

## **Women with Disabilities in the State of Qatar: Human Rights, Challenges and Means of Empowerment**

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### **Abstract**

*This study explored human rights for Qatari women with disabilities, challenges and means of empowerment as perceived by females and males both with and without disabilities. The Questionnaire of the Rights of Women with Disabilities (QRWD) was developed using the Articles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Results indicated that participants without disabilities, especially men, less acknowledged the rights of women with disabilities. Furthermore, women with disabilities did not emphasize civil and political rights, but highly addressed the obstacles related to the society and legislative and political empowerment. Findings were discussed in the light of the previous literature and further recommendations were provided.*

**Keywords:** *Women with disability; human rights; CRPD; Middle East; Qatar.*

### **Introduction**

Recent movements towards achieving social inclusion of persons with disabilities is framed around a human rights perspective. Such movements believe that everyone must be able to exercise their fundamental human rights and adopt the call to support disabled people in exercising their rights, and to promote their full inclusion and active participation as equal members of their families, communities and societies. This social-ethical rationale of inclusion is premised by the disability rights and educational reform movements which used some of arguments and tactics of the civil rights movement of the 1960s for crystallizing awareness of

problems inherent in the segregation of persons with disabilities (Bailey et al., 1998; Hassanein, 2015).

The goal of the Civil Rights movement was to gain equal opportunities and equal rights for all regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, or handicapping condition. Therefore, there was a change in the conceptualization of disability as the result of this broader civil rights movement in society towards “*normalization*” and appreciating social justice and human rights (Gaad, 2004, Hassanein, 2015). Such efforts were supported by the issue of The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (United Nations, 2006). The Convention establishes a binding for applying human rights to all persons with disabilities. Notably, Qatar was a signatory to the CRPD in 2007 at the United Nations. The CRPD’s fundamental purpose is to ensure the inherent dignity of persons with disabilities.

The Convention celebrates human diversity and human dignity. Its main message is that persons with disabilities are entitled to the full spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination. This is reflected in the Convention’s preamble and throughout its articles. In prohibiting discrimination based on disability and establishing that reasonable accommodation shall be provided to persons with disabilities with a view to ensuring equality, the Convention promotes the full participation of persons with disabilities in all spheres of life. In establishing the obligation to promote positive perceptions and greater social awareness towards persons with disabilities, it challenges customs and behavior based on stereotypes, prejudices, harmful practices and stigma relating to persons with disabilities. Importantly, the Convention and its Optional Protocol challenge previous perceptions of disability—as a medical problem or a generator of pity or charitable approaches—and establish an empowering human rights-based approach to disability (United Nations, 2014).

Although women with disabilities and men with disabilities have different life experiences due to biological, psychological, economic, social, political and cultural characteristics associated with being female and male, women with disabilities face multiple discrimination and are often more disadvantaged than men with disabilities in similar circumstances (Women With Disabilities Australia, WWDA, 2007). Underlying the double discrimination is negative attitudes about women compounded by negative attitudes toward disability that often cut across cultures and level of development. Women and girls with disabilities are commonly stereotyped as sick, helpless, childlike, dependent, incompetent and asexual, greatly limiting their options and opportunities (Rousso, 2003).

This study explores how Qatari females with disabilities perceive their human rights, and the legitimacy of having those rights as perceived by females with no disability and males with and without a disability. A great deal of work has addressed disabilities and human rights (see Bruce, Quinlivan, & Degener, 2002; Frohmader & Meekosha, 2012). However, very little information is known about disability and human rights in the Middle East, especially for women (Abu-Habib, 1997; Fiduccia & Wolfe, 1999). This international literature indicates that women with disabilities face multiple discrimination and are often more disadvantaged than men with disabilities in similar circumstances. Women with disabilities are often denied equal enjoyment of their human rights, in particular by virtue of the lesser status ascribed to them by tradition and custom, or as a result of overt or covert discrimination. (UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR, 2005). Women with disabilities face particular disadvantages in the areas of education, work and employment, family and reproductive rights, health, violence and abuse. (Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA, 2007).

