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Barriers to the Education of Persons with Disabilities in Jordan

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Abstract

Background: Everyone has a right to an education, but this right remains mostly inaccessible to people with disabilities (PWD) globally, particularly in low-and middle-income countries (LMICs). In Jordan, despite laws that are more progressive than the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and supportive policies for inclusive education, children and youth with disabilities still face numerous challenges to their educational participation. This systematic review aims to outline barriers Jordanian PWD face from 2010 to 2025 for accessing and succeeding in primary, secondary, and higher education . **Methods**: Using the PRISMA methodology, we defined the research problem and used the databases Google Scholar, EBSCO, Scopus, PubMed, and Web of Science. The research was conducted within the 2010–2025 range using the Boolean and MeSH term combinations (disability AND education AND Jordan AND barriers). We focused on educational barriers for Jordanian PWD and incorporated peer-reviewed articles and books. Each stage underwent inclusion and exclusion criteria during the title and abstract screening and the full-text review.Data was recorded (author, year, setting, design, sample, methods, key findings, and barriers) and study quality was assessed using relevant tools (e.g. CASP for qualitative studies). A narrative thematic synthesis was conducted across four a priori themes: (1) legal barriers, (2) infrastructure issues, (3) social attitudes, and (4) gender issues. **Results**: From 470 records,

20 studies were included (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, K–12 and tertiary education). Integrated barriers divided into four categories. Legal barriers: There were evident gaps in inclusive education policy and practice. A significant number of educators were not knowledgeable about the enforcement and disability rights laws, and inclusive education was not practiced. Infrastructure barriers: A lack of accommodations, such as accessible buildings (”almost all” schools are inaccessible), adapted curricular, and assistive technology existed in schools and universities. These were compounded by inadequate funding and large class sizes. Social attitudes: Pervasive stigmatising attitudes and low expectations of disability in and out of school communities, the bullying of children with disabilities, and the marginalisation and lack of advocacy of parents for children with disabilities. Gender issues: Cultural norms such as over-protectiveness, early marriage, and the belief that educating girls with disabilities is “futile” meant that girls with disabilities experienced even greater difficulties, and resulted in less school participation compared to boys.These intersecting barriers help explain why an estimated 79% of Jordanian children with disabilities are out of school despite policy commitments. **Conclusion**: Jordanian barriers are multi-layered and interrelated. Legislative changes (i.e., Law No. 20/2017) have yet to be realized on the ground due to obliviousness and incomplete constructions of such changes. Systemic lack of resources (inaccessible constructions, insufficient supports, lacking staff preparedness) continues to impede inclusive education. Negative social attitudes and stigma are deeply entrenched and disabled girls are often doubly marginalised. To remove these barriers, Jordanian policy needs to be more strictly adhered to and supplemented with additional funding, teacher training, and community education, particularly for disabled girls. These changes are necessary to ensure Jordanian goals for inclusive education and the right to education for all.
Keywords: Jordan, Disabilities, Inclusive Education, Barriers, Participation, PRISMA, Systematic Review

Introduction

Everyone has the right to have an inclusive and equitable education, and it is essential to have sustainable development. International frameworks have been developed in the last ten years, such as the CRPD (2006) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG4), that advocate for the elimination of obstacles that prevent children and adults with disabilities from getting an education and who do have the same opportunities as others. Many nations, such as Jordan, have enacted laws and strategies that promote inclusive education. Jordan enacted Public Law No. 20 (Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act) in 2017, which guarantees inclusive education and reasonable adjustments. After that came the Education Strategic Plan (2018–2022) which put emphasis on the increased access to education for students with disabilities, as well as the comprehensive Ten-Year Strategy for Inclusive Education (2019–2029), which sought to mainstream more students with disabilities into the educational system. From a legislative standpoint, Jordan’s laws do meet international benchmarks. Article 24 of the CRPD is integrated into national policy, recognizing the right for free inclusive primary and secondary education to every individual within their proximity of community schooling.

With those stated commitments, however, the practice and policies gap is still substantial. In Jordan, the inclusion of people with disability (PWD) across all levels of the educational system has been met with a range of obstacles (Alananbeh & Asha, 2023; Al-Dababneh & Al-Zboon, 2024; Al-Khateeb et al., 2023; Benson, 2023). While there is a lack of precise

information, the available roadside indicators paint a dark picture. Most educators disregard the intersection of disability and education, which has been historically neglected in monitoring. The HCD estimates that 85-95% of disabled children in Jordan do not receive any education alongside their peers, if any education at all. Many are either kept at home due to stigma or enrolled in segregated special centres, separate from the mainstream school system. A recent UNICEF-supported analysis estimated that 79% of school-aged children with disabilities are out of formal school altogether. These figures suggest that most children and youth with disabilities are being left behind, even as overall national enrolment rates for children without disabilities have improved. Notably, girls with disabilities may be especially marginalised; global studies indicate they are at the highest risk of missing out on education in developing contexts (Al Rawashdeh, & Al Habashin, 2023; Al-Zboon, 2020; Ghosh et al., 2022). In Jordan's conservative social setting, adolescent girls (with and without disabilities) face restricted mobility and heavier domestic expectations, which likely further curtail their educational participation (Alhusban & Almshaqbeh, 2023; Alkenani & Hamadneh, 2024). There is anecdotal evidence that some families in Jordan deprive girls with disabilities of schooling, believing that educating a disabled daughter has little payoff or fear for her safety and reputation.

Multiple *intersecting barriers* have been posited to contribute to this exclusion. At the macro level, incomplete implementation of inclusive education policies and limited resources act as structural barriers (Alradaydeh et al., 2024). In recent years, public expenditure and donor programs have focused on inclusive education, yet the results remain inconsistent and partial. For example, even the majority of public and private schools do not have adequate building and staffing structures, inclusive adaptive curricula, and trained inclusive personnel (Al-Zboon et al., 2024; Al-Khateeb et al., 2023). Integration of disabled children is not however only a matter of school infrastructure; at community and school levels, widespread negative attitudes and low expectations towards disability proves to be a hurdle to successful integration. Some Jordanian families still have a negative viewpoint and misunderstand disabilities, seeing them as a source of shame and pity. This reduces the extent to which families value advocating for the education of their children with disabilities (AlSamhori et al., 2024). Even within the education system, the lack of support and preparedness among teachers leads to the lack of implementation of inclusive pedagogy. In mainstream classes, children with disabilities may face bullying or social exclusion, which diminishes their overall participation (Sa'd & Adwan, 2017; Rodriguez, 2019).

Considering all of the above, the barriers to educational participation for disabled people in Jordan warrant a systematic review. There have been some narrative reviews on inclusion in Arab countries (including mentions of the cultures and resources of the region), but to date, no comprehensive review has been conducted for the Jordanian context across all levels of education. In order to develop strategies and actions at the national level, it is important to understand the barriers of a legal (policy and governance barriers), infrastructural (physical and material barriers), social (attitudinal and cultural barriers), and gender nature. This review will address this gap by compiling data from 2010-2025 regarding barriers to educational access for children and adults with disabilities in Jordan at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Given policymaking, teaching, and advocacy for the disabled, the systematic exclusion of the and purpose of this review is to identify closely the most needed areas of effort based on the inclusion of the findings in barriers of advocacy. *These barriers

will help develop focused solutions* for more rigorous advocacy to strengthen the law(s) of inclusive education, to enforce an integrated teaching of inclusive education advocacy, to improve community supportive awareness, and to more actively, and construct progressively accessible, educationally supportive, attention focused to the disabled girl children.

