**Social Discrimination as a Psychological Barrier for Voters with Disabilities in Indonesia’s 2024 Election**

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**Abstract**

Elections are a manifestation of the concept of democracy. Citizen participation is a key indicator in measuring the success of these elections. People with disabilities, as integral members of the nations, have equal rights to vote in elections. However, discrimination against voters with disabilities presents an obstacle that ultimately hinders their participations in elections. This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews and literature review as data collection methods. The results highlight that more than 50 percent of voters with disabilities do not vote or abstain in elections, with psychological factors contributing to their non-participation. The social discrimination that people with disabilities still experience affects their mental health, leading many to lack confidence in their social environment. This lack of confidence and a sense of insecurity in their social environment influences people with disabilities not to participate in elections. Therefore, psychological factors significantly contribute to the low voter participation among individuals with disabilities in the 2024 elections in Indonesia. This research also emphasizes increasing public awareness, strengthening social education, and strengthening the law and protections of people with disabilities as efforts that can be made to reduce the rate of discrimination against people with disabilities.

**Keywords:** Disabilities; Discrimination; Election; Psychological

**Introduction**

In a democratic country, elections are one way to foster active citizen participation in the political process. Democracy emphasizes active and equal participation by citizens in a system of government, representing the political power vested in the people (Hidayat, 2023). Consequently, many define democracy as a government of the people, by the people, and for the people (Wahyudi et al., 2022). Therefore, elections are a manifestation of democracy that emphasizes of democracy that emphasizes citizen participation in determining the future direction of their country’s government.

Election is a key instrument in a democratic country. Active and equal citizen participation is essential for the realization of substantive democracy, one of which is through the electoral process. Citizen have right the right to determine their political choices (Rahmaniah, 2021). Elections can also be described as a process of producing a new social contract between the people and the government, as popular sovereignty is transferred to the elected candidates to produce policies that benefit all levels of society (Antari, 2018; Nadiasih, 2023). Therefore, citizens are expected to be discerning in determining and selecting candidates in elections, as this will influence their country’s future democratic process.

Citizen participation in politics reflects the important role played by individual citizens in shaping the political system (Dim, 2023). In the implementation of elections, citizen participation is a form of citizen confidence and hope in leaders and representatives of the people, who carry out the people’s mandate, thereby creating prosperity for all levels of society (Hapsari & Saraswati, 2023). This participation is a form of popular sovereignty, which means that the people have the sovereignty, responsibility, rights, and obligations to democratically elect leaders and representatives who will run the government (Silalahi, 2022). Thus, the active and equal participation of citizens in the election process is one of the main indicators for measuring the success of election.

Persons with disabilities, as an integral part of citizens, have equal rights and status in voting, and have equal rights to participate in all election processes, including exercising their right to vote. World Health Organization (WHO) records that at least 1.3 billion people with disabilities, or approximately 16 percent of the world’s population, live with disabilities (Kamenov et al., 2022). This data makes people with disabilities the largest minority group in the world. The large number of people with disabilities, along with environmental conditions that still do not pay attention to disability conditions, hinders them from participating in their social environment, including in elections.

In the 2024 Indonesian election, 1.101.178 voters with disabilities were registered on the permanent voters list. The active participation of disabled voters in this election provides momentum to help determine the future direction of the government, including providing hope for policies that support them. However, the reality shows that only 482.499 people with disabilities were registered to vote on election day (General Election Commission of Indonesia, 2024). This figure is far from ideal, as less than 50 percent of people with disabilities in the election should raise question about whether voters with disabilities have received equal rights, thus limiting their participation in the election process.

Acceptance of the existence of people with disabilities is one of the social obstacles still faced by people with disabilities. This social discrimination ultimately hinders people with disabilities from participating in their social environment, including in elections. The limitations experienced by people with disabilities continue to receive negative stigma, whether seen as lacking capabilities (Lestari & Fitlya, 2021; Propiona, 2021). Many people with disabilities experience social exclusion because society still does not accept the differences and limitations of people with disabilities. Ultimately, people with disabilities experience obstacles or psychological disorders that lead to a loss of self-confidence and choose to isolate themselves from the social environment (Jauhari, 2017). This discrimination demonstrates a lack of understanding and empathy in society regarding disability, thus still viewing people with disabilities as not part of society.

