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SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF DISABILITY FIQH: THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EXTENSION WORKERS IN SHAPING THE WORSHIP UNDERSTANDING OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Hayinun Nafsiyah[1], Nita Agustina Nurlaila Eka Erfiana[2]
UIN Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah Tulungagung, East Java, Indonesia

e-mail Correspondence: hayinunnafsiyah@gmail.com
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Abstract

Purpose: *This study examines how disability fiqh is socially constructed and how Islamic religious extension workers (*penyuluh agama Islam*) shape the worship understanding of persons with disabilities in the only inclusive housing complex for persons with disabilities in Trenggalek Regency, Indonesia.* ***Design/methodology/approach:*** *A qualitative case study was conducted at the Inclusive Housing of Banaran Village, Tugu District, using in-depth interviews, participatory observation and documentation. Informants were selected purposively from residents with deaf, low-vision and physical disabilities, extension workers and surrounding community members. Data were analysed thematically through Miles and Huberman's interactive model, and validity was maintained through source and technique triangulation. Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory was combined with an inclusive disability fiqh perspective.* ***Findings:*** *Worship understanding is not derived mechanically from normative texts; it is formed through negotiation, adaptation and dialogue in a specific social setting. Extension workers act as agents of social construction who perform preventive, corrective, preservative and developmental functions and operate as facilitators, mediators and role models. Residents adapt along three interrelated dimensions (practice, understanding and environment) and through three stages (doubt, strategy determination and adaptation). Persons with disabilities emerge as active subjects, not merely objects, of fiqh provisions.* ***Research limitations/implications:*** *The single-case design restricts statistical generalisation, so transferability rests on thick description of a purpose-built community. Practical implications: Disability-awareness training for religious service personnel and equal dialogue among scholars, extension workers, academics and persons with disabilities are essential for inclusive religious services.* ***Originality/value:*** *The study treats lived experience as a legitimate source of knowledge in fiqh formation and proposes an inductive model of contextual disability fiqh grounded in an inclusion-by-design community.*
Keywords: *social construction, disability fiqh, Islamic religious extension workers, religious inclusion, Indonesia*

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Persons with disabilities are often treated as recipients of ready-made religious rulings rather than as participants in shaping them. This study shows, in an Indonesian inclusive housing community, how worship understanding is negotiated among residents with disabilities, Islamic religious extension workers and neighbours. It fills the gap between normative studies of disability fiqh and empirical accounts of everyday religious practice, and it offers religious service providers, policymakers and community organisations practical guidance for building

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genuinely accessible religious services.

INTRODUCTION

Disability is no longer understood solely as an individual medical condition to be cured or corrected. The social and human rights paradigms locate the main barriers faced by persons with disabilities in social construction, inaccessible environments and discriminatory systems, and recent analysis suggests that these two models are best read as complementary rather than as successive improvements (Lawson & Beckett, 2021). This shift has direct consequences for religious life in Muslim societies, where religion is one of the arenas in which disability is defined most intensively. Islam does not only supply normative texts about worship; it also produces social meanings that shape how persons with disabilities are viewed and how they view themselves in religious practice. Empirical work in Indonesia, the largest Muslim-majority country, shows that stigma towards disabled people remains embedded in social structures, and that religious leaders and societal norms strongly influence public perception (Billah et al., 2025). Studies of Muslim families point in the same direction: Othman et al. (2022) found that Muslim mothers of children with disabilities negotiate caregiving values, disparity, fortitude and unmet needs within communities where disability is culturally stigmatised.

The normative sources of Islam contain strong principles of inclusion, yet the literature on how these principles become lived practice is uneven. The Qur'an affirms that believers should fear God to the best of their ability (Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia, 2005), which grounds the principle of proportional obligation (*taklif*), and the prophetic precedent of Abdullah ibn Ummi Maktum, a blind companion entrusted with the call to prayer and with guardianship of Madinah, shows that sensory limitation does not diminish spiritual or social capacity (Ghaly, 2009). Foundational studies report that the Qur'an presents physical conditions neither as a curse nor as a blessing (Bazna & Hatab, 2005) and that classical jurisprudence treats disability with doctrinal neutrality (Rispler-Chaim, 2007). Maftuhin (2023) nevertheless argues that this neutrality is compromised in practice by a "normality bias": authorities who do not experience disability design rulings and facilities, such as ablution areas, that exclude those who do. In Indonesia, the response has taken the form of organisational compendia: Nahdlatul Ulama's fatwas on the rights of people with disabilities (Maftuhin, 2021), the Muhammadiyah *Fikih Difabel* (Maftuhin & Muflihati, 2022) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs' *Fikih Penguatan Penyandang Disabilitas* (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019). The conceptual resources of the tradition have been mapped by Ghaly (2009, 2019), including the question of legal capacity under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, while the perceptions of faith leaders have been identified as decisive for inclusion in congregations (Ault et al., 2023).

