
Removing Stigma: Inclusive Public Policy Innovations for People with Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the development of inclusive public policies for people with disabilities in Indonesia, focusing on reducing stigma and addressing accessibility gaps. Although there are laws such as Law Number 8 of 2016 on People with Disabilities, there are many shortcomings in their implementation, including non-disability-friendly infrastructure and a lack of public awareness. A literature review was used to collect data from official government documents and scientific databases to evaluate the obstacles and opportunities to creating inclusive public services. The results show that inaccessible public infrastructure, such as ramps and braille signs, face significant problems. In addition, they show that public service officers have a lack of understanding of the rights of people with disabilities. Cases in cities such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung show that adaptive policies and training of service providers are beneficial. This study concludes that policies that combine improvements in physical accessibility, inclusive awareness campaigns, and community involvement in policy development are important for realizing a more socially just Indonesia.

Keywords: Social Inclusion, Public Policy, People With Disabilities, Accessibility Of Services, Public Service Innovation

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INTRODUCTION

One of the important goals in equitable social development is the provision of inclusive public services for persons with disabilities. The idea of inclusive public service is considered an ideal standard for achieving a more equal society across countries (Antoninis et al., 2020; Mead et al., 2022). The provision of inclusive services is also in line with the commitment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities, which emphasizes the social, economic, and political inclusion of all people, including persons with disabilities. Furthermore, SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions highlights the importance of ensuring equal access to public services through effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions. Unfortunately, people with disabilities still face a number of major challenges in accessing public services that should be available to everyone in Indonesia. These obstacles stem from a lack of disability-friendly infrastructure,

limited public knowledge and concern about the issue, and policies and regulations that have not fully met the needs of these vulnerable groups (Bailie et al., 2023; St. John et al., 2022).

The discussion related to these barriers cannot be separated from the understanding of social inclusion for people with disabilities. Social inclusion is one of the important pillars in realizing social justice and equitable welfare in modern society (Mahdi, 2020). In many countries, efforts to achieve social inclusion face challenges, especially for vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities (Ayuningtyas et al., 2023). This group often experiences structural discrimination, both in access to public infrastructure and in basic services they should receive equally (Syafi'ie, 2014). The principle of inclusion is strongly reflected in the SDGs' overarching commitment to "leave no one behind," which seeks to ensure that all members of society benefit from development outcomes regardless of their physical condition or social background. In Indonesia, although there is already a legal framework that supports the rights of persons with disabilities, such as Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities, implementation in the field is still far from ideal (Bappenas, 2016). Existing policies are constrained by limitations in human resources and in the implementation of infrastructure.

The emergence of this discrepancy between reality and expectations suggests an important issue that warrants special attention. Therefore, it is very important to improve the quality of public services through innovative policies. Not only is physical access important for social inclusion for people with disabilities, but also paradigm shifts and adjustments in public policies to ensure their rights are equal to those of others. Although there are numerous policies and regulations that support the rights of persons with disabilities, their implementation has been inconsistent across regions. This creates disparities in service quality between regions (Al-Faruq, 2022; Hestiantini & Personal, 2020). Such disparities are contrary to the objectives of SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, which promotes equal opportunities and the reduction of discriminatory practices affecting vulnerable populations.

Adaptive and responsive public policies are needed to address social inclusion issues for persons with disabilities in Indonesia (Aishworiya & Kang, 2021). People with disabilities often face structural and cultural problems that limit their full involvement in society. The existing discrimination is exacerbated by structural barriers such as limited access to infrastructure and public facilities that are not yet fully disability-friendly. Problems that occur in the community related to public services for people with disabilities in Indonesia include several aspects of services, such as (1) accessibility of facilities, where many public facilities, such as government buildings, public transportation, and educational places, have not been properly designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities (Dawud et al., 2019; Mahfud et al., 2023; Mandasari, 2022), (2) lack of awareness and training characterized by low awareness of the public and government officials regarding the rights of persons with disabilities resulting in a lack of training for public service staff in handling the special needs of persons with disabilities (Al-Faruq, 2022; Dawud et al., 2019; Rahman & Indrayati, 2019), and (3) obstacles in public transportation as evidenced by the many obstacles in terms of accessibility for people with disabilities. Facilities such as ramps and priority seats are often unavailable or not functioning properly, making it difficult for them to use public transport (Wahyudi, 2020). These challenges are directly related to SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, which emphasizes the importance of providing

safe, inclusive, accessible, and sustainable public spaces, transportation systems, and urban infrastructure for all citizens, including persons with disabilities.

