a guide to those suffering from emotional distress and aims to lead people to a meaningful quality of life.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ — رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ — عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ " مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ دَاءً إِلَّا أَنْزَلَ لَهُ شِفَاءً " ⁹

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "There is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment".

Mental Retardation is further categorized into four types defined below:

- **Mild mental retardation** is defined as significantly sub average intellectual ability, which ranges between 50–55 and 70, and concurrent delays in adaptive functioning that present prior to the age of 18.
- **Moderate mental retardation** is defined as significantly sub average intellectual ability, which ranges between 35–40 and 50–55 and concurrent delays in adaptive functioning that present prior to the age of 18.
- **Severe Mental Retardation** is defined by the presence of significantly sub average general intellectual functioning as well as significant limitations in adaptive functioning (adaptive behavior) present prior to the age of 18 years.
- **Profoundly retarded** individuals have IQ scores under 20 to 25. They may be able to develop basic self-care and communication skills with appropriate support and training.

4. Some of the Challenges Faced by Disabled Persons

4.1 Acceptance by the Disabled Themselves

It is the most important part that he/she should accept that he is disable and he/she will have to face all the obstacles and will have to overcome his problems with positive attitude to prove themselves.

4.2 Acceptance by the Parents

Parents will have to accept the disability of their children with braveness. They should specially plan for their grooming and education and to not let them feel down.

4.3 Acceptance by the Friends

If Disabled are part of General Education System, normally classmates do not accept them as their friends. They make them friends to know their challenges and then leave them because of their problems.

4.4 Acceptance by the Teachers

After studying in the special institutes when disables move into general education institutes for higher education in Colleges and Universities, normally they face ignorance. Disabled persons usually find themselves at the receiving ends of violent and disgusting actions.

So, the teachers at the special institutes should be well trained and should not over pamper the disabled ones, so that, they can survive in the society without seeking any sympathy. They should motivate them to feel different but Not Special, in order to make them independent.

4.5 Acceptance by the Society

People with disabilities have limited access to employment prospects, and even if they do find work, they encounter challenges such as reasonable accommodations at work, accessible public transit to and from work, and prejudice and ignorance about their skills at work.

They are sometime compelling to do strikes for their rights.

if they get good job status then other people criticize over them that how they will fulfil their tasks. So, governments should make such schemes that guarantees their jobs and workplace rights.

Here are some ways we can continue to make our world more accepting of people with disabilities:

- View the disability community as a valuable consumer.
- Employee people with disabilities, they are ambitious and want to work.
- Increase disability representation in political settings.
- Provide them scholarships.
- Realize that people with disabilities are humans too

4.6 Acceptance as a Life Partner

Home and marital life is also a need of disabled persons. Most disabled people are desirous of life partners, but this often bring sadness and loneliness to their lives. A

high marriage age or a profound age gap between the spouses would suggest that high levels of inequality were involved in the marriages.

4.7 Economical Matters

Economic matters differ region to region. In European countries, disabled are fully supported and their parents are also helped out to look after their children. Whereas in Pakistani educational institutes, this support is not satisfactory and given only to the students of Special Education Systems.

People with disabilities cannot perform economic and business duties due to mental

and physical disabilities, so the government and individuals have the right to provide them with the necessities of life. Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala says in the Quran in Surah An-Nur in verse 61:

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَنْ
تَأْكُلُوا مِنْ بَيْوتِكُمْ¹⁰

There is no restriction on the blind, or the disabled, or the sick. Nor on yourselves if you eat from your homes.

"Some relatives of the family who are indigent, disabled, paralyzed, insane, blind, some body part amputated, then their maintenance is obligatory on the other healthy members of the family according to the jurisprudence."¹¹

4.8 Religious Matters

It is difficult for deaf and dumb people to gain religious education because they can't hear and see if something is written on the board or someone is teaching them. They can't pronounce Arabic phrases if they can't hear. Therefore, mostly deaf and dumb people are deprived of Islamic Education.

Mentally retarded people are not taught to take care of their cleanliness and purity and they don't know how they should survive.

Physically disabled are somehow able to gain religious education based on their interest level.

Most blind people memorize the Qur'an because their parents think that if they cannot see, they should listen and memorize it. But some parents think that memorization is a big responsibility, so, they do not put this responsibility on their children. Hence, their children are completely deprived of the basic teachings of the Qur'an and religion.

4.9 Educational Matters

Disabled people have a right to be educated and their abilities should not be underestimated. This right is illustrated clearly in the Qur'an, and this event is documented in the following verses:

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى (1)، أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَى (2)، وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهُ يَزَكَّى (3)¹²

He (the Prophet) frowned and turned his face (1) because the blind man came to him! (2) What could tell you (O prophet about the prospects of the blind man?)

May be, (if you had attended him properly,) he would have attained purity, (3)

As a result of Allah's warning, the Prophet was more hospitable to the blind man whenever he encountered him. The Prophet even delegated the administration of Madinah, Saudi Arabia's second holiest city, twice to the blind man.

Islamic history is replete with stories of people who, despite having a disability, held very high positions and had a prominent place in society.

Anyway, Deaf and dumb people are taught in sign language through the selected signs.

The advantage for them in Pakistan is that their syllabus is very brief.

Due to lack of comprehensive knowledge, most of the disabled persons do not achieve any leading success.

It is because they are unable to understand the terminologies, beyond the basic education, and they received at their institutes.