Despite this growing scholarship, three gaps remain. First, most studies analyse fiqh documents, organisational fatwas or normative arguments; Maftuhin (2023) shows that these documents rely heavily on dispensation (*rukhṣah*), which persons with disabilities may experience as "discounted religiosity", yet we know little about how worship understanding is actually formed in everyday interaction. Second, the role of Islamic religious extension workers, the frontline of religious service at community level, has been examined only in small and institution-specific studies, for example on worship learning for deaf pupils at SLB Negeri Banyuates Bangkalan (Jurnal Maalim, 2024), on religious guidance for families with a member with a disability in Wonosobo (Garuda Kemdiktisaintek, 2025) and on religious guidance for persons with visual disabilities, and these have not been theorised as processes of social construction. Third, research on the Trenggalek inclusive housing has so far addressed social

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adaptation in general (Lahitani et al., 2025) and has not examined its religious dimension. A purpose-built community in which residents with deaf, low-vision and physical disabilities live alongside neighbours and extension workers is therefore an unusually informative setting, but it has not been studied from this angle.

This article responds to these gaps by exploring the social construction of disability fiqh at the Inclusive Housing of Banaran Village, Tugu District, Trenggalek Regency, an initiative of the Naeema Foundation and the only residential area in the regency designed specifically for persons with disabilities. Drawing on Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of the social construction of reality and on an inclusive disability fiqh perspective, the study addresses three research questions: (1) How do Islamic religious extension workers shape the fiqh understanding of worship among persons with disabilities? (2) How does the social construction process unfold in daily interactions between residents, extension workers and the surrounding community? (3) How do persons with disabilities themselves interpret and practise worship in this context?

The study makes four contributions. Theoretically, it applies the dialectic of externalisation, objectivation and internalisation to the formation of fiqh, and it positions extension workers as agents of construction rather than as neutral transmitters of texts. Empirically, it provides a case-based account of three disability groups in a single inclusion-by-design community. Methodologically, it demonstrates how a qualitative case study with source and technique triangulation can capture the negotiation of religious meaning. Practically, it identifies competencies and training needs for religious service personnel and outlines a model of contextual disability fiqh that treats lived experience as a legitimate source of knowledge. The remainder of the article develops the conceptual framework and research propositions, explains the method, presents the thematic findings, discusses them against prior studies and concludes with implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

Three bodies of scholarship underpin the study. The first concerns models of disability. The medical model locates the problem in individual impairment; the social model relocates it in disabling environments and attitudes; and the human rights model, embedded in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, foregrounds dignity and entitlement. Lawson and Beckett (2021) argue that the social and human rights models have different subjects and different functions and are therefore complementary, which is a useful stance for this article: the social model explains why worship barriers are produced, while rights-based reasoning justifies the duty to remove them. In Islamic discourse, this stance resonates with Maftuhin's (2023) insistence that accessibility and the state's duty to provide it must come before any discussion of exemptions.

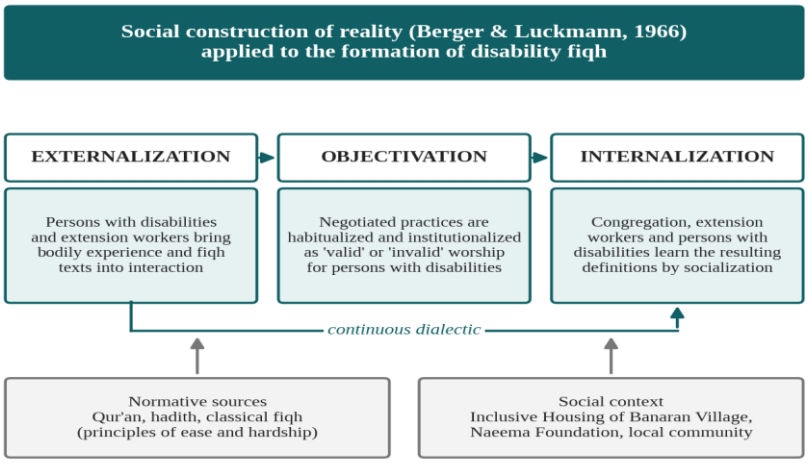
The second body of scholarship concerns fiqh. Fiqh denotes the human endeavour to understand the divinely ordained sharia and is therefore open to revision (Maftuhin, 2023). It contains a social ethic oriented towards justice, benefit (*maslahah*) and humane treatment, and maxims such as "hardship brings ease" (*al-mashaqqah tajlib al-taysīr*) and "harm must be removed" (*al-ḍarar yuzāl*) allow inclusive interpretation. Disability fiqh in Indonesia has so far drawn on three principles identified in the classical literature: removal of hardship, reduction of burdens and gradual legislation, of which the first two supply most legal solutions (Maftuhin, 2023). The Ministry of Religious Affairs' guidance (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019) signals institutional recognition that the shift from an individual to a social view of

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disability must be reflected in religious services, and the Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama texts show that organisational fiqh can integrate the aspirations of persons with disabilities, national legal norms and academic findings (Maftuhin, 2021; Maftuhin & Muflihati, 2022; Maftuhin, 2024).