In addition to the conditions described above, people with disabilities also feel isolated due to social stigmatization and a lack of understanding in society. People with disabilities often do not get enough information about the public services available. For example, in health services, people with disabilities do not know the location of health facilities or the types of specialized services available (Afattar et al., 2024; Wahyudi, 2020). This condition demonstrates that social inclusion extends beyond physical accessibility and encompasses equitable access to information and healthcare services. This issue is closely related to SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, which advocates universal access to quality healthcare services without discrimination. The condition also indicates the need for a change in public policy that does not focus solely on improving service accessibility but also addresses the underlying problems that hinder social inclusion. The lack of coordination among the parties involved in constructing disability-friendly facilities has led many projects to go off course. This often results in facilities that do not fully meet the needs of people with disabilities (Ariyadi et al., 2024; Dawud et al., 2019). It is hoped that inclusive public policies will enable people with disabilities to overcome social differences and contribute fully in various aspects of life.

In policy studies that highlight participation for persons with disabilities, there are still gaps that require more attention in the literature. Physical accessibility or case studies in developed countries have been the focus of many previous studies (Bailie et al., 2023; Pratiwi, 2023). However, there is little more in-depth research on policy change in developing countries, especially Indonesia. Studies show that inclusive public policies rely heavily on accessible infrastructure and policies that take into account the specific needs of people with disabilities. Overall, inclusive public policies for persons with disabilities need to consider three main components: adequate infrastructure, training to reduce social stigma, and the active participation of persons with disabilities in policy planning. These components align with SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, particularly the objective of creating inclusive decision-making processes that are responsive to the needs of all citizens. Based on various research findings, this policy change requires an approach that combines infrastructure improvements, regulatory strengthening, and transformation (Jensen et al., 2020; Mehvar et al., 2021; Rusch et al., 2022).

By emphasizing innovative approaches that have not been widely studied in the literature, this study offers a new perspective on inclusive public policy-making for people with disabilities in Indonesia. The novelty of this study is that it combines structural and cultural analysis to develop policy innovations that address physical accessibility needs and eliminate the social stigma that often limits the participation of persons with disabilities. Such an approach supports the achievement of SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, and SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, which collectively emphasize inclusion, accessibility, equal participation, and responsive governance. This research is expected to contribute to a more equitable and inclusive public policy update, as well as to provide a foundation for implementing policies that support sustainable social development in the country.

Against this backdrop, the purpose of this study is to explore and analyze innovations in public services for persons with disabilities in Indonesia and to identify the challenges that hinder their effective implementation. Innovation in public services plays a crucial role

not only in overcoming the various obstacles faced by persons with disabilities but also in ensuring that public services are accessible in an inclusive and equitable manner (Pasciana, 2020; Pramashela & Rachim, 2022). Therefore, this study contributes to the realization of sustainable development by strengthening inclusive public service systems that uphold equal rights, accessibility, participation, and social justice for persons with disabilities, in accordance with the principles embodied in SDGs 3, 10, 11, and 16.

METHOD

This study uses the literature review method as the primary approach for collecting and analyzing data. The literature study was chosen because it enables researchers to identify, review, and analyze relevant literature sources to understand the phenomenon of disability-friendly public services, as well as related innovations and challenges in the context of social inclusion in Indonesia. The literature sources used include scientific journals, academic books, research reports, and official policy documents related to disability and inclusive public services. In this study, library sources are obtained from reputable academic databases, such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and others, which provide access to the latest, indexed, and quality-assured scientific articles. In addition, books relevant to the topic of disability and public policy in Indonesia are also referred to provide a strong theoretical foundation. National policy documents, such as Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities, as well as other related regulations and policies issued by the Indonesian government, are reviewed to provide insights into the national policy framework.

