

Students with Disabilities: Towards a Social Inclusion Policy in the Egyptian Higher Education System

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• Abstract

The study examines the challenges of social inclusion for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in higher education in Egypt. It aims to determine whether reasonable accommodations are provided to students with disabilities in schools more often than in universities. The study suggests that universities offer an inadequate, inclusive education compared to schools. A mixed-methods approach was used to collect data from various sources. First, a review was conducted on the laws, treaties that Egypt has ratified, publications, and Ministerial Decrees regarding PWDs. Second, semi-structured interviews with students with disabilities ($n=7$) in a private university in Egypt were conducted to determine issues on social inclusion for PWDs in higher education in Egypt by comparing the experiences of students in the sample, in higher education versus schools. Lastly, the researchers used data collected from observations of the experience of students with disabilities in higher education. Results revealed that the private university, under study, has offered better, reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities than their private schools. In terms of social inclusion, students with disabilities have asserted that they have open communication with their instructors, peers, and that they feel more comfortable working in group activities in their university compared to their private schools. Hence, the hypothesis of the study holds theoretically, since most of the previous studies assert that schools offer more reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities than universities. While in application, students agreed that they received better accommodations at their university, which resulted in their social inclusion in their educational experience.

Key words: Students with disabilities, SocialInclusion Policy, Egyptian Higher Education, Reasonable Accommodation, Diversity and Inclusion

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الطلاب ذوي الإعاقة نحو سياسات الشمول الاجتماعي

في نظام التعليم العالي في مصر

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• ملخص:

تناقش الدراسة تحديات الإدماج الاجتماعي للأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة في التعليم العالي في مصر. وتهدف إلى الإجابة عما إذا كان يتم توفير الترتيبات التيسيرية المعقولة للطلاب ذوي الإعاقة في المدارس أكثر من الجامعات. وتشير الدراسة إلى عدم كفاية التعليم الشامل في الجامعات مقارنة بالمدارس. وقد تم استخدام نهج مختلط لجمع البيانات من مصادر مختلفة. أولاً، تم إجراء مراجعة للقوانين والمعاهدات التي صادقت عليها مصر والمنشورات والقرارات الوزارية المتعلقة بالأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة. ثانياً، أجريت مقابلات شبه منظمة مع الطلاب ذوي الإعاقة (العدد = ٧) في جامعة خاصة في مصر لتحديد القضايا والتوصيات المتعلقة بالإدماج الاجتماعي للأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة في التعليم العالي بمصر من خلال مقارنة تجارب الطلاب في العينة في التعليم العالي مقابل المدارس. وأخيراً، استخدم الباحثون البيانات التي تم جمعها من ملاحظات تجربة الطلاب ذوي الإعاقة في التعليم العالي. وكشفت النتائج أن الجامعة الخاصة، قيد الدراسة، قد قدمت ترتيبات تيسيرية أفضل للطلاب ذوي الإعاقة من مدارسهم الخاصة. فيما يتعلق بالإدماج الاجتماعي، أكد الطلاب ذوي الإعاقة أن لديهم تواصلًا مفتوحًا مع أساتذتهم وأقرانهم، وأنهم يشعرون براحة أكبر في العمل ضمن أنشطة جماعية في جامعاتهم مقارنة بمدارسهم الخاصة. وبالتالي، فإن فرضية الدراسة صحيحة نظرياً حيث اثبتت معظم الدراسات السابقة انه يتم توفير الترتيبات التيسيرية المعقولة للطلاب ذوي الإعاقة في المدارس أكثر من الجامعات. بينما في الجزء التطبيقي، اجمع الطلاب ان الجامعة تقدم لهم تسهيلات أفضل مما ادي الي دمجهم اجتماعيا في تجربتهم التعليمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الطلاب ذوي الإعاقة، سياسة الإدماج الاجتماعي، التعليم العالي في

مصر، الترتيبات التيسيرية، التنوع والإدماج

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• Introduction

In recent years, the concept of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) has been prioritized in different societies worldwide, and the need for reducing inequalities has been emphasized by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The problem which is discussed in this research is to what extent students with disabilities are socially included in educational institutions. This social inclusion is based on facilities and accommodations provided to those students.