The third body of scholarship is the theory that organises the analysis. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that social reality is built through repeated human interaction that becomes habitual, is institutionalised and is finally experienced as objective and given. The dialectic comprises three moments: externalisation, in which people produce meanings through action; objectivation, in which these products acquire the status of an external reality; and internalisation, in which the objectivated world is learned through socialisation. Applied to this study, what counts as valid or invalid worship for a person with a disability is not a natural fact. Normative texts supply raw material, but the definitions that circulate in a community result from negotiation among scholars, extension workers, neighbours and persons with disabilities themselves (Figure 1). Islamic religious extension workers occupy a pivotal position in this dialectic because they mediate between textual authority and the bodily realities of their audience. The functions attributed to them in the literature on religious guidance for persons with disabilities are preventive (explaining correct procedure before problems arise), corrective (helping to overcome difficulties or errors), preservative (maintaining good practices that already exist) and developmental (building capacity and independence in worship).

Figure 1
Theoretical Framework: Social Construction of Disability Fiqh



Source: Authors' adaptation of Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Maftuhin (2023).

Research Propositions

Because the study is qualitative, it develops propositions rather than hypotheses. Each proposition is grounded in theory and in prior empirical evidence and guides the exploration of the case (Table 1). The first proposition holds that worship understanding is mediated rather than transmitted. Maftuhin (2023) shows that the technical vacuum in normative texts, for example on how deaf worshippers should follow auditory recitation or how worshippers with physical disabilities should perform certain movements, can only be filled through interpretation, so that outcomes depend on the actors who interpret. The second proposition concerns extension workers: because faith leaders' perceptions strongly condition whether persons with disabilities are included and how they participate (Ault et al., 2023), and because

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religious leaders shape public attitudes towards disability in Indonesia (Billah et al., 2025), extension workers should be analysed as constructors of meaning and not as passive conduits. The third proposition concerns adaptation: Lahitani et al. (2025) report that persons with disabilities in the Trenggalek inclusive housing pass through stages of doubt, strategy determination and adaptation, and it is plausible that religious adaptation follows a similar course. The fourth proposition addresses the epistemic status of lived experience. If rulings rooted only in dispensation can leave worshippers feeling that their worship is incomplete (Maftuhin, 2023), then recognising experiential knowledge as a source of fiqh should produce more satisfying and more inclusive practice, consistent with a rights-based reading of disability (Lawson & Beckett, 2021).

Table 1
Research Propositions and Their Theoretical Anchors

No.	Proposition	Theoretical and empirical anchor
P1	Worship understanding of persons with disabilities is mediated through interaction; normative texts are raw material, not finished rulings.	Berger & Luckmann (1966); Maftuhin (2023)
P2	Extension workers act as agents of social construction through four functions (preventive, corrective, preservative, developmental) and three roles (facilitator, mediator, model).	Ault et al. (2023); Billah et al. (2025); Kementerian Agama RI (2019)
P3	In an inclusion-by-design community, religious adaptation proceeds through doubt, strategy determination and adaptation, along dimensions of practice, understanding and environment.	Lahitani et al. (2025); Berger & Luckmann (1966)
P4	Recognising lived experience as a legitimate source of knowledge enables contextual disability fiqh and reduces the sense of "discounted religiosity".	Maftuhin (2023); Lawson & Beckett (2021); Maftuhin & Muflihati (2022)

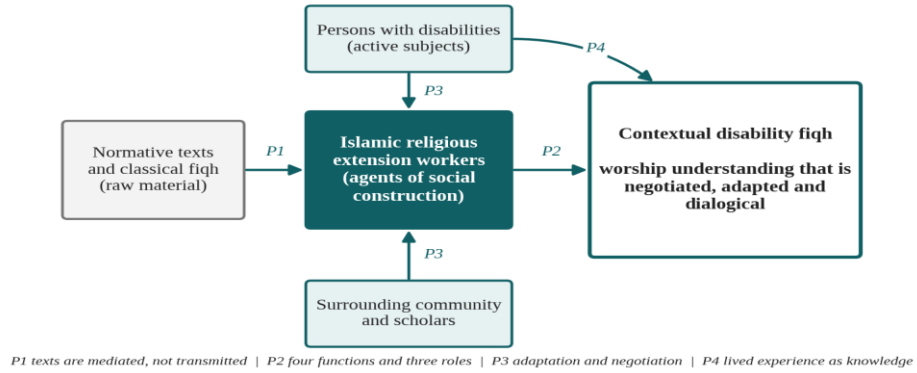
Source: Authors' synthesis.