Although the State of Qatar gives special attention and care for women with disabilities (Qatar Vision, 2030), women still face some difficulties (Al-Attayah and Nasser, 2014). For example, according to a survey conducted by the Supreme Counsel for Family Affairs in Qatar (Al- Merekhi & Al-Buainain, 2012), the number of disabled males (24.5%) significantly exceeds the number of disabled females (8.6%) in terms of employment. Additionally, girls with disabilities do not enjoy their full rights of education. Indeed, this is not a specific issue in Qatar. Rather it seems to be an international issue. The UNESCO (2000) report stated that this is a pervasive problem across countries and cultures. It mentioned how this problem is articulated in several cultures. Rousso, (2001) argued that the literature on disabled girls and education is sparse and this holds true for countries at all levels of development, including the United States.

The most frequently mentioned barrier to education for girls with disabilities was the cultural bias against women, leading to preferential treatment and allocation of resources and opportunities to male children, at the expense of their sisters. Education is deemed less important for girls, who are expected to become wives and mothers, whereas boys, destined to become breadwinners, are given priority in schooling (Rousso, 2003).

### **Gender, Disability and Human Rights**

According to the Convention of Human Rights (1948) and the Convention on the Rights of Handicapped Individuals, all individuals are born free and equal in dignity and rights. As stipulated, all men and women with disabilities have the right to live in dignity. Furthermore, human rights are universal and do not differ for individuals with disabilities. Despite the recognition of the equality and rights of women and women with disabilities and in spite of all efforts to revitalize and empower women in society, women in general face many of the aspects of discrimination and inequalities in the law.

The interaction between gender and disability creates vulnerability for women with disabilities regarding violations of their rights (Ferri & Gregg, 1998). These women become vulnerable to the challenges associated with the financial and social aspects, low rates of employment and wages among women with disabilities (Azaamt, 2000), low educational levels, high rates of sexual and physical violence and limited access to health services, including reproductive health care (Fiduccia & Wolfe, 1999). They also have less chance to get married compared with other women or disabled men and once married, are more likely to be divorced. Furthermore, disabled women and girls are extremely vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse, with the resulting additional stigma and shame (Jones and Webster, 2006).

Al-Attayah (2006) demonstrated that the main problems faced by women with disabilities are as follow: all types of physical and verbal violence, psychological abuse that is represented in isolation and the lack of communication. Women with disabilities are more likely to suffer economic exploitation that refers to acts reducing a woman's ability to control property, funds, their share of inheritance and others illegally using of her funds. Finally, they are more likely to suffer from neglect of her health, nutrition and personal care.

Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that women with disabilities stated that they did not exercise their rights in various fields, such as the right of self-determination and had limited opportunities to receive education appropriate because of their abilities compared with other

women and even with disabled men (Ferri & Gregg, 1998). Additionally, Barker and Maralani (1997) found that 79% of disabled individuals expressed that they suffer from problems in mobility and transportation preventing them from performing life activities. Other studies highlighted further burdens that disabled women face including exposure to abuse in the community, isolation and violence and weakened identity (DeWees, 2006; Santos, 2008), humiliation and negative attitudes (Mustafa, 2004), and gender inequality (Santos, 2008). Several factors have been identified to contribute to the violation of rights of women with disabilities. These factors include lack of awareness of their rights (Ferri & Gregg, 1998), prejudice against the disabled, societal gender discrimination, the tendency to stigmatize, bureaucratic procedures and the idea of segregation in special education institutions (Rauzon, 2002; Al-Kassas, 2004; DeWees, 2006; Hassan, 2011).

