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REVIEW ARTICLE

Determination of the Concept of *Rahmah* in the Lives of Persons with Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

Since the early days of Islam, Muslim intellectuals have debated the idea of kindness. Incorporating the notion of grace into all actions and suggestions serves as the foundation for establishing a cohesive and contented society. Islam is a religious belief system that promotes the cultivation of mercy among its adherents. *Rahmah* is a praiseworthy character that means love, politeness, and gentleness in relationships with all creatures that live with humans, whether with humans or animals. This Rabbani quality *rahmah* is a universal element that overshadows every creature. In Malaysia, those with disabilities are often referred to as disabled people. This study aims to demonstrate the compassion method in caring for disabled persons and to correctly grasp the notion of mercy from Islamic view. This study employs a review on a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of kindness within the experiences of persons with disabilities. In conclusion, the concept of mercy in the lives of the disabled clearly illustrates the importance of a good life for the group.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature on the idea of mercy (*Rahmah*) as it pertains to people with disabilities. Mercy illustrates the

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importance of an excellent life for people with disabilities. Sustainable progress, development, monetary wealth, spiritual and physical well-being, and holistic education are suggested to be pursued.

1. Introduction

Islam emphasizes love for all creatures, especially fellow human beings. This love for fellow human beings coincides with the meaning of Islam itself. The word Islam comes from the word *Salama*, which means peace. The nature of love or mercy is often mentioned in the Quran and hadith. The word Rahmah is one of the names of Allah SWT, which is *al-Rahman al-Rahim*, which means Most Merciful and Most Compassionate. Muslims are obliged to read this word every time they perform prayer, five times a day, in Surah al-Fatihah. It illustrates that Islam is practiced as a religion of mercy, emphasizing love in all areas of daily life (Amin et al., 2018).

By nature, in every human being, there is already the nature and feeling of love. This nature of love needs to be nurtured and harmonized in every field of life, whether in family or community life (Hammad et al., 2018). Practicing the nature of mercy will give birth to a country that is peaceful, harmonious, and far from the nature of hostility and strife with each other. *Rahmah* is an Arabic word derived from the root word *rahima* which means compassion and love. The repetition of the word *Rahmah* many times in the Quran with various forms (nouns, verbs, and adjectives) shows how much Islam attaches great importance to the concept of *Rahmah* in its teachings.

Rahmah is an element that encompasses all aspects of life, including fairness, love, tolerance, kindness, gentleness, peace, and harmony. This concept of mercy was practiced by the Prophet SAW in his life by showing compassion towards children, the elderly, women, orphans, indentured servants, prisoners of war, and other creatures, including animals and the environment (Mohd Raus, 2016). Regarding leadership, His Majesty has displayed a gracious attitude as a Muslim community's husband, father, and leader. The importance of the nature of mercy is preceded by Allah SWT's recognition of His Most Compassionate nature. The Word of God Almighty in the Qur'an (chapter 6, verse 133):

> *"And your Lord is the Free of need, the possessor of mercy (rahmah). If He wills, he can do away with you and give succession after you to whomever He wills, just as He produced you from the descendants of another people"* (Qur'an, 2004).

The message of Islam as a mercy for the whole world (*Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin*) was brought through His Majesty the Prophet SAW to his people. The words of Allah Almighty in the Qur'an (chapter 21, verse 107), which mean:

> *"And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy (rahmah) to the worlds"* (Qur'an, 2004).

Umar bin al-Khattab RA said: The Messenger of God SAW came to a group of prisoners of war. Suddenly, a woman rushes to a baby in the group, then supports, hugs, and breastfeeds him. The Prophet SAW said:

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> *"Do you think that this lady can throw her son in the fire? We replied: No if she has the power not to throw it (in the fire). The Prophet (pbuh) then said: Allah is more merciful to His slaves than this lady to her son"* (Al-Bukhari, 2022).

