

DISABILITY AND ISLAMIC SPIRITUAL PRACTISE: A STUDY OF MUSLIM PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVITIES FOR THE DISABLED IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Indeed, there are links between Islam, philanthropy and disability. This is because aids and social support are core to religion. However, there is the problem of the extent to which Muslims with disabilities (MWDs) have received help in carrying out their spiritual and social activities in Nigeria. Previous studies have shown that many of them face stigma, discrimination, violence, and lack of access to healthcare, housing and education. The present study assesses the amount of support Muslim individuals and organizations in Nigeria give to Muslims with disabilities (MWDs). Through descriptive and historical approaches, among the contributions of the present work to the discourse is its attempt to present the risk often encountered by Muslims with disabilities due to increased exposure and vulnerability to poverty. This paper suggests that the concepts of *Zakat*, *Sadaqah*, and *Waqf* should be applied strategically by the Muslim communities to address the welfare of the disabled in the country. It also recommends that philanthropic responsibilities toward the Muslim disabled community should not be haphazard or half-hearted because Islam enjoins that Muslims should fulfill their duties as helpers and should do so to the best of their abilities.

Keywords: Islam; philanthropy; disability; Muslim with disabilities (MWDs); Nigeria.

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Introduction

Aids and social support are at the core of Islamic spiritual practice. That is why the Qur'an stresses in various verses (e.g., Suratul Baqarah verse 177; Suratul Baqarah verse 215; Suratul Nisa verse 36; Suratul Taubah verse 71; Suratul Fath verse 29; Suratul Hashr verse 9) the concept of social support. The Qur'an explains why, for whom, and why Muslims should establish philanthropic activities in communities. Moreover, worship in Islam is incomplete without the deeds of helping one another. In other words, after having faith in Allah, angels, the Prophets, the Books, and the Last Day, a Muslim is expected to translate that faith into actions of service to mankind. By involving in philanthropic activities within communities, every Muslim can directly give the required support based on Islamic teachings.

Nigeria has about 25 million people living with at least one disability. Around 3.6 million of these have significant difficulties in functioning. Owing to the multi-religious nature of the country, a fraction of people living with disabilities are Muslims. Just like in many countries, people with disabilities (PWDs) have been marginalized either because of limited resources or the carefree attitude of people to those living with disabilities. In addition, Muslims living in countries where there are social, economic and political instabilities have been shown to have significantly higher rates of disability.²

Philanthropy entails charitable giving to worthy causes on a large scale. It is an effort taken by individuals or organizations based on an altruistic desire to improve the welfare of people. This can be done by giving a monetary gift or donation to a cause one believes in. Individuals can also give their time serving, tutoring, or engaging in any volunteer activity to improve lives. Although charity is similar to philanthropy in providing care, philanthropy has more to do with the "strategic process of giving that seeks to identify the root causes of systemic issues and make the world a

² Izaida Ibrahim and Muhammad Fahmi Ismail, "Muslims with Disabilities: Psychosocial Reforms from an Islamic Perspective," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 22, no. 1 (2018): 1–14; Numan Gharaibeh, "Disability in Arab Societies Is a Challenging Subject for Several Reasons," in *Disabilities: Insights from across Fields and around the World*. Vols. 1–3, ed. C. A. Marshall et al. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009), 63–79.

better place by tackling societal problems at their roots”.³ Among Nigerians are Muslims who engage in various philanthropic activities. These activities reflect Islamic spiritual values and norms and how Muslims are expected to contribute to the community.⁴ However, many Nigerian Muslims with disabilities (MWDs) are in poverty due to insufficient, unsustainable means of income and lack of access to Islamic charitable funds that can be used to empower Nigerian MWDs.

This study aims to critically present Islam's teachings in addressing the plight of MWDs in Nigeria. It will examine the issue of Muslim philanthropy in Nigeria but within the context of Islam and disability. The study focused on Islam, Nigeria, philanthropy, Muslims, and Islamic spiritual culture through a descriptive and historical approach. The study shall, therefore, proceed under the following headings: Disability in Nigeria, Muslim philanthropic activities in Nigeria, Islam and disability, Muslim charitable activities for the disabled in Nigeria, and Conclusion.