Previous research has shown that social discrimination against people with disabilities impacts their participation in elections. A study by Dedi and Soedarmo (2020) entitled “*Political participation of Voters with Disabilities in Ciamis Regency in the 2019 Simultaneous Election*” showed that discrimination and negative stigma fostered a lack of confidence, preventing people with disabilities form entering polling station. Another research by Filianggi, Ahmady, and Khalisni (2024), entitled “*Fulfillment of the Right to Be Voted by Persons with Disabilities by Political Parties in General Elections (Case Study of the 2019 General Election in Banda Aceh City)* ”, shows that social and community characteristics that have not accepted persons with disabilities, are one of the causes of many persons with disabilities who lack confidence and are a factor in their small percentage in elections. Although this previous research has identified the influence of social discrimination in the low level of participation of persons with disabilities, a more in-depth study of the analysis of social discrimination and psychological analysis specifically affecting the participation of persons with disabilities has not been conducted. Therefore, this research will focus on the analysis of social discrimination and psychological aspect of persons with disabilities, utilizing a psychological approach to the theory of voting behavior in its analysis. This research also provides efforts that can be made to reduce and prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities.

**Theory of Voting Behavior**

Voting behavior theory defines citizen participation in election as a decision-making process, ultimately determining whether or not to vote (Kristiyani, 2024). Three approaches can be used to analyze citizen voting behavior in determining their choices: 1) a sociological approach; 2) a psychological approach; and 3) a rational approach. This study will employ a psychological approach to analyze the low participation of people with disabilities in Indonesia’s 2024 election.

The psychological approach was first proposed by the University of Michigan Survey Research Centre as a response to dissatisfaction with the sociological approach, which methodologically incapable of measuring existing tendencies in society (Mahardika & Fatayati, 2019; Simanullang et al., 2023). This psychological approach primarily focuses on information or phenomena that affect an individual’s environment, influencing their psychology and, in turn, shaping their decision to vote (Rosit et al., 2023).

In the context of disabled voters, psychological factors influence their decision to participate in elections. The social discrimination that still experienced by people with disabilities will affect their mental health. Research conducted by Jung, Kang, Park, & Jang, (2022) shows that social environments that do not accept the existence of people with disabilities, create feelings of inadequacy and even lack of self-confidence in people with disabilities, which ultimately disrupts their mental health. The disruption of mental health of people with disabilities leads them to isolate themselves from their social environment (Jauhari, 2017). Anxiety, isolation, and risk avoidance are psychological factors that influence and shape their voting decisions in elections (Suárez, 2022).

The psychological distress experienced by people with disabilities due to social discrimination underpins their decision to participate and vote in elections. Feelings of efficacy exacerbate feelings of anxiety and fear, leading to complete withdrawal from participation, ultimately leading to non-participation (Buisseret & Prato, 2020)

**Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy refers to an individual’s belief in their ability to organize and carry out the actions necessary to complete a specific task Bandura (1997). The belief that grows within an individual, in the form of an awareness of how important and influential they are in carrying out their rights and obligations as a citizen in the country’s political process, is called political efficacy (Fitriah, 2014). High political efficacy in society is evident in the stability of democracy. A society with high political efficacy will tend to be a supporter of the democratic system (Nurcahya & Mulyana, 2017).

Political efficacy consists of external and internal dimensions. Sylvester (2010) suggest that external political efficacy refers to the belief in the political demands of having a responsive political system, while internal political efficacy refers to the belief that an individual is competent enough to influence political decisions. External political efficacy is influenced by interaction between an individual and their environment, whereas internal political efficacy is influenced by a person’s perception of their abilities (Nurcahya & Mulyana, 2017).

Internal efficacy encompasses self-perception, individual knowledge of politics, understanding of politics, political self-confidence to participate in political processes, and individual capacity in politics (Craig et al., 1990). Individual with low internal political efficacy tend to be apathetic citizens and indifferent to the political process, thus making them more likely to become whitelisted (Prabowo, 2020). Internal political efficacy has a significant influence on political participation (Putra et al., 2021).

