

Transforming Ethical Concern into Educational Justice: Disability Inclusion in Islamic Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

Children with disabilities continue to experience barriers to meaningful participation in educational settings, including limited recognition, accessibility, and institutional support. In Islamic early childhood education, responses toward disability are often shaped by ethical values of compassion, care, and moral responsibility. However, when these values remain limited to benevolent assistance, inclusion may depend on individual goodwill rather than becoming a sustainable educational responsibility. This study aims to develop a conceptual framework that transforms ethical concern into educational justice for children with disabilities in Islamic early childhood education. This study employs a conceptual-critical library research approach by analyzing relevant literature on disability inclusion, Islamic educational ethics, *maqasid al-shariah*, *karamah insaniyyah*, and social justice. The analysis develops the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework, which explains the transformation of inclusion from moral concern toward institutional accountability. The framework positions benevolence as an ethical foundation, while dignity recognition, rights awareness, and justice-oriented practices provide pathways for establishing sustainable inclusion. This study contributes to Islamic early childhood education by reframing children with disabilities not merely as recipients of compassion but as dignified members of educational communities with rights to participation, development, and belonging. The integration of Islamic ethical principles and social justice perspectives provides a conceptual foundation for strengthening inclusive pedagogy, family engagement, and institutional responsibility. This study is limited by its conceptual nature and the absence of empirical validation; therefore, future research should examine the applicability of the proposed framework in diverse Islamic early childhood education contexts.

Keywords: disability inclusion; Islamic Early Childhood Education; educational justice; *Maqasid Al-Shariah*; *Karamah Insaniyyah*; social justice

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1. Introduction

Inclusive education in early childhood cannot be understood merely as the placement of children with disabilities within regular educational settings. Meaningful inclusion requires educational environments that recognize children's dignity, provide equitable access to learning opportunities, accommodate developmental diversity, and enable children to participate as valued members of the learning community (UNESCO, 2016; Vidal et al., 2024). This perspective is particularly important in early childhood education because children aged 0–8 years' experience a critical developmental period in which early educational experiences shape cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development. For children with disabilities, inclusive environments during this period are essential because early recognition, meaningful participation, and appropriate support can influence their developmental trajectories and sense of belonging within educational communities (Chioma, 2026). Therefore, barriers to inclusion should not be understood solely as consequences of children's individual conditions but also as outcomes of educational structures, institutional cultures, curriculum flexibility, teacher preparedness, accessibility, and social perceptions of disability (Morrissey et al., 2025; Novelli, 2026; Podzo & Chipika, 2019).

Islamic early childhood education provides an important context for examining disability inclusion because early education is not only concerned with children's cognitive development but also with moral, religious, and social formation. Islamic educational principles emphasize *rahmah* (compassion), *Adl* (justice), human dignity, social responsibility, and respect for human diversity as fundamental values that guide educational relationships (Afif, 2025; Baidowi et al., 2026; Mareta et al., 2024; Novanto et al., 2025; Suhendri & An Nuha, 2025). These values also provide philosophical foundations for educational planning and curriculum development, where respect for diversity and learner differences should be integrated into educational processes rather than treated as separate considerations (Aulia et al., 2024). In Indonesia, Islamic early childhood education is represented through various institutions, including *Raudhatul Athfal* (RA), Islamic kindergartens, and other faith-based early childhood education settings, which contribute to children's moral and religious development while facing ongoing challenges in establishing inclusive learning environments (Susanti et al., 2026). In the Indonesian context, this issue becomes particularly relevant because Islamic early childhood institutions serve not only as spaces for academic preparation but also as environments where children's religious values, social relationships, and perceptions of diversity are developed from an early age. Within this context, children with disabilities are not excluded from the objectives of Islamic education, as education aims to develop individuals who possess faith, ethical awareness, dignity, intellectual capacity, and the ability to participate in social relationships (Adnan, 2022; Mardatillah et al., 2025; Memon et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the existence of ethical principles does not automatically guarantee inclusive practices, particularly when support remains primarily framed through compassion, protection, or charitable assistance rather than through recognition of children's rights and institutional responsibilities.

One conceptual challenge in disability inclusion concerns the use of benevolence as the primary basis for educational support. Benevolence represents an important moral disposition because it encourages educators and institutions to respond to the needs of children with disabilities through care, empathy, and assistance (Basori et al., 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2024). Within Islamic educational traditions, compassion remains an essential value because education involves moral responsibility toward others. However, benevolence becomes limited when support depends mainly on the personal goodwill of teachers, institutions, or individual benefactors. Under such conditions, children with disabilities may unintentionally be positioned as recipients of care rather than as children possessing dignity, agency, developmental rights, and opportunities for participation (McMahon-Panther & Bornman, 2025; Nario-Redmond et al., 2019). Consequently, benevolence may reproduce paternalistic relationships when decisions regarding children's needs are determined primarily by those providing support without sufficient recognition of children's voices, experiences, and participation (Barnett, 2016; Midtgaard & Pedersen, 2025).