Islam and Disability

Islam has a positive attitude towards people living with disabilities. The Qur'an and Hadith not only talk about the existence of disabilities as part of human nature but also provide guidelines for caring for disabled people.⁵ The Qur'an, for instance, states: “No blame is there on the blind, nor is there blame on the lame, nor on one ill (if he joins not the war): But he that obeys Allah and His Messenger,- (Allah) will admit him to Gardens beneath which rivers flow; and he who turns back, (Allah) will punish him with a grievous penalty” (Suratul Fath verse 17). In the Hadith, it is reported that the Prophet said: “The example of the believers, in their mutual love and mercy, is like the example of a body, if one part feels pain, then all of the body suffers in sleeplessness and

³ CFGFW, “Charity vs Philanthropy?,” Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne, 2018, <https://cfgfw.org/blogs/2095/>.

⁴ Gary A Tobin, *The Transition of Communal Values and Behavior in Jewish Philanthropy* (Institute for Jewish Community Research, 2001).

⁵ Hiam Al-Aoufi, Nawaf Al-Zyoud, and Norbayah Shahminan, “Islam and the Cultural Conceptualisation of Disability,” *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 2012, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673843.2011.649565>.

fever” (Bukhari). The Prophet also said: “The believer to the believer is like a solid building, one part supporting the other” (Bukhari).

Indeed, mercy is one of the significant guiding Islamic principles in supporting people with disabilities (PWDs). Mercy in Islam encompasses everything in this world and the hereafter, humanity, animals, birds, and the surrounding habitats. Allah described Himself with mercy and His prophets and righteous Muslims with it. The Qur’an says: “And My mercy encompasses everything” (Suratul-A'raf verse 157). Also, “Muhammad [SAW] is the Messenger of Allah and those who are with him are severe against the disbelievers and merciful to one another” (Suratul Fath verse 29). Allah made his sending forth of the Prophet as a mercy to all of creation, as the Qur’an says: “And We have not sent you (O Muhammad [SAW]) except as a mercy to the worlds” (Suratul-Anbiya' verse 107). Therefore, caring for and protecting the old, frail, disabled, or weak in general is a virtue encouraged in Islam. The weaker and poorer a human being is, the more care is required from Muslims. Moreover, there is no dichotomy between belief and works in Islam. Rather, faith and works complement each other and are intertwined. The person who claims to believe—and does not show it with works—is regarded as a hypocrite. If one truly loves God, one is expected to show it in obedience to God’s Commandments. Such a person would know that doing good deeds means earning God’s pleasure. He would strive through his works to seek the Pleasure of God. The Qur’an says: “Whoever desires honor [through power] - then to Allah belongs all honor. To Him ascends good speech, and righteous work raises it. But they who plot evil deeds will have a severe punishment, and the plotting of those - it will perish” (Suratul-Fatir verse 10).

Among the ways the Qur’an draws attention to the treatment of the weak can be found in Suratul ‘Abasa verses 1-16. According to the historical context in which the verses were revealed, there was a day when Prophet Muhammad (SAW) met notable Quraish leaders, among whom were Utbah ibn Rabbiah and his brother Shaybah, Amr ibn Hisham (also known as Abu Jahl), Umayyah ibn Khalaf and Walid ibn Mughirah. The Prophet had begun talking, negotiating, and telling them about Islam. He was pretty enthusiastic that they would respond positively to the message or at least stop the persecution of his companions. While engaged with these people, Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum, a blind companion of the Prophet who was always eager to learn the

Qur'an, came up and asked him to read a verse from the Qur'an. He asked the Prophet to teach him what God had taught him. However, the Prophet frowned and turned away from him (the action of the Prophet is where the chapter got its name). He turned his attention instead to the personalities of Quraysh in front of him because of his hope that they would bring greatness to Islam and strengthen his mission by their acceptance of Islam. Not long after the Prophet left their company, he suddenly felt partially blinded and his head began to throb violently. At this point, the first sixteen verses of Surah Abasa were revealed, rebuking the noble Prophet on account of Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum.⁶ According to Bazna & Hatab,⁷ they observe that:

“...these verses indicated that people with disabilities are to be treated with full regard and to have the same subject-to-subject relations that are granted to the non-disabled. A deeper analysis, however, revealed even more. Considering the timing of this incident (at a very early stage of the Prophet's mission) and Muhammad's apparent keenness to gain followers among the wealthy and influential members of society, the verses indicate that the value of a sincere seeker of God, even though weak and/or disabled, is more than that of one who is heedless of God, no matter how wealthy or powerful (p. 13).

It is essential to state that in rebuking the Prophet on account of his behavior toward Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum, the Qur'an does not concentrate so much on his disability of blindness. Instead, the focus was on the Prophet's negligence of someone who came to him to learn. This also shows that he is not being admonished for his insensitivity towards a physically challenged person.⁸ Moreover, from what is known about the Prophet, he did not cease to be kind to Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum. He often asks about his affairs and needs and takes him into his council whenever he is approached. Thus, the Prophet's behavior toward disabled people is an

⁶ Abdul Wahid Hamid, *Companions of the Prophet, Volume 2* (Muslim Ed. and Literary Services, 1995).

