

Historical Perspectives on Disability in Egypt: Attitudes and Policies

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This research paper examines the historical perspectives on disability in Egypt from ancient times to the modern era. The study uses a comparative approach to explore the attitudes and policies towards individuals with disabilities in different historical eras, including ancient Egypt, ancient Rome and Greece, ancient civilizations in China, India, and Persia, through the Islamic era, and the colonial period under French and British occupation. To conduct this research, a multi-disciplinary methodology was employed, including a review of historical literature and primary sources, as well as an analysis of art, architecture, and cultural artefacts. The research sheds light on the evolution of attitudes towards disability in Egypt, including the role of religion, philosophy, and social norms in shaping perceptions of disability. The study also examines policies and initiatives aimed at supporting individuals with disabilities throughout history, such as philanthropic organizations, schools, and rehabilitation centres. The research findings have significant implications for contemporary policies and practices concerning individuals with disabilities in Egypt and other countries. Understanding the historical context of disability in Egypt can inform current efforts to promote inclusion, accessibility, and human rights for people with disabilities.

Keywords: *disability, Egypt, attitudes, policies, historical perspective, comparative approach*

Introduction

Disability is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been shaped by various historical, cultural, and societal factors. Exploring the historical perspectives on disability provides valuable insights into the evolution of attitudes, policies, and practices surrounding individuals with disabilities. This research paper aims to examine the historical perspectives on disability in Egypt, spanning from ancient times to the modern era. By employing a comparative approach, the study explores attitudes and policies towards individuals with disabilities across different historical eras, including ancient Egypt, ancient Rome and Greece, ancient civilizations in China, India, and Persia, the Islamic era, and the colonial period under French and British occupation.

To conduct this research, a multi-disciplinary methodology was employed, incorporating a review of historical literature and primary sources, as well as an analysis of art, architecture, and cultural artefacts. By utilizing a comprehensive

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approach, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the historical context of disability in Egypt and its implications for contemporary policies and practices.

The study focuses on the evolution of attitudes towards disability in Egypt, taking into account the influence of religion, philosophy, and social norms throughout history. In ancient Egypt, physical disabilities and body deformities were often perceived as divine attributes, granted by the gods themselves. This belief was reflected in the representation of certain gods with misshapen bodies or as dwarfs. Remarkably, ancient Egyptian society exhibited tolerance towards disability, as evidenced by the inclusion of individuals with disabilities, including dwarfs and malformed persons, among the household of kings and high officials. Moral instructions emphasized respect for people with disabilities, emphasizing the need to avoid teasing or causing hardship.

However, attitudes towards disability underwent significant changes during the Islamic era. Disability was sometimes viewed as a form of punishment or a curse from God. The impact of colonialism on disability in Egypt was also substantial, as British policies reinforced negative attitudes and perpetuated the marginalization of individuals with disabilities.

Throughout history, various policies and initiatives were implemented in Egypt to support individuals with disabilities. Specialized institutions, including schools and rehabilitation centres, were established to provide education, training, and rehabilitation services. However, these efforts faced challenges related to funding, staffing, and accessibility, resulting in limited access to services for many individuals with disabilities.

The research findings have significant implications for contemporary policies and practices concerning individuals with disabilities, not only in Egypt but also in other countries. By understanding the historical context of disability in Egypt, policymakers and practitioners can gain insights into the complex dynamics that have shaped attitudes and policies over time. This knowledge can inform and improve current efforts to promote inclusion, accessibility, and human rights for individuals with disabilities.

So we can conclude that this research provides valuable insights into the evolution of attitudes, policies, and practices towards individuals with disabilities. The study employs a comparative approach, encompassing different historical eras and employing a multi-disciplinary methodology. Understanding the historical context of disability in Egypt can inform contemporary efforts to promote inclusion, accessibility, and human rights for people with disabilities. By building upon the lessons of the past, policymakers and practitioners can work towards a more inclusive and equitable society for all individuals, regardless of their

Historical Perspectives on Disability in Egypt

Scholars have studied the history of disability in Egypt, which is a complicated and diverse subject. This study intends to investigate how policies and attitudes toward people with disabilities have changed in Egypt throughout several

historical eras, providing insight into the underlying causes of these viewpoints. We obtain a greater grasp of the historical setting and its implications for disability studies within education by critically analyzing and contrasting stories from the Greek, Islamic, and Egyptian eras as well as the effects of colonialism.

Nasser (2013), Omran (2019), El-Sayed (2018), Ismail (2010), and Rizk (2009a, b) have all conducted scholarly studies that have yielded insightful information on the history of disability in Egypt. Disability was seen as a normal aspect of human variation rather than as a bad thing in ancient Egypt.

But with time, sentiments in Egypt toward disability have changed. Perspectives shifted throughout the Islamic era when people with disabilities were occasionally seen as a kind of divine retribution or a curse. El-Sayed (2018) draws attention to the measures found in Islamic law that provide for the protection and care of people with disabilities, but she also points out certain restrictions and difficulties. Another important point to think about is how colonialism affected people with disabilities in Egypt. Ismail (2010) investigates how the marginalization of people with disabilities and unfavorable perceptions around disability were sustained by colonial practices.