The relationship between benevolence and justice therefore requires further conceptual clarification. This study does not view compassion as incompatible with inclusion; rather, compassion represents an ethical starting point that requires transformation into educational responsibilities. In educational practice, values and philosophical commitments require appropriate pedagogical approaches and learning strategies to ensure that educational goals are translated into meaningful experiences for learners (Aulia et al., 2025). Therefore, educational justice requires that support for children with disabilities should not depend solely on voluntary actions but should be embedded within pedagogical practices, institutional policies, and accountability mechanisms. Similar concerns have been identified in Islamic education, where moral and religious values may remain limited to normative commitments when they are not translated into concrete educational practices, assessment processes, and institutional mechanisms (Aulia et al., 2026). Therefore, educational justice requires that support for children with disabilities should not depend solely on voluntary actions but should be embedded within pedagogical practices, institutional policies, and accountability mechanisms. Such

transformation involves recognizing children with disabilities as subjects of rights, ensuring accessible learning experiences, enabling meaningful participation, and creating educational environments that respond to developmental diversity.

Existing literature on disability inclusion in Islamic education demonstrates two major tendencies. The first tendency is normative-theological, emphasizing that Islamic principles, particularly *maqasid al-shariah*, provide ethical foundations for protecting human welfare, preventing harm, developing capacities, and ensuring educational access for persons with disabilities (Afif, 2025; Anugrah & Sartika, 2025; Billah et al., 2025). The second tendency is pedagogical and institutional, focusing on teacher competence, differentiated instruction, curriculum adaptation, accessible learning resources, and supportive educational environments (Iman et al., 2025; Muchtar & Ali, 2025; Saputri & Hasibah, 2025; Warosari et al., 2025). Although these perspectives provide important foundations, they remain insufficiently connected in explaining how ethical commitments can be transformed into a coherent framework that links dignity, rights recognition, inclusive pedagogy, and institutional accountability, particularly within Islamic early childhood education (Ariff & Ismail, 2026).

To address this gap, this study positions *maqasid al-shariah*, *karamah insaniyyah*, and social justice as complementary analytical perspectives. *Maqasid al-shariah* provides an ethical orientation for understanding education as a responsibility to protect welfare, develop human capacities, preserve dignity, and facilitate meaningful participation in society (Hajimin et al., 2024; Mir & Anjum, 2025; Singh, 2024; Yunus, 2024). *Karamah insaniyyah* emphasizes that the dignity of children with disabilities is inherent and does not depend on their physical, intellectual, communicative, or social abilities (Brauch, 2022; Ferdynus, 2024; Pageau et al., 2024). Meanwhile, social justice provides an analytical perspective for understanding how ethical commitments can be translated into educational practice through equitable resource distribution, recognition of diversity, participation, and institutional accountability (Moraca, 2025).

The novelty of this study lies in developing the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework, a conceptual model that explains how ethical concern toward children with disabilities can be transformed into educational justice through dignity recognition, rights-based responsibility, inclusive pedagogy, and institutional accountability.

Based on this argument, this study aims to develop a conceptual framework explaining how ethical concern toward children with disabilities can be transformed into educational justice within Islamic early childhood education. Specifically, this study addresses three research questions: (1) What are the conceptual limitations of benevolence when used as the foundation of disability inclusion in Islamic early childhood education? (2) How can *maqasid al-shariah* and *karamah insaniyyah* provide ethical foundations for recognizing children with disabilities as subjects of rights? and (3) How can social justice perspectives translate these ethical foundations into pedagogical and institutional responsibilities?

2. Methodology

This study employed a conceptual-critical library research approach to reconstruct the relationship between ethical concern, disability inclusion, and educational justice within Islamic early childhood education. Unlike systematic reviews that aim to identify and synthesize all available publications within a defined research field, conceptual-critical research examines theoretical assumptions, compares conceptual arguments, and develops new understandings through critical engagement with existing scholarly works (Snyder, 2019; Torraco, 2005; Zed, 2014). Therefore, this study does not aim to provide statistical generalization or measure publication trends, but rather to construct a conceptual framework explaining how benevolence can be transformed into educational justice.

This study examined scholarly articles, academic books, conceptual studies, and relevant policy documents related to disability inclusion, Islamic education, Islamic early childhood education, *maqasid al-shariah*, *karamah insaniyyah*, disability rights, and social justice. The literature identification process used exploratory searches in Google Scholar and Consensus AI as supporting scholarly discovery tools. Consensus AI was used only to help locate potentially relevant scholarly publications, while the researcher's judgement guided selection and interpretation. The identified publications were then evaluated manually for relevance, theoretical contribution, and alignment with the research objectives.

The literature was selected purposively based on its conceptual relevance and contribution to the study's argument. Priority was given to recent scholarly discussions, particularly literature published within approximately the last five to ten years, while foundational theoretical works were retained when they provided essential conceptual foundations. The final selection of literature was determined by its ability to support the conceptual construction of the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework, rather than by the quantity or frequency of publication within a particular database.

The literature analysis followed three interconnected stages. First, conceptual mapping identified key concepts related to benevolence, disability inclusion, dignity, rights, participation, *maqasid al-shariah*, and social justice. Second, critical comparison was conducted to examine how previous studies conceptualized disability inclusion, particularly regarding the position of children with disabilities, the role of educators, and institutional responsibilities. Third, interpretive synthesis reconstructed relationships among concepts and developed a framework explaining the shift from ethical concern to educational justice.

Through this analytical process, five interconnected themes were identified: (1) the limitations of benevolence-based inclusion, (2) dignity and recognition of children with disabilities as rights-bearing subjects, (3) *maqasid al-shariah* as an ethical foundation for inclusive education, (4) social justice as a framework for translating ethical values into educational responsibilities, and (5) pedagogical and institutional transformation within Islamic early childhood education. These themes were subsequently organized into the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework, which explains the movement from moral concern toward rights recognition, inclusive educational practices, and institutional accountability.

