

# Faith Leaders, Disability, and Inclusion in the Muslim Community of Connecticut

## Insights from an Ongoing Research Project

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# Objectives & Purpose

- Explore attitudes and knowledge of Muslim faith leaders in Connecticut about disabilities.
- Understand perceived theological, physical, and social barriers.
- Inform inclusive practice, training, and advocacy within religious settings.
- This research fills a gap by focusing on **Muslim faith leaders in Connecticut.**

# What Previous Study Said

- Disabilities are often viewed spiritually (test from God, source of reward) - can discourage action.
- Barriers include stigma, lack of training, and inaccessibility (Ali et al., 2020).
- Training improves inclusion; untrained leaders may unknowingly marginalize (Taras & Potocky, 2021).

# Research Question

What are some specific barriers and attitudes for faith leaders in the Muslim community regarding individuals with disability in Connecticut?

# Methodology

- This study will employ a mixed-methods quantitative and qualitative data approach, integrating data from participants, including Imams and mosque administrators.
- A quantitative survey via Qualtrics was sent to imams and mosque leaders. Questions covered demographics, disability knowledge, inclusion efforts, and religious views.
- All qualitative data will be transcribed using computer-assisted tools, and thematic analysis will be completed with manual coding procedures.
- Currently in the early data collection phase - **1 response received so far.**

# Preliminary Insight

- Respondent: Mosque leader with 5+ years of experience.
- Strong belief that **Islam encourages the inclusion** of people with disabilities.
- They reported limited accommodations at the mosque (e.g., no ramps or ASL interpreters).
- Expressed interest in receiving training to better support inclusion.

# Limitations

- Only one response so far.
- It may not capture the full diversity of Connecticut's Muslim community.
- Response bias is possible (e.g., more open leaders may be more likely to participate)

# Where We Go From Here

- Expand outreach: Collaborate with Muslim community orgs to increase participation.
- Use findings to develop **inclusive training modules** for mosques.
- Advocate for physical accessibility improvements.
- Encourage dialogue between public health professionals and faith leaders.



# Final Thoughts

- Faith leaders are essential in creating welcoming spaces for all.
- Disability inclusion strengthens community and spiritual health.
- With proper awareness and support, religious institutions can be champions of equity.
- This study aims to catalyze **change** in the Connecticut Muslim community.

# Resources

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