On the other hand, several means of achieving empowerment for women with disabilities have been suggested in the literature. It is essential from childhood for the family to allow maximum autonomy for their daughter with a disability and to encourage her to engage and interact with the community (Rousso, 2001). To enable women with disabilities to access their rights as confirmed by the Convention on Human Rights and the Convention on individuals rights of the disabled, governments signed these agreements and worked on the legislation passing several laws to ensure that women with disability rights. These include rights in areas such as education, rehabilitation or health. The right to be integrated into society, to live in dignity and to have access to appropriate services such as health, appropriate prosthetic devices, provisions for adequate job opportunities and to provide adequate financial support for who are unable to work. Governments have urged institutions to take the necessary measures to ensure the translation of these rights and the laws of the practices of the effectiveness (Rousso, 2001).

From the above, it can be stated that women with disabilities need the support of the community, family and support for their self-confidence (Rauzon, 2002). They also need rehabilitation and empowerment of educational attainment and reduce illiteracy, unemployment rates that they suffer from and improve their economic and social level (Hassan, 2011). The results of previous studies highlighted the importance awareness of women with disabilities of their rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities and supported the efforts to eliminate discrimination between men and women and promote equality and citizenship rights (Hassan, 2011; Farouk, 2001). However, in fact, no study –up to the knowledge of researchers- identified the extent of the awareness of women with disabilities for their rights that set forth in the Convention on the rights of disabled and translated by many countries in the form of legislation and laws.

Qatar plays a leading role through demonstrating the interest in the provision for education and health services and equal opportunities at work for disabled women. Qatar has issued rules and regulations that defend human rights and protection for women with disabilities from the abuses that take place in all areas to work. However, few studies have sought to identify the extent of awareness of individuals with disabilities, including women with disabilities regarding their rights guaranteed by law or to assess the awareness and knowledge of disabled individuals so they are able to better gain access to specialized services.

Furthermore, however the international literature about rights of women with disabilities is growing, little is known about such issues in the Middle East in general and Qatar in particular. Such growing research, while invaluable in identifying barriers, rarely includes comparisons with both disabled boys and non-disabled girls, making it difficult to identify the

joint impact of gender and disability bias. Given the lack of research in Qatari context, it is necessary to investigate such issues in Qatar hoping it could provide some national and international insights that could enhance rights of women with disabilities and could provide useful worldwide insights into gender and disability. The study aims to answer the following questions:

- What are the human rights of disabled women as perceived by University Students at Qatar University and are there any significant differences among the human right dimensions according to the gender (male, female), and type of undergraduate students (with disabilities, without disabilities)?
- What are the obstacles facing women accessing their human rights as perceived by University Students at Qatar University and are there any significant differences among these obstacles dimensions according to the gender (male, female), and type of under-graduate students (with disabilities, without disabilities)?
- What are the variety of empowerment means that may help women with disabilities to practice the human rights, and are there any significant differences among empowerment meaning dimensions according to gender and type of undergraduate students?

## Methods

### Participants

A total of 128 undergraduate students at Qatar University volunteered to participate in this study. The sample included 30 females with a disability ( $M_{age} = 21.4$  years,  $SD_{age} = 1.8$ ), 18 males with a disability ( $M_{age} = 20.8$  years,  $SD_{age} = 2.6$ ), and 80 students without a disability (40 females and 40 males;  $M_{age} = 19.7$  years,  $SD_{age} = 1.7$ ). For the disabled females, there were 11 students with a motor disability, 13 with a sensory disability (visual or hearing impairments), and 6 with speech impairments. For the disabled males, there were 8 students with a motor disability, 8 with a sensory disability (visual or hearing impairments), and 2 with speech impairments.

### Measure

For this study, the CRPD was adapted to build a self-reported questionnaire consisting of three parts. Part 1 included seven categories of human rights: civil and political rights, social protection, health welfare, education rights, social rights, family construction, and personal rights. Part 2 includes three types of barriers or obstacles for achieving the human rights. The first type is related to the individual woman. The second is related to the family while the third type is related to society. Part 3 addressed the ways of empowerment that help women with disabilities achieve their human rights. There are four dimensions of empowerment: legislative & political, economic, social, and educational.