The final stage involved conceptual synthesis by positioning *maqasid al-shariah*, *karamah insaniyyah*, and social justice within a complementary relationship. *Maqasid al-shariah* serves as an ethical orientation for human welfare, dignity, and development; *karamah insaniyyah* affirms the inherent dignity of children with disabilities; and social justice provides analytical dimensions for evaluating resource distribution, recognition, participation, and institutional accountability. Because this study is conceptual, the proposed framework should be understood as an analytical proposition that requires further empirical examination across diverse Islamic early childhood education contexts.

3. Results

3.1. The Limitation of Benevolence-Based Inclusion: From Assistance to Rights Recognition

The conceptual analysis reveals that the central challenge in disability inclusion is not the absence of compassion but the limitation of compassion when it remains disconnected from rights recognition and institutional responsibility. In early childhood education, including Islamic early childhood education, benevolent responses may encourage teachers and institutions to provide assistance, protection, and emotional support for children with disabilities. Such responses represent an important ethical foundation because care and empathy are necessary elements in establishing supportive educational relationships (Vlachou & Tsirantonaki, 2023). However, inclusion cannot be sustained

when access, participation, and educational opportunities depend solely on the personal commitment of individual educators or institutions.

Within a benevolence-based approach, children with disabilities may receive support because they are perceived as needing protection or assistance. Although such support may produce immediate benefits, it risks positioning children primarily as recipients of care rather than as children with inherent dignity, developmental capacities, and rights. This distinction is particularly significant in early childhood education because children's participation is often mediated by adults, including teachers and families. Without careful consideration, adult decisions regarding children's needs may unintentionally replace children's opportunities to express preferences, develop autonomy, and participate according to their developmental capacities (O'Connor et al., 2021).

The analysis further indicates that benevolence should be distinguished from charity and paternalism. Benevolence refers to a moral disposition to promote another person's welfare, whereas charity may involve assistance that is not necessarily guaranteed as a right of the recipient (Graziano, 2026; Qu, 2024). Paternalism emerges when decisions regarding what is considered beneficial for children are determined primarily by those providing support without sufficient consideration of children's perspectives, experiences, or participation (Graziano, 2026). Therefore, benevolence itself is not inherently problematic; rather, the limitation occurs when benevolent action remains discretionary and does not develop into an accountable educational obligation.

The conceptual transformation identified in this study begins from this limitation. Ethical concern should not be abandoned but reconstructed into a rights-oriented approach. In this transformation, compassion functions as a moral motivation that initiates attention toward children with disabilities, while justice provides the institutional conditions that ensure such attention becomes sustainable. Therefore, the movement from benevolence to justice represents a shift from assistance based on goodwill toward educational responsibility grounded in dignity, accessibility, participation, and accountability.

3.2. *Maqasid al-shariah and Karamah insaniyyah*: Establishing the Ethical Foundation of Inclusion

The second conceptual finding demonstrates that *maqasid al-shariah* provides an ethical foundation for understanding disability inclusion as an educational responsibility rather than merely an act of compassion toward vulnerable groups. In this framework, inclusion is connected to the broader objectives of Islamic ethics, particularly the protection of human welfare, development of capacities, preservation of dignity, and prevention of harm (Al Munawar, 2021; Aslati et al., 2024; Mustofa et al., 2025). Therefore, *maqasid al-shariah* functions not only as theological justification for inclusion but also as an analytical framework for evaluating whether educational environments enable children with disabilities to learn, develop, participate, and experience belonging.

Within this study, three dimensions of *maqasid al-shariah* are particularly relevant to Islamic early childhood education: *hifz al-aql*, *hifz al-nafs*, and *hifz al-din*. In addition, *hifz al-nasl* is considered relevant because early childhood education is closely connected with family involvement and children's social development (Zakaria et al., 2025).

Hifz al-aql provides an ethical basis for ensuring that children with disabilities receive meaningful opportunities for learning and developmental growth. In early childhood education, this principle does not imply directing all children toward identical developmental outcomes but requires educational environments that provide appropriate pathways for children to develop their potential according to their abilities and needs (Hajimin et al., 2024; Mohd Raus et al., 2023).

Hifz al-nafs emphasizes the responsibility to protect children from harm, discrimination, stigma, exclusion, and educational environments that negatively affect their physical and psychological well-being (Fajar & Firdaus, 2026; Wahyuni et al., 2022). However, protection within this framework should

not be interpreted as restricting children's participation. Instead, protection should create safe environments that enable children to engage meaningfully in educational experiences.

Hifz al-din highlights that children with disabilities possess equal rights to participate in religious learning experiences. Within Islamic early childhood education, religious learning should be accessible through developmentally appropriate communication, learning materials, and pedagogical strategies that accommodate diverse abilities (Afif, 2025; Hajimin et al., 2024; Mohd Raus et al., 2023). Furthermore, *hifz al-nasl* expands the framework by emphasizing the role of families as essential partners in supporting children's educational experiences. In early childhood contexts, inclusion cannot rely solely on institutional practices because children's development is shaped through relationships among children, families, teachers, and communities (Martínez-Rico et al., 2024).

These dimensions are connected through the concept of *karamah insaniyyah*. Human dignity functions as the bridge between Islamic ethical objectives and the recognition of children with disabilities as rights-bearing subjects. Dignity is not determined by children's physical, intellectual, communicative, or developmental abilities, but is inherent within their humanity (Brauch, 2022; Ferdynus, 2024; Pageau et al., 2024). Therefore, *karamah insaniyyah* transforms the understanding of children with disabilities from objects of protection into members of the educational community whose voices, experiences, and participation deserve recognition.