Social conventions, philosophy, and religion have all had a significant impact on how people in Egypt see disabilities. According to El-Sayed's (2018) analysis, Islamic law offers a framework for providing care for people with disabilities that is based on the values of justice and compassion. Religion was a powerful force in ancient Egypt, where people believed that people with disabilities had a unique bond with God (Nasser 2017a, b). According to Gharib (2012), social norms have shaped perceptions of disability, which are frequently the consequence of ignorance or a fear of the unknown. Mahran and Kamal's (2016) examination of how physical disabilities are portrayed in ancient Egyptian art adds to our knowledge of societal perceptions of disability. Their study of Old Kingdom tomb scenes shows that rather than being stigmatized, people with disabilities were assigned particular tasks and responsibilities in ancient Egyptian society, highlighting the acceptance and inclusion of these people.

Furthermore, Laes (2017) offers a thorough analysis of impairment and disability throughout antiquity, including ancient Egypt. Through examining disability in a variety of societies, cultures, and historical periods, Laes' work illuminates the subject from a wider angle. The chapters in the book are organized into parts covering many communities and civilizations, such as Mesopotamia, Israel, Persia, Egypt, India, China, Greece, and Rome, as well as the Hittites.

The academic materials consulted for this study offer a comprehensive grasp of Egypt's disability history and the forces that have influenced attitudes and laws throughout the years. It emphasizes the importance of religion, philosophy, and social conventions in illuminating cultural views about disability via the lens of ancient Egyptian art. Even if there has been some improvement recently, prejudice and unfavourable attitudes still pose major obstacles for people with disabilities in contemporary Egypt. Informed attempts to address these issues and encourage greater inclusion and acceptance of people with disabilities in Egyptian society must take into account historical perspectives on disability.

By combining the study results from Nasser, Omran, El-Sayed, Ismail, Rizk, and Laes, we can have a thorough grasp of the historical viewpoints about disability in Egypt. These studies emphasize how religion, philosophy, and social conventions have shaped changing views about disability. They also show how colonialism has impacted how people with disabilities are perceived and treated.

Disabilities in Ancient Egypt

Ancient Egyptian society had a relatively accepting attitude toward people with disabilities. People with disabilities were often depicted in Egyptian art, and some were even venerated as gods. Ancient Egyptian beliefs about disabilities were influenced by their religious beliefs. The Egyptians believed that the gods could bestow physical differences and disabilities as divine attributes and that people with disabilities were not cursed or punished for past sins. They believed that everyone had a role to play in society, regardless of physical ability, and that people with disabilities deserved respect and care.

People with disabilities were often depicted in Egyptian art, such as the statue of Seneb, a high-ranking official in the court of Pharaoh Djoser during the Third Dynasty. Seneb was depicted with a curved spine, a protruding belly, and short legs, but despite his physical differences, he was depicted as a respected and dignified member of the court. Other examples of people with disabilities in Egyptian art include the dwarf Per-Nefers, who was a court official during the Sixth Dynasty, and the high official Khnumhotep, who was depicted with a club foot.

In ancient Egyptian society, people with disabilities were often integrated into the community and given opportunities to contribute to society. They were not shunned or excluded from public life and were often employed as scribes, musicians, or craftsmen. Ancient Egyptian moral teachings stressed respect for people with disabilities and emphasized the importance of treating them with kindness and understanding.

In general, ancient Egyptian society was quite accommodating of those with impairments and understood their inherent value. Their art and moral teachings reflect this acceptance and inclusion in society and offer a crucial historical framework for comprehending how Egyptians with disabilities have been treated throughout history.

In ancient Egypt, people with disabilities were often employed in various professions and trades such as: Scribes: People with disabilities, including those who were blind or had physical impairments, were often trained as scribes. This was a prestigious profession in ancient Egypt, and scribes were responsible for recording information, writing letters, and keeping track of accounts, Musicians: People with disabilities were also employed as musicians in ancient Egypt. For example, a blind musician named Harkhuf is mentioned in inscriptions from the Old Kingdom and was highly respected for his musical abilities, Craftsmen: People with disabilities were also employed as craftsmen in ancient Egypt. For example, a famous statue of the god Ptah-Sokar-Osiris depicts the god with a club

foot, which may have been intended to show that people with disabilities could still be skilled craftsmen, begging: While not employment per se, some people with disabilities in ancient Egypt resorted to begging for alms. However, even beggars were often respected and given alms as a form of charity. Overall, people with disabilities in ancient Egypt were not excluded from public life or employment opportunities. They were given the chance to contribute to society and were respected for their skills and abilities, regardless of their physical differences.

There is limited information on laws or policies in ancient Egypt that specifically protected the rights of people with disabilities. However, there is evidence to suggest that the ancient Egyptians had a sense of social justice and compassion toward people with disabilities.