The Questionnaire the Rights of Women with Disabilities (QRWD), a self-rating questionnaire consisting of three parts was constructed using the CRPD's Articles. Part 1 consisted of 28 items measuring seven categories of human rights: civil and political rights (9 items), social protection (3 items), health welfare (3 items), education rights (3 items), social rights (3 items), family construction (3 items), and personal rights (3 items). Part 2 consisted of 21 items assessing three types of obstacles that prevent individuals from achieving human rights. These are obstacles related to the women themselves (7 items), the family (5 items), or the society (5 items). Part 3 consisted of 18 items measuring four ways of empowerment: legislative & political (4 items), economic (3 items), social (4 items), and educational (3

items). Responses are reported on a three-point Likert rating scale (agree, neutral, and disagree). All participants with disabilities were administered the QRWD individually, but participants without a disability were administered in groups.

To ensure the face validity of the questionnaire, it was sent to six professors specializing in Special education and law at Qatar University. Considering their comments, changes were made (e.g. adding some items and removing others. Thus although the CRPD reports 50 Articles, only 28 Articles were used in this questionnaire.

To assess the reliability of the questionnaire, an internal consistency coefficient for the instrument was calculated using Cronbach's alpha method for each dimension. The reliability coefficients were reported high rates for the three dimension of the QRWD (Human rights: 0.83; Obstacles: 0.88; Empowerment: 0.91). Also, there were generally good inter-correlations among the sub-scales of those three parts (see Tables 1 to 3). These results indicated that the reliability coefficients were satisfactory for the purpose of the present study.

**Table 1. Inter-correlations among seven sub-scales of the human rights**

	Social Protection	Health Welfare	Rights for Education	Social Rights	Family Construction	Personal Rights
Civil & Political	0.64***	0.43*	0.54**	0.37*	0.51**	0.21
Social Protection		0.59**	0.57**	0.39*	0.53**	0.18
Health Welfare			0.70***	0.46**	0.47**	0.05
Rights for Education				0.72***	0.52**	-0.05
Social Rights					0.44*	0.08
Family Construction						0.42*

Note: \*=  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*=  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*=  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 2. Inter-correlations among t types of obstacles**

	Obstacles related to the family	Obstacles related to the society
Obstacles related to the woman	0.45*	0.85***
Obstacles related to the family		0.52**

Note: \*=  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*=  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*=  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 3. Inter-correlations among the four ways of empowerment.**

	Economic	Social	Educational
Legislative & political	0.66***	0.80***	0.58**
Economic		0.65***	0.67***
Social			0.70***

Note: \*=  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*=  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*=  $p < 0.001$ .

## Procedures

The researchers distributed the questionnaires among women with disabilities and without disabilities and men with disabilities and without disabilities in person at the end of the first academic semester of 2015/2016. In order to ensure a representative sample, a certain percentage of persons with disabilities and without disabilities were involved. Before distributing the questionnaires, the researchers explained the purpose of the study to the participants. Moreover, the participants of this study were encouraged to read the items carefully before choosing the appropriate choice. Participants were assured of confidentiality

and anonymity. The researchers collected all completed questionnaires and started data analysis.

## Data Analysis

In order to address the research questions, descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to describe each dimension for the questionnaire. All responses on the scale were coded, entered into the computer and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data collected were analyzed and then expressed through means and standard deviations. The t-test for an independent sample and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used as the main statistical techniques in the study, to determine whether there are significant differences among perceptions about human rights, obstacles facing women's human rights, and empowerment means according to the following independent variables: gender (male, female), and type of under-graduate students (with disabilities, without disabilities).