3.3. Social Justice as the Mechanism for Educational Transformation

The third conceptual finding demonstrates that ethical foundations alone are insufficient without mechanisms that translate values into educational practice. In this study, social justice functions as the operational dimension that transforms the ethical orientations of *maqasid al-shariah* and *karamah insaniyyah* into concrete responsibilities within Islamic early childhood education.

Social justice is understood through three interconnected dimensions: redistribution, recognition, and participation (Aguayo-Westwood, 2026; Smaal et al., 2021). These dimensions explain how educational institutions move beyond benevolent assistance toward sustainable inclusion. The distributive dimension concerns the equitable allocation of educational resources according to children's needs rather than identical treatment. Within Islamic early childhood education, this includes accessible learning environments, adaptive learning materials, supportive technologies, teacher competence, and flexible pedagogical strategies that allow children with disabilities to participate in learning activities (Malik & Prabowo, 2024; Syaidah et al., 2025).

The recognition dimension emphasizes that children with disabilities should be valued as individuals with unique identities, abilities, and developmental pathways. Inclusion requires transforming representations of disability from dependence and limitation toward dignity, capability, and belonging. Therefore, educational practices should avoid positioning children with disabilities merely as recipients of sympathy and instead recognize them as active members of the learning community.

The participation dimension positions children and families as contributors to educational decision-making. Although young children may participate according to their developmental capacities, their experiences, preferences, and responses should inform educational practices. Family involvement is also essential because parents and caregivers possess important knowledge regarding children's needs and development (Kruithof et al., 2020).

Base on these conceptual relationships, this study reconstructs the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework. The framework demonstrates that inclusive Islamic early childhood education requires a transformation process consisting of interconnected stages. Benevolence provides the initial ethical motivation; *karamah insaniyyah* establishes children's inherent dignity; rights recognition transforms moral concern into educational obligation; inclusive pedagogy translates rights into learning practices; and institutional accountability ensures that inclusion becomes sustainable. The framework does not

position justice as a replacement for compassion. Instead, it conceptualizes justice as the institutional realization of compassion. Through this transformation, children with disabilities are no longer understood as exceptional recipients of assistance but as children who possess dignity, rights, developmental potential, and meaningful membership within Islamic educational communities. The conceptual structure of this transformation is illustrated in Figure 1

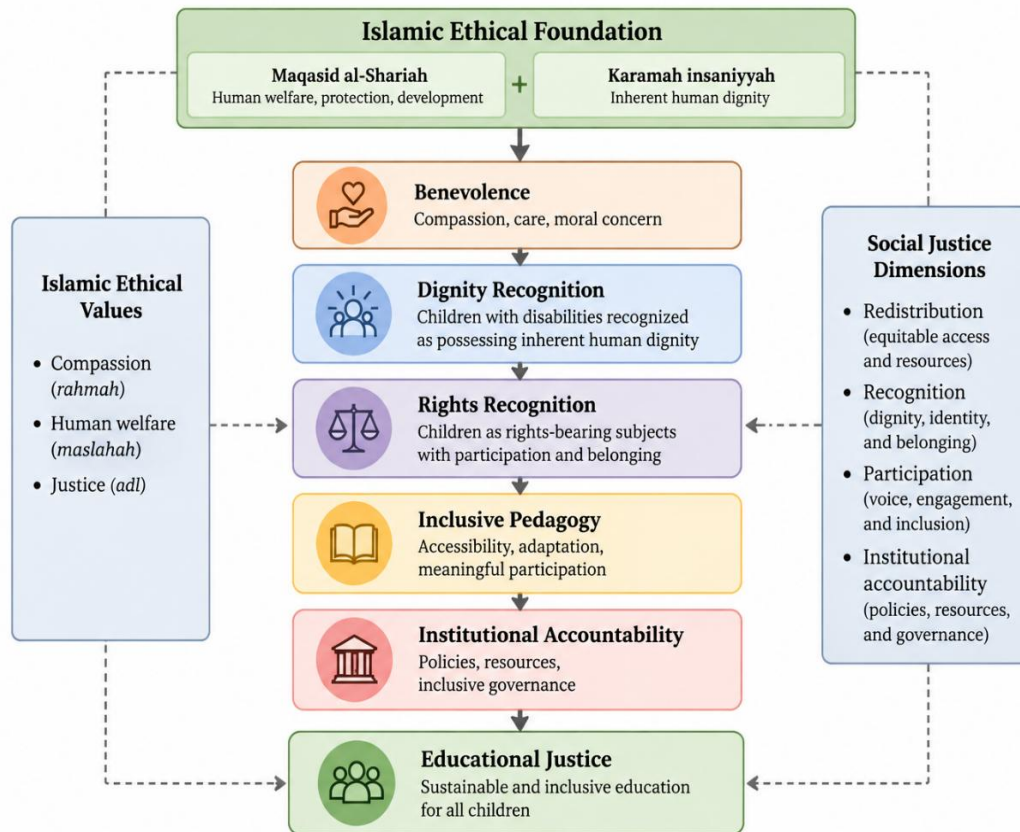


Figure 1

Benevolence-to-Justice Transformation Framework for Inclusive Islamic Early Childhood Education

As illustrated in Figure 1, the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework represents a conceptual movement from individual ethical concern toward collective educational responsibility. The framework does not eliminate the role of compassion in inclusive education; rather, it positions compassion as the ethical foundation that requires translation into dignity-based recognition, rights-oriented practices, and institutional commitments. Through this transformation, inclusion becomes a sustainable educational responsibility rather than a response that depends solely on individual goodwill.

