

Breaking the Cycle: Public Policy Innovations for Disability Inclusion and Poverty Reduction in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study explores innovative public policy strategies to break the cycle of disability-related poverty in Indonesia through a comprehensive literature review. The analysis reveals that barriers to education, employment, health services, and social protection, exacerbated by discrimination and stigma, are structural and mutually reinforcing poverty and exclusion. Grounded in the social model of disability and the capability approach, the study emphasizes that poverty is not merely a result of impairment but systemic obstacles limiting individual agency and opportunity. It highlights the role of Law Number 8 of 2016 as a foundational legal framework while stressing the need for consistent implementation, cross-sectoral coordination, and active participation of persons with disabilities in policymaking. Promising approaches include inclusive governance, accessible infrastructure, skills development programs, and stigma reduction initiatives. The study contributes theoretically by reinforcing the view that disability inclusion is a matter of rights and a strategic imperative for sustainable development and social justice. Embedding inclusive values into the core of public policy is key to reducing inequality and ensuring no one is left behind in Indonesia's development.

A. INTRODUCTION

'Disability is not the same as poverty.' This statement is often made by government officials when giving speeches in front of people with disabilities to encourage them. However, many people ignore the fact that people with disabilities face challenges beyond their limitations. These limitations affect their ability to meet their daily needs. Therefore, discussing poverty among people with disabilities is

essential. Disability is a physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory limitation that may prevent full and effective participation in society. The World Health Organization defines disability as the interaction between an individual with a health condition and personal and environmental contextual factors that hinder their participation in social life, thereby making them poor (WHO, 2011).

The World Bank defines poverty as people living on less than \$1.90 per day. However, poverty is not just about income; it also includes a lack of access to economic opportunities, education, and social inclusion, as experienced by people with disabilities. Currently, one billion people worldwide (15% of the world's population) live with disabilities (Devkota et al., 2017; Ganle et al., 2016). The World Health Organization (2011) defines disability as a combination of medical and social phenomena that cause people with disabilities to experience stigma and discrimination in access to education, medical services, and employment (Dessler, 2013). The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been ratified, a shift in global initiatives on disability, particularly in relation to the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Mittler, 2015; Wescott et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, disability and poverty are deeply connected. As of 2023, 9.4% of the population lives with disabilities (BPS, 2024), and 11.42% fall below the poverty line—higher than the national average of 8.57% (Asia-Pacific Solidarity Network, 2025). Barriers such as limited education, employment, and healthcare access persist: 17.85% never attended school, only 44% are employed (vs. 69% nationally), and 28% lack health insurance. Most work informally, and only 0.55% are formally employed—far below policy targets (Dahlan & Anggoro, 2021). Combined with high disability-related living costs (Marlina et al., 2024), these factors worsen exclusion and poverty, undermining inclusive development goals.

Several studies have shown that there is a mutually influential relationship between poverty and disability (Elwan, 1999; Parnes et al., 2009; Zimmer, 2008), which causes a higher potential for poverty to occur in them (Koller et al., 2018; Quinn, 2021; Rose & Gage, 2017). This is due to limited access for people with disabilities to education, employment, and health services, which worsens their poverty levels (Groce et al., 2019a; Trani & Loeb, 2012). First, people with disabilities have difficulty accessing education because schools are not fully friendly to their needs, whereas lack of education prevents them from getting decent jobs and increases the risk of unemployment (Diamond & Sheshinski, 1995) and poverty (Carr, 2024). Second, limited access to services (education, employment, and health) causes people with disabilities to fail to enter the labor market. Third, discrimination and social stigma cause them to have limited opportunities to develop (Bonaccio et al., 2020).

Fourth, the implementation of policies that are less effective in supporting people with disabilities. Fifth, the social impact on families of people with disabilities due to their economic conditions. Research on disability and poverty in Indonesia is essential to discuss, considering the high poverty rate in Indonesia. Poverty and disability are like two sides of a coin that influence and impact each other. This study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the conditions of people with disabilities in Indonesia. It is hoped that it can provide a strong foundation for developing more inclusive policies to improve their welfare.

Disability is defined as a condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it difficult for individuals with the condition to perform certain activities and interact with the world around them (Prevention, 2000). Disability is not always synonymous with a medical condition or functional limitation. According to the social model, disability is the result of the interaction of a person's functional status with their environment. A person is not identified as having a disability based on their medical condition. Instead, they become disabled because of the climate that inhibits their participation in the social and economic life of their community. Furthermore, disability is not an "all or nothing" concept. Disabilities can range from mild to severe, can be permanent or episodic, and whether someone is considered to have a disability depends largely on their environment. Disability looks not only at the physical environment but also at the cultural and legal environment.