⁷ Maysaa S. Bazna, and Tarek A. Hatab. “Disability in the Qur'an: The Islamic Alternative to Defining, Viewing, and Relating to Disability.” *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 9, no. 1 (2005): 5–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1300/J095v09n01>.

⁸ Saulat Pervez, “Disability in Islam: The Treatment of Handicapped People in Islam,” www.whyislam.org, 2014, <https://www.whyislam.org/social-issues/disability-in-islam/>.

example of excellence for all Muslims. It is reported that apart from treating Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum with respect and humility, the Prophet designated him as the leader of Madinah many times in his absence. This shows that as far as the Prophet was concerned, Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum's blindness was not a hindrance to his ability to carry out his duties. In addition, the Prophet did not allow the disabilities of his companions to stand in their way of leading everyday lives despite being sensitive to their particular circumstances. In other words, he was more interested in their inner beauty and level of God-consciousness (*taqwa*), just as he treated the rest of his companions.⁹

A large and growing body of literature has investigated Islam and disability,¹⁰ for instance, investigated early and modern sources of Islamic law. It examined their viewpoints and attitudes towards treating disabilities. It discovered two main methods of treating disabilities. The first method is physical medicine, which uses medicines and drugs as treatment. The second method is termed spiritual medicine, which uses specific religious deeds or formulae (e.g., texts from the Quran and words ascribed to the Prophet of Islam). Ghaly presented a detailed overview of these two methods within Islamic law as well as the attitudes of Muslim jurists towards these two methods. The study showed how the treatments developed within each method help prevent or cure disability.

Al-Aoufi et al., on their part, provided an analytical perspective of Islamic philosophy on disability by examining some texts from the Qur'an and Sunnah to differentiate between the cultural practices of Muslim communities and Islamic perspectives.¹¹ They observed that the fact that Muslims share the same beliefs and principles does not affect their attitudes and understanding regarding certain concepts and reactions to individuals with disabilities. The study further noted that responses to individuals with disabilities may vary depending on the intensity of faith, socio-economic status, level of education, awareness, and cultural context. The study concluded that

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Mohammed M. Ghaly, "Physical and Spiritual Treatment of Disability in Islam: Perspectives of Early and Modern Jurists," *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health*, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15228960802160647>.

¹¹ Al-Aoufi, Al-Zyoud, and Shahminan, "Islam and the Cultural Conceptualisation of Disability."

cultural perspectives are crucial in framing attitudes towards disadvantaged people in Muslim communities.

Bazna & Hatab demonstrated a firsthand understanding of the Islamic position and attitude toward disability by examining the Qur'an and the Hadith. They search for references to terms such as blind, mute, deaf, lame, weak, orphan, destitute/needy, and the wayfarer. The study finds that the concept of disability, in the conventional sense, is not found in the Qur'an. What the Qur'an concentrates on is the idea of disadvantage that is created by society and imposed on individuals with disabilities who might not possess the social, economic, or physical attributes that people happen to value at a particular time and place. They concluded that Islam places the responsibility of rectifying this discrimination on the shoulders of society through various verses in the Qur'an that encourage Muslims to recognize the plight of the disadvantaged and to improve their condition and status.¹² A similar study by Morad et al.¹³ also showed how Islam makes a distinction between a person with an intellectual disability and a mental disorder. The study observed that Islam encourages society to assess, assist, and respect the person with an intellectual disability and give the person an equal life chance. That is why the Prophet places so much importance on child welfare, education, well-being, and support of children, even those other than ones. The Qur'an also states, "and in their wealth, there is acknowledged right for the needy and the destitute" (Suratul-Dhariyat verse 19). The study, therefore, presented how the Islamic tradition deals with and looks upon persons with intellectual disabilities and concluded that the best therapy in Islam is the one directed to enhance the health of a person, psyche and spirit, to fight illness.

Turmusani¹⁴ argues the position of disabled women in many cultures remains one of the most under-researched areas within the discourses on disability. Turmusani examines disabled women in Islam and Muslim culture through textual analysis. It contends that disabled women in

¹² Bazna and Hatab, "Disability in the Qur'an: The Islamic Alternative to Defining, Viewing, and Relating to Disability."