In this study, the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework refers to a conceptual transformation model explaining how ethical concern toward children with disabilities progresses from moral motivation into institutional educational responsibility. The framework consists of interconnected dimensions involving benevolence, dignity recognition, rights awareness, inclusive pedagogical practices, and institutional accountability.

Table 1

Benevolence-to-Justice Framework for Inclusive Islamic Early Childhood Education			
Transformation Dimension	Limited Benevolence Approach	Islamic Ethical Foundation	Educational Justice Implication
Position of children	Children with disabilities are viewed primarily as recipients of assistance and protection	<i>Karamah insaniyyah</i>	Children are recognized as dignified rights-bearing members of the educational community

Educational access	Support depends on individual teacher or institutional goodwill	<i>Hifz al-aql</i>	Accessible learning opportunities and developmental support according to children's needs
Safety and well-being	Protection focuses mainly on children's limitations	<i>Hifz al-nafs</i>	Safe environments that prevent exclusion while enabling participation
Religious learning	Religious activities are provided without considering accessibility	<i>Hifz al-din</i>	Meaningful participation in religious learning through adaptive approaches
Family relationship	Family involvement depends on individual initiative	<i>Hifz al-nasl</i>	Partnership between families and institutions in supporting inclusion
Institutional responsibility	Inclusion relies on voluntary actions	<i>Adl</i> and social justice	Policies, resources, accountability mechanisms, and sustainable inclusive governance

The Benevolence-to-Justice Framework demonstrates that disability inclusion in Islamic early childhood education requires a transformation of moral intention into institutional responsibility. The framework highlights that compassion remains an essential ethical foundation, but it becomes educationally meaningful only when connected with dignity recognition, rights-based obligations, inclusive pedagogical practices, and institutional accountability. Therefore, the conceptual contribution of this study lies in explaining the process through which benevolent attitudes toward children with disabilities can be reconstructed into a justice-oriented educational framework. This transformation positions children with disabilities not merely as recipients of assistance but as dignified members of the educational community whose participation, development, and well-being must be actively supported.

4. Discussion

4.1. Transforming Benevolence into Institutional Educational Responsibility

The findings of this study demonstrate that the central challenge in disability inclusion is not the absence of compassion, but the limitation of compassion when it remains disconnected from educational rights, institutional responsibility, and sustainable inclusion. In Islamic educational contexts, including Islamic early childhood education, benevolence represents an important ethical foundation because care, empathy, and moral responsibility are essential elements in establishing meaningful relationships between educators, children, and families. Previous studies have emphasized that Islamic educational values encourage attitudes of compassion, responsibility, and social concern toward individuals who experience vulnerability or barriers in educational participation (Afif, 2025; Baidowi et al., 2026; Mareta et al., 2024; Novanto et al., 2025).

However, this study argues that benevolence alone cannot serve as the final foundation of disability inclusion. When inclusive practices rely primarily on individual goodwill, support may become dependent on the personal awareness, commitment, and resources of particular educators or institutions. Such an approach may provide immediate assistance but does not necessarily guarantee consistent access, participation, and recognition of children with disabilities as members of the educational community. This limitation reflects a broader concern in disability inclusion discourse, where approaches based solely on protection or charity may unintentionally position children with disabilities as passive recipients of support rather than as individuals with dignity, developmental capacities, and rights (Mustaniemi-Laakso et al., 2023).

The distinction between benevolence and justice is therefore essential. Benevolence provides the moral motivation to respond to children's needs, whereas justice establishes the structures and responsibilities required to ensure that such responses become sustainable. In this sense, the problem is not compassion itself, but compassion that remains discretionary and is not transformed into

institutional commitment. Previous studies on inclusive education have shown that positive attitudes among educators are important but insufficient when they are not accompanied by supportive policies, professional competence, accessible learning environments, and institutional mechanisms that sustain inclusion (Iman et al., 2025; Muchtar & Ali, 2025; Saputri & Hasibah, 2025; Warosari et al., 2025).

This distinction is particularly relevant in early childhood education because children aged 0–8 years' experience rapid development in cognitive, emotional, social, and moral domains, while their educational participation is strongly influenced by adults and institutional environments. Therefore, inclusion during early childhood cannot depend only on individual acts of kindness but requires educational systems that intentionally create conditions for belonging, participation, and developmental support (Munchan & Agbenyega, 2020).

Within Islamic early childhood education, the transformation from benevolence toward justice represents a movement from charitable assistance to ethical accountability. This transformation does not reject compassion but reconstructs its role. Compassion becomes the ethical starting point, while justice becomes the institutional expression of that compassion. Through this perspective, children with disabilities are no longer understood merely as children who require help but as children whose dignity, participation, and development must be actively supported.

Therefore, the first contribution of the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework is its explanation of how moral concern can be transformed into educational responsibility. The framework extends previous discussions by showing that inclusive education requires movement from individual ethical intention toward institutional accountability. In this transformation, benevolence initiates care, but justice ensures that care becomes consistent, rights-oriented, and sustainable within educational practice.

4.2. Reconstructing Disability Inclusion through *Maqasid al-shariah* and *Karamah insaniyyah*

The findings of this study indicate that the integration of *maqasid al-shariah* and *karamah insaniyyah* provides an ethical foundation for reconstructing disability inclusion from a compassion-oriented approach toward a dignity-based educational responsibility. While benevolence explains the moral motivation to care for children with disabilities, *maqasid al-shariah* provides a broader ethical orientation that explains why educational institutions have a responsibility to protect human welfare, develop individual capacities, and prevent forms of exclusion that hinder children's development. Therefore, inclusion within Islamic early childhood education should not be understood merely as an expression of kindness but as part of a broader commitment to human flourishing.