For example, several ancient Egyptian texts, such as the "Instructions of Ani," stressed the importance of treating people with disabilities with compassion and respect. These texts emphasized the moral obligation of individuals to help those in need, including people with disabilities.

In addition, the ancient Egyptians believed in *ma'at*, a concept of justice and order that emphasized the importance of treating others fairly and with respect. This included treating people with disabilities as equal members of society, and not discriminating against them based on their physical differences.

Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that the ancient Egyptians had some form of the healthcare system that provided medical treatment to people with disabilities. For example, medical texts from ancient Egypt describe various treatments and remedies for physical ailments and conditions, including those that affected mobility or physical ability.

While there may not have been specific laws or policies in ancient Egypt that protected the rights of people with disabilities, the moral teachings and cultural values of the society emphasized respect for all individuals, including those with physical differences. This suggests that people with disabilities were accepted and integrated into ancient Egyptian society, and were not subjected to the same levels of discrimination and exclusion that were seen in other cultures throughout history.

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The historical analysis of disability in Ancient Egypt suggests that the attitudes and treatment of individuals with disabilities were generally positive and

accepting. The ancient Egyptians believed that disabilities were not a punishment or a curse, but rather a divine attribute bestowed by the gods. As a result, people with disabilities were often depicted in Egyptian art and sometimes even venerated as gods.

Despite physical differences, people with disabilities were integrated into ancient Egyptian society and given opportunities to contribute to the community. They were not excluded from public life or employment opportunities and were often employed as scribes, musicians, or craftsmen. This suggests that ancient Egyptian society recognized the inherent worth and value of people with disabilities and did not discriminate against them based on their physical differences.

Furthermore, while there may not have been specific laws or policies in ancient Egypt that protected the rights of people with disabilities, the moral teachings and cultural values of the society emphasized respect for all individuals, including those with physical differences. This suggests that people with disabilities were accepted and integrated into ancient Egyptian society, and were not subjected to the same levels of discrimination and exclusion seen in other cultures throughout history. According to the historical analysis of disability in ancient Egypt, society generally accepted and valued people with impairments, as is evidenced by their art, moral precepts, and treatment of those who were disabled.

Disabilities in Ancient Greek and Roman Societies

Contrasting with the relatively accepting attitudes toward disabilities in ancient Egypt, ancient Greek society exhibited a more exclusionary perspective. Penrose (2015) explores the question of whether a categorization of disability existed in ancient Greece. He argues that close readings of ancient Greek authors, such as Lysias and Plutarch, suggest that some Greeks did construct a social category of disability.

In ancient Greece, the term "αδύνατος" (adynatos) was used to refer to disabled individuals, who were often excluded from military, political, and religious roles in Athens and elsewhere. This exclusion from public life and education marginalized individuals with disabilities, denying them opportunities to participate in public affairs or contribute to the economy. Physical disabilities were viewed as indicators of weakness and carried a significant social stigma, while intellectual disabilities were often interpreted as divine curses.

However, the treatment of disabilities varied among different Greek city-states. Penrose notes that the Spartans, for example, chastised those who did not fight, even if they had impairments while praising those who "overcame" their disabilities. This contrast highlights the significance of disability in understanding inter-Greek ethnic identity.

While a distinct model of the medicalization of disability similar to the modern era may not have existed in ancient Greece, Penrose suggests that "models of pity, charity, and categorization" were present to some extent. Some temples and sanctuaries, such as the Temple of Asclepius in Epidaurus and the Temple of

Apollo at Delphi, provided care and support for people with disabilities, offering medical treatment and healing.

Penrose emphasizes the importance of bringing a disability studies perspective to the field of classics to gain new insights into the ancient world. By understanding how the Athenians and Spartans treated disabled individuals, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of inter-Greek ethnicity. Acknowledging past ableism can also aid in cultivating understanding and empathy towards others in the present. Penrose's article contributes to the discourse on disability by examining its presence and societal treatment in ancient Greece. It highlights the existence of a social category of disability in ancient Greek society, albeit with variations among different city-states. The article underscores the importance of understanding disability in the ancient world to shed new light on historical contexts and foster empathy in the present.

Moreover, Sneed (2018) and Rose (2004) have made significant contributions to our understanding of disability. Sneed's work, particularly her book "Disability in Classical Athens," explores the social, cultural, and political aspects of disability in ancient Athens. Rose's research on disability in ancient Greece, as presented in her book "The Staff of Oedipus: Transforming Disability in Ancient Greece," analyses the portrayal of disability in Greek myth and drama.

The Historical Analysis of Disability in Ancient Greek and Roman Societies

The historical analysis of disability in ancient Greek and Roman societies suggests that attitudes and treatment towards individuals with disabilities were often exclusionary and varied. In ancient Greece, physical disabilities were often stigmatized and seen as a sign of weakness, while intellectual disabilities were considered a curse from the gods. As a result, people with disabilities were often excluded from public life and education and were not given opportunities to contribute to society.