¹³ Mohammed Morad, Yusuf Nasri, and Joav Merrick, "Islam and the Person with Intellectual Disability," *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health*, 2001, https://doi.org/10.1300/J095v05n02_05.

¹⁴ Majid Turmusani, "Disabled Women in Islam," *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health* 5, no. 2 (2001): 73–85, <https://doi.org/10.1300/J095v05n02>.

Islam have a lowly position in society due to historical perception related to both the inferior position of women in Islam as well as the lowly position of disabled people in society in general. The study proposes that more emphasis should be placed on analyzing disabled women within their remit and on broader contextual issues regarding cultures, religions, and economies.

Ibrahim and Ismail¹⁵ also observe how negative perceptions of disabled people can cause them to be excluded and deprived of the right to live a whole life. They noted that MWDs live in a variety of different circumstances, whether in predominantly Muslim countries on low or average incomes or as minority citizens, immigrants, or refugees in other countries. However, because current psychosocial strategies have been ineffective in addressing these challenges, they recommend a theoretical construct of disability from an Islamic perspective based on the authentic teachings of the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the stories of the Sahabi as a strategy for psychosocial reform, based on the Qur'an, Sunnah and Islamic history.

Hayhoe¹⁶ examines attitudes toward disability and disabled people by Muslims and Christians in the Middle East and North Africa, Europe, and the Americas, respectively. The study finds that Islam and Christianity have much in common and are a force for good in promoting and developing disability sense of belonging by both Muslims and Christians. A similar comparative religious scrutiny of study by Miles¹⁷ showed popular notions associated with disabilities in Eastern religions through historical data, viewpoints and attitudes as global measures for understanding, remediating, and accommodating disability in the same line of thought traces religious scriptural conceptualization and praxis of disability through pre-monotheistic Hellenic, Judeo-Christian, Islamic, and Eastern religious contexts. It argues that understanding historical scriptural conceptualizations of disability is essential in understanding contemporary trends in

¹⁵ Ibrahim and Ismail, "Muslims with Disabilities: Psychosocial Reforms from an Islamic Perspective."

¹⁶ Simon Hayhoe, "Towards a Greater Dialogue on Disability between Muslims and Christians," *Journal of Disability and Religion*, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23312521.2014.935104>.

¹⁷ M. Miles, "Disability in an Eastern Religious Context: Historical Perspectives," *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health*, 2002, https://doi.org/10.1300/J095v06n02_08; M. Miles, "Some Historical Texts on Disability in the Classical Muslim World," *Journal of Religion, Disability and Health*, 2002, https://doi.org/10.1300/J095v06n02_09.

international advances that affect PWDs.¹⁸ Through conceptual and doctrinal analysis, Khairil Azmin Mokhtar and Ikmal Hisham Md Tah compared the conventional human rights-based and Shariah approaches towards PWDs.¹⁹ They show many similarities between traditional human rights and the Shariah-based approach to care and support for PWDs regarding the right to live and the right to have a noble livelihood, equal opportunity to progress and develop their potential and not to be discriminated against unjustly.

The preceding illustrates various outlooks on Islam and disability in the past and contemporary times. The above points show how writers have examined the concept of disability within the ambit of religion, specifically Islam. The idea of disability in Islam has a lot to do with living a whole life. It can also be linked to the welfare of the weak in society. This is why philanthropic gestures are enjoined on Muslims when it comes to issues connected to PWDs. These will be elaborated upon in the subsequent sections of the present study.

People with Disabilities in Nigeria

The actual number of PWDs in Nigeria is unknown. However, the recently quoted figure is 27 million. The most common types of disabilities in the country are visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment, intellectual impairment, and communication impairment.²⁰ Nigeria is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD). Also, the country is part of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). The two Charters, although they did not make direct reference to PWDs, it, however, note the constitutional, administrative, and judicial measures needed to be adopted for the protection of the family and

¹⁸ Matthew J Schuelka, "A Faith in Humanness: Disability, Religion and Development," *Disability & Society* 28, no. 4 (2013): 500–513.

¹⁹ Khairil Azmin Mokhtar and Ikmal Hisham Md Tah, "United Nation Convention and Islamic Approach on the Right of Persons with Disabilities: A Comparison," *ULUL ALBAB Jurnal Studi Islam* 18, no. 1 (2017): 21–42, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v18i1.4196>

²⁰ Ngozi C Umeh and Romola Adeola, "Nigeria," *African Disability Rights Yearbook*, 2013, <http://www.adry.up.ac.za/index.php/2013-1-section-b-country-reports/nigeria>.

rights of women, children, older people, and people with disabilities to the extent that government directs its policies towards ensuring that suitable and adequate shelter, food and welfare of the disabled and other citizens are provided. The ACHPR was incorporated into Nigerian legislation through the Amended 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in chapters II and IV, which made provisions for socio-economic, civil, and political rights, respectively.