## Results

### Human Rights

Table 4 illustrates the descriptive statistics for the human rights of disabled women as perceived by the four groups of participants. These data were subjected to a series of 2 (Condition: disability vs. non-disability) x 2 (Gender: females vs. males) between-participant Analyses of Variance (ANOVA). There were significant main effects of Condition for the civil and political rights,  $F(1, 124) = 12.69, p = 0.0005$ , Social Protection,  $F(1, 124) = 13.01, p = 0.0004$ , Health Welfare,  $F(1, 124) = 22.38, p < 0.001$ , Rights for Education,  $F(1, 124) = 120.65, p < 0.0001$ , Social Rights,  $F(1, 124) = 54.92, p < 0.001$ , Family Construction,  $F(1, 124) = 41.27, p < 0.001$ , and Personal Rights,  $F(1, 124) = 20.27, p < 0.001$ . For all of these seven variables, there were advantages for participants with disabilities.

**Table 4. Descriptive statistics for the human rights of females with disabilities**

	Disabled Females		Disabled Males		non-disabled females		non-disabled males
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>
Civil & Political	89.5	12.0	77.4	25.4	74.0	8.2	72.5
Social Protection	95.6	9.5	93.2	16.2	93.6	12.8	72.9
Health Welfare	96.3	9.8	98.8	5.2	92.2	16.5	73.5
Rights for Education	97.8	6.8	95.7	9.4	72.2	13.8	68.9
Social Rights	95.2	10.0	95.1	10.2	77.5	13.4	73.8
Family Construction	93.7	10.4	92.6	12.6	68.1	16.1	81.8
Personal Rights	96.1	8.1	95.4	8.2	89.2	17.2	76.5

In addition, there were significant main effects of gender for the civil and political rights,  $F(1, 124) = 5.71, p = 0.02$ , Social Protection,  $F(1, 124) = 13.97, p = 0.0003$ , Health Welfare,  $F(1, 124) = 6.61, p < 0.01$ , Family Construction,  $F(1, 124) = 5.42, p < 0.02$ , and Personal Rights,  $F(1, 124) = 5.24, p < 0.02$ . For all of these five fields, except Family Construction, there were advantages for female participants. Interestingly, male participants reported more rights for women with disability to have a family than female participants. However, gender

had no main effect for the rights for education,  $F(1, 124) < 1$ , and Social Rights,  $F(1, 124) < 1$ .

The interactions between Condition and Gender were significant for Social Protection,  $F(1, 124) = 8.78$ ,  $p = 0.004$ , Health Welfare,  $F(1, 124) = 11.47$ ,  $p < 0.0009$ , Family Construction  $F(1, 124) = 7.42$ ,  $p = 0.007$ , and Personal Rights,  $F(1, 124) = 4.10$ ,  $p < 0.04$ . However, there were no interactions for the Civil & Political right,  $F(1, 124) = 3.29$ ,  $p = 0.07$ , Rights for Education,  $F(1, 124) < 1$ , and Social Rights,  $F(1, 124) < 1$ .

Table 5 illustrates the subsequent Simple Main Effects for those significant interactions. To summarize, males without a disability acknowledged less human rights in the domains of social protection, health welfare, and personal rights than both males with a disability and females without a disability. However, both males without disabilities and females with disabilities acknowledged more rights for family construction than females without a disability. No other statistically significant effects were found.

**Table 5. The Simple Main Effects for the significant interactions among human rights.**

	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Social Protection</i>		
Females with a disability vs. females with non-disabilities	0.25	0.62
Males with a disability vs. males with non-disabilities	18.60	<0.001
Females with non-disabilities vs. males with non-disabilities	31.19	<0.001
Females with a disability vs. males with a disability	0.23	0.62
<i>Health Welfare</i>		
Females with a disability vs. females with non-disabilities	1.08	0.30
Males with a disability vs. males with non-disabilities	28.40	<0.001
Females with non-disabilities vs. males with non-disabilities	24.65	<0.001
Females with a disability vs. males with a disability	0.26	0.61
<i>Family Construction</i>		
Females with a disability vs. females with non-disabilities	49.82	<0.001
Males with a disability vs. males with non-disabilities	5.90	0.02
Females with non-disabilities vs. males with non-disabilities	17.73	<0.001
Females with a disability vs. males with a disability	0.06	0.80
<i>Personal Rights</i>		
Females with a disability vs. females with non-disabilities	3.66	0.06
Males with a disability vs. males with non-disabilities	18.36	<0.001
Females with non-disabilities vs. males with non-disabilities	12.91	<0.001
Females with a disability vs. males with a disability	0.03	0.87