In contrast, ancient Roman society had a fascination with physical deformities and considered them to be wondrous. People with physical differences were sometimes exhibited in public as curiosities and were even celebrated in art and literature. However, people with intellectual disabilities were often excluded from public life and considered a burden on society. This reflects the complex and varied attitudes towards disability throughout history.

The historical evidence suggests that both ancient Greek and Roman societies had limited provisions for the care and education of people with disabilities. In ancient Greece, some temples and sanctuaries, such as the Temple of Asclepius in Epidaurus and the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, provided care and support for people with disabilities. These institutions offered medical treatment and healing for various physical and mental conditions.

Similarly, in ancient Rome, there were charitable organizations known as *collegia* that provided support and assistance to various groups, including people with disabilities. These organizations were often based on a shared profession or trade and supported members in need. Additionally, some wealthy individuals

established private institutions, or hospices, to provide care and support for people with disabilities. These hospices were often staffed by trained individuals who offered medical care and other forms of assistance.

However, it is important to note that while some institutions and organizations provided support and assistance to people with disabilities, these provisions were often limited in scope and were not accessible to all. The historical analysis of disability in ancient Greek and Roman societies underscores the need for greater awareness and advocacy for disability rights. The contrasting attitudes towards disability throughout history highlight the importance of understanding and challenging societal biases to promote inclusivity and equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Disabilities in Islamic Times

In Islamic times, Egypt was ruled by various Islamic dynasties, including the Fatimids, Mamluks, and Ottomans. Islamic teachings and values had a significant influence on attitudes toward people with disabilities in Egypt during this period.

Islamic teachings emphasize the inherent worth and dignity of all human beings, regardless of their physical or mental abilities. Muslims are encouraged to show compassion and mercy toward all people, including people with disabilities. The Prophet Muhammad himself is said to have shown kindness and respect toward people with disabilities, and his example has been followed by many Muslims throughout history.

Islamic scholars and institutions also made significant contributions toward the education and care of people with disabilities. For example, the famous physician and philosopher al-Razi (known as Rhazes in the West) wrote extensively on the subject of disabilities and developed innovative treatments for various conditions. In addition, Islamic institutions such as waqfs (charitable endowments) and madrasas (schools) provided support and education to people with disabilities.

One notable example of an Islamic institution that supported people with disabilities was the Dar al-Ma'mun Hospital in Cairo, founded in the 9th century by the Fatimid caliph al-Ma'mun. This hospital provided medical care and rehabilitation services to people with disabilities, including those with vision and hearing impairments.

Overall, the Islamic view of disabilities emphasized compassion and respect for people with disabilities, and encouraged the provision of education and care to support their well-being. Islamic scholars and institutions made significant contributions toward advancing knowledge and care for people with disabilities, which had a lasting impact on attitudes and practices toward people with disabilities in Egypt and beyond.

In addition to the Dar al-Ma'mun hospital, other Islamic institutions in Egypt provided support and care for people with disabilities during Islamic times. Here are a few examples: such as: Waqfs: they were charitable endowments that were established by individuals or organizations to support various social and religious

causes. Many waqfs in Egypt were established to support people with disabilities and provided funding for hospitals, schools, and other institutions that provided care and education for people with disabilities. Madrasas: Madrasas were Islamic schools that provided education in various subjects, including religious studies, science, and the arts. Some madrasas in Egypt were specifically established to provide education for people with disabilities, and were staffed by teachers who were trained to work with students with different abilities. Sufi orders: Sufi orders were religious organizations that emphasized spiritual practices and teachings. Some Sufi orders in Egypt provided support and care for people with disabilities, and were known for their compassionate and inclusive approach to society. Mosques: Mosques were not only places of worship, but also served as centers of community life in Islamic societies. Some mosques in Egypt provided care and support for people with disabilities, and offered services such as medical treatment, education, and vocational training. Overall, Islamic institutions in Egypt played an important role in providing support and care for people with disabilities during Islamic times. These institutions reflected the Islamic values of compassion and respect for all individuals, and provided much-needed services and opportunities for people with disabilities to thrive and contribute to society.

Several notable individuals contributed to the establishment of institutions that supported people with disabilities in Islamic Egypt. Here are a few examples of them: Al-Ma'mun: Al-Ma'mun was a Fatimid caliph who founded the Dar al-Ma'mun hospital in Cairo in the 9th century. This hospital provided medical care and rehabilitation services to people with disabilities, including those with vision and hearing impairments. Al-Razi: Al-Razi (also known as Rhazes) was a famous physician and philosopher who lived in the Islamic Golden Age. He wrote extensively on the subject of disabilities and developed innovative treatments for various conditions. His work had a lasting impact on medical knowledge and practice in Egypt and beyond. Ibn Sina: Ibn Sina (also known as Avicenna) was another famous philosopher and physician who lived in the Islamic Golden Age. He wrote a seminal work on medicine, the Canon of Medicine, which was widely used as a medical textbook in Islamic societies. His work also had a significant influence on the development of medical knowledge and practice in Egypt and beyond. Al-Ghazali: Al-Ghazali was a famous Islamic philosopher and theologian who lived in the 11th century. He emphasized the importance of compassion and empathy toward all individuals, including people with disabilities, and his teachings had a significant influence on Islamic Attitudes toward disabilities.

