

Gender, Disability and Islam: Living with Visual Impairment in Bahrain



Research Questions

- How are policies and provision for visually impaired people influenced by interpretations of Islam in an Arab Society?
- What are the gendered experiences of visually impaired young people in an Islamic society in relation to education, work and marriage?

Abstract

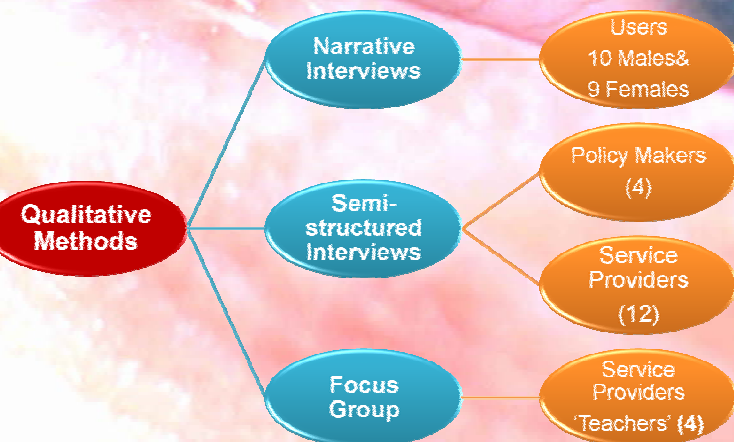
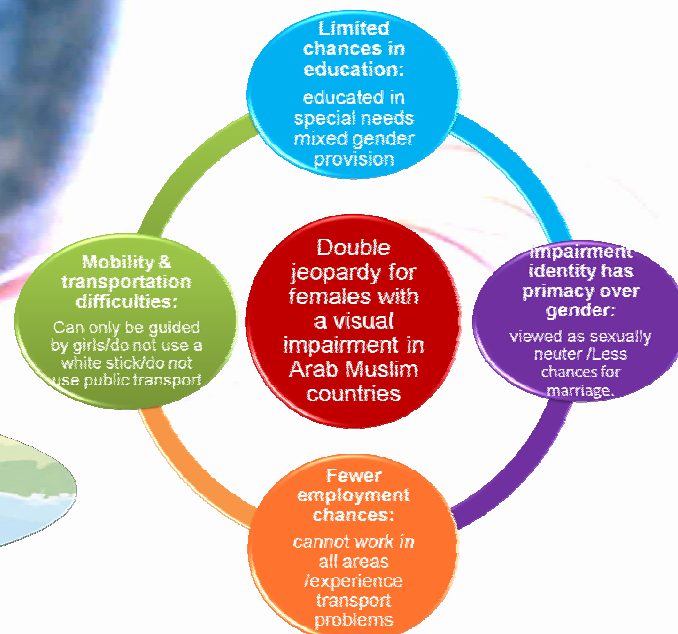
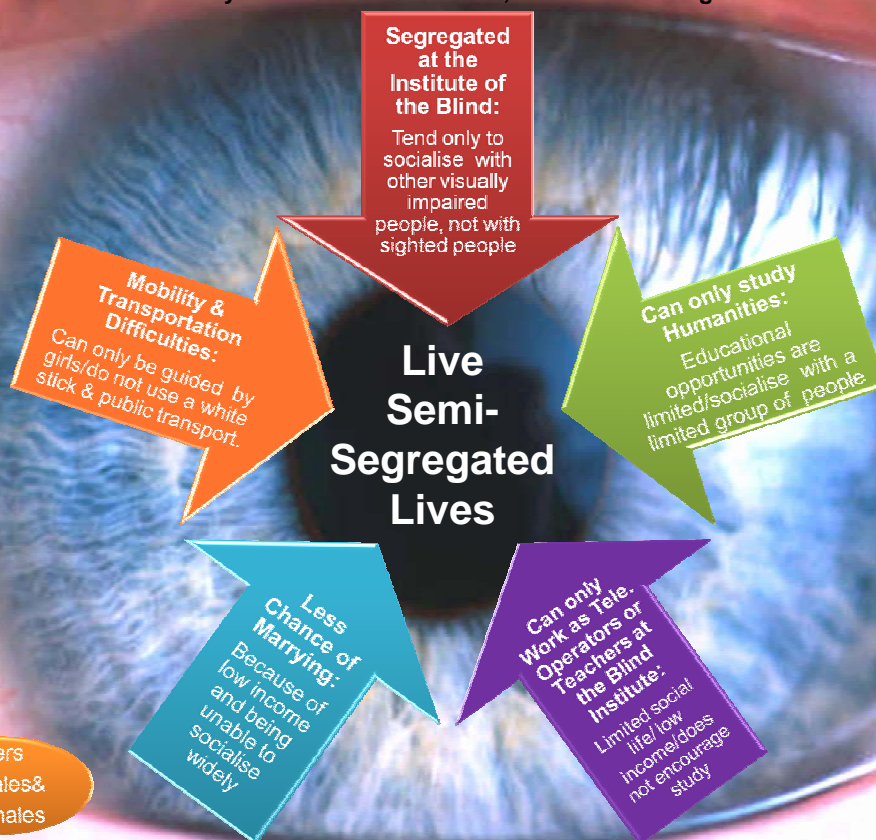
The interpretations of Islam in an Arab society shape the lives and experiences of young people with visual impairments. The ways in which the teachings of Islam are interpreted in relation to both disability and gender has an impact on policy formation, service provision, and day to day experiences. This topic is approached through a case study of living with visual impairment in Bahrain.

Islamic teachings promote a compassionate and charitable approach to people with disabilities which in some ways is congruent with the medical model of disability. Segregated specialist educational provision is provided, with limited inclusion in the sixth form, university and in adult life. Owing to Islamic interpretations of gender segregation, females experience the intersection of gender and disability in ways that disadvantage them more than males. The potential for Islamic teachings to be interpreted to support further social inclusion of disabled people with a focus on a rights based approach. Theoretically, it is considered possible for disability studies to be more inclusive of diversity and empirically for interpretations of Islam to support social inclusion and the rights of disabled people.

Main Findings

- Provisions and services are heavily influenced, by the medical model of disability and the Islamic views. Both encourage segregated specialist provision to protect them.
- In Islamic society, gender segregation is observed, thus conflicting with the practice of providing mixed gender specialist provision for people with disabilities.
- Visually impaired females want to find work to be financially independent as they have fewer chances of marrying.
- Gender identity is secondary to disabled identity.

Live Semi-Segregated Lives



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