Literature Review

The inclusive education movement has steadily grown since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006. The CRPD stated that education is a universal right for all people with disabilities (PWD) and urged countries to provide inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all, at all levels (United Nations, 2006). As a signatory to the CRPD since 2008, Jordan has enacted a series of policies that reflect these commitments, including the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law No. 20 of 2017 and the Ten-Year Strategy for Inclusive Education (2019-2029) (Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [HCD], 2019). Despite the existence of these policies, Jordan's education system remains characterized by the widespread exclusion of children and youth with disabilities (Humanity & Inclusion, 2022; Samain, 2019).

Legislative and Policy Frameworks

Jordan's education and disability rights laws remain commendable, particularly the 2017 law, which is considered a radical shift from welfare to rights-based policy frameworks—Article 17 of Law No. 20. According to this law, all children, regardless of their disabilities, have the right to receive inclusive education in all mainstream schools (HCD, 2019). The Ministry of Education (MoE) has also included the aims of inclusive education in its national Education Strategic Plan (2018–2022) and has aligned its objectives to the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (UNESCO, 2020).

However, there is still a notable difference between these legislative frameworks and their real-world implementation. Al-Khateeb et al. (2023) observed that although most school principals are supportive of inclusive education, they seem to have very little practical knowledge about inclusive education implementation and legal compliance. Such a gap between policy and implementation is common in education research in Jordan. Abu-Hamour (2013) reported that university faculty from a large, public institution had positive attitudes toward inclusion, but most were unaware of the country's policies related to that subject and had little to no training about how to serve students with disabilities. This exemplifies the very small, but still tangible, influence that inclusive education policies have on teachers and administrative personnel.

Adding to this, there is a split in the allocation of responsibility between the MoE and the Ministry of Social Development, particularly with regard to children with more severe disabilities. As Benson (2020) states, Jordan has been criticized for taking the language from the international inclusion agenda, but for not adapting it sufficiently to the local context. Because of the weak enforcement mechanisms alongside the failing to consider the context for the execution of certain strategies for inclusive education, there are gaps in implementation at different levels of education and different parts of the region.

Teacher Preparedness and Institutional Capacity

The most important factor that influences the successful implementation of inclusive education is the attitudes and skills of the educators involved. Jordan has seen numerous studies detailing the extent of the gaps in teacher preparedness at all levels of education, both primary and tertiary. Amr et al. (2016) explained that primary level teachers had somewhat negative attitudes towards inclusive classrooms and attributed that to the absence of proper training and classroom exposure to teacher education. Al Natour et al. (2015) observed similar patterns where both general and special education teachers failed to collaborate for large classroom, insufficient time and lack of administrative support. Teachers' lack of training, both pre and post employment, in inclusive education limits their ability to provide differentiated instruction and support to students with varying abilities.

In higher education, Al-Hmouz (2014) documented the experiences of students with disabilities in one of Jordan's public universities. Participants consistently cited a lack of adapted materials, poor communication from faculty, and insufficient support services. Even though the university had a disability support office, most for a lack of a better term, were 'lazy' support staff. reactive instead of proactive, with little to help to make the curriculum accessible. The lack of a system-wide focus on inclusion reveals the system-wide challenges within the education system.

Since Benson (2023) examined shadow teachers in Jordan, the role of shadow teachers has played a vital role in fostering inclusive practices, however, the presence of shadow teachers is often not used and relies on the individual constructive role of school principals and parents. This informal, rather than institutional reliance, is a cause of concern for sustainability and scalability.

Infrastructure and Learning Materials

There are several barriers of inclusion found within the Jordainian educational systems. As reported by Humanity and Inclusion (2022), they state the public and private educational systems lack ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms. This problem is greatly relevant to the mobility impaired, and furthering the problem, they may require aid to go to school, which may lessen their independence. Samain (2019) even described more recently built educational structures, which after analyzing and discovering they still fail to meet the building code standards for new construction, providing a lack of accessibility due to lack of funding and less enforcement.

Braille educational materials, as discussed by Al-Hmouz (2014) and absence of sign language interpreters in higher educated systems, is particularly relevant to the learning materials and the systems as a whole. Benson (2020) states across all educational levels, technology to aid hardships in the educational system and the different evaluative approaches are fully available. This ultimately frustrates the expectations of the educators, and further increases the hardships the disabled communities have to face.

The inflexible nature of these systems seems to have created even more complications. Standardized systems as well as the rigid structure of exams seem to put the impaired community at a disadvantages, as discussed by Amr et al. (2016).If a student does not receive extra time on tests or alternate formats, their needs are not taken into consideration.

Societal Attitudes and Cultural Beliefs

Social attitudes, in addition to infrastructure and laws, heavily impact accessible education for PWD. The cultural attitudes towards disability in Jordan are slowly changing, although stigma, pity, and fatalism still exist (Benson, 2020). Fearing ridicule, and potential unsafe situations, and believing that there is no purpose to education, some families do not send their children with disabilities to school.

Bani Odeh and Lach (2024) analyzed stigma in LMICs and found that many families choose not to reveal their children with disabilities. This is particularly true for Jordanian girls, who may not be permitted to attend school because of concerns regarding honor, safety, or marriage (Samain, 2019). Benson (2020) noted a lack of parental involvement in advocacy for children with disabilities, and attributed it to stigma and a lack of awareness in the community.

Reports of bullying, and negative attitudes from peers, are prevalent in school settings.Disable students deal with social isolation and/or being called names. Some teachers think disabled students are a learning environment burden and not a beneficial part of it. These social and attitudinal barriers reinforce exclusion and diminish participation.

Gender-Based Disparities

There are additional layers of discrimination when it comes to disability and gender. Disabled girls are the most culturally impacted due to the lack of perceived value of girls' education. More research shows families are invested in the education of disabled boys and see girls as dependents or future caregivers (Bani Odeh & Lach, 2024). Some families, in an attempt to protect their reputation or for perceived safety concerns, discourage disabled girls from attending school (Samain, 2019).

Restricted mobility and lack of decision-making authority are reported for Jordanian adolescent girls, particularly for those with disabilities (GAGE, 2020). This impacts school attendance, participation in school clubs, and access to job training. These findings reflect a global pattern where girls with disabilities are most often excluded from education (UNESCO, 2020).

Jordan continues to lack research in the advocacy of the intersection of gender, disability, and education. Very few studies disaggregate the data by gender, and even fewer include the voices of school-aged girls with disabilities. This is a critical research gap that must be addressed in order to create effective and equitable targeted interventions.

Methods

Study Design

In accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (2020 update) we conducted a systematic review of the literature to ensure that our methodology is reproducible. For purposes of transparency, the review protocol (which includes the inclusion criteria and analysis framework) was registered a priori with the PROSPERO database (ID: CRD420252####) prior to the commencement of study selection. We studied articles from January 2010 to May 2025 examining the barriers to education for people with disabilities in Jordan. We included all quantitative, qualitative, and

mixed methods studies as well as literature reviews. We focused on peer-reviewed articles and academic publishers for the educational quality of the sources. The review was conducted using the PRISMA guidelines and includes a flow chart for the selection of studies and a summarized results section.