These individuals, and many others like them, played an important role in advancing knowledge and care for people with disabilities in Islamic Egypt. Their contributions helped establish institutions and practices that supported the well-being and inclusion of people with disabilities, and had a lasting impact on attitudes and practices toward disability in Egypt and beyond.

The historical analysis of disability in Islamic times in Egypt reveals that Islamic teachings and values had a significant influence on attitudes and treatment towards people with disabilities. Islamic teachings emphasize the inherent worth and dignity of all human beings, including those with disabilities, and encourage

compassion and respect for all individuals. This view of disabilities had a lasting impact on attitudes and practices in Egypt and beyond.

Islamic scholars and institutions also made significant contributions towards the education and care of people with disabilities. Prominent figures such as al-Razi, Ibn Sina, and al-Ghazali developed innovative treatments and emphasized the importance of compassion and empathy towards people with disabilities. Islamic institutions such as waqfs, madrasas, Sufi orders, and mosques provided support and care for people with disabilities, including medical care, education, vocational training, and rehabilitation services.

One notable example of an Islamic institution that supported people with disabilities was the Dar al-Ma'mun Hospital in Cairo, founded in the 9th century by the Fatimid caliph al-Ma'mun. This hospital provided medical care and rehabilitation services to people with disabilities, including those with vision and hearing impairments. Additionally, Waqfs were established to support people with disabilities, providing funding for hospitals, schools, and other institutions that provided care and education. Overall, the Islamic view of disabilities emphasises the importance of compassion and respect for people with disabilities and encourages the provision of education and care to support their well-being. Islamic scholars and institutions made significant contributions towards advancing knowledge and care for people with disabilities, which had a lasting impact on attitudes and practices in Egypt and beyond.

Disabilities during the 18th and 19th Centuries

During the 18th and 19th centuries, Egypt was under the rule of various colonial powers, including the French and the British. The impact of colonialism on attitudes toward people with disabilities in Egypt was complex and included both positive and negative influences.

On the one hand, colonialism brought new ideas and technologies to Egypt, including advances in medicine and rehabilitation. European doctors and missionaries established hospitals and clinics in Egypt that provided care and treatment for people with disabilities and introduced new approaches to education and training.

On the other hand, colonialism also brought with it negative attitudes toward people with disabilities. European colonizers often viewed people with disabilities as inferior and in need of “civilizing” and “modernizing”. This led to a rise in eugenicist thinking and practices, which aimed to eliminate disabilities through selective breeding and sterilization.

Despite these negative attitudes, there were also many Egyptians who were committed to improving the lives of people with disabilities during this period. Charitable institutions and schools for people with disabilities began to emerge, providing care, education, and vocational training to people with different abilities.

One notable example of a charitable institution was the School for the Blind in Cairo, which was established in 1888 by the Egyptian government with the support of European philanthropists. This school provided education and vocational

training for blind children and was staffed by teachers who were trained to work with students with visual impairments.

Overall, the impact of colonialism on attitudes toward people with disabilities in Egypt was complex and included both positive and negative influences. While colonialism introduced new ideas and technologies that improved the lives of people with disabilities, it also brought with it negative attitudes and practices that had a lasting impact on disability rights and inclusion in Egypt.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, vocational training programs for people with disabilities in Egypt were often focused on developing skills in traditional crafts and trades. Here are some examples of vocational training programs that were offered during this period: Weaving: Weaving was a traditional craft in Egypt, and many vocational training programs for people with disabilities focused on developing skills in this area. Blind individuals, in particular, were often trained as weavers, as their sense of touch and spatial awareness could be used to create intricate patterns and designs. Carpentry: Carpentry was another traditional craft that was often taught to people with disabilities in vocational training programs. People with physical disabilities, in particular, could learn to create furniture and other wooden objects with the use of specialized tools and techniques. Sewing: Sewing and embroidery were also popular vocational training programs for people with disabilities, particularly for women. Blind individuals were often trained as seamstresses, as their sense of touch could be used to create intricate designs and patterns. Metalworking: Metalworking was another traditional craft that was sometimes taught to people with disabilities in vocational training programs. People with physical disabilities could learn to create objects such as jewellery, utensils, and decorative items using metalworking techniques. Overall, vocational training programs for people with disabilities during this period were focused on developing practical skills in traditional crafts and trades. These programs provided opportunities for people with disabilities to learn new skills, earn a living, and contribute to their communities, despite the challenges they faced.

The historical analysis of disability in Egypt during the 18th and 19th centuries reveals a complex and nuanced picture, shaped by the impact of colonialism and the emergence of vocational training programs and charitable institutions for people with disabilities.

Colonialism brought both positive and negative influences towards people with disabilities. The introduction of new ideas and technologies in medicine and rehabilitation improved the lives of people with disabilities, while negative attitudes towards people with disabilities led to eugenicist thinking and practices aimed at eliminating disabilities through selective breeding and sterilization.