Enjoying all the blessings in this world is only one percent of the grace of Allah SWT that is bestowed on humans and all creatures to be shared so that humans can love each other and live happily. There is a hadith that explains the matter:

> "*Narrated Abu Hurairah: I heard Allah's Messenger (pbuh) saying, Verily Allah created Rahmah (mercy). The day He created it, He made it into one hundred parts. He withheld with Him ninety-nine parts and sent its one part to all His creatures. Had the non-believer known of all the Rahmah (mercy) which is in the Hands of Allah, he would not lose hope of entering paradise and had the believer known of all the punishment which is present with Allah, he would not consider himself safe from the Hell-Fire*" (Muslim, 2023).

The mercy of Allah SWT extends to all human beings, whether children, single mothers, the poor, orphans, bachelors, ignorant people, infidels, animals, the environment, or the disabled. According to Ibn Manzur (1999), "disabled people" from a language point of view, are called *al-I'aqah*, which means hindered or confined. The same word also includes *al-muq'adin* (weak people), *dhu al-'ahat* (lost ability), and *al-'ajizin* (weak). According to the term, Al-Haiti (2002) explains that a disability is a condition in which a person has a disability in the body or mind, whether caused by genetic or environmental factors. The situation makes it difficult for a person to do some things that other people can usually do.

In this context, Islam is a comprehensive religion. His comprehensive teachings cover various aspects of human life. According to al-Shatibi (1996), Islamic sharia is a blessing, and its main purpose in *maqasid sharia* is to bring good and reject the harm of the world and the hereafter. Based on the breadth of Islamic teachings, the role of *maqasid sharia* principles also includes various activities, including in the lives of people with disabilities. Disabled people have the right to live like other people. Their existence is a form of test for themselves and their families to be patient, thankful, and calm. The test for community members is the extent of their concern for the well-being of the lives of this group by making various efforts to contribute to the good and well-being of the disabled group (Wasserman & Asch, 2014).

According to the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008, persons with disabilities include those with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, when interacting with various barriers, may restrict their full and effective participation in society. Muslim individuals with learning disabilities are among the groups that are the focus of the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030 (WKB 2030) and the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 (SDG 2030). In the context of this study, individuals with learning disabilities have different levels of cognitive ability, which affects their level of obligation in carrying out their daily activities. This group is often exposed to certain therapies, and to some extent, their cognitive ability increases, which may change the law for practicing worship in Islam (Farhan et al., 2020).

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Persons with disabilities is defined as a person who has physical or mental deficiencies and does not have equal rights in education, health, and employment opportunities (WHO, 2011). According to the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Della Fina et al., 2017), including those with long-term mental, physical, intellectual, or sensory disabilities that prevent them from interacting through full and effective participation in society as others (United Nations, 2022). Based on statistics from the Department of Social Welfare (*Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat*, JKM) in 2022, there are 619,273 people with disabilities registered until August 31, 2022, compared to 583,427 people in 2021. The statistics on the registration of disabled people according to age and category are as in Table 1.

Table 1: Disabled Registration Statistics by Age Level and Category Until January 31, 2023

Age	Vision	Hearing	Speech	Physical	Learning	Mental	Multiple	Total
<6	212	510	16	1434	6611	2	955	9740
6-12	1360	2030	460	6044	56014	9	4858	70775
13-18	2126	2513	613	6717	55275	70	4236	71550
19-21	1413	1375	189	4065	23342	211	1432	32027
22-35	8026	8534	503	29122	64018	7765	5848	123816
36-45	7200	6797	430	30457	16002	13844	3319	78049
46-59	13493	8814	614	58662	10748	19431	4092	115854
>60	21410	12079	572	82717	3721	11080	4147	135726
Total	55240	42652	3397	219218	235731	52412	28887	637537

Source: Social Welfare Department (2022)

Based on Table 1, the number of people with disabilities in Malaysia is 18%, compared to 32.9 million Malaysians. Although the numbers show that disabled people are a minority group, their rights cannot be marginalized and must be given attention by society. In Resolution 70/1, dated September 25, 2015, the United Nations (UN) argued that among those who are considered "vulnerable" are people with disabilities who need to be given space and opportunities to improve their survival (Handicap International, 2015). Malaysia's goal and commitment to implement the SDG 2030 agenda through the international framework in efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development by the year 2030. Based on that aspect of the national education system, disabled people cannot be excluded. The principle of democratization of education has been practiced by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MoE) in planning education for all individuals, regardless of background, race, economic status, or disability, who have the right to access education.