This literature study method is implemented in systematic stages. First, it involves a literature search using keywords such as "disability-friendly public services", "public service innovation", "social inclusion", and "disability policy in Indonesia". These searches are conducted in various databases to gather relevant library sources. Second, to select literature that meets the inclusion criteria: research directly related to this research topic, published in the last five years, and with contextual relevance to the situation in Indonesia. The selected literature sources are then critically analyzed to identify the main findings, gaps in previous research, and the potential contribution of this research to the existing literature. Furthermore, data analysis is conducted using a descriptive-qualitative approach, in which information from various sources is organized and synthesized to describe the main thematic patterns related to public service innovation, challenges in implementing social inclusion policies, and the relevance of previous research findings to the Indonesian context. This synthesis process aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the conditions for disability-friendly public services in Indonesia and to identify innovative opportunities for inclusive public policies for persons with disabilities.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Ideality and Implementation of Public Services for Persons with Disabilities

Based on the principles of social inclusion and access justice, disability-friendly public services aim to ensure that everyone, regardless of physical or mental limitations, has equal access to public facilities and services. According to the theory of social inclusion, the ideal condition for public services comprises four main components: physical accessibility, service support, officer responsiveness, and facility sustainability (Mead et al., 2022). This is emphasized in Law Number 8 of 2016, which emphasizes the importance of providing

public accessibility for people with disabilities, including public transportation, government facilities, and health services.

The results of this study show that although the scale of disability-friendly public services remains limited, some regions in Indonesia have made significant progress in this regard. In Surabaya, there are examples of positive implementation, including *access ramps* and guide rails for the blind in government buildings, as well as priority seating on accessible public transportation. The city of Bandung is also a good example of disability-friendly libraries and parks, as well as wheelchairs in various public places.

Table 1. Some Examples of Disability-Friendly Public Services in Indonesia

City	Type of Service/ Facility	Description
Surabaya	Public Transportation (Bus)	Provision of access ramps at bus and bus stops, priority seats for people with disabilities, special lanes in the bus stop area
Bandung	Public Library	Guide paths for the visually impaired, audio devices for the deaf, wheelchair access room with special computer facilities
Yogyakarta	Tourist Attractions (Prambanan Temple)	Ramp accessibility around the tourist area, wheelchairs that can be borrowed by visitors with disabilities
Denpasar	Government Office (Mayor's Office)	Elevator with braille buttons and guide sounds, <i>access ramp</i> and disabled-only toilets
Makassar	Regional Hospital General	Special lane for wheelchairs, special escort officer at the registration section for people with disabilities, accessible elevator



Figure 1. The condition of the special bus for people with disabilities. Source: suarasurabaya.net



Figure 2. Disabled facilities in the form of wheelchair ramps. Source: Surabaya Transportation Department



Figure 3. Inclusion garden in Ronsen, Bandung. Source: PSLD-UB & BCI



Figure 4. A wheelchair dance performance in Makassar. Source: PSLD-UB & BCI

Equal access is a fundamental right for all people, including persons with disabilities, grounded in theories of justice in public service and social inclusion (Antoninis et al., 2020). Implementation in several cities in Indonesia shows how this theory is applied in policies and facilities. For example, providing physical accessibility, such as ramps and

special pathways, demonstrates the importance of mobility for people with disabilities. This method allows local governments to improve community quality of life by building disability-friendly infrastructure and by considering the specific needs of each public service. Thus, it shows that social inclusion theory can be used to create policies that support service accessibility and justice. Based on the above findings, it can be concluded that the provision of public services for persons with disabilities in several regions of Indonesia is an ideal example and aligns with the principles of social inclusion.