Political efficacy for people with disabilities refers to their confidence in actively participation in political activities. Based on research conducted by Oktovrian (2024), it was suggested that factors that reduce political efficacy for people with disabilities include accessibility in elections, people with disabilities as first-time voters with limited knowledge, and a lack of support from the environment, thus becoming a significant barrier to political participation for people with disabilities. These factor can influence the absence of disabled voters or their inclusion in the white group during elections due to a lack of information, as well as reluctance or worry about going to the polling station because of their limitation (Nurrasyid & Sardini, 2018).

**Concept of Disability**

Disability is a word with various specific meanings. In the health sector, disability is viewed as a condition resulting from a disease, injury, or other clinically observable health issue affecting an individual (Baart et al., 2023). Meanwhile, in the social environment, disability is viewed as a limitation or lack of capacity to participate in an activity, thereby affecting an individual’s ability to engage in social activities (Sam et al., 2024). Some other definitions of disability are as follows:

1. In the Republic of Indonesia Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities, it is stated that persons with disabilities are any persons who experiences physical, intellectual, mental, or sensory limitations for a long period who, in interacting with the environment, may experience difficulties and obstacles in participating effectively with other citizens based on equal rights.
2. In the *Convention On The Rights of Persons With Disabilities* (CRPD) defines disability as a concept that is constantly evolving, resulting from the interaction between an individual’s limitations and environmental factors that hinder their full and effective participation in society. Persons with disabilities are those who have physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory limitations for a specific period that create barriers and prevent their full participation in society on an equal basis with other.
3. *World Health Organization* (WHO) states that disability is a condition caused by the interaction between health conditions, environmental factors, and personal factors, which ultimately results in impaired body function or structure, activity restrictions due to the inability to read or move, and restrictions on participation in various fields.

Referring to Republic of Indonesia Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities, it mentions four types of persons with disabilities, including:

1. People with physical disabilities: are individuals who experience disturbances in their motor function, whether due to amputation, stiffness, paraplegia, cerebral palsy, stroke, leprosy, and/or small people;
2. People with sensory disabilities: are individuals who experience disturbances in the function five senses, whether due impaired hearing function or deafness, due to impaired vision function or blindness, and/or due to impaired speech function or speech disability;
3. People with intellectual disabilities: are individuals who experience disturbances in their thinking function due to below average intelligence levels, whether slow learning, and/or down syndrome;
4. People with mental disabilities: are individuals who experience disorders in their thinking, emotional and behavioral function, including: 1) Psychosocial disorders, including bipolar, depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and personality disorders; and 2) Developmental disabilities, that affect their social interactions, including autism and hyperactivity.

From the definitions and categories above, it can be concluded that persons with disabilities are individuals who experience various obstacles due to limitations in their bodily functions, whether physical, sensory, intellectual, or mental. These various disabilities can be experienced singly or multiple times within a specific period determined by medical personnel. In the 2021, the WHO recorded 1.3 billion people living with disabilities, or equivalent to 16% of the world’s populations, making persons with disabilities the largest minority group in the world (Kamenov et al., 2022). Meanwhile, in Indonesia, there are 22.5 million people with disabilities, or equivalent to 5% of the Indonesian population (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2020). The obstacles experienced by persons with disabilities arise from the inaccessibility of all forms of fulfillment of fundamental rights for persons with disabilities. Therefore, fulfilling accessibility by prioritizing the concept of universality is manifestation of equality and equal rights for all citizens, especially persons with disabilities.

In the elections process, in addition to accessibility barriers, discrimination and social stigma are still obstacles faced by voters with disabilities. There is still a stigma that devalues the dignity of people with disabilities as voters, even questioning their participation in elections, as they are not “competent” enough to make their choice (Sirman & Rifai, 2023; Waisnawa & Dewi, 2019). The stigma that continues to be experienced by people with disabilities indicates a lack of support from their social environment for their position in having equal rights, which ultimately affects the psychology of people with disabilities. Low psychological conditions and self-efficacy can encourage people with disabilities not to participate in exercising their right to vote.

**Methods**

This research is a qualitative study using semi-structures interviews and a literature review. Qualitative research is conducted in a specific setting, aiming to understand the phenomenon being studied (Fadli, 2021). This study utilizes two data sources: primary data collected through interviews and secondary data derived from a literature review. The interview method used was Mr. Faluphy Mahmud, Chair of the Indonesia Association of Persons with Disabilities for South Sulawesi, and Mr. Aguswulu, Chair of the Indonesia Association of Persons with Disability for Makassar City.