To examine the relative importance of the seven human rights fields as perceived by women with disabilities, their data were subjected to a within-participant ANOVA. The results showed a significant main effect,  $F(6, 29) = 3.93$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Post-hoc analyses were carried out using the Tukey HSD test (see Table 6). To summarize, they rated the Civil and Political rights as less important than Social Protection, Health welfare, Rights for Education, and Personal rights. No other significant differences were found.

**Table 6. Post-hoc Tukey HSD comparisons among the seven human rights as perceived by females with disabilities**

Comparisons	<i>qs</i>
Civil & Political vs. Social Protection	4.49*
Civil & Political vs. Health welfare	5.04**
Civil & Political vs. Rights for Education	6.14***
Civil & Political vs. Social Rights	4.22



Civil & Political vs. Family Construction	3.12
Civil & Political vs. Personal Rights	4.91*
Social Protection vs. Health Welfare	0.55
Social Protection vs. Rights for Education	1.65
Social Protection vs. Social Rights	0.28
Social Protection vs. Family Construction	1.38
Social Protection vs. Personal Rights	0.41
Health Welfare vs. Rights for Education	1.10
Health Welfare vs. Social Rights	0.83
Health Welfare vs. Family Construction	1.93
Health Welfare vs. Personal Rights	0.14
Rights for Education vs. Social Rights	1.93
Rights for Education vs. Family Construction	3.03
Rights for Education vs. Personal Rights	1.24
Social Rights vs. Family Construction	1.10
Social Rights vs. Personal Rights	0.69
Family Construction vs. Personal Rights	1.79

Note: \*=  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ .

## Obstacles

Table 7 provides the descriptive statistics for the obstacles women face regarding human rights as perceived by the four groups of participants. These data were subjected to 4 (groups of participants) x 3 (obstacles) mixed-participant ANOVA. The results showed a significant main effect for the obstacles,  $F(2, 124) = 5.50$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . However, there was a non-significant main effect for participants' groups,  $F(3, 124) < 1$ . In addition, the interaction between these factors was non-significant,  $F(6, 124) < 1$ . Tukey HSD post-hoc tests showed that significant differences between the obstacles related to the woman and the society,  $q = 5.08$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , and between the obstacles related to the family and the society,  $q = 3.96$ ,  $p < 0.05$ , but there were no differences between the obstacles related to the women and family,  $q = 1.12$ .

**Table 7. Obstacles against the rights of disabled females as perceived by the four groups of participants**

	Disabled females		Disabled Males		Non-Disabled females		Non-Disabled males
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>
Obstacles related to the woman	79.2	18.4	79.1	17.6	81.5	12.7	75.4
Obstacles related to the family	78.4	23.4	83.0	19.0	76.2	18.2	75.7
Obstacles related to the society	73.8	24.4	78.1	22.6	72.5	13.9	71.2

## Empowerment

Table 8 demonstrates the descriptive statistics for the ways to enable disabled females to gain their rights as perceived by the four groups of participants. These data were subjected to 4 (groups of participants) x 4 (empowerments) mixed-participant ANOVA. The results showed significant effects for participant groups,  $F(3, 124) = 4.23$ ,  $p = 0.007$ , and empowerment,  $F(3, 124) = 4.95$ ,  $p = 0.002$ . The interaction between these factors was marginally non-significant,  $F(9, 124) = 1.81$ ,  $p = 0.06$ . Table 9 illustrates the results of Tukey HSD post-hoc

tests. Males without a disability acknowledged less the ways of empowerment than the females without a disability. In addition, legislative and political empowerment was considered more important than both social and educational empowerment.