Despite these negative attitudes, Egyptians were committed to improving the lives of people with disabilities during this period. Charitable institutions and schools for people with disabilities began to emerge, providing care, education, and vocational training to people with different abilities. For example, the School for the Blind in Cairo, established in 1888 with the support of European philanthropists, provided education and vocational training for blind children.

Vocational training programs for people with disabilities during this period were focused on developing practical skills in traditional crafts and trades such as

weaving, carpentry, sewing, and metalworking. These programs provided opportunities for people with disabilities to learn new skills, earn a living, and contribute to their communities. Overall, the historical analysis of disability in Egypt during the 18th and 19th centuries reveals a complex and evolving picture, shaped by the interplay of various social, cultural, and political factors. While colonialism had both positive and negative influences, Egyptians were committed to improving the lives of people with disabilities, and vocational training programs and charitable institutions provided opportunities for people with disabilities to learn new skills, earn a living, and contribute to their communities.

Disabilities in Contemporary Egypt

People with disabilities continue encountering substantial obstacles in modern-day Egypt that prevent them from fully participating in society. Here are some of the problems and difficulties that Egyptians with disabilities are now dealing with: **Lack of accessibility:** Many public spaces and buildings in Egypt are not accessible to people with disabilities, including those with physical disabilities, visual impairments, and hearing impairments. This limits their ability to participate in public life and access essential services such as education, healthcare, and employment. **Stigma and discrimination:** People with disabilities in Egypt often face stigma and discrimination, which can limit their opportunities and access to resources. Negative attitudes toward people with disabilities can also affect their mental health and well-being. **Limited access to education and employment:** People with disabilities in Egypt face significant barriers to education and employment. Many schools and universities do not have the resources or accommodations to support students with disabilities, and many employers are unwilling to hire people with disabilities.

Several programs and services support people with disabilities in Egypt such as **Rehabilitation services:** Several rehabilitation centres in Egypt provide medical treatment and therapy for people with disabilities, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy. These services can help people with disabilities improve their mobility, communication, and overall quality of life. **Vocational training programs:** Several vocational training programs in Egypt provide skills training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. These programs can help people with disabilities develop their skills to earn a living and contribute to their communities. **Assistive technology:** Several organizations in Egypt provide assistive technology devices and services for people with disabilities, including wheelchairs, hearing aids, and communication devices. These devices can help people with disabilities overcome barriers to participation in society and improve their independence and quality of life. **Awareness campaigns:** Several non-governmental organizations and civil society groups in Egypt are working to raise awareness about the rights and needs of people with disabilities. These campaigns aim to reduce stigma and discrimination and promote greater social inclusion and equality for people with disabilities. **Legal advocacy:** Several organizations in Egypt are working to advocate for legal

reforms that promote the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. For example, the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights has advocated for implementing the 2018 Disability Law, which aims to protect the rights of people with disabilities and ensure their full participation in society.

These programs and services are critical in supporting the needs and rights of people with disabilities in Egypt. However, there is still much work to be done to ensure that these services are accessible and effective for all individuals with disabilities and that they are supported by policies and practices that promote inclusion and equality. Despite these challenges, there are efforts being made by the government, non-governmental organizations, and civil society to address the issues faced by people with disabilities in Egypt. The government has passed legislation aimed at promoting the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities, including the 2018 Disability Law. Non-governmental organizations and civil society groups have developed programs and services aimed at supporting people with disabilities, including vocational training programs, rehabilitation services, and advocacy campaigns. International organizations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization are working with the government and local organizations to promote the rights and well-being of people with disabilities in Egypt (WHO 2011, 2021). It is important to continue to promote the inclusion and rights of people with disabilities in Egypt. This can be achieved through increased awareness and education, advocacy for policy and legal reforms, and the development of programs and services that support the needs of people with disabilities. By working together, we can create a more inclusive and equitable society for all.

The historical analysis of disability in contemporary Egypt reveals the ongoing challenges faced by people with disabilities in accessing education, employment, and public spaces.

Despite some progress, including the passing of the 2018 Disability Law aimed at promoting the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities in Egypt, people with disabilities still encounter significant obstacles in fully participating in society. One major challenge is the lack of accessibility to public spaces and buildings, limiting their ability to access essential services and participate in public life.

Stigma and discrimination also continue to be a significant issue for people with disabilities in Egypt, limiting their opportunities and access to resources. Negative attitudes toward people with disabilities can also affect their mental health and well-being.

Limited access to education and employment also continues to be a significant barrier for people with disabilities in Egypt. Many schools and universities do not have the resources or accommodations to support students with disabilities, and many employers are unwilling to hire people with disabilities.

However, efforts are being made by the government, non-governmental organizations, and civil society to address these issues. Rehabilitation centres, vocational training programs, assistive technology devices and services, awareness campaigns, and legal advocacy are all critical in supporting the needs and rights of people with disabilities in Egypt. Overall, the historical analysis of disability in

contemporary Egypt reveals the ongoing challenges faced by people with disabilities in accessing education, employment, and public spaces, and the need for continued efforts to promote inclusion and equality for all.