Previous studies identified lack of proper accommodation in university education; however, the research would use the same criteria used for social inclusion in previous studies to prove or disprove their findings in accordance with students' evaluation for both school and higher education.

Therefore, the research questions whether students with disabilities are better accommodated and included in schools or in higher education. This would be explored by the students' feedback on both educational institutions to identify the problem of how to achieve better inclusion for them with reference to the Egyptian legislations versus actual practices to assess what kind of policy reform needed to foster better social inclusion policy in higher education.

Initially the paper hypothesis is analogous to previous research which assumes that accommodation in higher education is inconsistent with school education to find out if this assumption is valid or not. The research methodology would rely on primary data through semi-structured interviews with students with disabilities enrolled in a private university to obtain their shared experiences in accommodation and social inclusion in both stages of school and higher education.

Literature Review

According to the latest profile of Egypt's 2017 statistics from the CAPMAS¹ on persons with disabilities among people above five years old, stands at 10.67%. However, there is no available data on how many students with disabilities are enrolled in higher education and schools.

On the legal front, the Egyptian Constitution confirms equality for persons with disabilities in terms of political, economic, cultural, educational, vocational, and social inclusion for them (article 53)², along with the provision of required assistance to help them have a decent life (article 54)³. Additionally, Law No. 10⁴ of 2018 states the preparations, procedures, and tools needed for persons with disabilities to help them live their lives as equally as possible to others⁵. The law also affirms the rights to integrate students with disabilities in various activities, services, and public facilities, besides ensuring adequate representation in local councils and the House of Representatives. Internationally, Egypt joined the United Nations Convention on the Persons with Disabilities in 2006 and signed the African Protocol on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁶. However, some assessment is

¹CAPMAS (2017). www.capmas.gov.eg

²Egyptian Constitution (2014). Article 53. *Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights*. <https://sschr.gov.eg/en/the-egyptian-constitution/>

³Egyptian Constitution (2014). Article 54. *Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights*. <https://sschr.gov.eg/en/the-egyptian-constitution/>

⁴Egyptian Law 10 (2018). Rights of Persons with Disabilities. *State Information Service*. <https://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/142989/Persons-with-Disabilities-Law-and-its-implementing-regulations> Egypt's Vision 2030 (2016). Goal 2 "Social Justice and Equality."

⁵Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR) (2020). "National Efforts to Promote and Protect the Rights of Persons of Disabilities in Egypt on the Occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities", International Human Rights Days Report. <https://sschr.gov.eg/media/qzgke5c0/hrd-8-2020-en.pdf>

⁶African Union (2018). "Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities."



needed to know if actual practices align with international legislations of social inclusion.

Institutionally, in Egypt, many institutions have been established to comply with the purpose of the legal framework aforementioned. This includes establishing entities concerned with the rights of persons with disability, such as the National Council for Disability Affairs, to develop, protect the rights of persons with disabilities, and raise awareness and properly exercise them.

More importantly, the establishment of the Support Fund for Persons with Disabilities⁷, which is supposed to help persons with disabilities on many fronts, including the educational sphere, and provide various scholarships to universities nationally and internationally, which will be investigated in this research.

Strategically, within the framework of Egypt 2030, the goal of social justice entailed protecting marginalized and vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, through curbing discrimination against them. In compliance with the National Plan for Persons with Disabilities, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, in turn, facilitates and improves the learning process and educational process and services provided to students with disabilities and introduces basic concepts of disability in all educational curricula.

The National Plan for Childhood and Motherhood (2020-2030) consists of goals aimed at improving the quality of education and health services provided to children with disabilities by increasing their enrollment numbers, equipping schools with the necessary tools, and establishing special education schools in terms of curricula. Additionally, it focuses on training teachers and mental health professionals to effectively support children with disabilities. However, this initiative is applied solely to pre-university education, lacking equivalent measures in higher

⁷Egyptian Law 200 (2020). Support Fund for Persons with Disabilities. *State Information Service*.<https://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/170472/Sisi-approves-amendments-to-persons-with-disabilities-law?lang=en-us>

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education to ensure consistent support for students with disabilities.

