

THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL EDUCATION ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AWARENESS AMONG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of political education on political participation awareness among people with disabilities in Indonesia. Inclusive political education is believed to be able to improve the understanding of people with disabilities regarding their political rights, the electoral process, and the importance of active involvement in democratic life. Through a descriptive qualitative approach and literature review, this study found that political education delivered through various methods, such as socialisation, lectures, and accessible materials, can increase knowledge, self-confidence, and motivation among people with disabilities to participate in elections and other political activities. However, there are still challenges in the form of limited facilities, materials that are not fully accessible, and social and psychological barriers. Therefore, an integrated strategy involving the government, election organisers, disability organisations, and the wider community is needed to ensure that political education is accessible in a fair and sustainable manner, so that the political participation of persons with disabilities can increase in both quantity and quality.

Keywords: Political Education, Political Participation Awareness, Disability.

Introduction

Political participation is one of the main pillars of a democratic system that guarantees the involvement of all citizens, without exception, in the public decision-making process. In this context, political participation is not limited to voting in elections, but also includes involvement in various other political activities, such as becoming a legislative candidate, election observer, and involvement in civil society organisations (Nugroho, 2024). However, in reality, not all groups in society have the same opportunities and access to actively participate in political life, including people with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities are individuals who experience long-term physical, intellectual, mental, and/or sensory limitations that, in their interactions with the environment, may encounter barriers and difficulties in participating fully and effectively alongside other citizens based on equal rights. Persons with disabilities often face

various obstacles in exercising their political rights (Widhiasthini, 2024). These barriers can be physical, such as voting stations that are not disability-friendly, or non-physical, such as a lack of political information that is accessible in formats suitable for their needs. In addition, social stigma and negative stereotypes about the political abilities of persons with disabilities are also significant barriers (Sari, 2022).

In Indonesia, the protection and fulfilment of political rights for persons with disabilities are regulated in Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities. This regulation affirms that every person with a disability has equal rights in the political sphere, including the right to vote and be elected in general elections. However, the implementation of this regulation still faces various challenges in the field, particularly in terms of providing inclusive facilities and information for persons with disabilities (Putri, 2024).

Political education is an important instrument in increasing public awareness and political participation, especially for vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities. Political education is a deliberate, planned, and systematic learning process to increase public knowledge, understanding, and awareness of their political rights, obligations, and responsibilities so that they can become responsible political participants and play an active role in the life of the nation and state. Political education is very important because it can shape ethical political behaviour, increase political participation, and create a more democratic and just society (Babik & Gardner, 2021).

Through political education, individuals can gain a better understanding of the political system, their rights and obligations as citizens, and the mechanisms of political participation available to them. Political education can also build confidence and motivation for persons with disabilities to actively engage in the political process.

Various studies show that political education has a positive influence on increasing political participation. For example, a study conducted in Minahasa Regency found that political education contributed 29.1% to increasing voter participation among persons with disabilities. Similar findings were observed in political education programmes initiated by the General Election Commission (KPU) in various regions, where the involvement of volunteers with disabilities in election outreach increased participation by 68.29% (Voulgarides, 2021).

However, the implementation of political education for persons with disabilities still faces various obstacles. One of them is the lack of accessible political education materials, both in terms of format and delivery media. The materials presented often do not consider special needs, such as the use of Braille, sign language, or audio for the blind and deaf (Reher, 2020). In addition, the lack of training for election officials and political educators in understanding the needs of persons with disabilities poses a particular challenge. Another equally important obstacle is cultural factors, such as the perception that persons with disabilities are not competent in political matters. This stigma comes not only from the general public, but also from family environments and

even persons with disabilities themselves. As a result, many persons with disabilities feel hesitant or reluctant to participate in political activities, even though they have the same rights as other citizens (Reher & Evans, 2024). To overcome these various obstacles, systematic and integrated efforts are needed from various parties, ranging from the government, election organizers, civil society organizations, to the disability community itself. The development of inclusive and accessible political education modules is one strategic step that can be taken. In addition, the active involvement of persons with disabilities in the design and implementation of political education programmes is also very important to ensure that the material presented is truly relevant to their needs (Fiala-Butora & Ashely, 2022).