People with disabilities in this study are not the same as disabilities because the emphasis on the meaning of disability in this concept is the existence of disorders and limitations in functioning that last a long time and cause limited participation in society caused by conditions of incapacity or loss or abnormalities, both psychological, physiological and structural or anatomical functional (Alabshar et al., 2024; TPN2K & Australian Government, 2019). Existing research shows that people with disabilities experience disparities in the labor market (Berlinski et al., 2021) and are not given the same opportunities as people without disabilities in terms of participation in the workforce (Albrecht, 2014; Grech & Soldatic, 2016; Norstedt & Germundsson, 2023). In fact, by working, everyone can reduce isolation, which is an essential tool in alleviating poverty (Schur, 2002). Figure 1 is about studies on disability and poverty sourced from various journals obtained through Google Scholar, PubMed, ScienceDirect, and JSTOR and then processed using software VOS viewer.

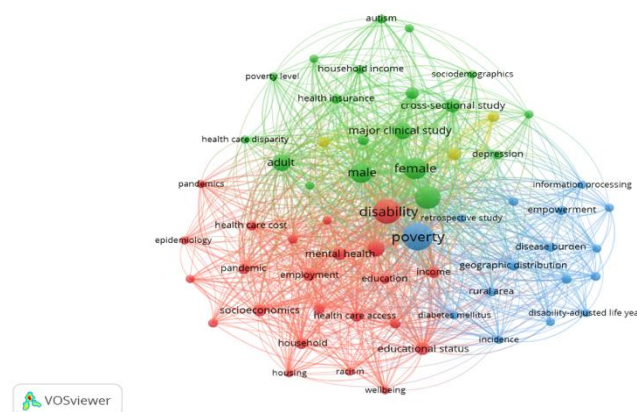


Figure 1. Study on Disability and Poverty
Source: Processed by VOSviewer (2024)

Figure 1 shows the results of the VOSviewer analysis, illustrating that poverty and disability are deeply interconnected and often form a complex cycle to break (Banks et al., 2018). Individuals living with disabilities are more likely to experience poverty due to several interrelated factors: (1) limited access to education and skills training, (2) insecure employment and low income, (3) unequal access to healthcare services, (4) discrimination and stigma, (5) unmet accessibility needs, and (6) the absence of inclusive and equitable policies (Neille & Penn, 2017). Addressing this complex relationship requires a holistic and sustainable approach involving policies and programs that promote social inclusion, ensure accessibility, expand educational and vocational opportunities, improve healthcare access, and eliminate stigma and discrimination against persons with disabilities (Pinilla-Roncancio et al., 2020; Trani et al., 2015).

The challenges faced by poor communities who also have family members with disabilities are often complex (Pradana & Widiyehseno, 2022). The relationship between people with low incomes and people with disabilities is mutually influential (Aprillia et al., 2021). To address the complex relationship between poverty and disability, an approach is needed that considers the various dimensions of poverty and disability. This includes policies that strengthen access to quality health and education services, inclusive economic empowerment programs, and efforts to increase accessibility and reduce the stigma of disability in society (Febriyan et al., 2022; Imamudin et al., 2021). In addition, an approach that considers their specific needs. Such as policies that support social and economic inclusion, economic empowerment programs, efforts to increase physical and social accessibility, and campaigns to reduce stigma and discrimination against individuals with disabilities (Bharata et al.,

2021). Acharya (2019) emphasized the importance of inclusive development, taking into account the needs of poor people with disabilities in poverty alleviation efforts. Development strategies and policies must actively consider the barriers faced by people with disabilities in accessing essential services, employment, and education – another challenge they face (Grills et al., 2017). (Mitchell, D. & Karr, 2015) also advocates for the rights and opportunities of people with disabilities worldwide.

The importance of social and economic inclusion for people with disabilities, particularly those living in poverty, continues to drive efforts to build more inclusive, disability-friendly societies (Fish & Morgan, 2021; Kaldy, 2017; Stein-Roggenbuck, 2020). In Indonesia, however, persons with disabilities remain disproportionately excluded from these processes. Despite existing laws, many still face limited access to education, healthcare, employment, and social protection. For example, 17.85% of persons with disabilities aged over five have never attended school, and only 44% are in the workforce, mostly in informal sectors, compared to 69% nationally (BPS, 2025). These challenges reinforce the urgency for inclusive policy frameworks tailored to Indonesia's socio-economic realities.

Globally, the functional approach to measuring disability has become more standardized, as seen in the WHO's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health and the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (Mont, 2007). Disability is now understood as difficulty performing at least one basic activity, such as seeing, hearing, walking, communicating, or self-care, and placing individuals in socially limited positions. Applying this approach in Indonesia would allow for more accurate, evidence-based policymaking by distinguishing between mild, moderate, and severe functional limitations (Gertler & Gruber, 2002). Ultimately, this perspective highlights how environmental and structural barriers, not just impairments, contribute to the social and economic marginalization of people with disabilities in Indonesia.