In addition, the Amended 1999 Constitution of Nigeria contains some provisions that indirectly address disability. These include Section 42(2), which prohibits discrimination based on a person's birth circumstances, and Sections 14, 16(1), and 17, which guarantee the right to equality and fundamental rights for all. Before this, the Nigerians with Disability Decree passed by the military government in 1993 directly addressed disability by providing for the rights and social welfare of PWDs. Also, legislation can be found in some states, such as Lagos and Edo.²¹ For instance, Lagos State Special People's Law 2011 established the Office of Disability Affairs. The functions of the Office, as stated in the Law, include:

The issuance of guidelines for the education, social development and welfare of persons living with disability; investigation, prosecution and sanctioning in appropriate cases of the violation of any of the provisions of the law subject to an individual's right to seek redress in court; re-orientation and education of the public on the right attitude towards persons living with disabilities; issuance of directives and guidelines on all manner of disabilities, preventive or curative exercises; actualising the enjoyment of all rights in the law by persons living with disabilities; keeping and updating a register and database of persons living with disabilities; and an advocacy and enlightenment campaign drive targeted at members of the public on ways to empathise with persons living with disabilities.

The law also establishes a Disability Fund, which shall be administered by the office and to which individuals, corporate bodies, and the government

²¹ Ibid.

may contribute. As settled in the law, the purpose of the Fund is to advance the cause of persons living with disabilities in the state.²²

Nigeria has policies integrating PWDs in governance by providing equal opportunity to contest elective positions, access to elections, and the ability to vote. Also, the National Social Welfare Policy allows PWDs, orphans, vulnerable children, and older people in the country to access social welfare packages and avoid the menace of street begging. Besides, the Nigerian National Policy on Education provides inclusive education services for children and young persons with special needs.

Among the organizations that fight for the rights of PWDs in Nigeria are The Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) and The Association of Comprehensive Empowerment of Nigerians with Disabilities (ASCEND). They have also partnered with human rights organizations such as Action Aid Nigeria, Coalition for Change and PACT Nigeria to call for integrating PWDs into the economic, social, and political setting.²³ Furthermore, apart from addressing human rights concerns generally in the country, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) attends explicitly to issues of the rights of PWDs. It surveys facilities in Nigerian tertiary institutions to help PWDs enjoy inclusive education. In addition, the NHRC organizes workshops for institutions and advocacy visits to institutions to improve access to PWDs.²⁴

Other PWD organizations are the Association of Deaf Muslims in Nigeria, The Leprosy Mission, The Spinal Cord Injury Association of Nigeria, Deaf Women in Nigeria, The Accidents Victim Support Association, Centre for Citizens with Disabilities, The Nigerian National Association of the Deaf, Resource Centre for Advocacy on Disability, Persons with Disabilities Action Network, Leonard Cheshire Disability, National Handicap Carers Association of Nigeria, Christian Blind Mission, Inclusion International, among others. Many of these organizations have been involved in the advocacy for the rights of disability issues in Nigeria. They also help the

²² Ibid, 281–82.

²³ R Lang and L Upham, “Scoping Study: Disability Issues in Nigeria” (United Kingdom: DFID, 2008).

²⁴ Umeh and Adeola, “Nigeria.”

government and private philanthropists establish programs for people with disabilities. Among the challenges commonly faced by these organizations are a lack of political will, inadequate national disability legislation, and the non-existence of administrative structures for effective implementation. To address some of these challenges, disability bills have been proposed in the National and State Assemblies.²⁵ Also, there have been calls for capacity building and support in terms of training and funding of schools and, more importantly, the need to move away from the welfare-based approach to disability to the rights-based approach in terms of social adaptation, inclusion, and empowerment.²⁶ Other issues include negative social attitudes and perceptions of

²⁵ Ibrahim Imam and M A Abdulraheem-Mustapha, "Rights of People with Disability in Nigeria: Attitude and Commitment," *African Journal of International and Comparative Law* 24, no. 3 (2016): 439–59; Umeh and Adeola, "Nigeria"; Amarachi Nasa-Okolie, "Nigeria Needs to Pay More Attention to Its Citizens with Disabilities," *Stears Business*, 2019, <https://www.stearsng.com/article/nigeria-needs-to-pay-more-attention-to-its-disabled-citizens>.