The Actual Reality of Public Services That Are Not Friendly to Persons with Disabilities

In Indonesia, there are many facilities and services that do not meet disability-friendly standards, despite various regulations that aim to make public services inclusive for people with disabilities. The results of this study show that access to public facilities, such as terminals, government buildings, and tourist attractions, remains very limited. Due to the limitations of wheelchair-only lanes in these places, people with disabilities are unable to access public services safely and comfortably. This indicates a difference between regulations and field practices, resulting in limited basic rights for groups with disabilities.

Physical infrastructure that is not adapted to the needs of people with disabilities is one of the shortcomings of public services for people with disabilities in Indonesia. Facilities such as ramps or elevators with braille keys are often unavailable or don't work properly in some cities. On the one hand, train stations and bus terminals do not yet have *Ramp* access, and on the other hand.

On the other hand, public service buildings such as government offices do not have special guide routes for the visually impaired. People with disabilities often feel neglected and limited in taking advantage of existing public services due to these infrastructure inadequacies. The results of the analysis show that infrastructure that does not support people with disabilities can lead to further structural discrimination, which hinders equal access for people with disabilities (Syafi'ie, 2014).

Table 2. Some Examples of Public Services That Are Not Ideal for People with Disabilities in Several Cities in Indonesia

City	Type of Service/ Facility	Description
Jakarta	Bus station	Lack of adequate access ramps, lack of dedicated lanes for wheelchair users, lack of braille signage
Terrain	General Hospital	The elevator is not equipped with braille buttons, there are no special escorts, the wheelchair lane is often blocked
Makassar	Tourist Attractions (Losari Beach)	There is no ramp access to the beach area, public toilets are not designed for people with disabilities, guide lanes for the blind are not available
Palembang	Government Building	Unavailability of sound-guided elevators for the visually impaired, no ramp or adequate wheelchair access
Denpasar	Shopping and Entertainment Malls	Accessibility is limited to the entrance, ramps are too steep and difficult to access with wheelchairs, public toilets are not up to disability standards

In addition to infrastructure issues, the main barriers for people with disabilities in accessing the services they need are a lack of understanding of public service workers and

a lack of training. Many employees do not know how to interact with people with disabilities, which often leads to uncomfortable situations and even exacerbates stigma. For example, there are some places where employees do not understand special needs, such as how to interact with deaf people or accompany people who use wheelchairs. This lack of training leads to non-inclusive services, underscoring the importance of improving human resource capacity to build more responsive and inclusive public services (Rahman & Indrayati, 2019).

Not only physical inconvenience, but the incompatibility of disability-friendly public services also has a much greater effect. Realizing that due to their limitations in accessing public spaces, people with disabilities often feel excluded from social life. In addition, people with disabilities experience stigma and social discrimination that make them feel less appreciated as members of society. In public service policy, psychological effects are often overlooked. However, psychological factors are essential to achieving effective social inclusion. As a result of research, the social isolation experienced by people with disabilities can have an impact on their mental health, which in turn has an impact on how they participate in different aspects of social life (Ayuningtyas et al., 2023).

The results of this analysis show a lack of consistency between policies and field implementation in creating disability-friendly public services. This includes physical infrastructure problems, a lack of understanding of officers, and the social impact experienced by people with disabilities. This suggests that a more innovative public policy approach is needed.

Public Policy Innovations and Challenges for Persons with Disabilities

To realize social inclusion and overcome and even remove social stigma against persons with disabilities requires innovative efforts and effective approaches, including (1) conducting systematic education programs to build public awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and the importance of social inclusion (Almunawaroh et al., 2022); (2) integrate and involve persons with disabilities in various forums and meetings to prioritize and realize their needs (Dirkareshza et al., 2023; I. P. Sari et al., 2024); (3) Provide special training for public service employees on disability-friendly services (Sadiawati et al., 2023; I. P. Sari et al., 2024); and (4) to promote positively the contribution of persons with disabilities to improve the abilities and potentials of persons with disabilities (Andayani et al., 2019; N. N. Sari et al., 2022).