Research Model

Figure 2 translates these propositions into an analytic model. Normative texts and classical fiqh enter the model as raw material (P1). Extension workers are the central agents who convert this material into guidance through their functions and roles (P2). Persons with disabilities, the surrounding community and scholars interact with extension workers through negotiation and mutual adaptation (P3), and the cumulative outcome is a contextual disability fiqh in which persons with disabilities are recognised as subjects who contribute experiential knowledge (P4). The model ensures alignment between the research questions, the theoretical framework, the propositions and the empirical analysis that follows.

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Figure 2
Research Model and Propositions



Source: Authors' construction.

METHOD

The study adopts a qualitative approach with a single-case design. A qualitative approach was chosen because the objective is to understand meanings, processes and social dynamics in real-life context rather than to test hypotheses or measure variables, and a case study allows a phenomenon to be explored holistically in its context, with attention to interrelated aspects that cannot be separated (Yin, 2009). The design is aligned with the theoretical framework: Berger and Luckmann's dialectic is a theory of processes, and processes of externalisation, objectivation and internalisation are best captured through sustained engagement with those who participate in them. The overall research design is summarised in Figure 3.

Figure 3
Research Design and Analytic Procedure

1 Case selection	Only inclusive housing for persons with disabilities in Trenggalek Regency (Naeema Foundation initiative)
2 Informants	Residents with deaf, low-vision and physical disabilities; Islamic religious extension workers; surrounding community members (purposive)
3 Data collection	In-depth interviews, participatory observation of religious guidance activities, documentation (records, photographs)
4 Data analysis	Thematic analysis following the interactive model: data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing (iterative)
5 Validation	Source triangulation and technique triangulation across informants and methods

Source: Authors' design, based on Yin (2009) and Miles and Huberman (1994).

The research was conducted at the Inclusive Housing of Banaran Village, Tugu District, Trenggalek Regency, East Java. The location was selected for its uniqueness: it was initiated by the Naeema Foundation, it is the only residential area specifically designated for persons with disabilities in the regency, its residents have deaf, low-vision and physical disabilities, and its residents interact actively with the surrounding community and with religious extension workers. This combination makes the site a rich social laboratory for examining the construction of disability fiqh in a real context, and the case is therefore an information-rich, instrumental case rather than a statistically representative one.

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The informants comprised three groups: residents with disabilities, Islamic religious extension workers who provide guidance in the area, and surrounding community members who take part in religious interaction. Informants were selected purposively according to their involvement in religious activities and social interaction in the housing complex, so as to obtain diverse perspectives on how worship understanding is formed and practised. The final number of informants was [insert total number and breakdown by group]. Sample adequacy was judged by meaning saturation rather than by a fixed quota, in line with empirical evidence that saturation in interview-based studies with relatively homogeneous groups is typically reached within roughly 9–17 interviews (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Transferability is supported by thick description of the setting and the informants (Table 3).

Three techniques were used. In-depth interviews explored the informants' understanding of worship, their experiences of performing worship and their interactions with extension workers. Participatory observation followed the religious activities and guidance carried out by extension workers in the housing complex, which allowed practices to be compared with accounts of them. Documentation collected relevant secondary data such as activity records, photographs and other supporting documents. The data were collected between [insert months and year of fieldwork]. The interview guide was organised around the three research questions, and field notes were written after each observation session.

Data were analysed thematically within the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), comprising data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Reduction involved selecting and simplifying data relevant to the research focus and coding them against the sensitising concepts of the theoretical framework as well as against inductively emerging categories. Display took the form of thematic narratives and matrices that describe patterns across informant groups. Conclusions were drawn iteratively by comparing new data with provisional findings. Consistent with the reflexive tradition of thematic analysis, themes were treated as analytic outputs developed through interpretation, not as summaries of topics, and the quality of the analysis was judged by the coherence, depth and reflexivity of the interpretation instead of by coding-reliability statistics (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Validity was maintained through source triangulation (comparing data from different informant groups) and technique triangulation (comparing interviews, observation and documentation).

Table 2
Analytic Framework Linking Concepts, Categories and Data Sources

Theme	Theoretical concept	Illustrative categories	Main data sources
T1. Fiqh between text and social reality	Externalisation; objectivation	Ease and hardship principles; technical vacuum; definitions of ability; fiqh as unfinished	Interviews with extension workers; documentation
T2. Extension workers as agents of construction	Agents of construction; legitimation	Four functions; facilitator, mediator, model; competencies and networks	Observation of guidance; interviews
T3. Interaction, adaptation and negotiation	Internalisation; habitualisation	Adaptation of practice, understanding and environment; stages of adaptation	Interviews with residents; observation
T4. Towards contextual disability fiqh	Dialogical construction; lived experience as knowledge	Inductive approach; equal dialogue; awareness training; authority of experience	Cross-source synthesis

Source: Authors' analysis.

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RESULT

The findings are organised into four themes that correspond to the research questions and to the analytic framework in Table 2. The thematic map in Figure 4 summarises their relationships. Informant characteristics are described first.