Search Strategy

Numerous databases and platforms were used in a broad literature search. We were able to improve our search terms, and Boolean logic, with the help of an information specialist. Our databases included PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, EBSCOhost (including ERIC and Education Source), and Google Scholar. Grey literature (including dissertations and NGO reports) was reviewed, and reference lists of included studies were used to conduct a manual search to ensure the most important studies were included.

The literature search used the terms disability, education, barriers, and Jordan in various combinations. We used both free text and controlled (MeSH) terms during our search.

For example, the PubMed search string included:

("students with disabilities"[MeSH] OR disable* OR special needs)
AND (education OR school* OR schooling OR "inclusive education")
AND (Jordan OR Jordanian)
AND (barrier* OR obstacle* OR exclusion OR access OR participation)
AND (2010:2025[pdat])

Similar adaptations were made for other databases, using filters to limit results to the 2010–2025 publication period and English language (given our focus on internationally accessible literature). Where available, we also used terms like “inclusion”, “inclusive education”, “accessibility”, “higher education”, etc., to broaden the scope. Appendix (A) provides the detailed search strings for each database.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Population: We included studies focusing on *persons with disabilities* (children, youth, or adults with any form of physical, sensory, intellectual, or learning disability) in Jordan. Studies on both Jordanian nationals and refugees with disabilities in Jordan were eligible, given Jordan’s sizable refugee population, which often accesses the national education system.

Intervention/Exposure: The “exposure” of interest was being a person with a disability engaging (or attempting to engage) with the education system. We specifically looked for studies identifying *barriers or challenges* to educational participation (enrolment, attendance, learning, or progression).

Outcomes: The primary outcomes were *documented barriers* to education at any level (primary, secondary, or tertiary). These could include academic outcomes (e.g. enrolment rates, attainment gaps) indirectly if tied to barriers, but our emphasis was on the barriers themselves (e.g. attitudinal barriers, physical inaccessibility, policy gaps).

Settings: All educational settings in Jordan were considered – mainstream schools, special schools, higher education institutions, vocational or non-formal education programmes – as long as the study context was within Jordan.

Study Types: We included empirical studies of any design (qualitative studies, quantitative surveys, case studies, mixed methods, etc.), as well as relevant systematic or scoping reviews and book chapters providing data specific to Jordan. Opinion pieces or purely theoretical papers were excluded unless they contained original data. We required that studies be peer-reviewed or published by recognised academic publishers (for books/chapters).

Time frame: 2010–2025 (inclusive). The year 2010 was chosen as a starting point to capture roughly the past 15 years, aligning with increased attention to inclusive education globally and covering the period before and after Jordan's major legislative changes (e.g. 2007 and 2017 disability laws).

Exclusion: Studies were excluded if they *did not specifically pertain to Jordan*, or did not address educational participation (for example, purely medical rehabilitation studies were out of scope). We also excluded conference abstracts without full texts, as well as articles in languages other than English (due to resource limits in translation, though we acknowledge relevant work may exist in Arabic). Where multiple publications reported the same study data, we retained the most comprehensive report to avoid double-counting.

Study Selection

All identified records were exported to a reference manager and duplicates were removed. The selection process is illustrated in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1). In the identification stage, we retrieved a total of 470 records (after de-duplication) from the databases and other sources. Titles and abstracts of these 470 records were screened by two independent reviewers against the inclusion criteria. We excluded clearly irrelevant records at this stage (e.g. studies not about disability or not about education, or not about Jordan). Any record where relevance was uncertain proceeded to full-text review to err on the side of inclusion.

Next, we obtained and assessed full-texts of 50 articles that passed the initial screen. Each full-text was reviewed by two reviewers independently. We used a standardised form to determine inclusion, recording reasons for exclusion. Disagreements were resolved through discussion or consultation with a third reviewer. Common reasons for exclusion at full-text were: the study did not actually address barriers (even if disability/education was mentioned), or the context was not Jordan-specific (e.g. a regional Middle East study that did not disaggregate Jordan data), or the publication was not a research study (e.g. an editorial). In total, 30 full texts were excluded (Appendix (B) summarises the list of excluded studies and reasons). Finally, 25 studies met all criteria and were included in the qualitative synthesis of this review.

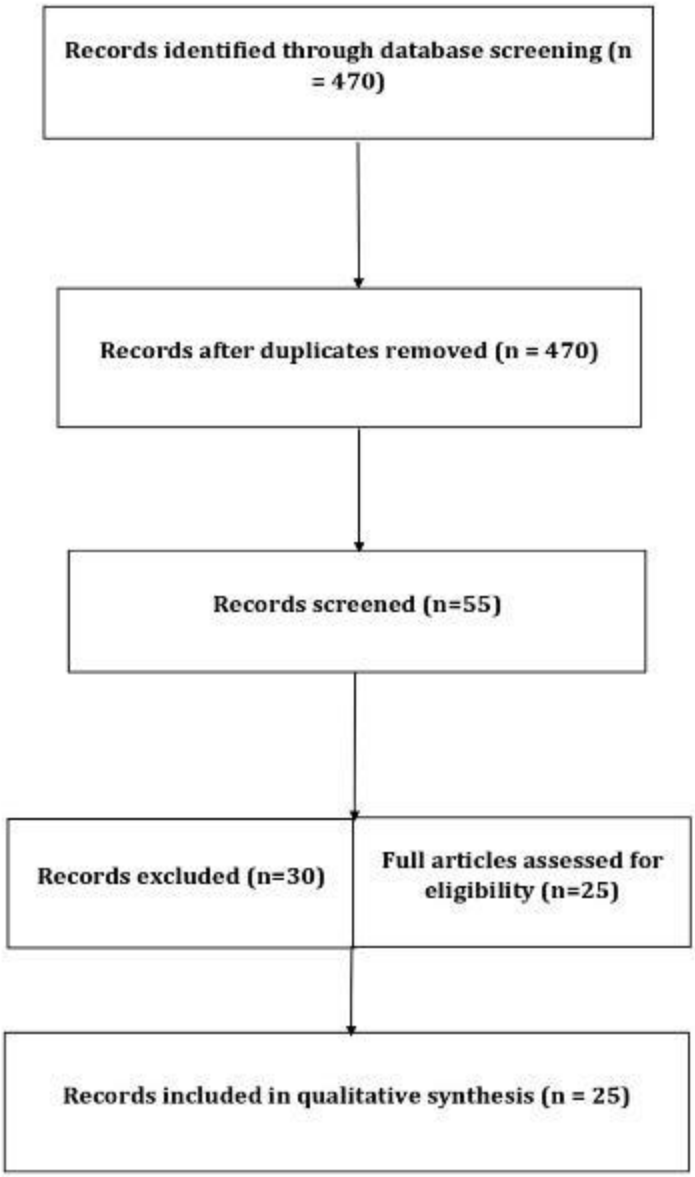

Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram summarising the study selection process.