In collecting interview data in this study, interview guidelines, recording tools, and electronic folders were used to store interview audio. The primary data analysis process involved several steps, including: 1) The interview audio was transcribed into text using transcription tool; 2) The transcript result was manually adjusted to ensure the text matched the audio; 3) The transcript result was reviewed to determine the final data; and 4) The final data were presented in the study by language and writing conventions.

In collecting and processing literature study data, this research carried out several steps, including: 1) Searching for relevant sources based on research keywords, including articles on legislation, scientific articles, books, mass media reports, and government report; 2) The collected sources will be inputted into the reference management application; 3) Literature sources will be reviewed to determine the initial data; 4) The initial data will then be grouped in special file; 5) Reduction is carried out on the initial data, with adjustment, analysis, and sorting data based on research needs, to obtain the final data; and 6) The final data will then be presented in this research.

**Results and Discussion**

**Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Indonesia’s 2024 Election**

Electoral participation refers to the active involvement of citizens who have the right to participate in the electoral process, in determining their representatives or leaders. Citizen political participation in elections is a key indicator of the implementation of popular sovereignty in a democratic country (Rahmaniah, 2021). Popular sovereignty means that the people have the sovereignty, responsibility, rights, and obligations to democratically elect leaders who will govern the government (Silalahi, 2022). Voter participation in elections is expected to yield leaders and representatives who are oriented towards the community’s welfare.

Every citizen, without exception, including persons with disabilities, has equal rights to participate in elections. A total of 1.101.178 persons with disabilities are recorded on the National Voter List for the 2024 Election. With the large number of persons with disabilities who will exercise their right to vote, and considering the complexities faced by persons with disabilities, special provisions are needed to encourage their participation in the election. Referring to the concept of democracy, that every citizen without exception has the same and equal rights, including to participate actively in election without any obstacles, and is the responsibility of the state (Eversberg, 2021; Theiler, 2022). In the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities, Part Nine, “Political Rights” Article 13, point g, it is stated that persons with disabilities have the right to access facilities for holding elections. This article aims to support and realize promote equal participation of people with disabilities in the electoral process in Indonesia. Fulfilling accessibility, including access to information, disability-friendly polling station, and the availability of voting aids, are fundamental needs that must be met to enable people with disabilities to participate in the election process.

Diagram 1. Participation of Voters with Disabilities

The reality of the Indonesia’s 2024 election is still far from participatory and inclusive. Only 482.499 voters with disabilities participated in the election (General Election Commission of Indonesia, 2024), or 44% of the total number of voters with disabilities in the National Voter List. The lack of participation of people with disabilities in the 2024 election demonstrates the failure of election organizers to create inclusive and democratic elections. This lack of participation of people with disabilities is driven by unresolved issues in each election, which ultimately reduces the interest of people with disabilities to participate. According to Mr. Faluphy, there are at least four factors inhibiting the participation of voters with disabilities in the 2024 election, including: 1) The social stigma that still attaches to people with disabilities; 2) Lack of understanding among election officials or organizers regarding disabilities; 3) Lack of involvement of relevant stakeholders, both government and NGOs; and 4) Lack of support for election facilities and infrastructure for the needs of voters with disabilities.

People with disabilities are considered a disadvantaged group globally, as they continue to face barriers to acceptance in society, and still face stigma, discrimination, and injustice in fulfilling their rights in daily life (Magnusson et al., 2021). Although there are laws that essentially affirm the protection and position of people with disabilities who have equal rights, status, and obligations with other citizens, people with disabilities still face discrimination and exclusion from the social environment (Ndaumanu, 2020; Sam et al., 2024). This discrimination ultimately becomes one of the causes of the lack of participation of disabled voters in the implementation of election in Indonesia

**Social Discrimination**

The negative stigma of imperfection still clings to people with disabilities in society, making discrimination and exclusion in social circles a harsh reality they must accept. People with disabilities are still seen as deviant, weak, unable to contribute, and even excluded from society, which ultimately negates their abilities and integrity (Hayon, 2019; Nurbeti & Chandra, 2021). A study conducted by the Centre of Research Excellence in Disability and Health(Mulyani, 2022) states that discrimination is a reality that people with disabilities accept in their daily lives. This social stigma ultimately becomes stressful for families with disabled members. According to Mr. Faluphy, many families still believe that a family member with a disability is a “disgrace” that tarnishes the family’s reputation, something that should not happen to their family. Consequently, many families with disabled members choose not to exercise their rights, one of which is participation in elections.