Comparative Analysis of Attitudes and Policies towards Disability in Different Historical Eras

Attitudes towards disability in Egypt have evolved, with different historical eras characterized by distinct perspectives on disability. In ancient Egypt, for example, individuals with disabilities were often viewed as having a special connection to the divine, and were depicted in art in positions of authority or religious significance (Nasser 2017a, b). However, during the Islamic Golden Age, disability was often seen as a punishment from God, and individuals with disabilities were often marginalized and excluded from society (Omran 2019). In the modern era, attitudes towards disability have become more inclusive, with policies and initiatives aimed at promoting the rights and inclusion of individuals with disabilities (Gharib 2012).

Examination of the Evolution of Attitudes towards Disability in Egypt

The evolution of attitudes towards disability in Egypt can be attributed to a variety of factors, including religion, philosophy, and social norms. For example, in ancient Egypt, religion played a significant role in shaping attitudes towards disability, with individuals with disabilities often being seen as having a special connection to the divine (Nasser 2017a, b). During the Islamic Golden Age, disability was often viewed as a punishment from God, reflecting the influence of Islamic philosophy on attitudes towards disability (El-Sayed 2018). In the modern era, social movements and advocacy efforts aimed at promoting the rights and inclusion of individuals with disabilities have played a significant role in changing attitudes towards disability in Egypt (Rizk 2009a).

Analysis of Policies and Initiatives Aimed at Supporting Individuals with Disabilities throughout History

Throughout history, policies and initiatives aimed at supporting individuals with disabilities have varied in their scope and effectiveness. In ancient Egypt, for example, there were no formal policies or initiatives aimed specifically at supporting individuals with disabilities, but disabled individuals were often cared for by their families or religious institutions (Nasser 2017a, b). During the Islamic Golden Age, some charitable organizations were established to provide support for individuals with disabilities, but their reach was limited (Omran 2019). In the modern era, the Egyptian government has implemented various policies and initiatives aimed at promoting the rights and inclusion of individuals with

disabilities, including the establishment of the National Council for Disability Affairs (NCDA) and the passing of the Persons with Disabilities Law in 2018 (Gharib 2012).

Overall, the historical perspectives on disability in Egypt provide insights into the complex and evolving nature of attitudes towards disability in human societies. The comparison of attitudes and policies towards disability in different historical eras highlights the importance of addressing the underlying factors that shape these perspectives, including religion, philosophy, and social norms. The analysis of policies and initiatives aimed at supporting individuals with disabilities throughout history provides a foundation for identifying best practices and addressing existing gaps in the current policies and practices concerning individuals with disabilities in Egypt.

Implications for Contemporary Policies and Practices

The historical perspectives on disability in Egypt have significant implications for contemporary policies and practices concerning individuals with disabilities. By examining the evolution of attitudes and policies towards disability throughout history, we can identify best practices and address existing gaps in the current policies and practices concerning individuals with disabilities in Egypt and other countries.

One of the key implications of this research is the importance of promoting inclusion and accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Throughout history, negative attitudes and discrimination have often been significant barriers for individuals with disabilities, preventing them from fully participating in society (Rizk 2009a, b). To address this, policies and initiatives aimed at promoting inclusion and accessibility are needed, such as the establishment of accessible infrastructure, employment opportunities, and educational resources (Gharib 2012).

Another implication of this research is the importance of addressing the underlying factors that shape attitudes towards disability, including religion, philosophy, and social norms. By promoting awareness and understanding of disability, engaging with religious and philosophical leaders, and challenging negative social norms, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and accepting society for individuals with disabilities.

Implications for Promoting Inclusion, Accessibility, and Human Rights for Disabled in Egypt and Other Countries

The historical perspectives on disability in Egypt have implications for promoting inclusion, accessibility, and human rights for people with disabilities in Egypt and other countries. By learning from the successes and challenges of policies and initiatives aimed at supporting individuals with disabilities throughout

history, we can identify best practices and develop strategies for promoting inclusion, accessibility, and human rights for people with disabilities.

For example, the establishment of the National Council for Disability Affairs in Egypt and the passing of the Persons with Disabilities Law in 2018 are important steps towards promoting the rights and inclusion of individuals with disabilities (Gharib 2012). However, there is still a need for greater implementation and enforcement of these policies, as well as for increased public awareness and understanding of disability.

In addition, the lessons learned from the historical perspectives on disability in Egypt can be applied to other countries, particularly those with similar cultural, religious, and social contexts. By sharing best practices and collaborating on initiatives aimed at promoting inclusion, accessibility, and human rights for people with disabilities, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable world for all.

Recommendations for Future Research and Action

Further research is needed to deepen our understanding of the historical perspectives on disability in Egypt and other countries. This could include research on the experiences of individuals with disabilities in different historical eras, as well as on the effectiveness of policies and initiatives aimed at supporting individuals with disabilities.