Informant Characteristics

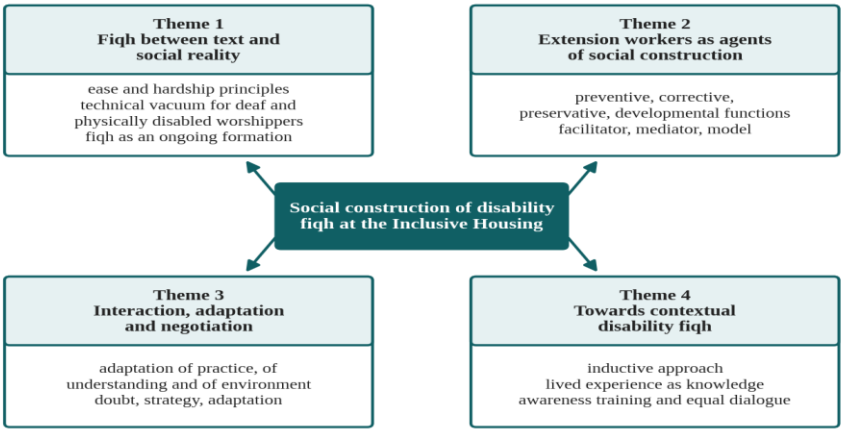
The informants represent the three groups that together form the social field in which worship understanding is constructed (Table 3). The residents with disabilities include deaf, low-vision and physical disabilities, which matters analytically because each group meets a different barrier to worship: auditory recitation for deaf residents, printed texts for residents with low vision and bodily movement for residents with physical disabilities. Extension workers are the actors who bring textual authority and fiqh tradition into this field, and surrounding community members are the congregation with whom residents share religious activities such as community service and mutual cooperation.

Table 3
Informant Groups, Roles in the Field and Data Sources

Group	Role in the construction of worship understanding	Barrier or focus	Techniques	n
Residents with deaf disabilities	Bring lived experience of worship; negotiate practices	Auditory recitation and sermons	Interview; observation	[n]
Residents with low-vision disabilities	Bring lived experience; test accessibility of texts	Print size and contrast	Interview; observation	[n]
Residents with physical disabilities	Bring lived experience; adapt movements	Prayer movements, mobility	Interview; observation	[n]
Islamic religious extension workers	Provide guidance; interpret and contextualise fiqh	Four functions; three roles	Interview; observation; documentation	[n]
Surrounding community members	Share religious activities; adjust expectations	Acceptance of differing practices	Interview; observation	[n]

Source: Authors' field design. Group sizes are to be inserted from the field records.

Figure 4
Thematic Map of the Findings



Source: Authors' analysis.

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Theme 1: Disability Fiqh between Normative Text and Social Reality

The first finding is that fiqh, as a product of human understanding of sharia, always exists in productive tension between normative text and social reality, and that this tension becomes more complex in the case of disability because it involves bodily experience that classical discourse seldom represents. The Qur'anic principle to fear God to the best of one's ability and the Prophetic guidance to pray standing, then sitting if unable, then lying down, give persons with disabilities space to adjust their worship to their condition (Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia, 2005). These sources, however, do not specify how deaf worshippers should follow prayer recitations or how worshippers with physical disabilities should perform particular movements. The technical vacuum calls for *ijtihad* and creativity, and in the housing complex this vacuum is filled in interaction between residents and extension workers.

Following Berger and Luckmann (1966), the definitions that fill the vacuum, that is, what counts as ability or inability in worship and what counts as valid or invalid worship, undergo habitualisation and institutionalisation until they appear objective and given. The case shows that this process is gradual and works through socialisation, education and daily interaction. Residents bring their own experiences and understandings of worship, while extension workers bring textual authority and established fiqh traditions; their encounter produces negotiation that does not always run smoothly but is analytically productive. Residents are not passive in this negotiation. They voice their experiences and needs and look for ways to worship that still meet the requirements of sharia, and responsive extension workers listen to these voices when formulating guidance, so that the construction of disability fiqh at Banaran is dialogical and participatory rather than monological and authoritarian.

Classical texts do not discuss disability in the way the term is understood today, but their general principles can anchor inclusive understanding: *masyaqqah* (hardship that brings leniency) and *ḍarūrah* (necessity that permits exceptions) provide a basis for creative interpretation that responds to contemporary inclusion challenges. The finding therefore is that disability fiqh is not finished and ready to be applied; it continues to be formed through interaction between text, context and experience.

Theme 2: Extension Workers as Agents of Social Construction

The second finding concerns how Islamic religious extension workers shape worship understanding. They act as agents of social construction with a strategic position in forming community religious understanding: they convey fiqh texts, but they also interpret and contextualise them according to the audience they face. In the context of disability this demands sensitivity and adaptation that conventional extension training does not always provide, and a view of disability not only as a medical condition but as a complex and diverse lived experience. Four functions operate simultaneously and reinforce one another (Table 4). The preventive function appears when extension workers explain correct worship procedures before problems arise; the corrective function when they help residents overcome difficulties or errors; the preservative function when they maintain good practices that are already running; and the developmental function when they build the capacity and independence of residents in worship.