In this context, SDG 2030 is seen in line with the concept of *Rahmah*, which also strives to help the community in developing the national economy and looking after the welfare of communities in need. The purpose of SDG 2030 is to eradicate poverty, eliminate hunger, and provide quality education is in line with the concept of mercy. Similarly, the lives of persons with disabilities should be emphasized as focused by the SDG goals, such as poverty, hunger, and education for disabled people.

1.1. Research Objectives

This study aims to demonstrate the compassion method in caring for disabled persons and to correctly grasp the notion of mercy from Islamic view. This study employs a

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review on a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of kindness within the experiences of persons with disabilities. The sustainability approach in the lives of disabled people coincides with the concept of *Rahmah* and clearly shows the importance of ensuring well-being in the context of the individual, society, and country.

2. Kindness to the Disabled

The word *Rahmah* comes from the Arabic language. The word *Rahmah* is taken from the compound word *rahima*, and its names are *Rahmah*, *ruhm*, and *marhamah*. It means tenderness, forgiveness, and love. According to Ibn Manzur (1999), the meaning of mercy is *al-Riqah wa Ta'attuf*, which means tenderness and compassion. From the root word of the word *Rahmah* comes the word *rahima*, which means the bond of brotherhood and kinship. The word *Rahmah* is divided into two parts: al-*Rahmah*, which refers to humans, and *Rahmah*, which refers to Allah SWT (Ibn Manzur, 1999).

The term *al-Rahmah*, which is relied on by humans, is "*riqqat al-qalb wa 'atfih",* which means the tenderness of the heart and its compassion. While the term al-*Rahmah*, which is relied on by Allah SWT, is "*'atfuh wa ihsanuh wa rizquh*" which means His mercy, goodness, and sustenance (Ibn Manzur, 1999).

Ibn al-Jawzi (1984) explained that al-*Rahmah* is the quality of well-being, a feeling of sympathy with an elegant social element, and gentle and sincere advice between two people. Ibn al-Qayyim (1997) stated that the word *Rahmah* means mercy, which demands goodness from the loved one. It is also understood as mercy only or something good without mercy. He says *Rahmah* is more about being loving, gentle, and ready to sacrifice and protect. According to the Oxford dictionary of Islam, *Rahmah*, within the Quran, serves as a representation of the comprehensive divine care towards humanity (Esposito, 2004).

The word mercy is mentioned as many as 300 times in the Quran, and some verses are always heard and used by most of the community, especially in chapter 3, verse 74:

> *"He selects for His mercy (rahmah) whom He wills. And Allah is the possessor of great bounty."* (Qur'an, 2004).

The phrase *rahmatan lil alamin* has gone through various processes of interpretation and the development of its meaning. Nevertheless, the concept and meaning of *rahmatan lil alamin* are universal and encompass all human life fairly and equitably based on the principles established in Islam. Every creature on this earth must enjoy the mercy and love that Islam brings.

Ibn al-Jawzi (1984) focuses on language processing that explores the literal meaning of each word based on the context of the verse in each surah. For instance, some of the words are health (*al-'afiyah*), delicacy (*al-riqqah*), forgiveness (*al-maghfirah*), and love *(al-mawaddah*). Most understanding from this point of view describes the nature of the love and mercy that Allah and His Messenger brought. *Rahmah*, in terms of language, is also understood as compassion, high affection, and compassion (Omar, 2022).