Discrimination is influenced by the perspective or belief of ‘Ableism’ which underlines negative attitudes, stereotypes, and stigma towards people with disabilities. Ablism is defined as a social attitude that limits and excludes the potential of people with disabilities. Ablism is also defined as beliefs and practices that consider themselves perfect beings, which then view people with disabilities as something full shortcomings and weakness (Sitorus, 2023). Ableism is based in the idea that people with disabilities are an abnormality of the normality inherent in humans. Therefore, this idea is used to justify discrimination, harassment, exploitation, and neglect of people with disabilities (Sam et al., 2024).

In the implementation of elections, social discrimination is one of the obstacles and challenges still faced by people with disabilities. As seen in the implementation of the 2024 elections, only 482.499 voters with disabilities cast their votes, equivalent to 44%, of the total 1.101.178 disabled voters in the National Voter List. The existence of discrimination or negative stigma fosters a lack of confidence in people with disabilities, thus fostering a fear of participating in the election (Ansori, 2024; Dedi & Soedarmo, 2020). On the other hand, some people still question in the position of people with disabilities who have the right to vote in elections, arguing that they are not ‘capable’ enough to determine and cast their choice (Sirman & Rifai, 2023).

**Table 1**

**Social Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities**

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| **Researchers** | **Findings** |
| (Waisnawa & Dewi, 2019) | * There are still views in society that look down on the dignity of disabled group as voters; * There is neglect of people with disabilities due to their limitations; |
| (Dedi & Soedarmo, 2020) | * People with disabilities still experience negative stigma and discrimination; * There are still families who close themselves off to the presence of a family member with disabilities; |
| (Qodarsasi, 2021) | * There are stereotypes attached to people with disabilities, which result in exclusion and discrimination; |
| (Ramadhan, 2021) | * There is still negative stigma regarding the rights of people with disabilities to participate in elections; |
| (Dwintari, 2021) | * Some people with disabilities are not properly registered and do not receive the same recognition as other voters; * There are still families who hide their family member who have disabilities; |
| (Rengganis et al., 2021) | * Negative stigma from families who assume that people with disabilities are unable to vote independently, makes families apathetic and not accompany the to the polling station; |
| (Sirman & Rifai, 2023) | * There are still people who question the voting rights and participation rights of people with disabilities in election, because they are not ‘capable’ enough to determine their choice; |

Source: Processed Data

The table above shows that there are still negative views on people with disabilities, particularly regarding their participation in elections. This stigma, rooted in society, ultimately impacts the psychological of people with disabilities. Mr. Aguswulu states that many people with disabilities label themselves based on their limitations. This label is driven by an environment that doesn’t accept or support the existence of people with disabilities, ultimately leading many choose to hide from their social environment.

The social discrimination that people with disabilities continue to experience ultimately impacts their mental and psychological health. Research conducted by Jung et al., (2022) shows that an environment that does not yet accept the presence of people with disabilities creates feelings or inadequacy and even a lack of self-confidence in people with disabilities, and can disrupt their mental health. This psychological disruption ultimately leads to distrust and even fears among people with disabilities to participate in elections, especially in exercising their right to vote at polling stations. On the other hand, discrimination against people with disabilities is a form of violation of basic principles of Human Rights. According to Rhona K. M. Smith in (Paruntu et al., 2023), the basic principle of human rights include: 1) Equality, which is defined as equal opportunities in the same situation, and different situations, different treatment is required to realize this equality; 2) Non-Discrimination, defined when everyone has equal opportunities with others; and 3) Human Dignity, defined as respect for the dignity of every human being, receiving good treatment, and respecting every human being. However, the discrimination, stigma, and exclusion still experienced by people with disabilities do not demonstrate the upholding of human rights principles. People with disabilities, who should receive support, appreciation, and good treatment, have not yet fully experienced this.