Moreover, the SDG goal number four aims to guarantee equal and accessible education by building inclusive learning environments and providing the needed assistance for persons with disabilities by aims to eradicate prejudice and discrimination based on an individual or group of individuals' protected characteristics.

The implication of the fourth goal of SDGs has two areas that directly impact students with disabilities in Higher Education Institutions, namely, accessible infrastructure such as buildings and education facilities, and equal access to education and vocational training without any focus on the social inclusion dimension⁸. EDI “ensures fair treatment and opportunity for all. It aims to eradicate prejudice and discrimination based on an individual or group of individuals' protected characteristics”⁹. This global pressure on fostering EDI in societies from within has caused many legislators to consider legal protection and inclusion of marginalized groups and communities, including persons with disabilities, as a group that is protected, in educational contexts, by creating an environment where all students feel welcomed and valued.

The enrollment of students with disabilities in higher education has increased recently due to global efforts that resulted in the development of inclusive educational legislations, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with

⁸Hosny, O. H. (2023). “*Opening Windows and Closing Gaps: A Case Analysis of the Agenda Setting of Egypt's Inclusion Policymaking Process in Higher Education Institutions*”. [Ph.D. Thesis, Lancaster University]. <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/opening-windows-closing-gaps-case-analysis-agenda/docview/2812065847/se-2>

⁹University of Edinburgh (2025). *What does Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion mean?* School of Physics and Astronomy. <https://www.ph.ed.ac.uk/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/about-edi/what-does-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-mean>



Disabilities (CRPD)¹⁰, specifically in article 24, which is concerned with education. It provides a theoretical framework for persons with disabilities to support their social inclusion in the learning process by providing reasonable accommodation that should be made available to them. The convention article provides an integrated framework for this community, but the actual practices show a gap between theory and practice.

For many countries, they have kept the concept of reasonable accommodation in educational institutions exclusive for learning the sign language or merely providing logistics in the surroundings to facilitate the movement of students with physical disabilities. For students with learning disabilities, reasonable accommodations provided have been exclusive for making special exams for them without adequate consideration for the role of social inclusion in facilitating their learning process.

A reasonable accommodation is defined as a “modification or adjustment to a course, program, service, or activity. This enables a qualified student with a disability to have an equal opportunity to access and use benefits, privileges, and services that are available to similarly situated students without disabilities”¹¹. In this paper, the concept of accommodation will be broadened to include the significance of integration rather than segregation in the learning process based on the social model which views disability as barriers in society, such as physical or attitudinal barriers, rather than an inherent flaw in the individual if the environment creates handicaps and barriers, not the disability itself.

¹⁰United Nations (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

¹¹Oregon State University (2025). Office of the Dean of Students Disability Access Services, Determining Reasonable Accommodations.
<https://ds.oregonstate.edu/book/das-student-handbook/chapter-3-determiningreasonableaccommodations>

Models of Disability

Historically, the perception of disability was limited to the medical condition, which was known as the “medical model of disability”¹². This model had emerged by the end of the nineteenth century when scientists and doctors had replaced the authority of religious men¹³. The medical discourse of this model has explained disability as one aspect of the human body and mind, and perceives it merely from a biological standpoint, which attributes disability to natural factors¹⁴.

The medical model has been rejected in an educational context, instead, the social model was found to be more relevant to education as it argues that disability is imposed on individuals by society. The social model, unlike the medical model, distinguishes impairment from disability. It claims that impairment is a deviation from the body’s normal function, but disability is a limitation in an individual’s activity that results from the social exclusion of those individuals and failure to accommodate and include them¹⁵. It tracks disability to the isolation and exclusion of persons with impairments from participation and engagement¹⁶.

¹²Riddle, C. A. (2018). “*Disability and disadvantage in the capabilities approach*”. In A. Cureton, & D. Wasserman (Eds.), *The oxford handbook of philosophy and disability*. Oxford University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190622879.013.19>.