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Table 4
Functions and Roles of Extension Workers in the Construction of Worship Understanding

Dimension	Meaning in the field	Link to construction process
Preventive function	Explaining correct worship procedure before problems arise	Externalisation: bringing text into interaction
Corrective function	Helping residents overcome difficulties or errors in practice	Objectivation: stabilising what counts as valid
Preservative function	Maintaining good practices that already work	Habitualisation and institutionalisation
Developmental function	Building capacity and independence in worship	Internalisation: self-directed worship
Facilitator role	Helping residents find ways to worship and creating a supportive environment	Enabling adaptation
Mediator role	Helping society accept residents as equal members of the ummah and reducing stigma	Legitimation in the wider community
Model role	Treating residents, communicating and guiding in ways that become examples	Shaping culture and social values

Source: Authors' analysis, informed by Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia (2019) and Berger and Luckmann (1966).

At Banaran, extension workers face the challenge of bridging textual fiqh understanding and diverse practical needs. Deaf residents may find auditory prayer recitations hard to follow and therefore need visual or written approaches; this resonates with the report that visual approaches, direct practice and congregational habituation are effective strategies in worship learning for deaf pupils (Jurnal Maalim, 2024). Residents with physical disabilities may need adjustments in prayer movements that standard fiqh explanations do not accommodate, and residents with low vision may need larger print or higher contrast. Extension workers must therefore find solutions that fulfil sharia principles while being executable by residents.

The role of extension workers cannot be understood as one-way transmission of knowledge. It is dialogue and negotiation: effective extension workers listen to residents' experiences, understand their limitations and abilities and together seek formulations of worship that are both legitimate and realistic. This requires humility from both sides, since extension workers bring textual authority and fiqh tradition while residents bring lived experience and understanding of their own bodily abilities. Extension workers also mediate between residents and the wider society, helping the community see persons with disabilities as equal members of the ummah with the same rights and obligations in worship, and emphasising that physical limitation does not reduce spiritual value before God. Finally, they act as models: how they treat and communicate with residents becomes an example for the surrounding community, so that inclusive extension workers inspire inclusive communities while discriminatory ones reinforce prejudice. Carrying out these roles requires adequate fiqh knowledge, adaptive communication skills, understanding of disability, cultural sensitivity and networks with disability organisations, health institutions and social institutions (Garuda Kemdiktisaintek, 2025).

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Theme 3: Social Dynamics at the Inclusive Housing: Interaction, Adaptation and Negotiation

The third finding is that the Inclusive Housing is not only a physical residential space but a social space where persons with disabilities and the general public interact intensively. Residents take part in joint activities with the surrounding community, including community service and religious activities, so they are part of a broader social network and not isolated (Lahitani et al., 2025). This interaction is the ground on which a collective understanding of worship and disability is produced. In religious life, residents bring their own understandings and practices, which may differ from those of the general community, while the community and extension workers bring expectations and fiqh norms that apply generally. Their meeting produces mutual adaptation along three interrelated dimensions (Table 5).

Table 5
Dimensions of Religious Adaptation at the Inclusive Housing

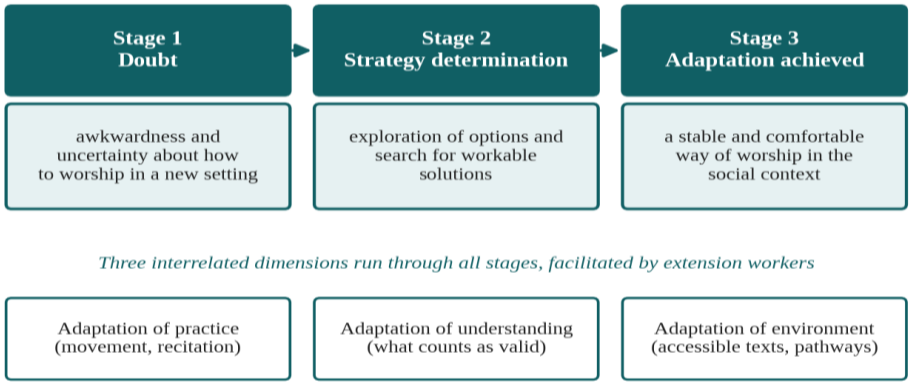
Dimension	Who adapts	Illustration from the case
Adaptation of practice	Residents with disabilities	Adjusting movements, recitation or manner of worship to physical condition while meeting sharia provisions
Adaptation of understanding	Community and extension workers	Revising what is considered valid or invalid in the worship of persons with disabilities
Adaptation of environment	Community, extension workers and institutions	Providing prayer-recitation texts in formats accessible to deaf residents; pathways that facilitate wheelchair users

Source: Authors' analysis of field data.