The protection of persons with disabilities in Indonesia is legally grounded in Law Number 8 of 2016, which defines persons with disabilities as individuals with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that hinder their full and effective participation in daily life. This law guarantees 22 fundamental rights that must be upheld, including access to education, employment, healthcare, and participation in public affairs. However, the issue extends beyond regulatory frameworks—it reflects the government's broader responsibility to reduce poverty and promote equality. Ensuring that persons with disabilities can fully exercise their rights in both state and societal systems requires legal protections, coordinated, inclusive development policies, and sustained implementation efforts. Table 1 shows the rights of people with disabilities that must be fulfilled by the state.

Table 1. Regulations on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

No.	Right	No.	Right
1.	Right to life	12.	Social welfare
2.	Right to be free from negative stigma	13.	Accessibility
3.	Right to privacy	14.	Public services
4.	Right to justice and legal protection	15.	Disaster protection
5.	Right to obtain adequate education	16.	Habilitation and rehabilitation
6.	Right to entrepreneurship and cooperation	17.	Concessions
7.	Health	18.	Data collection
8.	Politics	19.	Independent living and participation in society

9.	Religion	20.	Communication, interaction and obtaining information
10.	Sports	21.	Change of place and citizenship
11.	Culture and tourism	22.	Freedom from discrimination, neglect, abuse, exploitation

Source: Law Number 8 of 2016

The right to equal economic access (number 6), education (number 5), and social inclusion (number 19) for people with disabilities make them prosperous and free from poverty (number 12). In Indonesia, the intersection of disability and poverty remains a critical area of concern that significantly affects individual well-being and national development. These two issues are closely interrelated: disability can increase the risk of poverty due to limited access to services and opportunities, while poverty can exacerbate disability through inadequate healthcare, education, and living conditions (Banks & Polack, 2014; Pinilla-Roncancio, 2015). According to Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2023), approximately 13.92% of the population, or around 33 million people, live with some form of disability. Despite existing legal protections, many persons with disabilities still face significant barriers in accessing education, employment, and healthcare.

Government efforts, including Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities, aim to protect their rights. However, implementation remains weak due to persistent stigma, low public awareness, and inadequate infrastructure (Bappenas, 2020). As a result, many persons with disabilities remain trapped in a cycle of poverty, lacking access to affordable and inclusive services. This ongoing marginalization underscores the need for more inclusive policies, targeted social protection programs, and stronger institutional accountability to promote equal opportunities and break the poverty-disability cycle (Mitra, 2018; Trani et al., 2015). To better understand how these challenges manifest in practice and how current policies affect the lived experiences of persons with disabilities in Indonesia, this study investigates the intersection of disability and poverty through a qualitative approach. The following section outlines the research methods used to explore these dynamics.

B. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach to examine the relationship between disability and poverty. This approach employs a literature review as the primary data collection technique. This technique allows the researcher to gather and analyze information from a wide range of existing studies, enabling a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the topic without collecting primary data (Snyder, 2019). It also facilitates the identification of recurring themes, trends, research gaps, and policy implications (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015). Inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to ensure the relevance and quality of sources. The inclusion criteria include peer-reviewed journal articles, reports from international organizations such as the WHO and the World Bank, and official government publications. Selected literature must be published between 2014 and 2024 in English or Indonesian. Priority is given to studies focusing on the intersection of disability and poverty, including disability prevalence, economic implications, access to services, and relevant policy frameworks (Okoye et al., 2022; Mitra, 2018; Banks & Polack, 2014).

On the other hand, articles that are not directly related to the topic or require appropriate research methods will be excluded. After establishing these criteria, a literature search was conducted through several trusted databases and sources, including Google Scholar, PubMed, ScienceDirect, and JSTOR. Reports from international organizations and governments were also included to provide a broader and more contextual perspective. Keywords used in the search included combinations of terms such as “disability and poverty,” “impact of disability on economic status,” “poverty among persons with disabilities,” and “socioeconomic factors and disability.” The search process was designed to capture a

wide range of relevant studies and ensure a broad coverage of the literature. After collecting relevant literature, the next stage was the article selection process. At this stage, each article was evaluated based on its title and abstract to determine whether it met the inclusion criteria. Articles that passed this stage were read fully to ensure their relevance and methodological quality.

This process involved critically assessing each article, including the research methods used, the sample studied, and the conclusions drawn. Articles that met all criteria were then included in the literature review analysis. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis methods, which allowed researchers to identify key themes and trends emerging from the literature. Each article was coded to identify related themes, such as the impact of disability on poverty, the social and economic factors that influence this relationship, and interventions and policies implemented to address poverty among individuals with disabilities. The coding process involved repeated reading and recording key findings combined to form a narrative synthesis. Through this thematic analysis, the study found a reciprocal relationship between disability and poverty. Individuals with disabilities often have lower economic opportunities, limited access to education and employment, and face greater discrimination, all of which contribute to poverty. Conversely, poverty can also exacerbate disability by limiting individuals' access to adequate health care and support services. These findings highlight the importance of holistic and inclusive policies that provide economic assistance and increase access to education, employment, and health services for individuals with disabilities. With a systematic and comprehensive approach, this study provides a comprehensive picture of the relationship between disability and poverty. It is hoped that these findings can be used as a basis for designing more effective and sustainable policies to address poverty among people with disabilities and improve their overall quality of life.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Relationship Between Disability And Poverty