Previous studies have highlighted that *maqasid al-shariah* provides an important framework for understanding Islamic education as a process directed toward human welfare, intellectual development, moral formation, and social responsibility (Afif, 2025; Anugrah & Sartika, 2025; Billah et al., 2025; Hajimin et al., 2024; Mir & Anjum, 2025; Singh, 2024; Yunus, 2024). However, this study extends previous discussions by emphasizing that the relevance of *maqasid al-shariah* for disability inclusion lies not only in protecting children with disabilities from harm but also in ensuring their opportunities for participation, learning, and development. Through this perspective, inclusive education becomes a realization of Islamic ethical objectives because it enables children to achieve their potential within supportive educational environments.

The principle of *hifz al-aql* provides an important foundation for understanding the educational rights of children with disabilities. Within Islamic early childhood education, protecting intellect does not imply achieving identical developmental outcomes among all children. Rather, it requires educational environments that recognize developmental diversity and provide appropriate opportunities for each child to learn according to their abilities and needs. Therefore, differentiated instruction, adaptive learning resources, and inclusive pedagogical approaches can be understood not only as

educational strategies but also as expressions of ethical responsibility toward children's intellectual development (Gheysens et al., 2022).

Similarly, *hifz al-nafs* expands the understanding of protection beyond physical safety. For children with disabilities, protection includes preventing exclusion, stigma, discrimination, and educational practices that limit participation. An inclusive educational environment should therefore not only prevent negative experiences but also create conditions where children feel secure, valued, and able to participate in meaningful interactions with teachers and peers. This perspective challenges protective approaches that unintentionally restrict children's opportunities for autonomy and engagement.

The principle of *hifz al-din* is also relevant within Islamic early childhood education because religious development represents an important dimension of children's learning experiences. However, meaningful religious education requires accessibility and adaptation so that children with disabilities can participate according to their developmental characteristics. Thus, inclusive religious learning is not merely a matter of providing access to religious content but ensuring that children experience belonging and participation within the religious educational community (Moono & Mulima, 2026).

Furthermore, this study highlights the relevance of *hifz al-nasl* in strengthening the role of family and community within early childhood inclusion. Unlike older learners who may demonstrate greater independence, young children are deeply influenced by family relationships, caregiving practices, and social environments. Therefore, inclusive Islamic early childhood education requires collaboration among teachers, families, and communities to understand children's needs and provide continuous developmental support. This perspective aligns with the broader understanding that early childhood inclusion cannot be achieved through institutional efforts alone but requires ecological support involving multiple stakeholders (Rad et al., 2022).

These dimensions of *maqasid al-shariah* are connected through the concept of *karamah insaniyyah*, which provides the fundamental basis for recognizing children with disabilities as subjects of rights. Human dignity is not determined by children's physical, intellectual, communicative, or developmental characteristics but is inherent within their humanity (Brauch, 2022; Ferdynus, 2024; Pageau et al., 2024). Consequently, children with disabilities should not be viewed primarily through a deficit perspective or understood only in relation to their need for assistance. Instead, they should be recognized as children who possess inherent worth, developmental potential, and the capacity to participate within educational communities.

The significance of *karamah insaniyyah* within the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework lies in its ability to transform the ethical position of children with disabilities. Benevolence may encourage individuals to provide support, but dignity requires recognition that such support is not merely an act of generosity. It represents an obligation to respect children as individuals whose rights and participation deserve institutional protection. In this way, *karamah insaniyyah* functions as the conceptual bridge connecting Islamic ethical values with rights-based approaches to inclusive education.

Therefore, the contribution of integrating *maqasid al-shariah* and *karamah insaniyyah* is not limited to demonstrating compatibility between Islamic values and disability inclusion. Rather, this integration reconstructs the foundation of inclusion by explaining why children with disabilities deserve educational justice. Through this perspective, inclusion becomes a reflection of Islamic ethical responsibility because it protects dignity, supports development, and recognizes every child as a valuable member of the educational community.

4.3. Educational Justice as the Institutionalization of Islamic Ethical Values

The significance of the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework lies in its ability to explain why ethical commitments frequently fail to produce sustainable inclusion when they are not translated into institutional mechanisms. Although *maqasid al-shariah* and *karamah insaniyyah* provide the moral and ontological foundations for recognizing the dignity of children with disabilities, these principles

require an operational mechanism that translates values into educational structures and practices. In this regard, educational justice functions as the pathway through which ethical commitments are institutionalized within Islamic early childhood education.

This perspective expands previous discussions on inclusion by emphasizing that justice is not achieved merely through positive attitudes or the presence of children with disabilities in mainstream educational settings. Meaningful inclusion requires educational systems that actively remove barriers, recognize diversity, and provide opportunities for participation. Previous studies have demonstrated that inclusive education requires multiple dimensions, including teacher competence, curriculum adaptation, learning accessibility, and supportive institutional environments (Iman et al., 2025; Muchtar & Ali, 2025; Saputri & Hasibah, 2025; Warosari et al., 2025). However, this study extends these discussions by explaining how such practices can be conceptually connected with the ethical transformation from benevolence toward educational justice.