The process of adaptation unfolds in stages (Figure 5). Lahitani et al. (2025) show that persons with disabilities in the Trenggalek inclusive housing move from doubt about adapting, through the determination of adaptation strategies, to being able to adapt to society, and the case suggests that religious adaptation follows a comparable course. The doubt stage is marked by awkwardness and uncertainty about how to worship in a new environment; the strategy-determination stage involves exploring options and searching for solutions; and the adaptation stage is reached when residents have found a stable and comfortable way to worship in their social context. Responsive extension workers are significant throughout: they help residents find ways that enable worship, provide guidance and a supportive environment, and help the surrounding community understand and accept practices that differ from the common pattern. In this sense extension workers are facilitators of real inclusion at the practical level and not only at the level of discourse.

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Figure 5
Stages and Dimensions of Religious Adaptation



Source: Authors' analysis, adapted from Lahitani et al. (2025).

The dynamics also show that inclusion is not a finished condition but a process that is continuously fought for. Every day residents and the surrounding community negotiate how to live together in diversity, including in the religious aspect, and this negotiation involves an exchange of knowledge, experience and meaning that enriches all parties: residents learn the traditions and norms that apply in society, while society learns about the experiences and needs of persons with disabilities.

Theme 4: Towards Contextual Disability Fiqh

The fourth finding concerns the implications of the case for the development of fiqh. Disability fiqh cannot be only deductive from normative texts; it must also be inductive and learn from the practices and experiences of persons with disabilities. This demands openness to sources of knowledge that may have been overlooked, above all lived experience, and it casts persons with disabilities as experts by experience and as subjects in the formation of understanding about their own worship rather than recipients of pre-made provisions. The case further indicates that extension workers need to be equipped with an understanding of the inclusive disability paradigm, adaptive communication skills and the ability to perform contextual fiqh interpretation, and that disability-awareness training for religious service personnel, as recommended in the Ministry of Religious Affairs' guidance (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019), is an urgent step.

Developing contextual disability fiqh also requires more intense dialogue among scholars, extension workers, academics and persons with disabilities, even when what emerges does not always align with established formulations, and it requires a change in how authority and sources of knowledge are understood: if authority has mostly been drawn from classical texts and the opinions of past scholars, then recognising lived experience as a legitimate source of knowledge becomes necessary for an inclusive fiqh. Fiqh of this kind is oriented to liberation rather than oppression and to mercy for all creation (*raḥmatan lil-ʿālamīn*), and it is discussed further below.

DISCUSSION

The findings answer the research questions in three steps. Extension workers shape worship understanding by mediating between normative texts and bodily realities through four functions and three roles (RQ1). The construction process unfolds as continuous negotiation

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and mutual adaptation of practice, understanding and environment in everyday interaction (RQ2). Persons with disabilities take part as active subjects who voice needs, test solutions and ultimately stabilise a comfortable way of worship (RQ3). Read through Berger and Luckmann (1966), these results show that the "fiqh truth" about worship by persons with disabilities is an outcome of externalisation, objectivation and internalisation, and not a datum waiting to be applied.

Compared with prior studies, the findings are consistent with the argument that organisational fiqh texts rely on dispensation and may leave worshippers with a sense of incomplete worship (Maftuhin, 2023), but they add an empirical layer: at Banaran the remedy is found not in a new ruling alone but in dialogue that lets residents co-define what is workable. They also extend the observation that Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah responded to activists' aspirations by integrating them into fatwas (Maftuhin, 2021; Maftuhin & Muflihati, 2022): the present case shows the same listening operating at community level through extension workers. In relation to stigma, Billah et al. (2025) report that cultural misinterpretation and limited awareness make the application of inclusive Islamic teachings inconsistent in Makassar; the mediator and model roles identified here describe how extension workers may counter this inconsistency, while the experiences of Muslim mothers reported by Othman et al. (2022) indicate why such community-level work matters for families. The importance of faith leaders' perceptions (Ault et al., 2023) is likewise supported, although this study shifts attention from perceptions to practices of guidance. Table 6 summarises these comparisons.