In elections, concerns about the social environment ultimately become a factor in people with disabilities’ decision to participate. A social environment that has not entirely accepted the existence of people with disabilities creates a psychological barrier for people with disabilities in exercising their rights. Their psychology ultimately determines voting behavior among voters with disabilities. To provide a sense of security, they often choose not to vote on elections. In other words, the psychological disturbances they experience erode their trust in their social environment, leading them to decide not to vote in elections.

**Psychological Analysis**

People with disabilities are one of the largest minority groups vulnerable to social discrimination. This discrimination stems from negative stigma that views physical or mental limitations as weaknesses, incompetence, and even social burdens (Mulyani et al., 2022; Sinaga & Desiandri, 2024). In political context, this stigma can marginalize people with disabilities from the democratic process, lowering their self-confidence and creating a perception that their right to vote is unimportant. The psychological impact of stigma can trigger psychological problems such as low self-esteem, decreased self-confidence, feelings of anxiety when having to interact with outsiders, and even social isolation (Yudanagara, 2020).

Experiences of discrimination among people with disabilities can lead to feelings of being unwanted or unaccepted in the political process, thus preventing them from participating (Kim et al., 2020). This is also related to the self-efficacy theory proposed by Albert Bandura (1997). In his theory, Bandura stated that self-efficacy is an individual’s belief in their ability to organize and execute the necessary actions to complete a specific task. Therefore, experiences of social discrimination experienced by people with disabilities can undermine their confidence in their ability to participate in elections.

Explaining this phenomenon through a psychological approach in voting behavior theory reveals that voting behavior is influenced by internal psychological conditions, such as political identification, self-perception, and beliefs about the effectiveness of participation (Campbell et al., 1960). Within this framework, one key determinant is political efficacy, which encompasses both internal and external efficacy (Craig et al., 1990). Internal efficacy refers to an individual’s belief in their ability to understand and engage in political. External efficacy relates to the extent to which an individual believes the political system will respond to their aspirations.

Voting behavior theory emphasizes that psychological factors can be a more dominant determinant than structural barriers. Although limited accessibility remains a significant issue, as noted in Mulya's (2024) report, of the 1.571 polling stations monitored, 262 were not disability-friendly, physical barriers often only reinforce pre-existing decisions. For many people with disabilities, the decision not to attend a polling station is formed long before election day, influenced by low self-efficacy and a lack of confidence in social acceptance.

Thus, this analysis demonstrates that the low political participation of people with disabilities in Indonesia can be understood as a consequence of psychological barriers shaped by experiences of social discrimination. A psychological approach within voting behavior theory help explain why interventions targeting changes in self-perception and increasing political efficacy are crucial for promoting more inclusive electoral participation.

**Efforts to Prevent Social Discrimination**

Preventing discrimination against people with disabilities is a crucial step in achieving quality for all individuals. The social discrimination that people with disabilities still face, including negative stigma, limited access to public facilities, and exclusion from the social environment, must be addressed to ensure a decent life for them, particularly to encourage their participation in elections. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach, ranging from raising public awareness through inclusive campaigns to strengthening laws and protecting people with disabilities, as well as enhancing education that fosters social acceptance. These efforts aim not only to prevent and eliminate discrimination but also to promote equal opportunities in all aspects of life, including participation in election for people with disabilities.

1. Increasing Public Awareness

Increasing public awareness of people with disabilities is one way to foster acceptance of their social status. A heightened public awareness of respect and acceptance of the diversity of each individual creates opportunities for people with disabilities to be accepted into their social environment. Simultaneously, this acceptance of people with disabilities offers a significant opportunity to eliminate stigma, stereotypes, and social discrimination against people with disabilities.

In (Eldiva et al., 2023), that high public awareness of the acceptance of people with disabilities can include: 1) Inclusive environment, with no limitations or obstacles to the participation of people with disabilities in the social environment, as well as in education, employment, public service, and election participation; 2) Elimination of stigma and stereotypes against people with disabilities, by respecting diversity and their contribution to the social environment; and 3) Provision of social facilities and support that are accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities, both disability-friendly development and access to information technology that enables the full participation of people with disabilities. On the other hand, high public awareness of the acceptance of people with disabilities becomes support for people with disabilities to actively participate in the social environment, without having to feel the fear of discrimination that occurs.