Therefore, this study on the influence of political education on political participation awareness among persons with disabilities is highly relevant. Through this study, it is hoped that patterns of relationship between political education and increased awareness and political participation among persons with disabilities can be identified. Additionally, this study can also identify various obstacles faced and formulate effective strategies to improve access and quality of political education for persons with disabilities.

Research Method

The research method used in this study is descriptive qualitative method. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the influence of political education on political participation awareness among persons with disabilities (Levy & Ellis, 2006); (Webster & Watson, 2002). Data was collected through a literature review by examining various literature, documents, previous research results, and relevant regulations regarding political education and political participation of persons with disabilities. Data analysis was conducted thematically, namely by identifying the main themes that emerged from the literature review, such as the forms of political education received, the obstacles faced, and the impact of political education on the political awareness and participation of persons with disabilities. Additionally, category analysis techniques were employed to group data based on specific aspects relevant to the research objectives, thereby providing a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon under examination (Fink, 2014).

Results and Discussion

The Influence of Political Education on Political Participation of Persons with Disabilities

Political education plays an important role in encouraging political participation among persons with disabilities in Indonesia. Through political education, persons with disabilities gain a better understanding of their political rights, the electoral process, and the importance of active involvement in democratic life. This knowledge is the

foundation for their equal and meaningful participation, rather than mere formality (Hutagaluh & Aslan, 2019).

One of the main challenges faced by persons with disabilities is the lack of access to political information tailored to their needs. Election information materials, for example, are often not available in accessible formats such as braille, sign language, or audio. Inclusive political education must address this need to ensure that persons with disabilities are not left behind in the democratic process (Aslan, 2019).

Political education efforts carried out by various parties, such as the General Election Commission (KPU) and community organisations, have shown positive impacts. In several regions, special political education for people with disabilities has increased their enthusiasm to participate in elections. This is evident from the increasing number of voters with disabilities who turned up and exercised their right to vote in several regional head elections (Shields & et al., 2020).

Political education also serves as a means of empowerment, building self-confidence, and eroding the social stigma that has long been attached to persons with disabilities. With sufficient knowledge, they feel more empowered and confident to engage in public discussions and political decision-making processes (Rini, 2023).

The involvement of organisations for persons with disabilities in political education is a significant supporting factor. Organisations such as the Indonesian Association of Persons with Disabilities (PPDI) and the Indonesian Movement for the Welfare of the Deaf (GERKATIN) actively accompany and mentor their members to understand and exercise their political rights optimally. Collaboration between the KPU and these organisations also helps bridge the needs of persons with disabilities with election policies (Pramudito, 2023).

Additionally, effective political education can enhance the quality of political participation among persons with disabilities. They are not only present as voters but are also beginning to engage as democracy volunteers, election monitors, and even legislative candidates. This active role strengthens the position of persons with disabilities within the political structure and expands their participation opportunities. However, the implementation of political education for persons with disabilities still faces various challenges. Limited numbers of officers, differences in educational methods, and a lack of special training for election officials are challenges that must be addressed immediately. Without adequate support, political education risks not reaching all disability groups equally (Prasetyo, 2023).

Psychological factors also influence the political participation of persons with disabilities. Good political education can increase their motivation, confidence, and enthusiasm to participate. Conversely, a lack of support and information can lead to doubts and reluctance to engage in political activities (Lestari, 2023).

Sustainable and integrated political education is essential to ensure that the political participation of persons with disabilities increases in both quantity and quality.

Regular socialisation programmes, accessible materials, and the involvement of persons with disabilities in policy design are strategic steps that must be prioritised (Handayani, 2022).

Government and community support are crucial in creating a disability-friendly political environment. The government must ensure that existing regulations are properly implemented, while the community must change its perceptions and attitudes towards persons with disabilities so that they can participate without discrimination (Widhiasthini, 2024).

Overall, political education has proven to have an impact on increasing political participation among people with disabilities. Through inclusive and sustainable political education, people with disabilities can become an integral part of the democratic process, advocate for their rights, and contribute to building a more just and equitable nation.

Effective Strategies to Improve Access to Political Education for Persons with Disabilities

Effective strategies to improve access to political education for persons with disabilities must be designed comprehensively and inclusively in order to address the various obstacles that have been encountered. These strategies include policy aspects, provision of facilities, development of materials, training, and active involvement of the disability community (Siregar, 2022).