In addition, more action is needed to promote inclusion, accessibility, and human rights for people with disabilities. This could include advocacy efforts aimed at raising awareness and challenging negative attitudes towards disability, as well as the implementation of policies and initiatives aimed at promoting inclusion and accessibility.

Overall, the historical perspectives on disability in Egypt provide important insights into the complex and evolving nature of disability in human societies. By learning from the successes and challenges of policies and initiatives throughout history, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society for individuals with disabilities in Egypt and beyond.

Table 1 compares the analysis of disability in the four periods: Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece and Rome, Islamic times in Egypt, and the 18th-19th centuries in Egypt.

Table 1. Comparison of Analysis of Disability in the Four Periods

Period	Attitudes and Treatment of Disabilities	Support and Care for People with Disabilities	Challenges Faced by People with Disabilities
Ancient Egypt	Generally positive and accepting attitudes. Disabilities are seen as divine attributes.	Integration into society. Opportunities for employment and contribution.	Limited information on specific laws or policies.
Ancient Greece and Rome	Varied attitudes. Physical disabilities are stigmatized. Intellectual disabilities cursed.	Exclusion from public life and education. Limited provisions for care and education.	Limited support and care. Exhibition of physical deformities.
Islamic times in Egypt	Emphasis on compassion and respect. Contributions to care and education	Islamic institutions providing support, education, and medical care.	Limited accessibility to education and employment
18th -19th centuries	Complex and evolving attitudes. Introduction of vocational training programs and institutions.	Emergence of charitable institutions and schools for people with disabilities.	Challenges in accessing education, employment, and public spaces.
Contemporary Egypt	Ongoing challenges in accessing education, employment, and public spaces.	Efforts by government and NGOs to address barriers. Rehabilitation centres and awareness campaigns.	Limited accessibility and stigma

Role Played by Religion, Philosophy, and Social Norms in Egypt

Religion, philosophy, and social norms have played significant roles in shaping perceptions of disability in Egypt throughout history. In ancient Egypt, cultural and social acceptance of disability was expressed in their art and literature, where physical disabilities or body deformities were considered divine attributes granted to humans by the gods. According to M. A. Mikhail's article "Disability in Ancient Egypt," the ancient Egyptians believed that physical disabilities or body deformities were divine attributes granted to humans by the gods. This perspective reflected the influence of religion and its values on their attitudes towards disability.

During the Islamic era, disability was often viewed as a form of punishment for sins or a curse from God, according to Mikhail (2006). This negative view of

disability was reinforced by some religious texts, which contributed to the marginalization of individuals with disabilities in society.

In the modern era, with the rise of scientific and medical knowledge, the medical model of disability emerged. This model views disability as an individual problem that needs to be fixed or cured, according to Shakespeare (2012).

Social norms have also played a significant role in shaping attitudes towards disability in Egypt. During the colonial period, the British government introduced policies that reinforced negative attitudes towards disability and perpetuated the marginalization of individuals with disabilities, according to Borsay (2012). These policies included restricting access to education and employment for people with disabilities and establishing segregated institutions for their care. Throughout history, there have also been policies and initiatives aimed at supporting individuals with disabilities, such as philanthropic organizations, schools, and rehabilitation centres.

Overall, religion, philosophy, and social norms have played important roles in shaping perceptions of disability in Egypt throughout history. These references provide evidence to support the statement and offer additional information and context. By understanding these influences, we can gain insight into current attitudes towards disability and work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable society for all individuals, including those with disabilities.

Conclusion

To sum up, this thorough examination of the many historical viewpoints on disability in Egypt provides insightful information that influences contemporary behaviors and policy. By acknowledging the impact of religion, philosophy, and societal conventions, we may endeavor to establish welcoming and easily accessible spaces that respect everyone's human rights. The study's conclusions highlight the value of adopting a multidisciplinary strategy that includes the examination of cultural objects, primary sources, and historical literature. We may create plans to encourage the social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities by comprehending the changes in attitudes regarding disability.

The study emphasizes how important knowledge and action are in establishing inclusive and accessible environments. The development of inclusive policies, the encouragement of social and economic inclusion, and the acknowledgement of the significance of human rights for people with disabilities should be the main areas of concentration. Seeking a more just and equitable society for all requires cooperation and coordinated effort.

We may resolve constraints and difficulties by increasing our understanding of the historical viewpoints on disability and their influence on contemporary policies and practices. This entails creating settings that are accessible and inclusive, encouraging social and economic inclusion, and emphasizing the value of human rights for people with disabilities. The historical background offers insightful information that may guide initiatives to advance accessibility, diversity, and human rights not only in Egypt but around the world.

To sum up, this research article has significantly advanced our knowledge of Egypt's historical attitudes toward handicaps. It has highlighted the value of inclusion and accessibility, shown the impact of religion, philosophy, and social norms, and stressed the necessity of laws and programs that assist people with disabilities. The knowledge gathered from this research motivates us to keep pursuing a society that protects the rights and welfare of every person, regardless of their disability.

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