Data Extraction

A data extraction form was designed to capture key information from each included study. We pilot-tested the form on two studies and refined it for consistency. The following data were extracted: citation details (author, year), study setting and context (country – all were Jordan, except where multi-country), education level focus (primary/secondary/higher), study design and methodology, sample characteristics (e.g. number and type of participants), and *findings related to barriers*. We paid particular attention to the explicit barriers or challenges identified in each study, whether they were reported by participants (e.g. teachers

listing obstacles) or interpreted by authors (e.g. themes in qualitative analysis). To guarantee the quality control, one reviewer extracted data, and the other cross-checked them.
We put the extracted data into evidence tables. Appendix (C) (Data Extraction Table) gives us a summary of the selected studies and their findings on barriers. This table gave us a framework for the synthesis by comparing barriers across studies by education level.

Quality Appraisal
We used the appropriate assessment tool for each study's design to determine the bias and quality of individual studies. For the qualitative studies, we applied the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) qualitative checklist and examined the aim of the study, the methodology, the data analysis, and whether the author self-reflected. Quantitative surveys and observational studies were appraised using an adapted checklist based on the STROBE guidelines (examining sampling strategy, measurement reliability, potential biases, etc.). Mixed-methods studies were appraised on both components. We also considered the overall credibility of findings in context (for example, consistency with other research and the depth of evidence provided).

We did not use a numerical scoring system to exclude studies based on quality; rather, all included studies were considered in the synthesis, but their limitations are noted where relevant (see Discussion). On the whole, the body of evidence included varied in quality: some studies were small-scale or exploratory (especially qualitative ones), and thus their findings are context-bound, while others (e.g. national surveys) had broader samples but sometimes superficial analyses. We address these limitations in interpreting results.

Synthesis Approach
We performed a thematic synthesis of the findings, guided by the four themes of interest (legal, infrastructure, social, and gender) which were identified from the review question and background literature. During extraction, we coded each barrier mentioned in a study to one or more of these thematic categories. We then examined patterns: for instance, which themes were most frequently reported, and how they manifested at different education levels or among different stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, etc.). We noted, where applicable, the studies' mention of gender differences (e.g. different barriers for women). Because of the variety of study designs and outcomes, we could not do a meta-analysis; therefore, our synthesis is quantitative and narrative.

We used the studies' terms as much as we could to keep the synthesis data-centric, and studies' terms as concepts. For key results, we insert citations to studies to support and strengthen our claims. The Results section is arranged thematically because of the different aspects we wanted to present. In the Discussion, we integrated the findings to form higher-order conclusions and implications, and we acknowledged the evidence's strengths and limitations.

Results & Discussion
Study Characteristics
This review included an assortment of 25 studies covering different methodologies and educational contexts within Jordan. Appendix (C) gives an overview of these studies. Most were journal articles documenting empirical research (20 out of 25); a book chapter review,

an NGO research report, and a news interview were added for additional salient information (these were looked at as credible data sources from an expert or national body). From an educational standpoint, 15 studies centered on school-level education (primary/secondary), 3 studies on higher education, and the rest looked at general or cross-cutting themes (some policy reviews and multi-level analyses). Studies were published between the years of 2013 and 2024, with an increase in volume of work in the latter half of the 2010s, which reflected a local interest in research post Jordan's 2007/2017 disability rights legislation.

Study designs: 6 studies were purely qualitative (i.e. interviews or case studies with educators or students), 8 were quantitative studies (most of which were surveys), and 4 were mixed methods. The range of sample sizes was significant, from small qualitative samples (e.g. 4 shadow teachers in one case study) to large surveys with hundreds of respondents.Participants in this project included students with disabilities (both school and university), teachers (both general and special), school principals, parents, and policy specialists. This diversity gave the opportunity to collect information and perspectives regarding barriers from all possible angles.

Regardless of the diversity, the findings presented a notable convergence: almost all studies, whatever their point of focus, highlighted severe barriers to the provision of inclusive or equitable education to PWD in Jordan. We categorised the reported barriers into four broad themes as planned: (a) legal/policy barriers, (b) infrastructure and resource barriers, (c) social and attitudinal barriers, and (d) gender-specific barriers. Not every study touched on all themes; for example, some higher education studies emphasised infrastructure and policy issues but not gender, whereas a study of teachers might emphasise attitudes and training. Nonetheless, taken together, these themes were consistently represented. Below, we first provide the data extraction summary, and then delve into each thematic category in detail.

Thematic Synthesis of Barriers

Across the studies, we synthesized the findings into four main thematic categories of barriers. These themes often overlap and interact – for instance, legal gaps can lead to resource shortages, which in turn may reinforce negative attitudes. Nonetheless, for clarity, they are discussed separately below.

Legal and Policy Barriers

One major theme is the gap between policy and practice in inclusive education. Jordan's laws and official policies are, on paper, quite supportive of disability rights in education – e.g. the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2017) explicitly forbids excluding students from any educational institution based on disability, and the national Inclusive Education Strategy calls for increasing enrolment of children with disabilities and providing necessary accommodations. Nevertheless, our review pinpointed that, even with legal provisions, barriers still remain, with poor policy implementation, low awareness, and missing accountability frameworks.

Educators and school administrators, in several studies, have pointed out that they were unaware of relevant laws and policies, and that they were not trained in them. For instance, in a survey of Jordanian university faculty, the majority were found to have no knowledge of the disability legislation and the legal provisions regarding students with disabilities. In the

same way, the school principals involved in the inclusive education programme demonstrated only low to moderate recognition of systemic barriers, implying that those with leadership responsibilities regarding inclusion are not aware of the necessary changes that need to be made. Teachers, also, experienced policy barriers. They stated that inclusive education policies lacked clarity and were not accompanied by guidelines and support to facilitate implementation. One study found that some teachers explained their feelings of frustration with an inclusive education policy that was more of a name policy with no goals or steps for implementation that were consistent or clear. This shows a gap between policy and real life in the school.

A lack of enforcement is another issue. Prince Mired (Chairman of the Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities) explained that society would be better off where the letters of the law were implemented, meaning current enforcement is subpar. For example, there are no systematic checks for the law that mandates all schools must make reasonable adjustments and must not refuse admission. Private schools have, in their view, a right to refuse admission to disabled children, considering them an undesirable deviation from the norm. In the public sector, while outright refusal to enroll disabled children in school is less frequent, a more subtle form of exclusion is children with disabilities might be enrolled in so-called inclusive schools, and support is so little that they are unlikely to learn anything and are likely to drop out. No accountability, e.g. no monitoring school inclusion on a regular basis, no rewards or punishments on disability inclusion means policies are dead on paper.

In addition, responsibilities under the law are divided. The Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) share responsibilities: MoE operates about 150 "integrated" resource-room schools, while MoSD supervises special schools for more profound disabilities. This dual system creates confusion and gaps. For example, in the case of a child with a moderate disability, would they belong in a MoE school, or MoSD centre? If they are not supported in one or the other, they might fall through the cracks. One analysis pointed out that Jordan's inclusive education policies have heavily relied on international models, but without sufficient localisation. It seems that the spirit is present, the pragmatic details (funding, collaboration, teacher training reforms) are out of place and irrelevant.