Allah SWT has created humans as a society of various races and skin colors. All these creations of Allah SWT have wisdom. The test of life tests humans, whether they are healthy, sick, or disabled. Some people are tested for hearing, sight, and limbs. People like this should not be forgotten, especially in Muslim society, which considers them one

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of the cornerstones of building a good society. The words of Allah SWT in the Quran (chapter 49, verse 13):

> *"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another..."* (Qur'an, 2004).

The primary emphasis of the surah, as shown by the aforementioned Quranic verse, is the establishment of a virtuous community through the observance of the rights of one's fellow individuals. Among the concepts or pre-conditions for creating a quality society based on the "*al-qudwah qabla al-da'wah*" method (being an example before preaching) is to recognize the existence of every individual in the community regardless of race, physical appearance, and level of physical and mental ability.

Every human has rights and obligations in addition to the ones set by the Shari'ah. The same goes for disabled people; the rights and laws of the disabled need to be given attention so that their fate is protected. Disabled people are included in the *mukallaf* category except for people who have lost the condition of *taklif*, which is their intellect. A *mukallaf* refers to an individual who bears the responsibility of fulfilling the obligations and adhering to the prohibitions of Islamic law. This responsibility arises once the person has attained the age of adulthood, possesses sound judgment (*baligh*), and has been made aware of the teachings of Islam. However, the appointment of disabled people depends on their ability. Allah SWT will not impose anything beyond a person's ability, as He says in the Qur'an (chapter 2, verse 233):

> *"No person is charged with more than his capacity..."* (Qur'an, 2004).

People with disabilities are servants of Allah SWT and must worship Him according to their abilities. Islam has outlined some specific rights and obligations that have been set for this group. Society is also responsible for this group, especially in teaching aspects of religion such as worship (*ibadah*), business transaction (*muamalah*), crime (*jinayah*), marriage (*munakahat*), and creed (*akidah*) to the disabled. Through this teaching, they can live together with the community, and at the same time, the concept of mercy towards disabled people is well implemented. Islam mentions their rights and obligations and explains how to manage them when there is a violation of Sharia law.

Islamic history has proven that disabled people have privileges. The historical treatment of individuals with disabilities within Islamic civilization has been characterized by a strong emphasis on their protection and the recognition of their rights. Consequently, this group has not been subject to significant concerns or challenges within the context of Islamic principles and values. The principles of Syariah dictate that disabled individuals should not be marginalized within the community, and instead should be actively engaged in various community activities. Opportunities and space need to be given so they can also enjoy a normal life with other members of society.

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has exemplified a commendable approach to engaging with individuals with disabilities by assigning them tasks that align with their respective abilities. In some hadith, the Prophet (pbuh) has appointed Ibn Ummi Maktum as a *mu'adhdhin* (the person who recites the call for prayer) and *imam* (the person who leads the prayer) although he is blind:

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> *"'A'ishah reported: Ibn Ummi Maktum was the mu'adhdhin of the Messenger of Allah (May peace be upon him) and he was blind"* (Abu Daud, 2022).

> *"Anas said that the Prophet (pbuh) appointed Ibn Ummi Maktum as a substitute to lead the people in prayer, and he was blind"* (Abu Daud, 2022).

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), always demonstrated the greatest respect and dedication towards Ibn Ummi Maktum. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), garnered significant interest from several individuals in the community of Makkah, hence causing apprehension, concern, and unease among the polytheists. This occurrence indicates that even if someone has a disability, we should treat them like everyone else, particularly if they approach us to get a better understanding of religious issues. As a result, as members of society who will constantly deal with persons with disabilities, we must adopt certain attitudes to guarantee that their welfare and rights are protected (Baharudin & Mohamed Ramli, 2020).

In general, both groups are required to establish a relationship based on the spirit of love, following the words of His Majesty SAW, which means:

> *"Nu'man bin Bashir reported Allah's Messenger (pbuh) as saying: The similitude of believers regarding mutual love, affection, fellow-feeling is that of one body; when any limb of it aches, the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever"* (Muslim, 2023).