The relationship between disability and poverty is complex and multidimensional, each reinforcing the other in a vicious systemic cycle of harm. A detailed analysis of this relationship reveals the ways in which disability can exacerbate poverty and vice versa, highlighting the challenges that people with disabilities face in accessing economic opportunities and social services. Disability and poverty are intertwined as both are considered to be 'causes' and 'effects' of disability (Singal, 2011). Disability is often associated with health shocks that can increase the risk of poverty (Elwan, 1999; Hoogeveen, 2005; Yeo & Moore, 2003) as over one billion people worldwide (15% of the global population) live with a disability (WHO, 2011) and the majority of them (80%) live in low- and middle-income countries where it is difficult to meet their needs (Elwan, 1999). Several factors contribute to disability and poverty: first, disability can significantly limit a person's ability to engage in productive economic activities as it can restrict an individual's ability to participate in productive economic activities. This can be due to physical, mental, or sensory limitations that affect their ability to perform specific tasks. In addition, inaccessible work environments and lack of technological support or workplace adaptations further exacerbate the situation. Research shows that discrimination is a significant factor preventing people with disabilities from obtaining decent employment. They are often faced with prejudice and negative stereotypes that make it difficult for them to be accepted in the workplace. In addition, opportunities for skills development for people with disabilities are also minimal. Many do not have adequate access to the education and professional training needed to compete in the job market. This further limits the employment options available to them, forcing many people with disabilities to take informal or low-paid jobs that do not provide job security or additional benefits.

Research by (Baskind & Birbeck, 2005 Kiani 2009; Maya Dhungana, 2006) reveals that stigma and discrimination are the main reasons why people with disabilities find it challenging to find work. In addition, research by (Sophie Mitra & Sambamoorthi, 2014) shows that people with disabilities tend to receive lower wages than non-disabled workers, even for jobs of the same level of difficulty and length of service. This suggests structural inequities that affect the economic well-being of people with disabilities. These factors contribute to high rates of poverty among people with disabilities. The inability to find stable, well-paying employment traps many people in a cycle of poverty. As a result, they lack access to the resources needed to improve their quality of life, such as education, health care, and adequate housing. Second, people with disabilities face a number of barriers to accessing essential social services such as health, education, and housing, which are critical to improving their quality of life and socioeconomic status (Filmer, 2008). These barriers significantly impact their chances of escaping poverty and achieving a better life. One significant barrier is the lack of adequate facilities and equipment in health care and educational institutions to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. Many health facilities lack physical accessibility, such as ramps, lifts, and medical equipment designed for people with disabilities. This results in people with disabilities often not getting the health care they need or having to travel long distances to access appropriate services.

In education, the situation is not much different. Many schools in Indonesia still lack disability-friendly infrastructure, such as accessible classrooms, toilets, or adapted teaching materials. Additionally, the absence of adequate teacher training to address the specific needs of students with disabilities results in significant gaps in the quality of education they receive. Research by Banks et al. (2017) and others has shown that lack of education exacerbates poverty among people with disabilities (Baskind & Birbeck, 2005; Filmer, 2008; Kiani, 2009; Dhungana, 2006; Mitra & Sambamoorthi, 2014). Data from the United Nations (UN DESA, 2018) indicates that most people with disabilities live in rural areas and often do not receive adequate education, contributing to high illiteracy rates and barriers to employment.

Discriminatory attitudes and stigma surrounding disability remain significant barriers, not only from the general public but also from social service providers. A study by Bappenas and the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Economic Development (PROSPERA) found that 46% of persons with disabilities reported experiencing discriminatory treatment from public service providers, particularly in healthcare and administrative settings (PROSPERA, 2018). This stigma discourages individuals from seeking necessary services due to fear of being judged or mistreated. Consequently, they become increasingly vulnerable to poverty, isolation, and long-term social exclusion (SKALA, 2023).

In the context of housing, many people with disabilities live in environments that do not support their needs. Inaccessible housing and non-disability-friendly environments limit their mobility and participation in daily activities. The lack of government policies often exacerbates the focus on providing adequate housing for people with disabilities. Research by (Groce et al., 2019b) shows that unemployment rates among people with disabilities are very high in several developing countries, including Uganda, Botswana, India, Vietnam, and Indonesia. This suggests that greater efforts are needed to address barriers to accessibility and discrimination in social services. In this way, people with disabilities can have a greater chance of improving their quality of life and escaping poverty.