²⁶ Sally D. Hartley and Sheila L. Wirz, "Development of a 'communication Disability Model' and Its Implication on Service Delivery in Low-Income Countries," *Social Science and Medicine*, 2002, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536\(01\)00136-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536(01)00136-8); C. Jonah Eleweke, "A Review of the Challenges of Achieving the Goals in the African Plan of Action for People with Disabilities in Nigeria," *Disability and Society*, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2012.710009>; Lang and Upah, "Scoping Study: Disability Issues in Nigeria"; Tom Shakespeare, "The Social Model of Disability," *The Disability Studies Reader* 2 (2006): 197–204.

PWDs,²⁷ lack of access to public transport, education,²⁸ vocational training,²⁹ health care,³⁰ access to employment,³¹ access to recreation and sports and access to justice,³² especially for women and children with disabilities.³³

²⁷ Olusola John Ogundola, "Framing Disability : A Content Analysis of Newspapers in Nigeria," *SURFACE Media Studies - Theses S.I.*, 2013; Edwin Eticyibo and Odirin Omiegbe, "Religion, Culture, and Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria," *African Journal of Disability*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v5i1.192>; Nasa-Okolie, "Nigeria Needs to Pay More Attention to Its Citizens with Disabilities."

²⁸ N. E. Groce, A. K. Yousafzai, and F. van der Maas, "HIV/AIDS and Disability: Differences in HIV/AIDS Knowledge between Deaf and Hearing People in Nigeria," *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 2007, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638280600834567>; Adeniyi O. Olaleye et al., "Sexual Behaviours and Reproductive Health Knowledge among In-School Young People with Disabilities in Ibadan, Nigeria," *Health Education*, 2007, <https://doi.org/10.1108/09654280710731566>; Vincent Onyeacholam Ekwelem, "Library Services to Disabled Students in the Digital Era: Challenges for Outcome Assessment," *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 2013; Abubakar Ahmed, Zakaria Al Cheikh Mahmoud Awad, and Naziaty Mohd Yaacob, "The Response of Accessibility Infrastructures for PWD to National Disability Policies in Higher Institutions of Developing Countries: Case Study of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur," *Journal of Surveying, Construction & Property*, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.22452/jscpv/vol5no1.1>; Yetunde C. Adeniyi and Olayinka O. Omigbodun, "Effect of a Classroom-Based Intervention on the Social Skills of Pupils with Intellectual Disability in Southwest Nigeria," *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-016-0118-3>; Maruff Akinwale PhD Oladejo and Sofiyat Abimbola Oladejo, "Educating Students with Disabilities in Nigeria: Some Challenges and Policy Implications," *European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Vol*, 2011.

²⁹ Eunice B. Alade, "Community-Based Vocational Rehabilitation (CBVR) for People with Disabilities: Experiences from a Pilot Project in Nigeria," *British Journal of Special Education*, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0952-3383.2004.00345.x>.

³⁰ Patrick Emeka Okonji and Darlinton Chukwunalu Ogwezzy, "Awareness and Barriers to Adoption of Assistive Technologies among Visually Impaired People in Nigeria," *Assistive Technology*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10400435.2017.1421594>; Jacob Udeme Samuel, "Utilization of Community Based Rehabilitation for Persons' with Disabilities (PWD) in Nigeria: The Way Forward," *European Scientific Journal*, 2015; Theresa B. Abang, "Disablement, Disability and the Nigerian Society," *Disability, Handicap & Society*, 1988, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02674648866780061>.

³¹ Jonah Eleweke and Gabriel Soje, "Challenges of Empowering People with Disabilities in Nigeria for National Development," *Journal of Special Education and Rehabilitation*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.19057/jser.2016.14>.

³² Natalie Smith, "The Face of Disability in Nigeria: A Disability Survey in Kogi and Niger States," *Asia Pacific Disability Rehabilitation Journal*, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.5463/DCID.v22i1.11>; Lateef Omotosho Adegboyega, Falilat Anike Okesina, and Olumayowa Ayorinde Jacob, "Family Relationship and Bullying Behaviour among

Muslim Philanthropic Activities in Nigeria

Muslims in Nigeria engage in various philanthropic activities. Among the philanthropic activities found within the Muslim community in the country are donations of money, buildings, and equipment. There are also instances of donation by kind in terms of volunteering time and effort. Muslim philanthropic activities are often at their zenith during Ramadan. They donate money to charities and volunteer to assist the less privileged and needy families. Also, because Ramadan is a fasting period, food-related support is often seen during the period in many Muslim communities.