The interweaving of this bond is like the strength of a magnificent construction due to the interweaving of various materials and components that strengthen each other. The advent of Islam has also stopped the old practice of discriminating against disabled people. Applying the *Rahmah* principle, which Islam recommends, can ensure that the community emphasizes the welfare and well-being of disabled people and strengthens interfamily ties.

3. Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for the Disabled

Sustainability and balance are very important in the daily lives of every human being in terms of education, health, social, economic, spiritual, and physical aspects. Researchers and research institutes today express various concepts and methods for achieving a balance based on sustainability. The need to achieve balance and sustainability for the community's well-being must consider the *maqasid sharia* approach in line with the Sustainable Development Goals introduced by the United Nations (UN) (Kasri et al., 2023). This matter is crucial in setting plans and actions to implement sustainability throughout the country.

Researchers and scholars discuss various definitions of sustainability. Sustainability refers to the enduring viability of a community, a collection of social institutions, or a societal practice over an extended time. Sustainability, in broad terms, is commonly conceptualized as a manifestation of intergenerational ethics. It encompasses the notion that the environmental and economic choices made by individuals in the present should not impede the ability of future generations to have comparable levels of affluence, satisfaction, or well-being (Meadowcroft, 2023).

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According to Hasna (2007), sustainability is a continuous process, even as a target to reach the desired future destination. Elliott (2012) thinks sustainability is an idea of justice and equity. Sustainability is also about preserving nature and services that have worked for humans for generations. It has implications for showing how socioeconomic systems and their relationship with nature should be utilized and managed well (Baumgärtner & Quaas, 2010).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) were introduced by the United Nations through the global cooperation of member countries in the fields of Education, Science, Culture, and Communication. By introducing 17 global sustainability goals (refer to Figure 1), UNESCO has suggested that a world transformation process, "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," can be implemented through this global agenda (Agbedahin, 2019). UNESCO hopes that member countries commit to realizing these goals by 2030 (Bergman et al., 2018).

Figure 1: The Global Goals and Sustainable Development



Source: UNESCO (2021)

Awareness and knowledge related to sustainability are two of the basic elements needed to ensure the effectiveness of implementing the concept of mercy in sustainability. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are in line with the concept of Rahmah, which also strives to help the community develop the national economy and look after the welfare of communities in need. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) aim to eradicate poverty, eliminate hunger, provide quality education, and others in line with mercy. Similarly, in managing disabled people, emphasis should be given to SDG goals such as poverty, hunger, and education for disabled people. The sustainability approach to managing disabled people coincides with the concept of Rahmah, and it clearly shows its importance in ensuring well-being in the context of organizations and communities.

4. *Rahmah*'s approach to the disabled

It is crucial to prioritize the well-being of persons with disabilities to guarantee that this population consistently receives enough care and support from individuals and

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governing bodies. The welfare of disabled people needs to be given attention to ensure that this group is always cared for by individuals or authorities. Various programs and services can be provided to this group according to their needs. Officials and volunteer organizations can work together to ensure this group is always given attention, especially in education, welfare, treatment, and protection.

4.1. Awareness Program for Community Members

Society lacks information or knowledge about how to interact with disabled people, which causes disabled people to be neglected. Raising awareness in the community about the causes of disability, how to interact with various people with disabilities, and changing their negative perception of this group can stop this from happening. This awareness program requires the involvement of every party, be it the government, media, authorities, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The stakeholders need to be provided with information and disclosure about prevention methods from an Islamic perspective. The preventive concept in Islam is about preserving well being of society in *maqasid syariah* (Rasool et al., 2020).

The jurists say prevention is better than elimination (Al-Qaradawi, 1993). It means preventing something from happening is better than getting rid of it after it happens. The authorities are responsible for providing sufficient facilities to develop the people regarding food, drink, clothing, and shelter, and they also need to prevent harm from food poisoning. A study made by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in the Gulf States in 1981 on the causes of disability and preventive measures, among others, because of the lack of awareness programs about the cause of this disability in the television and radio media (Al-Hawali, 2007).