Poverty can increase the risk of disability and worsen its impact on individuals and communities. Living in poor conditions makes individuals more vulnerable to a range of risk factors that can trigger and worsen disability. Some main factors contributing to this include inadequate nutrition, lack of access to clean water and sanitation, and limited health services. Inadequate nutrition is one of the most serious problems faced by people living in poverty. Lack of essential nutrients can lead to a range of health conditions that increase the risk of disability, especially in growing children. Deficiencies in vitamins, minerals, and protein can lead to impaired physical and mental development, which can lead to permanent disability. Lack of clean water and sanitation access is also a significant risk factor. Poor

sanitation and contaminated water can lead to serious infectious diseases, such as chronic diarrhea and parasitic infections, which can ultimately lead to disability. Poor people often live in areas with poor infrastructure, further exacerbating these risks. Limited access to health services is also a significant problem for low-income people.

The lack of adequate health facilities and high medical costs mean that many poor people do not get the medical care they need. Diseases and injuries that are preventable or treatable in their early stages often develop into severe, disabling conditions because they do not receive timely medical intervention. The stress and trauma associated with poverty can also exacerbate existing disabilities. Living in economic and social uncertainty can cause significant psychological distress, which in turn can worsen a person's mental and physical health. Chronic stress can affect a person's ability to cope effectively with their disability and reduce their overall quality of life. The additional costs associated with managing a disability also place a heavy burden on low-income families. The cost of medical treatment, assistive devices, and special care often exceeds their financial means. Without assistance or subsidies, these families must allocate a large portion of their limited income to meet disability needs, further pushing them into poverty.

Fourth, the intersection of disability and poverty often perpetuates a cycle of social exclusion and marginalization. People with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to structural inequalities and systemic barriers that limit their opportunities for socio-economic advancement. Discrimination in employment, education, and health services further limits their access to opportunities that could improve their living conditions. This traps them in a cycle of poverty and deprivation that is difficult to overcome. In the employment sector, discrimination against people with disabilities is often seen in their low participation rates in the labor market and the low wages they receive. Many companies are reluctant to employ people with disabilities due to negative stereotypes and false assumptions about their productivity. As a result, many people with disabilities are forced to work in the informal sector for low wages and without social security.

In education, children with disabilities often face significant barriers to accessing adequate education. Lack of accessible infrastructure, lack of training for teachers to address special needs, and discriminatory attitudes in schools prevent them from receiving an education on par with children without disabilities. Without adequate education, their chances of obtaining decent employment in the future are further limited (Widjaja et al., 2020). Health services are also an area that people with disabilities often neglect. Many health facilities are inaccessible to people with disabilities, and the lack of training for health workers to meet their special needs exacerbates this situation.

Lack of access to adequate health services can worsen the health conditions of people with disabilities and hinder their ability to participate in society fully. To address the complex relationship between disability and poverty, policymakers and stakeholders must adopt a multifaceted approach. This approach should include implementing inclusive policies and programs that promote equal access to education, health services, employment, and social protection for people with disabilities. These inclusive policies should ensure that all public services and facilities are accessible to people with disabilities.

2. POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR DISABILITIES

Disability policies are essential in explaining the relationship between disability and poverty in Indonesia. Through the implementation of appropriate policies, the expected impacts, in the form of inclusive policies and welfare for people with disabilities, can be realized. Figure 2 below shows some of the policy implications for people with disabilities.



Figure 2. Policy Implications Related to Persons with Disabilities

Source: Processed by Researchers (2024)

Access to Education and Skills Training

The Indonesian government has taken important legislative steps to support people with disabilities, particularly through Law No. 8 of 2016, which guarantees the right to inclusive education and skills training. The law defines people with disabilities as individuals with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory limitations that may hinder their full participation in society. First, in education. This law has been implemented through programs such as the Inclusive Education Program, which has established inclusive schools in cities such as Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung with disability-friendly infrastructure and individualized learning plans. In addition, teacher capacity has been strengthened through initiatives such as Schools for All (SfA) to better support students with special needs.

Second, regarding skills development, the Ministry of Manpower has launched specific vocational programs for people with disabilities, including computer literacy and sewing training in certain provinces. However, access is still limited in rural areas. Third, to address workplace inclusion, Government Regulation 60 of 2020 mandates that public institutions employ at least 2% of employees from the disability community and private companies 1% of employees from the disability community. However, its implementation is challenging due to weak law enforcement and the ongoing stigma surrounding disability and employability. These three efforts demonstrate the government's steps to operationalize Law Number 8 of 2016 in various sectors. Moving forward, broader and more consistent implementation, especially in access to education and training, is critical to empowering people with disabilities to participate fully in the labor market.

Access to Health Services

Access to quality health services is essential for the well-being and full participation of persons with disabilities. In addition, an inclusive health system must ensure that these facilities are physically accessible, geographically and economically accessible, and responsive to the specific needs of persons with disabilities by Law Number 36 of 2009 concerning Health and Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning

Persons with Disabilities. The form of implementation, namely first the Ministry of Health issued Regulation of the Minister of Health Number 82 of 2020 concerning Health Services for Persons with Disabilities, which mandates the establishment of disability-friendly primary health centers (Disability-Friendly Puskesmas) in various regions, such as in Sleman (Yogyakarta) and Denpasar (Bali). These centers are equipped with accessible infrastructure and assistive devices.