Meanwhile, during elections, one method of raising public awareness about the importance of voting rights for people with disabilities is through outreach to improve public understanding of elections for this population. This finding is consistent with research conducted by Sudharma and Utami (2024), which demonstrated that public education activities effectively encouraged citizens to participate actively and wisely in exercising their voting rights. Therefore, increased public awareness of the importance of each individual’s rights to vote allows for the acceptance of people with disabilities to actively and fully participate in elections.

1. Legal Strengthening and Protection for People with Disabilities

While various laws and regulations currently exist that affirm the protection of persons with disabilities, they face discrimination and exclusion form their social environment (Sam et al., 2024). The weak legal standing regarding the fulfillment and enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities in one reason for the continued neglect and discrimination against persons with disabilities in Indonesia. This weak legal implementation is outlined in concerning the National Action Plan for Human Rights 2021-2025, which states that the formulation of implementing regulations for Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities has not been optimal, resulting in ineffective implementation of respect, protection, fulfillment, enforcement, and advancement of the rights of persons with disabilities.

Indonesia, as a country that has ratified the CRPD, must guarantee and promote the full realization of all human rights principles and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination in any form based on disability. In eliminating discrimination, States Parties, including Indonesia, must adopt all appropriate policies to eliminate discrimination based on disability against any person (CRPD, 2006).

Therefore, strengthening the law is a fundamental step in ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities are guaranteed and protected, including in elections. With firm legal enforcement and protection, the barriers to political participation they have experienced can be minimized, from accessibility in elections to the elimination of discrimination. With consistent legal strengthening, it is hoped that participation of persons with disabilities in elections will increase, supporting the creation of an inclusive democracy that represents all levels of society.

1. Strengthening Social Education

Strengthening education that support social acceptance for people with disabilities is one way to build an inclusive society that values diversity and equality. This inclusive social education provides the public with a deeper understanding of the rights, potential, and needs of people with disabilities, and reduces persistent stigma and discrimination. Awareness and respect for people with disabilities are crucial to achieving a more inclusive and equitable society (Eldiva et al., 2023).

Strengthening social education can begin in early childhood. Early childhood social education is expected to become the primary foundation for building the social skills and character of the nation’s children, who behave respectfully, politely, helpfully, and tolerate differences (Resita, 2018). Social skills can be defined as the ability to interact with others in a social context in a specific, acceptable, and mutually beneficial manner, while avoiding behaviors that conflict with the social environment (Rahmatiani et al., 2023). Strengthening social education provided from an early age is considered to influence future lifestyle, with an emphasis on promoting good behavior by acceptable customs and character within the social environment (Jumiati & Noor, 2021).

Strengthening social education regarding the acceptance of people with disabilities is a crucial step towards creating equality, supporting diversity, full inclusion, and eliminating discrimination against people with disabilities. Therefore, education is a crucial tool for changing mindsets and promoting acceptance of people with disabilities in various aspects of life

**Conclusion**

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that social discrimination experienced by people with disabilities influences their decision to exercise their rights to vote in elections. Discrimination, negative stigma, and exclusion in the social environment cause psychological problems, such as a lack of confidence, low self-esteem, and even anxiety and fear of their social environment. In the other words, this discrimination becomes a psychological factor for people with disabilities in determining their right to vote in elections, with people not participating to avoid the discrimination they might experience. The lack of accessibility for people with disabilities in election worsens their position in election, ultimately leading them to feel that the discrimination they might experience. The decision not to vote can be said to be the best decision to them. Therefore, social discrimination becomes one of the obstacles and challenges for people with disabilities to participate in elections, especially in exercising their right to vote in election day.

To reduce and even eliminate social discrimination against people with disabilities, a significant role is needed from various stakeholders, including the central government, in this case the Ministry of Social Affairs, the National Commission on Disabilities, the National Human Rights Commission, Election Organizers, NGOs, and other relevant actors to support the realization of equal rights for people with disabilities in various field, especially in the implementation of election. This research also highlights several comprehensive and sustainable steps that can be taken to reduce discrimination, such as increasing public awareness through inclusive campaigns, strengthening laws and protections for people with disabilities, and strengthening education that support social acceptance. This way, the realization of democracy through respect, protection, and fulfillment of the rights of people with disabilities can be fully realized by them.

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