Among other things that need to be included in the awareness program is refining the community's view of disabled people. Their view should be one of compassion, gentleness, and respect. It is crucial to prevent them from feeling deprived and make them compatible with the surrounding community to play a role (Mohd Nasir et al., 2019). An awareness program about the welfare and rights of disabled people or an awareness campaign to treat disabled people is an approach that has the concept of mercy and can create good ties in the community.

4.2. Provide Appropriate Treatment

People with disabilities need treatment to treat their disability or find replacements for their disabled members. The Ministry of Health and NGOs also provide health assistance to disabled people, such as helping disabled people who are less able to buy prosthetics or support devices such as prosthetic legs, calipers, hand/arm crutches, glasses, hearing aids, and others that recommended by officials or medical experts (Wong & Muhamad, 2017).

Providing facilities and assistance to this group so that they do not feel awkward and alien to socialize and together with the community is an approach of mercy that is encouraged in Islam. The assistance provided can make disabled people more comfortable and not feel isolated due to their behavior, which differs from ordinary people (Cithambarm et al., 2021).

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4.3. Education Services

The government or any authority must provide education services for disabled people using appropriate infrastructure. Education is crucial in giving people with disabilities awareness about interacting with society. In addition, through this education, they will interact more with the surrounding community in aspects they can without feeling like they are a burden to the community (Yusoff et al., 2018).

Education is the right of disabled people, just like everyone else. At least they need to be exposed and taught about the essential things in religion regarding faith, aspects of halal and haram, and how to fulfill obligations. All these things are mandatory and can only be achieved with a fish teacher. Therefore, fish education is also an obligation because the method of perspective Islam states: "Something is not perfect if it is done with it, then it becomes obligatory (Al-Tilmisani, 1998).

One of the ways that can be used is to establish a suitable study center for this group or oblige any existing study center to create a special section for this group. The education provided to disabled people is in line with the concept of mercy demanded in Islamic teachings and coincides with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which want quality education for all (Yusof et al., 2021).

4.4. Taking Care of The Needs of The Disabled

Taking care of the needs of disabled people is a requirement of Shariah. Even they need to be defended when there is a war. The words of Allah SWT in the Quran (chapter 4, verse 75):

> And what prevents you from fighting in the way of Allah (to establish the religion of Islam) and (to save) the oppressed (*mustad'afin*) of men, women, and children (Qur'an, 2004).

The government can enact laws to protect the rights of disabled people and impose severe punishments on anyone who takes advantage of their disabilities. During the reign of Caliph 'Umar bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, a governor wanted to give many alms to patients who could not work, but the governor did not give them the proper rights from the provisions of Baitulmal. This matter was brought to the caliph, who ordered a special allocation from Baitulmal's expenses, not just alms (Al-Zuhri, 2001).

It shows that giving allocations to people in need is very necessary. This allocation can help reduce the burden of the disabled living in the community. The approach of mercy for disabled people by creating laws to protect their welfare and benefits is very much in line with the concept of mercy demanded in Islam.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the concept of mercy in the lives of the disabled clearly illustrates the importance of a good life for the group. It needs to be achieved to realize all efforts towards sustainable progress, development, material development, spiritual and physical gains, and holistic education. The situation of disabled people in this country should be used as one of the opportunities to cultivate the character of helping each other, loving each other, and loving each other. The basis for forming a developed community and country is to apply the concept of mercy to every person, as the Islamic

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religion recommends. Applying the concept of grace in every action and suggestion becomes the basis for forming a harmonious and happy community. Islam is a religion that encourages its people to be merciful, and Malaysia, as one of the Islamic countries, has taken various initiatives to instill the nature of mercy in its people, including in treating people with disabilities.

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Conflict of Interest

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