Second, regarding human resources, the government, through collaboration with institutions such as the University of Indonesia and the Health Social Security Agency, has provided training modules for health workers to improve their ability to serve patients with various types of disabilities. This training includes communication techniques (e.g., sign language) and practical skills to provide more appropriate and respectful care. Third, to address the issue of affordability, the Indonesian government provides disability-related services in the form of national health insurance. However, barriers still exist. For example, health information related to health insurance coverage is still limited and is not yet extensive. However some general hospitals have introduced visual and audio health information systems, but these practices have not been standardized across the region. In addition, many health facilities are still physically difficult to access, and health workers have limited awareness.

To address this, local governments, such as in Surakarta and Bandung, have piloted inclusive health outreach programs, such as partnering with organizations for people with disabilities, providing home visits and mobile clinics specifically designed for people with disabilities, improving inclusive communication such as providing health information in braille and sign language interpretation during public health campaigns. Some health offices in Jakarta have started this practice, but it still needs to be replicated more widely in Indonesia. In short, the government has taken concrete steps to implement Law Number 8 of 2016 in the health sector. However, broader implementation, consistent standards, and ongoing stakeholder engagement are essential to ensure that all people with disabilities can access their right to health in a fair and dignified manner.

Economic Empowerment and Employment Opportunities

To address the economic challenges faced by people with disabilities, inclusive policies aim to empower the economy through entrepreneurship, skills training, and fair employment practices. Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities, supported by Government Regulation 60 of 2020, mandates equal employment opportunities and protection from discrimination in the workplace. In practice, the government has launched programs. First, Social Rehabilitation Assistance by the Ministry of Social Affairs provides business capital, equipment, and training to people with disabilities to start micro-businesses. By 2023, thousands of people across Java, Sumatra, and Sulawesi have benefited from this support. Second, vocational training in sewing, cooking skills, and computer literacy was conducted by the Social Rehabilitation Center for People with Disabilities in Solo, Makassar, and Banjarmasin.

Third, to encourage employment, the Ministry of Manpower facilitates job placement services for people with disabilities and organizes inclusive job fairs in big cities such as Jakarta and Surabaya. Based on data in 2023, this is done because there were 277 job placements for people with disabilities, with the majority of placements in the physical and sensory disability categories (see Table 2). However, individuals with mental or multiple disabilities are still significantly underrepresented.

Table 2. Disabled Workforce

No.	Type of Disability	Gender		Number
		Male	Female	
1.	Physical Disabilities	98	52	150
2.	Multiple Disabilities	3	2	5
3.	Mental Disabilities	3	1	4

4.	Sensory Disabilities	76	37	113
5.	Others	2	3	5

Source: Indonesian Ministry of Manpower (2024)

Despite legal protection, law enforcement is still weak, and discrimination still occurs. Companies often fail to meet the employment quotas set by law. Public infrastructure and transportation are still inaccessible, limiting formal education and employment participation. As a result, people with disabilities and their families often fall into poverty due to limited access to jobs and additional costs related to care or assistive devices. Broader socioeconomic factors, such as low educational attainment, lack of accessible services, and family caregiving burden, shape this exclusion. These constraints reduce human capital and contribute to what Mitra (2017) calls “disability conversion,” which is when people with disabilities are unable to convert the same resources into the same outcomes.

Therefore, inclusive economic policies must go beyond regulation. The government should expand access to microcredit, offer tax incentives to inclusive entrepreneurs, enforce anti-discrimination laws, and ensure that vocational programs reach underserved communities. Collaborating with civil society organizations and disability rights groups is also key to tailoring programs to actual needs. With stronger implementation of Law No. 8/2016, people with disabilities can contribute productively to the economy and break the cycle of poverty and exclusion.

Inclusive Infrastructure Development

Inclusive infrastructure is essential to improving mobility and social participation of people with disabilities. The provision of disability-friendly infrastructure is needed not only to facilitate physical accessibility but also to ensure that people with disabilities can participate fully and equally in community life. Policies that support the development of accessible public facilities, such as roads, transportation, and public buildings, are essential to achieving this goal. Thus, to support the development of inclusive infrastructure is Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities, which affirms the right to an accessible environment. This is reinforced by Law Number 26 of 2007 concerning Spatial Planning and more concretely implemented through the Regulation of the Minister of Public Works No. 14/PRT/M/2017, which stipulates technical standards for accessibility in buildings and public spaces.

This policy has been implemented in several regions of Indonesia. First, Surakarta (Solo) has easily accessible sidewalks with guide blocks for people who are blind and ramps for wheelchair users. Second, in Jakarta, TransJakarta buses and the Jakarta MRT have been equipped with ramps, audio-visual information systems, and priority seating to accommodate people with various types of disabilities. Third, inclusive facilities have been introduced in certain public schools and hospitals in Yogyakarta and Bandung. For example, the availability of accessible toilets, sign language interpreters, and lifts can help reduce physical barriers and encourage equal access to services.