Making public policies in favor of people with disabilities is an important step to bridge the gap between what is expected and what is happening in Indonesia. Public services must ensure equal accessibility for everyone, including people with disabilities, according to social inclusion theory. As outlined above, the implementation of various creative policies is urgently needed, such as providing disability-friendly facilities, providing training for apparatus to improve understanding of inclusion, and using technology as an accessibility tool (Bailie et al., 2023; Mead et al., 2022). The legal framework for the fulfillment of the rights of persons with disabilities is provided by Law Number 8 of 2016, but adaptive and responsive policy approaches still need to be improved to enable its implementation in the field. Pratiwi (2023) said that public policy innovation must include three main elements: infrastructure improvement, human resource development, and active participation of persons with disabilities in public service planning. Furthermore, in the current digital era, it is necessary to develop a range of mobile

applications that help people with disabilities find accessible public services, especially regarding facility accessibility. Finally, it is necessary to build a monitoring system to periodically assess the effectiveness of the implemented policies.

However, many regions still face great difficulties in implementing this inclusive policy. The main obstacles remain structural, including a lack of funding and qualified human resources (Hudson et al., 2019). In addition, cultural barriers and social stigma against people with disabilities only make things worse. According to the research by St. John et al. (2022), poor public understanding and a lack of coordination among public institutions are two additional factors that hinder the implementation of inclusive policies. It is important for people with disabilities to access services because of a lack of infrastructure, such as wheelchair-accessible lanes and braille guides in many public facilities (Ayuningtyas et al., 2023; Syafi'ie, 2014). As a result, disability-friendly public services require policy innovation across sectors and active community participation to sustain inclusion policies.

Discussion

The analysis of ideals and the implementation of public services for persons with disabilities shows a significant gap between expectations and reality in the provision of inclusive services. Equal accessibility, encompassing physical access, service support, officer responsiveness, and facility sustainability, is essential to social inclusion theory. Some regions in Indonesia, such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung, have made progress by building access ramps, blind guide floors, and priority seats for public transportation. This suggests that building infrastructure that takes into account the needs of persons with disabilities can enable the application of social inclusion theory.

However, public services remain largely disability-inaccessible in most parts of Indonesia. Innovating in increasing social inclusion for people with disabilities in Indonesia is not easy and involves several challenges faced such as lack of awareness and understanding of the rights of people with disabilities, inadequate public facilities for people with disabilities so that they become barriers to access to public services, inconsistent policy implementation in the field so that it creates disparities in service quality between regions. In addition, the limited budget and capacity of employees to implement social inclusion programs, the use of technology and digital innovations that help find disability-friendly facilities has not been optimized, and the lack of good coordination between parties so that collaboration has not been carried out effectively. A concrete example is the lack of access *ramps* and braille guides in some facilities, such as bus terminals and government buildings. This condition shows that Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities has not been properly implemented and that there is resistance to the changes needed to meet inclusive service standards.

Thus, reducing negative stigma is the key to creating social inclusion so that people with disabilities can improve their quality of life. To address these issues and create inclusive public services, innovative and sustainable efforts are needed. Policies that support social inclusion for persons with disabilities can be strengthened through cross-sectoral reforms involving government, the private sector, and civil society. It is possible to reduce stigma and improve accessibility through infrastructure improvements, training of service personnel, and the implementation of assistive technology. If everyone works together, they can build a more equitable and inclusive society.

CONCLUSION

The analysis in this study emphasizes that although laws support the accessibility of people with disabilities to public services, such as Law Number 8 of 2016, many challenges still hinder their implementation in practice. There are significant differences between policies and what is happening on the ground, including structural barriers, infrastructure limitations, and service personnel's lack of knowledge and skills. Some cities have shown good examples of providing disability-friendly facilities, but their implementation is still far from adequate in many areas. This shows that policies must be updated to be more responsive and applied evenly throughout Indonesia.

Further research can improve understanding of how effective various policy innovations are across different local contexts in Indonesia and how they affect the long-term quality of life of people with disabilities. In addition, it is hoped that this comprehensive approach can accelerate the implementation of truly inclusive public services and reduce social stigma through cross-sector collaboration between the government, community, and private sectors.

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