People with Physical disabilities receive comparatively better treatment than the blind people, and sometimes they are more successful than blind people because they can see and hear and easily understand. But one of the biggest difficulties for them is that they need the help of others to get around.

With a little help and support, they can easily achieve success.

Wheelchair users are often left behind because they cannot carry a wheelchair anywhere where one can walk.

There are three ways for totally blind people to study

1. Braille
2. Recordings
3. Jaws Screen reading software

Some apps for totally blind individuals to study and access information are given below:

- Voice Over (iOS) and Talk Back (Android): Built-in screen readers that read aloud text on smartphones.¹³
- Braille Screen Input (iOS): Allows braille typing on smartphones.¹⁴
- KNFB Reader (iOS and Android): Scans and reads aloud printed text.¹⁵
- Book share (iOS and Android): Accessible e-book library with text-to-speech functionality.
- Braille Tutor (iOS): Teaches braille reading and writing skills.

Braille books are provided to visually impaired people up to degree level in some Government institutions.

Ironically, before the creation of the Braille texts, the blind are dependent entirely on the senses of ear.

If Braille books do not exist, then the recording system is used to teach the children but it is not much better because most of the children do not understand everything in the recordings so they face difficulty.

For example, in Saudi Arabia and other countries like Kuwait, people with visual impairments are given the Qur'an in Braille. The Qur'an and many other Islamic literature are available in audio format.

As another example of people's awareness and understanding, Egypt's University of al-Azhar became the first to admit blind students to continue their studies. The actions of this university have a favorable impact on the psychology of people with impairments. As a result, individuals gain confidence knowing that they will not face discrimination.

I will say Technology is not curse because its appropriate use helps to overcome many problems faced by the disabled persons.

Although totally blind are also given the knowledge of computer usage. But certain software is helpful to some extent only.

For example, Jaws cannot read every type of pdfs and images. It's difficult for this software to access. The students in the discipline of Islamiyah, and particularly those who's medium of learning is Urdu mostly face these issues.

Window Eye software is helpful in these situations because it zooms the paragraph and makes it easy to read.

5. Famous disabled persons in the Our Society

Muhammad Talha Khakwani was my university classmate who was blind but now he is doing his MPhil Islamiyat from Gomal University Dera Ismail Khan along with being a Hafiz-e-Quran.

Muniba Mazari Baloch known as the Iron Lady of Pakistan She is disabling due to injuries sustained in a car accident at the age of 21.

Pakistan's most popular religious figure Allama Khadim Hussain Rizvi became disabled in car accident.

Miss Saima Saleem CSS is also visually impaired but is working as the Assistant Commissioner.

6. Steps Towards the solutions of these Issues

- The first step in solving all these things is for the parents to educate their disabled children in the same way as you teach your normal children.
- Also, they should train their children more so that they can face the problems of life bravely.
- There should be training programs for parents of disabled children.

- In Pakistan, there are training programs for teachers at the provincial and national levels. This system should be further updated so that these children should feel normal instead of Special.
- Awareness programs should be conducted for their motivation so that they can also reach the high success level.
- Friends should be of helping nature and sincere to help them.
- Family attitude is most important part for any disabled. Siblings should be much supportive because they can act like the backbone of their success.
- A sincere spouse and life partner should be there to support them at every stage of life.
- In our society disabled people are still not acceptable for normal people so they marry each other (disable to disable) therefore they always depend on each other and can't live a happy and independent life. This problem should be resolved.

It might be argued that the Islamic religion defends the rights of persons with disabilities and that communities have a responsibility to protect the vulnerable. According to Islam, all people must accept one another regardless of nationality, gender, or disability, because everyone is equal and has the same duty to God.

7. Conclusion

The Islamic religion instills in every one of its adherents the finest ideals, values, and morality. Prophet Muhammad was the first advocate for individuals with disabilities, calling for the inclusion of all people, rich or poor, elderly or young, literate or illiterate, normal or disabled, as members of the community and valuing their unique characteristics. As a leader, Prophet Muhammad instilled in his followers the value of recognizing and meeting the needs of those with disabilities. He admired their strengths, talents, and leadership abilities.

In Islam, people with impairments can become renowned scholars and leaders. Their leadership responsibilities are usually helpful to their communities, as their cultures recognize how much their contributions have impacted people's lives. The issue of handicap, as we understand it today, is not specifically addressed in the Quran or the prophet's Sunnah/Tradition, peace be upon him. Islam regards disability as ethically neutral. It is considered neither a blessing nor a curse. Clearly, disability is regarded as a natural element of the human condition. It is simply a reality of life that the current society must deal with effectively. Humans with disabilities are humans, and they want to be treated with the same respect and decency as people without disabilities. They do not have any unique abilities or characteristics. They are no more or less brave or amazing than people without disabilities. People with impairments are

appreciative for the abilities that Allah (swt.) has bestowed upon them. As a result, people with disabilities frequently make the best use of their strengths.

In general, disabled persons confront the challenge of resuming their life with patience, fortitude, and courage. Many of them do this with such flair that they no longer consider themselves "different." May God help them through their difficulty and allow others of us to be a support system for them.

And this test is not just a test for a disabled, it is also a test for society that How it deals with its disabled population, to get the best from them. Everyone should understand that service of Mankind is the Service of God.

For over fourteen centuries, Islam has emphasized the importance of protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, especially the blind. This call was not only for those with impairments, but for people with illnesses in general. Today, any person with an illness or disability knows that his or her rights are protected under the name of Islam.

We pray to ALLAH Almighty to guide us all and grant us success in our deeds. Aameen.

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