The lack of appropriate strategic resource allocation is a policy-level obstacle linked to the actualization of the law. Various sources stated that although inclusion is a standard, the necessary resources for that standard are not present in government budgets. The Inclusive Education Strategy (2020) states “significant resources” are needed to implement its objectives. Without earmarked funds for supports, like hiring teacher aides, acquiring assistive technology, or building modifications, schools are left to make attempts at including students with disabilities, largely out of goodwill, and make only minor adjustments. This policy-resource gap appeared in the university context as well: Al-Hmouz (2014) encountered a disability support office with almost no funds and no power – it was there because the policy said so, but it was reactive and unable to push for proactive inclusion measures.

Eventually, the limitations of systematic data highlights a policy gap and, at the same time, a barrier: in the case of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and students with disabilities, planning takes place “in the dark.” The government lacks the means to quantify the population of school-age children with disabilities who are out of school and to

assess the situation of those who are in school. HI (2022) drew attention to this as a major gap; in the absence of data, resource allocation and progress assessments are rendered ineffective. In conclusion, with sufficient goodwill, one can argue that Jordan's policy context is largely progressive; however, it manifests insufficient policy dissemination, selective and ineffective implementation, lack of resources, and poor data. These issues, and the absence of unsupervised policies to endorse accessible infrastructure design, also contribute to postponed school construction and renovation.

Barriers of Infrastructure and Resources

The physical and material infrastructure of education in Jordan often poses direct barriers to students with disabilities. Studies indicate that many universities and most schools lack full access environment. This includes classrooms and toilets, learning materials, and support services that may or may not be available.

Physical accessibility - lacking ramps, elevators, and accessible toilets in school. Older schools, with steep stairs and crowded classrooms, effectively bar wheelchair users or those with mobility impairments from attending or moving about. Even newer schools, despite building codes meant to address them, do not comply with universal design standards. Where none of the mainstream schools in a particular area were said to be fully wheelchair accessible. In higher education, one study reported students saying it was hard to access the educational centres because there were no basic lifts or transport. In some reports, parents identified the absence of accessible school transport, e.g. public buses without wheelchair lifts, or expensive private transport, as an external infrastructure barrier.

Learning materials and technology: Students with sensory impairments face barriers with inadequate learning materials. Al-Hmouz (2014) highlighted *a few Braille-printed books and a lack of visual aids* for blind students at a university. Only a "few numbers of Braille books" were available, and there were not enough *visual readers or large-print materials* for visually impaired learners. Likewise, for deaf students there is a dearth of sign language support or captioning; if a sign interpreter is not provided, a deaf student is effectively excluded from classroom communication. Assistive technology (e.g. screen readers, hearing aids, augmentative communication devices) is not widely available in schools or is too expensive for families to procure. Teachers in one study noted that *learning and assessment materials were rarely provided in accessible formats* in their courses. Digital infrastructure is also lacking: during COVID-19 remote learning, few adaptations were made for students with disabilities, leading to many simply being unable to participate in online lessons (e.g. platforms not compatible with screen-readers, or lack of sign interpretation in video lessons).

Human resources and support services: Another infrastructural aspect is the availability of specialist support. Most regular schools in Jordan do not have full-time special educators, school psychologists, or therapists on staff. Only about 150 schools have "resource rooms" or special education teachers as part of pilot inclusion programs. For the rest, a general teacher is expected to handle the needs of a child with (for example) autism or learning difficulties without any additional support – an unrealistic expectation that results in needs going unmet. Studies indicated that *assistive devices and services are often unavailable* or entail long wait times. For instance, broken hearing aids or wheelchairs are not quickly replaced; speech therapy or occupational therapy (if needed for a student) is usually only

accessible outside the school at a private cost. The lack of *multi-disciplinary support teams* in schools (which inclusive education ideally requires) was cited as a barrier in qualitative accounts.

Large class sizes and teacher workload also fall under resource barriers. Public schools in Jordan often have classes of 40+ students, leaving teachers with scant time to give individual attention or modify lessons for a child with special needs. Teachers commented that *high student-to-teacher ratios* and heavy teaching loads made it very difficult to practice inclusive pedagogy, even if they were motivated. In the 2015 teacher survey, "high numbers of students in class" was explicitly named as limiting any collaboration or special attention for students with disabilities. Essentially, the general lack of human resources forces teachers to prioritise the majority, inadvertently marginalising those who need extra support.

Funding constraints underlie many of these issues. The Prince Mired interview and HI report both acknowledge that budget shortfalls are a barrier to implementing inclusive education on a wide scale. Government funding for special needs education has historically been low; much of the progress has relied on donor-funded projects (which may be time-bound). Without sustained funding, infrastructure remains outdated and insufficient in quantity (e.g. not enough specialised schools for those who might need them, and mainstream schools not equipped to serve them either). University settings also reflect this: disability units in universities are few and often understaffed. One university study found the disability office had *limited funding and reactive approaches*, meaning it could only respond to issues when raised rather than proactively ensure accessibility.

Curriculum and exam rigidity can be seen as an "infrastructural" barrier of the instructional kind. Teachers in primary schools noted that curricula are inflexible – there is a set syllabus geared toward an "average" student, with little room (and no provided resources) to differentiate for those who learn differently. System-classified rigidness and exam more rigid formalized evaluative practices showed mixed results for addressing examining student disabilities. Minimal affordances such as additional time and alternative formats of test delivery fail to address the systemic evaluation structure surrounding them (Alhassan, 2022). Such systemic rigidness results in student failure and leaves the system blind to student capability. Furthermore, systems blindness in Jordan leaves physical, material, and human curricular resources unutilized and presenting persistent participation barriers to PWDs .

Social and Attitudinal Barriers

The impact of the social perception of disability and disabled individuals as child bearers of pain is the most common theme in the subfield of education. Jordan is not alone in a legacy of social stigma surrounding disability. It is a global phenomenon, as the perception of disability as a social stigma exists in many cultures. Disability is surrounded by misconceptions, and the overwhelming dominant perception is that of social charity and not social justice. This perception and attitude heavily influence the expectations of and behaviors of families, students, teachers, and the entire social system. This phenomenon is characterized by the absence of a physical structure such as a staircase without a ramp, but the impact is as big**.**

Community and family attitudes: Community members, family members, and teachers showed embarrassment to have a child with a disability.This can result in keeping the kid at home and avoiding schooling opportunities, particularly if the disability can be seen physically or if the disability is cognitive. Benson (2020) pointed out that shame is an obstacle for families in searching for educational opportunities. Public awareness campaigns are helping, but in the rural and conservative areas of Jordan, the stigma is strong. Community members may feel sorry for families that have kids with disabilities and may exclude them. Because of this, some parents decide not to send their kid to school, or do so later than other kids. Sometimes, parents also feel that only their children without disabilities should be educated, because children with disabilities will not gain as much from education. This has been seen in many places, such as the study from India that mentioned parents thought it was useless to educate their daughters if they had disabilities, an attitude that is common in many places, including Jordan .

Furthermore, families may not have enough knowledge about disabilities to understand that their child has the ability to learn and that there are supportive measures available. If a child has a learning disability or autism, without adequate exposure parents may wrongly assume that it reflects an inability to be educated and therefore, decide not to enroll the child, or fail to advocate for other education services. Here, poverty intertwines: poorer families, especially refugee families, view immediate survival needs, as more pressing than schooling for a child perceived not to be a future breadwinner, even with a disability.