¹³Humpage, L. (2007). “*Models of disability, Work and Welfare in Australia. Social Policy & Administration*”, 41(3), 215–231.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9515.2007.00549.x>

¹⁴Brittain, I. (2004). Perceptions of disability and their impact upon involvement in sport for people with disabilities at all levels. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 28(4), 429–452.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723504268729>

¹⁵Goodley, D. (2001). “*Learning Difficulties’, the Social Model of Disability and Impairment: Challenging epistemologies. Disability & Society*” 16(2), 207–231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590120035816>

¹⁶Bingham, C., Clarke, L., Michielsens, E., & Van de Meer, M. (2013). “*Towards a social model approach?: British and Dutch disability*



Accordingly, students with disabilities are victims of “epistemic injustice,” which refers to their lack of credibility of the information, knowledge, and experiences they share because of the prejudices of others¹⁷. Therefore, inclusive education would be a major contributor to reducing injustice related to educational access and academic achievement.

A third approach, which is meant to solve the discrepancy between the medical and social modes, refers to the capabilities approach¹⁸. It asserts that individuals with disabilities have full freedom to achieve their well-being based on their capabilities and functions¹⁹. It bypasses the social injustice facing persons with disabilities and claims that various factors normally determine the well-being of those people, such as age, gender, and impairment level, which are all related to the education system. In short, it perceives a disability as normal human variation that cannot solely determine the well-being of a person; other factors do.

Since the research adopts the public policy of social inclusion, it would be reflecting more on the social model as it can be measured within the educational context, and it would reflect more insights on what the government in Egypt should do and what policies should be made to facilitate social inclusion of students specifically in higher education domain.

policies in the health sector compared”. Personnel Review, 42(5), 613–637. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-08-2011-0120>

¹⁷Rosas, R. A. M., & Alvarez, S. J (2022). “*Epistemic injustice in the education of people with mental disabilities*”. Educaç~ ao & Realidade, 47, Article e116051. <https://doi.org/10.1590/2175-6236116051vs02>

¹⁸Lim, S. (2020). “*The Capabilities Approach to inclusive education: Re-envisioning the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act’s least restrictive environment*”. Disability & Society, 35(4), 570–588. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1649119>

¹⁹Robeyns, I., & Byskov, M. F. (2023). “*The capability approach*”. In E. Zalta, & U. Nodelman (Eds.), The stanford encyclopedia of philosophy. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/capability-approach>.

Inclusive Education in Egypt

The major definition of inclusive education is attributed to the UNESCO has defined social inclusion as “*the process of reinforcing the capacity of education systems to welcome and reach out to all learners*” (UNESCO, 2017: 7)²⁰. This process includes the transformation of educational institutions to cater for all learners regardless of their differences including physical disabilities with the purpose of providing equal chances and eliminating barriers among learners (UNESCO, 2008: 5)²¹.

Another definition provided by Norwich²² has envisioned inclusion as the ability to engage students in a learning community based on equity, community cohesiveness, and social acceptance. Glazzard²³ perceived inclusion as the ability to take advantage of heterogeneous community members, who can complement each other. Cologon²⁴ concluded the previous definitions by asserting

²⁰UNESCO (2017). *A guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education*. Paris UNESCO.

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002482/248254e.pdf>

²¹UNESCO(2008). *Inclusive education: The Way of the Future*, Forty-eight session of the international Conference on Education. *Reference document: ED/BIE/CONFINTED 48/3*. Geneva: UNESCO.

http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Policy_Dialogue/48th_ICE/CONFINTED_48-3_English.pdf

²²Norwich, B. (2013). “*Addressing Tensions and Dilemmas in Inclusive Education: Living with uncertainty*”. New York, USA: Taylor and Francis.<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9780203118436/addressing-tensions-dilemmas-inclusive-education-brahm-norwich>

²³Glazzard, J. (2014). “*From Integration to Inclusive Education in England: Illuminating the Issues through a Life History Account*”. International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research, 9(1), pp. 107-116.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/293811368_From_Integration_to_Inclusive_Education_in_England_Illuminating_the_Issues_Through_A_Life_History_Account

²⁴Cologon, Kathrine (2019). “*Towards Inclusive Education: A necessary Process of Transformation*”. Macquarie University, Sydney,

that inclusion is about being authentic in embracing students' differences, deploying students' collective abilities, considering students' multi-dimensional aspects of learning, and securing students' life-related learning environments.