It is pertinent to state that Muslims' contributions to the larger Nigerian society go beyond the elimination of the suffering caused by social problems. Instead, Muslim philanthropic activities in Nigeria also encompass attempts to eliminate social issues. Some of the top Muslim philanthropists in Nigeria, both dead and living, are (not in any particular order) Chief Mohammed Shitta-Bey (1824-1895), Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola (1937-1998), Aliko Dangote, General T.Y. Danjuma, Alhaji Abdulwahab Iyanda Folawiyo (1928-2008), Alhaji Abdulazeez Arisekola Alao (1945-2014), Alhaji Isiyaku Rabi'u (1925-2018), Alhaji Abdulraheem Oladimeji, Mallam Yusuf Olaolu Ali (SAN) and Dr. Wale Babalakin (SAN) to mention just but a few.

Many of their efforts are based on an altruistic motive to improve the welfare of the Nigerian citizenry. Some individuals mentioned above also established foundations to facilitate their philanthropic efforts. These foundations include the TY Danjuma Foundation, Abdul Raheem Oladimeji Islamic Foundation (AROIF), Aliko Dangote Foundation, and Yusuf Olaolu Ali Foundation. Other Muslim philanthropic organizations are the Muslim Oasis Health Care Foundation, Islamic Aids and Relief Foundation of Nigeria, Islamic Welfare Foundation (IWF), Federation of Muslim Women's Association in Nigeria (FOMWAN), Ansar-ud-Deen Society of

Students with Disabilities in Ogbomoso, Nigeria," *International Journal of Instruction*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2017.10316a>.

³³ Abiola Olaleye et al., "Attitudes of Students towards Peers with Disability in an Inclusive School in Nigeria," *Asia Pacific Disability Rehabilitation Journal*, 2012, <https://doi.org/10.5463/DCID.v23i3.136>; Olajide O Agunloye et al., "Policy and Practice of Special Education: Lessons and Implications for Education Administration from Two Countries," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2011.

Nigeria, etc. In sum, apart from promoting the welfare of others through generous donations, these organizations and individuals have also provided support with experience, time, talent, and skills to help others and create a better Nigeria.

Muslim Philanthropic Activities for People with Disabilities in Nigeria

Disability can be addressed in several ways, as mentioned in the earlier sections. For example, one of the respondents in the present study stated that “disability is not in people; it is more of a relationship between a person and the environment; change the environment, and you eliminate disabilities.”³⁴ Hence, in Nigeria, the type of people and attitudes of Muslims to PWDs varies.

In response to the extent or type of support MWDs receive from Muslim philanthropic individuals and organizations, respondents mentioned financial assistance for annual dawah camps, economic aid to obtain admission forms for tertiary institutions and part payment of school fees. They also pointed out that some Muslim philanthropists extend their *Zakah* and *Sadaqah* donations toward them. Among the Muslim organizations in Nigeria that have been helping in this instance are Islamic Education Trust (IET) Minna, Women in Daawah, Muslim Students’ Society of Nigeria (MSSN), Muslim Sisters Organisation (MSO), Ansarul Islam, Islamic Welfare Foundation (IWF), Jama’atu Nasril Islam (JNI), Council of Muslim Organizations (CMO), Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) and The Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN). Personalities mentioned by respondents for their support include Justice Abdulkadir Orire, Dr. Y.K. Jumah, Professor Ishaq O. Oloyede, Professor A.Y. Abdulkareem, Professor S.O. Oba, Hajiya Muslimat Kamaldeen, Hajiya Halimot Yusuf, Lawyer Yusuf O. Alli, Dr. Abubakar Ali-Agan, Justice Ahmed Lemu and Alhaji Mudi Gold. Those who have helped before their demise include Dr. Abdullateef Adegbite, Sheikh Muhammad Kamaldeen, Hajiya Aisha Lemu, Alhaji Abdullah Jimba, the immediate past Walin Ilorin and Alhaji Mahmood Akanbi Oniyangi. Some of these personalities used their connections to help link MWDs to various top-ranking officials as well as institutions in the country; they established a unit for pupils with disabilities in their schools, assisted in the Islamic training of MWDs, mentored

³⁴ S. S. Dagbo, personal communication, July 28, 2020.

and advised on self-responsibility and contribution to the society, and provided scholarship up to the University level. Another area of support includes ensuring MWDs are not left out of the government agenda and social inclusion in the government's policies.³⁵