In Indonesia, public buildings such as government offices, shopping centers, and train stations are gradually being upgraded to meet accessibility standards, although progress is still uneven. However, all new public building construction must comply with accessibility requirements, although renovating old infrastructure with this inclusive aspect is still a big challenge. Therefore, to realize truly inclusive infrastructure, strong coordination is needed among stakeholders, such as the government, private sector, and the community. The lack of accessible buildings is still one of the main reasons employers hesitate to employ people with disabilities (Wahyuni, 2019), in addition to other obstacles such as inadequate supervision, fragmented disability data, and ongoing social stigma.

Therefore, consistent implementation of Law Number 8 of 2016, supported by technical regulations and monitored through regular audits, is critical. The government must ensure that every

infrastructure project, whether national or local, adheres to universal design principles so that people with disabilities can enjoy full participation in public life.



Figure 3. Challenges for Persons with Disabilities in Obtaining Decent Work

Source: Processed by Researchers (2024)

Awareness and Stigma Reduction

Reducing stigma and raising public awareness is essential for effectively implementing disability-inclusive policies. Stigma not only limits access to education, employment, and health services for people with disabilities but also perpetuates social exclusion. Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities explicitly mandates efforts to change negative perceptions and promote respect for the dignity of people with disabilities. Article 122 of the law requires the government to conduct education and advocacy to build public awareness and eliminate discrimination. As part of its implementation, the government has launched several initiatives.

First, the Ministry of Social Affairs, in collaboration with local governments and disability organizations, regularly organizes “Disability Awareness Week” in cities such as Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Makassar. This campaign uses social media, radio, and television to share successful stories of people with disabilities, dispel stereotypes, and promote positive representation. Second, in the education sector, the “Inclusive Schools” program includes teacher training and curriculum development to foster an inclusive school environment through topics such as empathy, diversity, and the rights of persons with disabilities being integrated into student learning materials and training modules for educators.

Third, the National Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Law and Human Rights have conducted training programs for law enforcement officers to prevent discriminatory practices and ensure the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities involving the private sector, such as the Indonesian Disability Business Network, to educate companies on inclusive recruitment practices and support employment for persons with disabilities and also encourage companies to adopt inclusive workplace policies and raise awareness among their staff. Fourth, the Ministry of Communication and Information has developed guidelines for accessible public communication, including using sign

language interpreters in national broadcasts and subtitles in TV programs to ensure that public facilities and media are inclusive.

Implementing these policies reflects a growing recognition that stigma is not only a social problem but also a structural barrier that perpetuates poverty among persons with disabilities. Discrimination and negative public perceptions limit access to education, employment, and health services, critical pathways out of poverty. Therefore, sustainable and multisectoral awareness efforts are essential. These efforts must involve persons with disabilities in planning and implementation to ensure relevance and impact. Public awareness campaigns, inclusive education, workplace training, and accurate media representation, when aligned with the spirit of Law Number 8 of 2016, can transform attitudes and break down the barriers that isolate and marginalize persons with disabilities. By embedding disability awareness into national systems and fostering societal empathy, the government is fostering more equitable participation.

Increased awareness and understanding reduce exclusion, which in turn opens opportunities for education and employment, improves access to essential services, and ultimately contributes to reducing the poverty experienced by persons with disabilities. In this way, shifting public perceptions becomes a crucial strategy for social and economic inclusion, laying the groundwork for a more just and inclusive society.

Strengthening the Legal and Policy Framework

A strong legal and policy framework is essential to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities and address poverty rooted in structural exclusion. Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities provides a foundation for advancing their rights in Indonesia. However, legal guarantees alone are insufficient—effective implementation and oversight are essential to make a real impact. First, national policies must be translated into actionable local regulations. This requires strong coordination between the central and local governments, regular monitoring, and mandatory reporting to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation in the regions. Establishing an independent monitoring body with the authority to investigate, recommend, and sanction non-compliance is also essential. Easily accessible complaint mechanisms must be in place to empower persons with disabilities to report rights violations.

Second, training and outreach programs for public officials and service providers are essential to improve legal literacy, reduce stigma, and support inclusive education, health, and employment services, all of which are essential to improving economic outcomes. The private sector also plays a critical role. The government should enforce disability employment quotas (for example, based on Government Regulation No. 60 of 2020) and offer incentives, such as tax breaks or public recognition, to companies that demonstrate inclusive practices. Third, the legal framework should ensure access to inclusive education, health care, and decent work through practical measures, such as accessible infrastructure, teacher and medical staff training, and scholarship or employment support programs. Most importantly, people with disabilities should be involved in every stage of policy-making, from design to evaluation. Their participation ensures that policies are responsive, relevant, and empowering.

Fourth, legal commitments should be reinforced with concrete actions, inclusive governance, and active participation so that the government can remove structural barriers and expand access to essential services and livelihoods for people with disabilities. This can not only uphold the rights of people with disabilities but also help lift them out of poverty and foster a more just and inclusive society.