The inclusion issue has three dimensions, as argued by Michailakis and Reich²⁵: the societal, the organizational, and the interactional, all of which foresee the inclusion problem as a discriminatory education in the regular classroom²⁶. Therefore, the research would examine the exclusion aspects as described by students with disabilities to determine whether they feel excluded, and if confirmed, to let them reflect on the reasons why they feel excluded. However, students with disabilities in Egypt continue to suffer cultural exclusion.

According to research made by Ola Hosny²⁷, the causes of cultural exclusion can be attributed to three causes. Firstly, the absence of inclusion policies sabotages standard opportunities and resources to ensure students' social inclusion. Secondly, inclusion policies' failure to fill the gap between what is intended to be done

Australia.Towards inclusive education: a necessary process of transformation - Macquarie University

²⁵Michailakis, D. and Reich, W. (2009). Dilemmas of inclusive education. *Alter European Journal of Disability Research* 3(1), pp. 24–44. <https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S1875067208000849?token=808373BAA0B0C20A653992F7A17629C99F574C17787F32DC9EEEB301A11C702A73088E0E0396CE6B995EC33CE1736BB2&originRegion=eu-west-1&originCreation=20221202194011>

²⁶Williams, M. et al. (2017). “*Models of support for students with disabilities. Brighton*”, UK: Institute for Employment Studies. <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/30436/1/modelsofsupport.pdf>

²⁷Hosny, O. H. (2023). “*Opening Windows and Closing Gaps: A Case Analysis of the Agenda Setting of Egypt's Inclusion Policymaking Process in Higher Education Institutions*”. [Ph.D. Thesis, Lancaster University]. <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/opening-windows-closing-gaps-case-analysis-agenda/docview/2812065847/se-2>

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and what is done²⁸. Thirdly, social practices are impeding students' social empowerment²⁹.

Educational Policy for Persons with Disabilities:

The Egyptian government has allocated significant funding to educational programs specifically designed for individuals with disabilities to enhance their educational skills and integrate them into school education prior to university. The latter has not received as much attention as school education. For instance, the Ministry of Education has implemented the Digitization Project Curriculum to support 18,000 students with hearing and visual impairments by creating highly accessible curricula³⁰.

The Ministry of Communication provided students with disabilities with electronic tablets to facilitate the learning process and trained teachers for their use. Plus, all schools for the blind and most schools of the deaf were equipped with necessary visual and hearing aid devices in all classrooms for a better education process. In higher education, the government supported a total of 24 centers for the disabled in public universities³¹. It can be inferred that the government is more inclined to support students with disabilities in pre-university education rather than in higher education.

²⁸El-Saadany and Metwally (2018): "*The Quality of Life of Youth with Disability in Egypt, with Special Focus on Educational Achievement*", Working Paper No. 1215, Economic Research Forum. Microsoft Word - Saadani&Metwally_finalworking paper - Formatted Aug 29.doc

²⁹USAID. (2017). "*Needs assessment of persons with disabilities in Egyptian public universities and regional technical colleges*". Cairo, Egypt: USAID. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00N6TT.pdf

³⁰Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights (SSCHR) (2020). "*National Efforts to Promote and Protect the Rights of Persons of Disabilities in Egypt on the Occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities*," International Human Rights Days Report. <https://sschr.gov.eg/media/qzgke5c0/hrd-8-2020-en.pdf>

³¹Ibid.



Students with Disabilities in Higher Education:

It is argued that worldwide, students with disabilities mostly suffer from psychological barriers related to social and educational interaction, particularly in higher education³². Since the government of Egypt is committed to achieving inclusive education, it must be enacted both in schools and universities. Nevertheless, not only does Egyptian higher education experience inconsistent progress towards social inclusion compared to pre-university education, but also many developed countries, such as the United States, Australia, Uganda, and South Africa, still grapple with many social and legal obstacles to achieve inclusion in higher education³³.