Drawing on the social justice perspective, particularly Fraser's framework of redistribution, recognition, and participation, educational justice can be understood as a multidimensional process rather than a single educational intervention. These dimensions provide an analytical framework for explaining how Islamic ethical values can move from moral intention toward institutional responsibility. The first dimension, redistribution, concerns the equitable distribution of educational resources and opportunities according to children's diverse needs. Within inclusive Islamic early childhood education, justice does not require identical treatment for all children but requires appropriate support that enables each child to participate and develop. Therefore, providing adaptive learning materials, accessible environments, teacher preparation, and individualized educational support should not be viewed merely as additional assistance but as institutional responsibilities necessary for realizing equitable participation (Mergia, 2025).

This understanding challenges the limitation of benevolence-based inclusion, where support may depend on the availability and willingness of particular individuals or institutions. Through the perspective of educational justice, resources and accommodations become part of children's educational rights rather than optional expressions of generosity. Consequently, redistribution represents the movement from voluntary support toward systematic responsibility.

The second dimension, recognition, concerns how children with disabilities are understood and positioned within educational communities. Recognition requires a transformation from viewing children with disabilities primarily through vulnerability and limitation toward acknowledging their dignity, abilities, identities, and developmental potential. This dimension closely reflects the principle of *karamah insaniyyah*, which emphasizes that human value is inherent and does not depend on physical, intellectual, or social characteristics.

In Islamic early childhood education, recognition has particular importance because early educational experiences influence children's sense of belonging and identity formation. When children with disabilities are recognized as valued members of the learning community, inclusion becomes more than physical placement in classrooms. Instead, inclusion becomes a process of creating relationships and environments where children experience acceptance, respect, and meaningful engagement (Haegele & Maher, 2023). The third dimension, participation, emphasizes that inclusion requires more than access; it requires meaningful involvement in educational experiences. For young children, participation should be understood according to developmental capacity, allowing children to communicate preferences, engage in activities, build relationships, and contribute to classroom interactions.

This perspective is particularly relevant in early childhood education because children's participation develops through interactions with teachers, peers, and families rather than through individual autonomy alone (Hildebrandt et al., 2026). Family involvement is therefore an essential component of participation-based justice. Families possess important knowledge regarding children's

characteristics, needs, communication patterns, and developmental experiences. Consequently, partnerships between families and educational institutions represent an important mechanism for ensuring that inclusive practices respond to children's actual conditions rather than relying only on institutional assumptions (McWayne et al., 2022).

Through redistribution, recognition, and participation, educational justice provides the mechanism through which Islamic ethical values become sustainable educational practices. The contribution of this study is not to replace compassion with justice but to demonstrate that justice represents the institutional realization of compassion. Benevolence initiates moral concern, while educational justice ensures that such concern is translated into accessible environments, respectful relationships, meaningful participation, and institutional accountability. Therefore, the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework contributes a conceptual explanation of how disability inclusion can progress from individual ethical motivation toward collective educational responsibility. This transformation strengthens Islamic early childhood education by positioning inclusion not as an act of charity toward children with disabilities, but as a manifestation of justice grounded in dignity, rights, and shared responsibility.

4.4. Implications for Islamic Early Childhood Education

The Benevolence-to-Justice Framework provides several implications for Islamic early childhood education by repositioning disability inclusion as an essential dimension of educational responsibility rather than as an additional service provided only when children experience difficulties. In Islamic early childhood settings, including *Raudhatul Athfal* (RA), Islamic kindergartens, and other faith-based early education institutions, inclusion can be understood as an expression of the broader educational mission of nurturing children's dignity, development, moral formation, and social participation. Therefore, supporting children with disabilities should not be separated from the fundamental objectives of early childhood education itself.

At the pedagogical level, the framework suggests that teachers need to move beyond assistance-oriented approaches toward inclusive learning design. Teachers play an important role not only in responding to children's individual challenges but also in creating environments that anticipate developmental diversity. This includes adapting learning activities, selecting appropriate learning resources, providing opportunities for meaningful participation, and developing supportive interactions with children and families. Such practices reflect the transformation from benevolence toward educational justice because support is embedded within professional responsibility rather than depending solely on individual kindness (Barahona & Ibaceta-Quijanes, 2024).

This implication is particularly relevant for early childhood educators because children aged 0–8 years develop through relationships and experiences within their educational environments. Inclusive practices during this developmental period should therefore consider not only children's access to learning activities but also their emotional security, sense of belonging, peer relationships, and opportunities for social interaction (Kuutti et al., 2022). In this context, teachers function not merely as providers of assistance but as facilitators who create conditions in which every child can participate and develop according to their potential.

At the institutional level, the framework suggests that Islamic early childhood education institutions need to develop inclusive cultures that integrate ethical commitment, pedagogical preparation, and organizational responsibility. Inclusion requires more than the presence of children with disabilities in educational settings; it requires institutional readiness through supportive leadership, teacher development, accessible learning environments, and collaboration with families (Paul et al., 2022). Such institutional transformation represents the movement from individual benevolence toward collective educational accountability.

Family engagement also represents an important implication of the framework. In early childhood education, families are not merely recipients of institutional decisions but partners who contribute

essential knowledge regarding children's characteristics, developmental needs, and learning experiences. Therefore, collaboration between teachers and families becomes a critical component of educational justice because meaningful inclusion requires understanding children within their broader social and family contexts (Corres-Medrano et al., 2022). Within the Indonesian context, the framework is relevant to Islamic early childhood education institutions such as RA and Islamic kindergartens that contribute to children's religious, moral, and social development. National disability rights policies, including Law No. 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities and regulations concerning reasonable accommodation in education, provide an institutional context that recognizes the importance of equitable educational opportunities for children with disabilities (Lestari et al., 2025). However, this study does not examine the implementation or effectiveness of these policies. Instead, these regulations illustrate the broader alignment between rights-based educational principles and the ethical transformation proposed through the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework.