Respondents also mentioned the ineffectiveness of Muslim philanthropic activities for MWDs because no single Foundation or institution focuses on MWDs in terms of education funds, empowerment, and welfare projects. Also, most support embarked on by Muslim philanthropists and organizations is often charity-based instead of human rights or social model-based 21st-century global standard of leave-no-one-behind or disability inclusion development. Most Muslim philanthropic activities are for the poor and less privileged, not for MWDs per se. However, some MWDs who see themselves as members of the less privileged join and participate in organized activities or support programs.³⁶ Other challenges faced by MWDs in the country are the attitude of some Muslims to MWDs in terms of lack of recognition of the intellectual capacity of MWDs, and lack of awareness among Muslims of the disability lens of disability inclusion. Also, many Muslim-majority cities in the country do not have disability-friendly *masjid* and religious institutions (e.g., Friday *khutbah* with sign language interpreters, a ramp for wheelchair users, etc.). Muslim private schools do not often mainstream Muslim children with disabilities. There are also issues of lack of religious freedom in some of the schools established by the government for PWDs, especially in the southern States of the country.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper assessed the position of Islam on disability. It was found that despite the efforts of Muslim philanthropists and organizations to assist MWDs, there is still a need for better and more effective ways of addressing the challenges faced by MWDs. The paper traced Muslim philanthropic activities in Nigeria and explained the type of support that Muslim philanthropists and organizations often render to MWDs. As a result of these philanthropic engagements, the paper showed areas that need improvements. It also demonstrated that essential personalities in Muslim

³⁵ S. A. Ujah, personal communication, July 29, 2020.

³⁶ L. O. Agbabiaka, personal communication, July 30, 2020.

society support MWDs. It also identifies the extent of their support and how it contributes to society's progress.

Muslim philanthropists and organizations need to intensify efforts to support *da'wah* work for PWDs, especially in government schools in the country. In addition, Muslim philanthropists and organizations should make their efforts more felt in clamoring for social inclusion and a rights-based approach for MWDs based on Islamic teachings of human diversity. Moreover, support should be given to Islamic scholars to raise the awareness of Muslims in better treatment and recognition of PWDs and avoid unnecessary prejudices and assumptions. This is because disability in and of itself is not necessarily a hindrance or disadvantage. Furthermore, a more practical approach should be taken to harness *Zakah*, *Sadaqah*, and *Waqf* concepts for the peculiar economic, social, and health needs of MWDs. The special rights among Muslims, which include mutual support in all matters, material care, advice, visitation, and love, should be the overriding motive and not just voluntary knee-jerk reactions from Muslim philanthropists and organizations. Therefore, this paper suggests that extra efforts should be made to provide facilitation to Muslim disabled individuals by ensuring not only their physical comfort but also their rights to social inclusion as a way of giving mental and emotional support. This can only be achieved when MWDs are seen beyond their physical state based on Islamic and Prophetic teachings.

In the context of enhancing support for the Muslim disabled community in Nigeria through philanthropic activities, here are three practical recommendations. Firstly, the establishment of specialized educational institutions is essential. Developing and funding schools and vocational training centers tailored to the needs of disabled individuals can provide both formal education and skills training, enabling them to achieve greater independence and improve their employment prospects. To implement this, partnerships with local Islamic organizations and international donors are crucial for securing funding. Ensuring accessibility in infrastructure, such as ramps, Braille materials, and sign language interpreters, is also necessary. Additionally, incorporating Islamic teachings and values in the curriculum can foster a sense of belonging and spiritual growth.

Secondly, the creation of healthcare and rehabilitation services is vital. Establishing healthcare centers that offer specialized medical care and rehabilitation services for disabled individuals, including physical therapy, mental health services, and regular medical check-ups, can

significantly improve their well-being. Collaboration with medical professionals and health NGOs can provide comprehensive care while utilizing zakat (charitable giving) and waqf (endowment) to fund these services. Implementing mobile clinics is also essential for reaching remote areas where disabled individuals may have limited access to healthcare.

Lastly, community awareness and inclusion programs must promote inclusivity and eliminate stigmatization. Launching initiatives aimed at raising awareness about disability issues within the Muslim community, such as workshops, seminars, and community events, can educate the public about the rights and capabilities of disabled individuals. Engaging religious leaders to disseminate positive messages about disability inclusion during sermons and community gatherings is effective. Developing campaigns using various media platforms to highlight success stories and challenges disabled individuals face and organizing volunteer programs where community members can assist disabled persons in their daily activities can foster a supportive environment. These recommendations can significantly enhance the quality of life for disabled Muslims in Nigeria, promote their inclusion in society, and align philanthropic efforts with Islamic principles of compassion and support for the less fortunate.

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