Despite all global obstacles facing many countries in achieving inclusive higher education, Egypt has introduced some inclusive measures in higher education in alignment with Egypt's SDGs, affirming equal access to higher education. Still, some obstacles may face students with disabilities accessing higher education in Egypt. Previous research³⁴ has spotted some barriers to inclusiveness in higher education for students with disabilities. Some relevant barriers have been selected for the topic of this research, including:

(1) pre-higher education barriers; (2) admission, enrolment, and program choice barriers; (3) attitudinal barriers; (4) physical environment and transport barriers; (5) course curricula and material barriers; (6) examination barriers

³²Harpur, P., & Stein, M. A. (in press-a) (2015). "*Children with disabilities, human rights, and sustainable development*". In C. Fenton-Glynn (Ed.), *Children's rights in international sustainable development law*.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Lord and Stein (2018). "*Pursuing Inclusive Higher Education in Egypt and beyond through Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*." *Social Inclusion* (ISSN: 2183-2803) 2018, Volume 6, Issue 4, Pages 230-240.

1. Pre-higher Education Barriers:

Many students with disabilities in the admission process for higher education lacked proper information about the support services and facilities provided to them by the university. Plus, those students do not have proper self-advocacy skills; in turn, it would be difficult for them to express the accommodation they need, in addition to their inability to use technology, which limits their choices of the course they opt for. Finally, students with physical disabilities face the challenge of movement and need a special environment. For example, they would have reduced access to transportation, classrooms on higher floors, and difficulty using bathrooms.

2. Admission, Enrolment, and Program Choice Barriers:

First of all, admission criteria are not clear for students with disabilities in higher education, typically, they are pushed to join certain departments. In most cases, they were denied entry into medical departments if they had physical disabilities³⁵. More importantly, there are no written policies to follow and apply by university administrators, they rather make decisions based on a general understanding, which eventually works against students' best interest³⁶. Although the law mentions that the "admission rate for persons with disabilities shall not be less than (5%) of the total admissions in the governmental and non-governmental educational institutions of all types" (article 12). It also mentions that educational institutions should "allocate not less than 10% of the places of residence in the university hostels" for students with disabilities (article 15)³⁷.

³⁵Lord, L. (2017). *"Students with Disabilities in Higher Education: A Guide for Faculty and Staff,"* Routledge

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷National Council for Women, 2020, p. 46 30-31, Cairo, Egypt

- Norwich, B. (2013). *Addressing Tensions and Dilemmas in Inclusive Education: Living with uncertainty.* New York, USA: Taylor and Francis.



3. Attitudinal Barriers:

In most cases, students with disabilities suffer from faculty and peer misperception of disability, which results in a lack of participation and engagement by students with disabilities in student activities and class participation. The findings suggest that most faculty were not aware of the rights of students with disability to have equal access to full inclusion in universities like other students.

4. Physical Environment and Transport Barriers:

The study assessed whether students with disabilities were able to commute to the university and whether various means and tools were provided for them to facilitate transportation and movement on campus, to lectures, the library, the recreational center, and sports. The study revealed that students with disabilities were not able to move freely despite the low cost of the facilities required to give them free movement. To illustrate, blind persons and persons in wheelchairs in particular could not attend lectures and activities due to the lack of environmental support, not to mention the inability to access toilets and sanitation facilities. The resource limitations and old buildings have been perceived as a major impediment to physical accessibility. Usually, those students relied on a friendly assistant from their family member outside campus, and their peers on campus³⁸. The law states that “permits for the establishment of any buildings of any kind that are permanently allocated to serve persons with disabilities shall be exempted from the value legally prescribed to permits. Licenses to modify an existing building to facilitate its use by persons with disabilities shall be exempt from the value legally prescribed to licenses within the limits of the value of such modification only” (article 31)³⁹.

<https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9780203118436/addressing-tensions-dilemmas-inclusive-education-brahm-norwich>

³⁸Ibid

³⁹National Council for Women (2020). pp. 46 30-31, Cairo, Egypt

5. Course Material and Curricula Barriers:

It has been reported that students with disabilities have difficulty accessing course materials and curricula, particularly for students with hearing and visual impairments, and a small fraction of students with physical disability have reported the same issue. One of the suggestions proposed was to provide alternative formats for courses and exams, which requires the approval of the faculty member and preparation for library staff in addition to the financial cost. The law also enforces that the “Equipment, materials, educational and medical materials, aids, machinery, special tools, prosthetics, technology and assistive devices, and their spare parts for persons with disabilities”⁴⁰.