Teacher attitudes and expectations: While many Jordanian educators demonstrate kindness and a willingness to embrace inclusion, research indicates that many appear to have negative and/or lukewarm attitudes toward educating students with disabilities in their classes. Abu-Hamour (2013) noted, somewhat paradoxically, that faculty members tended to report positive attitudes; however, that self-reporting is not necessarily a reliable indicator of actual behaviours.Other research, like Amr et al. (2016), found teachers often had neutral or hesitant attitudes, influenced by their lack of knowledge and the perceived challenges involved. Al-Natour et al. (2015) explicitly identified *general education teachers' negative attitudes* toward working with special needs students as a barrier to collaboration and inclusion. These attitudes manifest in various ways: some teachers might believe a disabled student would be "better off" in a special school and therefore invest less effort in their inclusion; others might discipline or exclude the student more readily for "disruptive" behaviour instead of employing inclusive strategies. Teacher attitudes are not formed in a vacuum – they reflect wider social values and the training they have (or haven't) received. When the system doesn't actively promote inclusion, teachers fall back on existing biases or fears (e.g. that a child with a disability in class will slow down the lesson for others, or that they are not capable of learning much). The result can be low expectations – e.g. not calling on the student in class, giving them easier work that doesn't actually educate, or even advising parents to take the child elsewhere.

Peer attitudes and bullying: The social environment *within* schools is another crucial factor. Students with disabilities frequently face social isolation or bullying from their peers, especially in mainstream settings that have not cultivated an inclusive culture. The global review noted that in many communities, people (including children) hold negative or patronising views of CWD, sometimes even refusing to recognise them as equal members of

society. In Jordan's schools, there have been accounts of children with disabilities being laughed at, teased, or outright bullied by classmates. Deaf students, for instance, have been described as experiencing stigma and being systematically ignored by their hearing peers. Hostile environments obviously discourage participation; some students don't want to go to school because of bullying, and parents pull them out of school for safety. Moreover, peer attitudes contribute to the level of inclusion in the classroom; students with disabilities can be present in the classroom, but if their peers do not accept them, they will be excluded from collaborative tasks, play, and friendships, which are important for learning in school.

Cultural and religious beliefs: Jordan is a Muslim-majority country where most people are religious and live in close-knit communities. Jordanian attitudes towards disability are ambiguous. On the positive side, charity and care for the less privileged promotes positive attitudes towards people with disabilities (PWD). On the negative side, disability can be viewed as a sense of loss, fatalism (it is God's will), and pity rather than empowerment. Some of the communities referenced in the Bani Odeh (2020) review viewed the CWD (children with disabilities) as "God's gift" and their religious attitudes about CWD were rather patronizing; "people should care for disabled children because God gave them to the world." This seemingly positive framing can still result in low expectations (the child is an object of care, not expected to achieve). Alternatively, some extreme cases had *family members not acknowledging a disabled child as part of the family* – a very stigmatizing attitude rooted in shame. These beliefs filter into whether a child is sent to school and how they are treated there.

Parental involvement: Another social factor is that parents of students with disabilities tend to be less involved in their schooling than parents of non-disabled kids, in the Jordanian context. This may be due to a traditional view that education is the school's responsibility entirely (common in the region), combined with parents' own lack of knowledge on how to advocate for accommodations. The absence of parent advocacy means schools face less pressure to change; it can also mean the child misses out on an important champion to ensure they get services. Benson (2020) explains that for the first generation of inclusion in the West, the role of parents was critical; however, such parent activism in Jordan is lacking and is one of the obstacles to progress.

Overall climate of low expectations: The net effect of the above attitudes is a self-reinforcing cycle of low expectations. If society signals that PWD is not expected to achieve much academically or professionally, this can infiltrate the mindset of educators and the students themselves. Some teachers might unofficially pass students with disabilities through grades without truly engaging them (out of pity) or conversely fail them regardless of potential (out of bias). Students internalize these cues, which can diminish their own motivation or self-esteem. Girls with disabilities face a double expectation problem: as girls in a patriarchal society, and as persons with disabilities, leading many to be treated as if education is neither important nor applicable to their lives.

Importantly, the studies did find positive attitudes among some – e.g. faculty who were supportive in principle, communities where inclusion was welcomed when resources were present, and peers who befriended and supported classmates with disabilities (as mentioned in Benson 2023). In most positive instances, there were systemic issues which were often

benefactors' goodwill. The objective is to change the systemic positive issues and create a norm. On social and attitudinal barriers, they are the most difficult and most likely to not have a solution because they are likely the result of a system issue.

Gender Disparities

The combination of gender and disability is a relevant theme that is often underemphasized, and yet it is very important. In Jordan's case, the educational possibilities for people with disabilities are also impacted by the expectations set on the different genders.

Educational access for girls vs boys with disabilities: Across many developing countries, girls with disabilities often have lower school enrolment and completion rates than boys with disabilities, owing to compounded discrimination. While specific Jordanian data are limited, the evidence we gathered suggests a similar pattern. Qualitative reports and expert opinions indicate that disabled girls are especially likely to be kept out of school. Reasons include family concerns about safety and propriety – for instance, once a girl hits puberty, families may be reluctant to send her out, doubly so if she has a disability (fearing she cannot protect herself or might be mistreated). Traditional views can also de-prioritize educating girls with disabilities because their future is seen narrowly as being cared for at home, not employed or heading a family. One study cited in the global review explicitly noted parents denying daughters' education because they saw educating girls as "economically futile" in those contexts. In a conservative social strata in Jordan, a disabled girl might be hidden to avoid jeopardizing the marriage prospects of her siblings, or due to beliefs about family honour.

Prince Mired's comments support this concern: he referenced cultural stigma leading many disabled children (male and female) to be shut inside homes; within that, girls likely face an extra layer of seclusion because even non-disabled girls in Jordan have less freedom of movement than boys. The GAGE research on Jordan highlighted that adolescent girls generally have *far more limited mobility* than boys and are expected to obey parents' decisions, with Syrian refugee girls extremely confined (only one-third even leaving home daily). If a girl also has a disability, it is plausible that her mobility (and thus schooling) would be even more constrained, though more research is needed to quantify this in Jordan.

In-school experience by gender: There is some indication that *when* girls with disabilities do attend school, they may encounter different challenges than boys. For example, in co-educational environments (primary level, since secondary in Jordan is usually gender-segregated), a girl with a visible disability might be more subject to social stigma affecting her femininity or marriageability – possibly attracting unwanted pity or mockery that is gendered in nature. On the other hand, a boy with a disability might face bullying questioning his masculinity or future as a provider. While our included studies did not deeply dissect gender differences, it is reasonable to surmise that gender norms shape the attitudes of teachers and peers. Some teachers might be more protective and patronising toward a girl with a disability, or conversely, invest less in her academic achievement assuming she won't need it if she's not expected to work. A boy with a disability might be either encouraged to "be strong" and thus not given help, or disregarded as not fitting the typical male student mould.