First, strengthening affirmative policies is crucial to ensure that there are operational standards for special services for persons with disabilities in the election administration environment. These policies must be followed by programmes and activities that specifically target persons with disabilities, complete with adequate budgetary support for the realisation of programme planning and the necessary accommodations (Fitria, 2022).

Second, providing accessible facilities and accommodations at Polling Stations (TPS) and in all political education activities is a must. These facilities include special pathways, voting aids, and communication tools tailored to the diverse needs of people with disabilities, such as braille, audio, and sign language (Sari, 2022).

Third, the development of accessible political education materials is crucial. Materials must be prepared in various formats, such as braille, videos with sign language, audio, and infographics that are easy to understand. This aims to ensure that all persons with disabilities, including those who are blind, deaf, or have intellectual disabilities, can access political information on an equal footing (Fadilah, 2021).

Fourth, special training for election officials and political educators needs to be conducted regularly. This training aims to ensure that they understand how to communicate and interact effectively with persons with disabilities, thereby creating an inclusive and friendly environment (Nanggala, 2024).

Fifth, collaboration with disability organisations is crucial to identify real needs and provide input on the provision of facilities and the development of political education programmes. These organisations can also be strategic partners in the implementation of political socialisation and education (Rini, 2023).

Sixth, the active involvement of persons with disabilities in the design and evaluation of political education policies needs to be prioritised. Discussion forums, working groups, or public dialogues involving persons with disabilities, families, educators, and election organisers can be a platform to hear their aspirations and experiences directly (Suryani, 2021).

Seventh, the use of information and communication technology is an effective strategy to reach more persons with disabilities. Online platforms, specialised applications, and social media can be used to disseminate accessible and interactive political education information (Babik & Gardner, 2021).

Eighth, massive campaigns and outreach to the wider community about the importance of political participation for persons with disabilities are also needed. This aims to eliminate stigma, discrimination, and increase social support for disability involvement in politics (Higgins, 2021).

Ninth, leadership training and mentoring programmes for persons with disabilities who wish to become more involved in politics, such as becoming legislative candidates or party members, need to be developed. These programmes can increase their confidence and capacity to participate actively (Grobelaar et al., 2021).

Tenth, the involvement of academics and educational institutions in providing political education to persons with disabilities is also very important. Academics can act as facilitators, resource persons, and agents of change in building an inclusive political culture in society (Schur et al., 2022).

Eleventh, regular monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of political education programmes for persons with disabilities must be carried out to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the programmes. The results of the evaluation can be used as a basis for improving and developing policies in the future (Wohnig, 2020).

Twelfth, commitment and synergy between the government, election organisers, disability organisations, academics, and the wider community are key to the success of this strategy. All parties must play an active role and support each other to ensure that access to political education for persons with disabilities is truly realised in a fair and sustainable manner (Morris, 2020).

Thus, political education has proven to have an impact on increasing political participation among persons with disabilities. The implementation of effective strategies—from affirmative policies, accessible facilities, inclusive materials, training, collaboration, to the use of technology—can overcome various barriers that have been faced. Support from the government, election organisers, disability organisations, academics, and the community is essential to create a truly inclusive political

environment. With commitment and collaboration from all parties, people with disabilities can become an integral part of the democratic process, advocate for their rights, and contribute to building a fair and equitable nation.

Conclusion

Political education has an influence on increasing political participation awareness among people with disabilities. Through inclusive political education, people with disabilities gain better knowledge and understanding of their political rights, the electoral process, and the importance of their involvement in democratic life. This knowledge not only increases their confidence but also encourages them to actively exercise their right to vote and participate in various other political activities.

Effective implementation of political education requires support from various parties, including the government, election authorities, and disability organisations and communities. Providing accessible materials, training for officials, and collaborating with disability organisations are key to ensuring that political education reaches all types of disabilities. With the right political education, barriers to participation such as lack of information, accessibility, and social stigma can be minimised, thereby increasing the quantity and quality of political participation among persons with disabilities.

Awareness among all parties regarding the importance of political education for people with disabilities must continue to be raised to create inclusive and fair elections and political processes. In this way, political education not only empowers people with disabilities to fulfil their rights and obligations as citizens but also strengthens participatory and equitable democracy for all segments of society.

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