Furthermore, the framework has implications for teacher professional development. Preparing educators for inclusive Islamic early childhood education requires integration between pedagogical competence and ethical awareness. Teachers need not only knowledge of disability inclusion strategies but also an understanding of dignity, justice, and children's rights as foundations for educational practice. Through this integration, inclusion can move beyond individual acts of compassion toward sustainable educational systems that support the development and well-being of all children.

Overall, the practical implication of this framework is that inclusive Islamic early childhood education requires transformation at multiple levels: individual educators, family relationships, classroom practices, and institutional structures. By connecting compassion with justice, the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework provides a conceptual pathway for translating Islamic ethical values into educational practices that recognize children with disabilities as dignified, capable, and active members of the learning community.

4.5. Theoretical Contribution, Limitations, and Future Research Direction

The main theoretical contribution of this study lies in the development of the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework, which explains how ethical concern toward children with disabilities can be transformed into educational justice within Islamic early childhood education. Previous studies have provided valuable discussions on Islamic ethical principles, disability inclusion, inclusive pedagogy, and social justice. However, these discussions often remain separated between normative foundations, educational practices, and institutional responsibilities. This study contributes by connecting these dimensions through a conceptual transformation mechanism that explains the movement from moral intention toward sustainable educational responsibility.

The framework extends previous discussions on disability inclusion by demonstrating that compassion and justice should not be positioned as competing approaches. Instead, compassion represents the ethical motivation that initiates attention toward children with disabilities, while justice provides the institutional structures that ensure such attention becomes consistent, accountable, and sustainable. Through this perspective, the inclusion of children with disabilities is reconstructed from an assistance-oriented approach toward a dignity-based educational responsibility.

Furthermore, this study contributes to Islamic educational discourse by showing how *maqasid al-shariah*, *karamah insaniyyah*, and social justice can function within a complementary conceptual relationship. *Maqasid al-shariah* provides the ethical orientation for protecting welfare and developing human capacities, *karamah insaniyyah* establishes the inherent dignity of children with disabilities, and social justice provides the mechanism for translating these values into educational practices. Therefore, the contribution of this study does not merely affirm that Islamic values support inclusion, but explains how these values can be reconstructed into a framework for educational transformation.

In addition, the framework contributes to early childhood education discourse by emphasizing that inclusion during the early years involves more than access to educational settings. Educational justice requires attention to children's dignity, participation, relationships, emotional well-being, and developmental opportunities. This perspective is particularly relevant for Islamic early childhood education because children's learning experiences are shaped through interactions among teachers, families, peers, and communities (Qusyairi et al., 2026).

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. First, the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework is developed through conceptual-critical library research and has not yet been empirically validated in Islamic early childhood education settings. Therefore, the framework should be understood as a conceptual proposition that requires further examination through empirical studies. Second, although this study integrates Islamic ethical perspectives and social justice theory, the interpretation and implementation of these concepts may differ across cultural, institutional, and educational contexts. Third, this study does not directly examine the experiences of children with disabilities, teachers, families, or educational leaders, which are important dimensions for understanding how inclusion operates in practice.

Future research may empirically investigate the applicability of the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework through qualitative and mixed-method studies involving Islamic early childhood education institutions, teachers, families, and children with disabilities. Future studies may also examine how the framework informs teacher professional development, inclusive curriculum design, institutional leadership, and family engagement strategies. Such empirical investigations would provide further insight into how ethical commitments can be translated into sustainable inclusive practices across diverse educational contexts.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that disability inclusion in Islamic early childhood education requires a transformation from benevolence-based assistance toward educational justice. Through the proposed Benevolence-to-Justice Framework, this study explains the conceptual pathway through which compassion can be transformed into dignity-based, rights-oriented, and institutionally accountable inclusion. While compassion and moral concern represent important foundations for supporting children with disabilities, they are insufficient when they remain dependent on individual goodwill and are not translated into institutional responsibilities. Through the Benevolence-to-Justice Framework, this study explains how ethical concern can be transformed into sustainable inclusion through a process involving dignity recognition, rights-based responsibility, inclusive pedagogical practices, and institutional accountability.

The framework contributes to Islamic early childhood education by demonstrating that *maqasid al-shariah*, *karamah insaniyyah*, and social justice can function in a complementary relationship. *Maqasid al-shariah* provides the ethical orientation for protecting welfare and supporting children's development, *karamah insaniyyah* establishes the inherent dignity of children with disabilities, and social justice provides the mechanism for translating these values into educational practices. Therefore, disability inclusion should not be understood merely as an expression of compassion toward children who experience barriers, but as a manifestation of educational justice that recognizes children with disabilities as dignified members of the learning community.

This study has several limitations. First, the proposed Benevolence-to-Justice Framework is developed through conceptual-critical library research and has not yet been empirically validated in Islamic early childhood education settings. Second, the interpretation and application of the framework may vary across different cultural, institutional, and educational contexts. Third, this study does not directly examine the experiences of children with disabilities, teachers, families, or educational leaders. Future research should therefore empirically investigate the applicability of this framework through

qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method approaches involving diverse Islamic early childhood education contexts.

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