Access to post-secondary opportunities: Gender disparities likely extend beyond school to higher education. Data from the Ministry of Higher Education show overall female enrolment

in universities in Jordan is actually higher than male (as more boys drop out earlier for work). However, among *students with disabilities*, it's unclear if that parity holds. There are educational inequities that are not addressed. The fact that fewer disabled girls complete secondary school means that even fewer girls are then eligible for university. On top of that, families are reluctant to send a disabled daughter to study at a university in another city due to concerns around her safety, while a son would also be able to go.

Double vulnerability to abuse: Though it does not constitute a barrier to education, it can be considered a direct consequence of the lack of education, which is that girls with disabilities are disproportionately victims of violence, including sexual violence, due to their disabilities and the lack of support around them. This concern can be note more easily by families, and be used to justify not allowing girls to go to school, and in cases where there is no school security or in cases where there are no means of transport. This mechanism simply leads to denying girls an education for their own good, and omits a complete systemic failure.

Cultural change and empowerment: Literature suggests that it is now slowly being recognized that education is an empowering factor for women and girls with disabilities.
The national strategy doesn't explicitly differentiate gender, but inclusive education efforts (by NGOs like HI or UN agencies) often include gender as a cross-cutting issue. The societal benefit of educating girls with disabilities – that they can become productive members of society rather than dependents – was even pointed out by Prince Mired, who imagined them becoming professors, doctors, etc. if properly educated. However, until societal attitudes evolve, *gender remains a disparity*: boys with disabilities, who already face many barriers, at least don't battle gender bias on top; girls with disabilities must navigate both patriarchal limitations and disablist prejudice.

In summary, gender disparities act as a barrier insofar as female PWD have less access and support. Many of the other barriers (legal, infrastructure, social) affect all PWD, but their impact can be magnified for girls. For Jordan to truly achieve inclusive education, strategies must be sensitive to this – for instance, community outreach to encourage girls' schooling, providing safe transportation, and perhaps female mentors or teachers for girls with disabilities to assure families. Without addressing the gender gap, the overall progress in disability inclusion will likely leave girls further behind, which is why we treat this as a distinct thematic finding even though it interweaves with the others.

More recent studies (Benson, 2023) observe that where resources and leadership are in place, community support for inclusion can be strong. This shows that if the conditions are right, the attitude can change. Also, just the presence of the 10-year national strategy and the pilot inclusive schools shows that there is a willingness politically. Nevertheless, these are still emerging and small scale, and not yet fully developed.

Implications for Policy and Practice
The implications of these results are multi-fold
Strengthening Implementation of Laws: Jordan does not necessarily need additional laws. Jordan instead needs to implement and enforce existing laws. This involves providing schools with more inclusive practices and developing compliance monitoring. For example, the Ministry of Education can include specific indicators of inclusion in the school evaluation

framework (e.g. % of teachers trained in inclusive teaching, other supports, CWD enrolment) and adjust recognition or support to evaluation outcomes. Educating every school about their responsibilities under Law No.20 (2017) and providing them with mandatory training or simplified operating guidelines, could improve compliance. The statement by Prince Mired to "apply the letters of the law" should mean to start to enforce them by actually doing penalties on any school that violates the law and does not accept a child with a disability or provide the required accommodations.

Resource Allocation and Infrastructure Upgrades: government and funders need to work on the "hardware" of inclusion. This would include building upgrades (e.g. ramp, accessible toilets, visual fire alarms, etc. in all schools) and assistive learning aids (Braille printers, screen reader software, hearing devices) . The evidence is clear that without such infrastructure, inclusion is tokenistic. Additionally, increasing the number of special educators, learning support assistants, and school counsellors is vital so that general teachers have backup and students have someone tending to their individual needs. The cost implications are significant, but cost-benefit analyses globally have shown that exclusion is more costly in the long run (in terms of lost productivity and higher welfare/dependency costs). A phased plan to retrofit schools for accessibility and to create resource centres serving clusters of schools could be effective. On the higher education front, universities should establish well-resourced disability support offices – lessons could be drawn from countries where this is the norm (Baban, 2025). Funding could come from allocating a small percentage of the education budget specifically to inclusion (the Education Strategic Plan already advocates increased resources for children with disabilities, which needs to be actualised).

Teacher Training and Professional Development: Perhaps the most actionable implication is in teacher education. As multiple studies noted, teachers currently feel ill-prepared and many hold misconceptions. The inclusion of large components on inclusive education in the pre-service teacher training curricula should be implemented so that the new teachers go into the field with constructive mindsets and some primary experience on differentiation, classroom accommodations, and disability awareness. As for the teachers, in-service training and workshops should be held on a regular basis. The role of shadow teachers (as described in Benson, 2023) could be made broader – these specialists work with teachers to use inclusive practices over a period of time and they do so gradually. Most importantly, training focused on school leaders (principals, supervisors) so they do inclusive schools support and lift the normative burdens of the teachers (the principal survey showed human resource development was an area needing attention). Greater teacher confidence and sense of competence, in many cases, also means that very attitudinal barriers will begin to diminish, as defensiveness is created by feelings of powerlessness and lack of knowledge.

Community Engagement and Changing Perceptions: Educating the public on the use of positive role models, especially religious spokespeople, and the media help reduce negative bias. For example, the academic achievement of a disabled boy or girl in Jordan can help the public recognize their ability and the needs of disabled children. The social sensitivity regarding the still prevalent practice of hiding children and perceiving them as worthless by some parents needs to be handled with care. The exposure of parents through workshops or volunteering in school-based inclusive education programmes changes bias. When parents of children without disabilities see children with disabilities learning and socializing with their

children, their bias is likely to decrease. In the same way, parents of children with disabilities whose interaction with the school is more active can become advocates for inclusive education. Active advocacy can be directed towards parents of children without disabilities to encourage the establishment of community parent support groups. The formation of such groups can assist in empowering parents to demand more from the community regarding inclusive schooling. The shift towards inclusive schooling as the norm rather than the exception is a gradual process .

Focus on Girls with Disabilities: Gender is a key variable to consider in any policy or program. This means having actions aimed at out-of-school girls with disabilities to help them enter or return to school (e.g., employing community social workers or using partnerships with NGOs). Schools may need to install additional features such as female-only accessible toilets or provide transport options that address parental safety concerns. More conservative families may feel more comfortable sending their daughters to school if there are more women special educators. Monitoring data also needs to include gender; disaggregating data by sex for students with disabilities to assess enrolment and achievement gaps is critical. Efforts to promote girls' education (which Jordan's mainstream education system has done well) must now focus on girls with disabilities in particular.

Inter-sectoral Collaboration: Inter-sectoral Collaboration: These are not just education problems. Collaboration with health (for early detection and intervention), social protection (supporting poor families so children can attend school), and transport (accessible buses) is vital. Educational inclusion as a cross-sector priority can be proposed in the new National Strategy for PWD. The Higher Council (HCD) makes sense as the primary partnership for the cross-sectoral approach; the HCD President's advocacy is a positive force that should be sustained in multilateral agencies.