6. Examination Barriers:

The large majority of students revealed experiencing difficulties while taking the examination; students pointed out that they are usually assigned unqualified readers and writers. They also noted that faculty would perceive allowing such aid as a privilege that is unfairly denied to others and that might allow cheating. Accordingly, students emphasized their right to have a policy that grants them whatever accommodation they need by law⁴¹.

Research Questions and Hypotheses:

The research aims to explore the reasons why inclusion is inadequate in higher education. This would be measured by some indicators, including reasonable accommodation, if it is provided to students with disabilities in schools more than in universities? Another question is how the lack of reasonable accommodation in higher education affects students' performance compared to their performance in school settings. (For example, did it affect their grades? Did a lack of inclusion force some students to drop out of universities or affect their attendance rate? Hypotheses of the research include:

⁴⁰Norwich, B. (2013). Addressing Tensions and Dilemmas in Inclusive Education: Living with uncertainty. New York, USA: Taylor and Francis.

⁴¹Ibid.

1. Inadequate inclusive education in universities
2. Minimal accommodation in universities would negatively affect students' grades and attendance rates compared to schools.
3. Poor policy formulation and implementation would result in poor accommodation provided to students in higher education.

Methodology and Data Collection:

The research relies on primary data collected through personal interviews with disabled students in a private institution, as previously mentioned, and simple qualitative analysis in addition to the researcher's observations while the respondents were being interviewed. A semi-structured interview was conducted with seven students with disabilities. The disabilities were mild to moderate and diverse, some were hard of hearing, ADHD, Dyslexia, and learning difficulties. The age ranged between nineteen and twenty-three, level one through level four, three females and four males, they all graduated from private schools, and they are studying Humanities and Social Sciences. Their CGPA at school compared to university is either almost the same or higher at the university, which suggests either the same level of performance or slight improvement at the university.

Data Analysis and Findings:

During the interview process, all seven students with disabilities argued that they were able to participate in group activities with more ease at their university compared to their schools. They found it easier to communicate with their instructors at the university than with their teachers in school because the former were flexible and encouraged them to participate in class either individually or through group activities. Furthermore, all students have asserted that they usually attend office hours to receive additional help from their instructors. They have also reported that they receive better teaching facilities, social, and psychological services from their university.

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Students with disabilities have reported that in recognition of the diverse challenges they face, DS provides a range of essential services aimed at fostering an inclusive academic environment for them, such as disability buddies during examinations, as mentioned earlier. Additionally, extra exam time is allocated to allow students to effectively complete their assessments and examinations. In some situations, students are exempt from long essay questions due to their short attention span, allowing for a more equitable testing environment. Students with disabilities have also asserted that they receive extended durations for assignment completion. In certain instances, assignments may be divided into smaller, manageable tasks to enhance accessibility. They argued that this approach is critical for accommodating their individual learning needs. In addition, they claimed that instructors and proctors are trained to deliver instructions clearly and deliberately, ensuring comprehension by students with disabilities, and in some cases, instructors record their lectures and provide students revision sheets; this practice was reported to be helpful by all students in the sample.

Furthermore, one of the students with ADHD has reported that due to his inability to use his fine-motor skills by holding a pen during exams, a software-assisted education is offered to him as an alternative examination method, utilizing computer software. Moreover, faculty members and Teaching Assistants extend their office hours to accommodate meetings with students with disabilities, ensuring they receive the necessary support to thrive in their academic pursuits. Lastly, they have described the overall support they have received from the university as either very good or excellent, while they reported that it is either good or very good in their schools, they have agreed on enjoying studying at the university more while one participant reported that she enjoyed studying equally at the university and school. Some of the recommendations that were suggested are to exempt students with disabilities from essay questions in all exams, or to allow them to write short essays or keywords instead of an essay format.



Additionally, one student has recommended not using bubble sheets in the exams. Lastly, they have recommended that instructors create more group activities during classes, as this fosters a sense of social inclusion in their educational journey.