Table 6
Comparison of the Present Findings with Prior Studies

Prior study	Focus and context	Relation to present findings
Maftuhin (2023)	Critique of three Indonesian Fikih Difabel texts; rukhṣah and "discounted religiosity"	Consistent; adds empirical evidence of negotiation as an alternative to dispensation
Maftuhin (2021); Maftuhin & Muflihati (2022)	NU fatwas and Muhammadiyah Fikih Difabel as theological basis for rights	Consistent; shows how listening to persons with disabilities operates at community level
Billah et al. (2025)	Stigma and Islamic law perspectives in Makassar (mixed methods)	Complementary; the mediator and model roles address inconsistent application of inclusive teachings
Othman et al. (2022)	Experiences of Muslim mothers of children with disabilities	Complementary; confirms cultural stigma and the need for community support
Ault et al. (2023)	Faith leaders' perceptions of inclusion	Extended; moves from perceptions to practices of guidance
Lahitani et al. (2025)	Social adaptation in the Trenggalek inclusive housing	Extended; applies the stages of adaptation to religious life
Lawson & Beckett (2021)	Social and human rights models as complementary	Supported; barriers are socially produced and removal is a duty

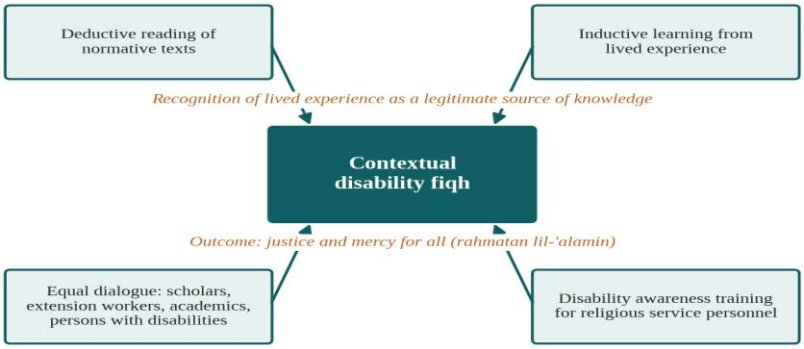
Source: Authors' synthesis.

Theoretically, the study contributes in three ways. First, it extends the social construction of reality from sociology of knowledge to the formation of fiqh, showing that the objectivation of religious definitions can be observed in a small community and that it is neither automatic nor fixed. Second, it refines the conception of religious leadership by treating

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extension workers as agents of construction whose four functions map onto the moments of the dialectic (Table 4). Third, it challenges the deductive default of disability fiqh by showing that an inductive approach, in which lived experience counts as knowledge, is consistent with the rights-based reading of disability (Lawson & Beckett, 2021) and with the call to move beyond dispensation (Maftuhin, 2023). Figure 6 summarises the resulting model of contextual disability fiqh.

Figure 6
Model of Contextual Disability Fiqh



Source: Authors' construction from the findings.

The practical implications are directed at policymakers, religious institutions and extension workers (Table 7). The core recommendation is disability-awareness training that builds knowledge of disability, adaptive communication and contextual interpretation; it should be complemented by structured forums for equal dialogue and by accessible religious materials. Maftuhin (2023) adds that accessibility is a public responsibility and that exemptions should come last, a principle that applies directly to the provision of visual or written worship texts for deaf residents and accessible pathways for wheelchair users.

Table 7
Theoretical and Practical Implications

Audience	Implication	Action
Scholars of fiqh and disability studies	Treat lived experience as a legitimate source of knowledge	Combine deductive reading of texts with inductive field learning; include persons with disabilities as co-researchers
Ministry of Religious Affairs and training institutions	Competence of extension workers must include disability	Mandatory disability-awareness training; modules on adaptive communication and contextual fiqh
Extension workers	Guidance is dialogue and negotiation	Listen first; use visual, written and enlarged formats; build networks with disability, health and social organisations
Community organisations and foundations	Inclusion is a continuing process	Create regular forums among residents, neighbours, scholars and extension workers; make worship facilities accessible

Source: Authors' synthesis.

Contextually, the findings concern a Muslim-majority setting in a developing country where organisational fiqh exists but local implementation depends on frontline actors. The

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inclusion-by-design character of the Banaran housing means that the intensity of interaction is probably higher than in typical villages, and the transfer of the model to other settings should be tested accordingly. The study has limitations: it is a single case, it covers three disability groups and it does not include residents with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities. Future research could compare several communities, include other disability groups and examine the long-term effects of awareness training on practice.

CONCLUSION

The social construction of disability fiqh at the Inclusive Housing of Banaran Village is a dynamic process of interaction among persons with disabilities, Islamic religious extension workers and the surrounding community. Worship understanding is shaped through negotiation, adaptation and dialogue, which confirms that fiqh is continuously formed through the interplay of text, context and experience. Extension workers act as agents of construction through preventive, corrective, preservative and developmental functions and as facilitators, mediators and models, and residents move through doubt, strategy determination and adaptation towards a stable and comfortable way of worship.

The study contributes a theoretically grounded and empirically situated account of how religious inclusion is produced, an inductive model of contextual disability fiqh and a rationale for treating lived experience as legitimate knowledge. Academically, it invites further work that links sociology of knowledge with Islamic legal reasoning; practically, it calls for disability-awareness training for religious service personnel and for equal dialogue among scholars, extension workers, academics and persons with disabilities. Future research should replicate the design in other communities, widen the range of disability groups and examine how contextual fiqh is institutionalised over time.

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Conflicts of Interest
The authors declare no conflicts of interest, to be confirmed by the authors

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