3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Disability has significant social and economic impacts at the individual and societal levels, and its relationship to poverty is complex. At the personal level, people with disabilities often face a range of challenges, including limited access to education, employment, health services, and social participation. These challenges often result in economic inequity, which in turn perpetuates the cycle of poverty for many people with disabilities. Socially, people with disabilities can experience stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion, which can hinder their integration into society and limit opportunities for social interaction and engagement. This isolation can lead to feelings of loneliness, low self-esteem, and mental health problems, further exacerbating the social impacts of disability. People with disabilities often experience discrimination in various aspects of life, including education, employment, and health services, which can hinder their ability to access the same opportunities as others, which in turn exacerbates their poverty. Disability in Indonesia is understood as an inability that prevents someone from carrying out certain activities or activities. This means that someone with a disability is considered unable to have the same performance and productivity as someone without a disability. One example of such discrimination is the discriminatory treatment of people with disabilities in obtaining employment in Indonesia.

At the recruitment stage of the workforce in the job vacancy information section, there are always special requirements for physical and mental health. However, physical health here is often interpreted as a physical condition without specific disabilities. This stigma arises from social interactions in Indonesia that view disability as a condition that must be fixed and can be an obstacle for someone to develop and maximize their potential. This stigma can be seen as discrimination that stems from negative thinking and evolves over time in society. Discrimination in employment means that many people with disabilities have not been able to get decent jobs. People with disabilities have the same opportunity to get job opportunities without discrimination based on employment regulations in Indonesia, which guarantee that people with disabilities are free from discrimination in the field of employment. In this case, one form of discrimination that often occurs is bias against applicants with disabilities. This bias can be seen through the company's stringent requirements for people with disabilities, such as higher education requirements.

The Indonesian Association of People with Disabilities reported that the 2019 civil servant selection contained requirements that were quite burdensome for people with disabilities, namely physical and mental health requirements (BBC News Indonesia, 2019). Another case is that many people with disabilities have difficulty finding work even though they have applied for more than 50 jobs in a year (Caron, 2020). This happens because of discrimination in the recruitment process (Nurhayati, 2020). (Suárez & Cameron, 2023), see this condition as a strong basis for the process of inclusion of people with disabilities in the civil service recruitment process to be implemented immediately so as not to complicate the recruitment process for people with disabilities in Indonesia. Economically, disability can result in reduced income potential and increased health costs. Many individuals with disabilities have difficulty finding work due to discrimination, workplaces that are not friendly to disabilities, and lack of accommodation. This leads to high unemployment and precarious employment among them, which ultimately affects their financial stability and quality of life. In addition, people with disabilities often require additional support and accommodation, which can drain their and their families' financial resources. Access to health services, assistive devices, and special education also add to the economic burden, especially in households with limited resources.

D. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

Breaking the cycle of poverty and exclusion for people with disabilities in Indonesia requires more than isolated interventions, as it demands systemic change through inclusive and rights-based public

policies. This study has shown that the barriers faced by people with disabilities, from limited access to education, employment, health care, and social protection to widespread discrimination and stigma, are profoundly structural. These barriers not only hinder individual development but also hinder national progress by perpetuating poverty and inequality. By framing disability through a social model, this study emphasizes that it is not the health impairment itself that is the barrier but rather the social, institutional, and environmental barriers that produce exclusion. This analysis is also aligned with the capabilities approach, which underlines the need to expand the fundamental freedoms and opportunities available to people with disabilities so that they can live lives they value.

This study emphasizes that disability-related poverty is multidimensional and mutually reinforcing, necessitating a shift from charity-based or medical models to structural and inclusive approaches. Law Number 8 of 2016 provides a strong foundation. However, its potential can only be realized through consistent implementation, cross-sectoral coordination, and active involvement of persons with disabilities in policy-making. Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing discourse that poverty is both a cause and effect of exclusion and that advancing disability inclusion is not simply a social obligation but a strategic imperative for sustainable development and social justice. By embedding inclusive values into the core of public policy, Indonesia can build a more equitable society that leaves no one behind.

Recommendation

This study has two limitations. First, the limited primary data requires researchers to rely on secondary data and desk analysis. Second, this study only focuses on the Indonesian context, so the findings and recommendations may be relevant to other countries. Thus, further research on the perspectives of people with disabilities is essential to provide deeper insights into their experiences. Based on our findings, we recommend a holistic and inclusive approach to policy formulation for people with disabilities. This approach involves improving physical and social infrastructure to increase accessibility and economic empowerment through skills training and entrepreneurship support, raising awareness, and reducing societal stigma. In addition, strong legal protection and effective policy implementation are also needed to ensure the rights and welfare of people with disabilities are protected. Thus, it is hoped that a more inclusive and equitable environment for people with disabilities can be created, as well as reduce the social and economic disparities they face.

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