From the researchers' observations, the private university under study has well-rounded disability facilities to allow for an inclusive learning journey. A Disability Services (DS) unit was founded that caters to the needs of students with special requirements, ensuring they have equal opportunities to succeed academically. The mission of DS is to address and alleviate the challenges faced by students with disabilities, which may include mobility, hearing, visual, and psychological impairments. Students with mobility-related disabilities may have challenges navigating the campus. To improve access, ramps are strategically placed throughout university buildings, ensuring wheelchair access to various locations. Ground floor facilities, like cafeterias, are easily accessible, while elevators are provided for those needing access to upper floors, such as the library.

Students who are hard of hearing may find it challenging to follow lectures or take effective notes. To address these needs, designated front-row seating is available in lecture halls, and each student is paired with a disability buddy or a shadow teacher. This buddy attends lectures with the student, acting as a note-taker and helping to clarify spoken content as necessary. For students with visual impairments, independent navigation on campus can be challenging. Accordingly, these students are paired with a disability buddy who provides essential support during their campus experience, including assistance with note-taking, reading, and writing tasks. Additionally, psychological disabilities encompass various conditions, including Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Dyslexia. Adjustments may include extended exam durations and personalized therapeutic sessions focused on managing exam-related anxiety and enhancing time management skills.

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The study concluded that the hypothesis of the study holds theoretically, since most of the previous studies asserted that schools offer reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. While in the applied section, students agreed to have received better accommodations at their university. Social participation is significantly lower among students with disabilities than among students without disabilities in extracurricular activities with effective communication with peers, instructors. This is due to a lack of awareness among students with disabilities of the existence of such activities. Additionally, the needs of students with disabilities are not clear among students, a stigma around the latter's preference to disengage from students' activities outside the classroom.

Study Limitations:

The study has limitations due to limited data availability on students with disabilities in higher education and the sensitivity of students with disabilities to participate in the data collection process. In our study, only seven out of fifty students agreed to participate in the interview process. This limited the reliability of the data gathered for future generalization. Additionally, the original plan was to include a larger number of respondents, but due to the difficulty in accessing more educational institutions and the sensitivity of approaching those respondents, we were obliged to limit our respondents to one private university.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

So, the study has found that social inclusion in extracurricular activities at the private university under study is necessary since most of the students have claimed they have only participated in trips and sports activities, but not in the student union or university models. Yet the university has offered better reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities than their private schools. In terms of overall social inclusion, students with disabilities have asserted that they have open communication with their instructors, peers, and that they feel more comfortable

working in group activities at their university compared to their private schools.Plus, the empirical study, unlike the hypothesis, which assumed that schools provide better accommodation, proved that students preferred the accommodation offered by the university.

It is recommended that data available on students with disabilities should be improved for future researchers and the policy and practice side of public policy. Few studies focus on the policy making of social inclusion in Egyptian higher education institutions, more research is essential in this area to improve the social inclusion criterion that ultimately helps students with disabilities to have a more meaningful higher educational journey. Some recent studies have indicated that students with disabilities in higher education who receive appropriate support are more likely to achieve academic success.

In addition, it is argued that the most common factors influencing the academic performance and success of students with disabilities at the university level are support from the family, the staff, faculty, and peers. Hence, it is crucial to provide training for professors, staff, and students without disabilities on how to deal with students with disabilities to allow for a more socially inclusive policy in higher education. Future research should focus on empirical, evidence-based practices to bridge the gap between theoretical perspectives and effective public policy formulation and implementation. Additionally, Student Unions in Egyptian Higher Education should represent students with disabilities' voices, requests, and concerns to facilitate their higher educational experience.

Lastly, Higher Education Institutions should align their efforts and resources to build an engaging environment and promote social inclusion policies across their institutions this should include raising awareness of how to improve the performance of students with disabilities through professors and staff training and through encouraging peer cooperation and engagement in the classroom and outside the classroom via extracurricular activities.

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The government should ensure that practices and accommodations in all educational institutions are in alignment with international agreements and conventions, besides adequate budget allocation for this vulnerable community. The success of the private university under study should be generalized in all Higher Education Institutions, not just in Egypt but regionally as well.

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