**Table 8. Ways for enabling disabled females to get their rights as perceived by the four groups of participants**

	Disabled females		Disabled Males		Non-Disabled females		Non-Disabled males
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>
Legislative & political empowerment	91.7	21.4	88.4	18.8	91.7	13.9	73.3
Economic empowerment	89.3	25.0	84.6	27.0	91.9	14.7	72.5
Social empowerment	77.8	25.4	84.7	25.4	87.1	16.8	74.0
Educational empowerment	81.5	25.2	79.0	27.5	85.6	18.9	75.3

**Table 9. Post-hoc Tukey Comparisons for the ways of empowerment**

Comparisons	<i>Qs</i>
<i>Groups of participants</i>	
Non-Disabled females vs. Non-Disabled males	4.83**
Non-Disabled females vs. disabled females	1.27
Non-Disabled females vs. disabled males	1.54
Non-Disabled males vs. disabled females	3.56
Non-Disabled males vs. disabled males	3.29
Disabled females vs. disabled males	0.27
<i>Empowerment</i>	
Legislative & political vs. Economic	1.05
Legislative & political vs. Social	4.09*
Legislative & political vs. Educational	4.09*
Economic vs. Social	3.05
Economic vs. Educational	3.05
Social vs. Educational	0.0

Note: \*=  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$ .

## Discussion

This study examined the human rights of Qatari women with disabilities, the challenges these women face and means of empowerment as perceived by Qatari women and men with or without disabilities. A questionnaire that addressed disabled women's human rights (QRWD) was developed using the CRPD that provide good rates of internal stability and generally strong inter-correlations among sub-scales.

Participants with disabilities were more aware of the human rights of women with disabilities than participants without a disability. In addition, males, especially who had no disabilities, were less aware of some rights of women with disability (social protection, health welfare and personal rights) than women. Together, these findings suggest that, in spite of the attention given to the special-needs population nationally and internationally, women with disabilities still face a "double handicap" economically, socially and politically (Deegan & Brooks, 1985; Schur, 2003; 2004). For this reason, women with disabilities addressed the

obstacles that are related to society more than those that are related to themselves or their families. Consequently, the legislative and political empowerment was considered the most important means of empowerment because it plays a central role in changing the attitudes of the society toward women and disabilities.

Interestingly, however, men with no disabilities best acknowledged the rights of females with disabilities to have a family. This is an unexpected finding since the statistics illustrates very low figures (37.4%) of women with disabilities actually having families in the State of Qatar (Al- Merekhi & Al-Buainain, 2012). This suggests that a change in attitudes may be taking place. On the other hand, females were more aware of the civil and political rights, social protection, health welfare and personal rights than males. These findings may reflect the results of the attention given by the Qatari government to individuals with disabilities. Indeed, the Qatari Supreme Council for Family Affairs organizes many events (e.g., lectures, workshops, and conferences) aimed to establish a culture that respects the human rights of men and women with disabilities. Since all participants in this study were undergraduate students enrolled at Qatar University, almost all participants with disabilities attended these events. This could explain why disabled persons were more aware of their human rights than the non-disabled individuals.

To conclude, this is the first study to examine the human rights of women with disabilities in the Arab-Gulf countries. In one notable study, Nagata (2003) previously examined gender and disabilities in the Arab region. However, unlike the present study that utilized a quantitative approach, Nagata's (2003) study was qualitative. Therefore, the present study is thought to have great contribution for the international literature. Qatar government provides persons with disabilities with great facilities and opportunities. However, women with disabilities still face some complications as perceived by non-disabled persons, especially men.

Therefore, the study recommends developing training programs for enhancing public awareness of the rights of all individuals with disabilities especially women and to enable women with disabilities to realize their rights and gain the knowledge necessary to access available services. Furthermore, there is need for the development of further legislation and laws for the integration of disabled women in various aspects of life.

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