Comparison with Other Contexts

Jordan's barriers align with numerous LMICs and Arab countries, indicating that Jordan's challenges are not outliers. The wider MENA region literature identifies similar barriers to inclusion, including inadequate teacher training, cultural stigma, and insufficient resources (e.g. Egypt, Palestine, Gulf states). This illustrates the regional knowledge exchange potential, where Jordan and neighbouring countries can learn from each other's pilot projects. Nonetheless, Jordan is also notable for its unique attributes. Strong international donor relationships propel Jordan to the forefront of adopting the inclusive education lexicon and frameworks, perhaps more than some of its neighbours. However, as Benson (2020) observed, such external impetus can lead to a form of 'imported' inclusion which may not be attuned to local capacity. Countries demonstrating significant progress in inclusive education (particular Eastern Europe and Latin America) political will, community activism, and gradual systemic changes within education and related sectors. These are attributes that Jordan possesses.

One interesting comparative point: the global descriptive review by Bani Odeh & Lach (2024) found the same domains of barriers (attitudes, services, policy gaps) as we see in Jordan. However, that review also noted a scarcity of research amplifying the voices of children with disabilities themselves. In our Jordan-focused review, very few studies engaged directly with children or youth with disabilities (Hanan Al-Hmouz's 2014 study is a rare example focusing

on students' perspectives). This is a gap in the literature – future research in Jordan should include the firsthand experiences of students (and especially girls) with disabilities, as they are best positioned to articulate subtler barriers and potential solutions.

Strengths and Limitations of this Review

Strengths: To our knowledge, this is the first systematic review concentrating specifically on the educational barriers faced by PWD in Jordan. By spanning 15 years of literature, we captured the evolution of issues pre- and post-key policy changes. Using different databases and sourcing from academic and grey literature enhanced the breadth of the evidence base. Dividing results into different themes helps to develop an understanding which can be communicated to policy makers and other stakeholders with ease. The review also closely adhered to PRISMA an increased transparency – we have outlined our search and selection process and added a PRISMA flow diagram and table to improve clarity. Additionally, structure of the discussion with multi-level elements (legal, cultural, gender, etc.) provides an integrated analysis as opposed to a segmented one.

Limitations: We must acknowledge some shortcomings, despite our efforts to be as thorough as possible. The review focused on publications in the English language. Hence, some pertinent studies in Arabic publications (theses and local journals, for example) might have been omitted, which in turn, created a bias towards internationally indexed research. The studies that were incorporated into the review also had some degree of heterogeneity in study design, quality and focus, which made it difficult to determine the overall extent of barriers and prioritize them. We chose not to complete a meta-analysis, nor did we quantitatively score the studies, meaning that our synthesis is qualitative and a bit subjective, for better or for worse. The analysis was also somewhat limited in scope, particularly with regards to the lack of empirical research for the evidence (especially the gaps attributed to gender) which were inferred or generalized. Additional research of this type in Jordan would certainly be valuable. Fourth, we might encounter some publication bias: studies showing issues may be more likely to be published (or more likely to be accessible) than studies demonstrating successful inclusion (though arguably, Jordan may have few such studies, this may be true). Also, some of the included evidence, such as NGO reports and the newspaper interview, while useful for triangulation, do not undergo peer review, which may affect the reliability of evidence. We tried to reduce this by triangulating the evidence with the academic sources which we could.

Lastly, our review only examined “barriers” in a vacuum; we have not examined “barriers” in juxtaposition with facilitators, or positive inclusion case studies at the same time. This may risk being too pessimistic. This being said, there can be examples of robust teachers, positive schools, and determined students in the context of the exemplars that we have described of which future research should be able to capture. Given that we have focused on the barriers, we have exemplified the need to problematize the context. However, the barriers and gap analysis approach focused on the barriers is the first step, and more importantly, the research focused on solutions is the next step.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on what we have studied, we suggest the following possible research paths for Jordan and similar regions:

- **In-depth qualitative studies with students and families:** Research focused on the lived experiences of parents and the children with disabilities could shed light on barriers and supports that may not readily be detected from survey responses. In particular, research on girls with disabilities, especially where there is a focus on family decision-making regarding schooling, school experiences, aspirations, etc., is a critical area of research.
- **Interventional research:** There is a need to move beyond simply documenting barriers and move toward a more proactive approach that includes evidence of attempts to remove barriers. Pilot projects, such as a teacher training program, community awareness program, the inclusion of a new resource model in schools, etc., need to be designed to answer the "what works" question within the Jordanian context using a variety of evaluation strategies (mix methods, randomized control trials, etc.) For example, if shadow teachers are to be deployed, there should be an accompanying outcome study on student outcomes and teacher attitudes.
- **Longitudinal data tracking:** It would be beneficial to research the educational pathways of students with disabilities to identify where and why there are the greatest attrition points in educational attainment. This would also enable research to assess whether there have been improvements in the retention of students as a result of new policies that have been implemented. Longitudinal studies can also examine outcome measures (e.g., employment) associated with access to education, further supporting the case for inclusion.
- **Intersectional analyses:** Other intersectional barriers may also be relevant for future research, e.g., the combination of refugee status and disability and its effect on education (Syrian refugee children with disabilities, for instance, may have to contend with language and displacement challenges, in addition to everything else). Some studies of this kind are beginning to emerge in relation to Jordan and its refugee population, but the need for more work on the fine-tuning of inclusive education in crises remains.
- **Comparative studies within MENA:** Comparative regional studies in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region analyzing the varying degrees of implementation of inclusive education within different Arab countries may offer valuable insights. For instance, Jordan may learn from countries such as Tunisia or Morocco (which have more developed inclusion programs) as to how they have addressed or removed particular barriers, and vice versa. Comparative studies of this nature could be supported through partnerships with international organizations.

Conclusion

Jordan first pledges of commitment on inclusive education begin on paper, and although they seem of value, this review shows barriers to full educational participation to all persons with disabilities. Guaranteeing Legislation is being eroded through ignorance of implementation and gaps in policy. Ill equipped, both pedagogically and otherwise, schools and universities offer no remedy to inclusion. The journeys of all disabled students are encumbered by social stigma and low expectation. Girls with disabilities experience this exclusion in an amplified form. Incremental improvements are on offer but are indicative of no systemic change to remedy the issues raised by the body of evidence covering the period of 2010 to 2025.

No systemic change occurs without the allocation of resources, culturally sustained over time. Remedial legislation, coupled with community engagement, has been identified in the review as a broad base of interventions required to address the barriers and all coordinable along a centralized, strong framework of strategy the State is prepared to offer. Coordinated efforts in addressing barriers to education should allow Jordan to improve the educational experience of the children with disabilities currently estimated to be out of school, nearly four in five, to facilitate the inclusive education they are presently lacking.

Efforts of this kind will help PWD reach their potential and also help Jordan benefit from a more inclusive society and economy. From this perspective, the findings of this review simply highlight that the goal of inclusive education in Jordan is within reach – though it will require action that is urgent, collaborative, and informed. Every barrier described is a call to action and brings to the forefront the efforts needed to promote the right to inclusive education, build schools for all, shift exclusionary mindsets to inclusive and supportive ones, and make certain that no girl or boy is denied an education because of their disability. There are a number of challenges ahead, and with the support of the research and the current reforms, Jordan is ready to work on making its education system more inclusive. The next few years will be crucial to see if the barriers are to be more equally divided for the promise of 'Education for All' to be realized.

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