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Inclusive Education, Disability, and Interfaith Justice: Legal and Religious Barriers in Plural Indonesian Society

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Abstract

Inclusive education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right; however, its realization for persons with disabilities remains uneven in plural societies such as Indonesia. This study examines inclusive education as an interfaith legal issue, arguing that the persistent failure to achieve substantive equality is not merely a problem of weak policy implementation but a consequence of normative dissonance among state law, religious norms, and social practices. Employing a

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juridical-empirical approach within a legal pluralism framework, the study draws on qualitative data from interviews, observations, and document analysis to explore how stigma and exclusion are socially and normatively produced. The findings reveal that disability stigma is reinforced through paternalistic religious interpretations, institutional routines in schools, and the lack of harmonization between Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities and the National Education System Law. At the same time, religious values across faith traditions possess significant normative potential to function as modalities of inclusion when mobilized through interfaith engagement. This study contributes to socio-legal scholarship by reframing inclusive education as a contested normative space shaped by interfaith dynamics and legal pluralism, and by highlighting the necessity of legal reform alongside cross-religious collaboration to achieve substantive justice in education.

KEYWORDS

Inclusive education, disability rights, misconceptions and stigma, interfaith perspectives, social marginalization

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Introduction

Inclusive education constitutes an interfaith legal issue, as practices of inclusion and exclusion are not determined solely by state policies, but are also shaped by the roles of schools, families, and religious communities that actively produce values, norms, and social legitimacy toward diversity and disability. The

right to education is a non-derogable human right that cannot be diminished under any circumstances. In reality, persons with disabilities frequently face discrimination and stigma, with women with disabilities experiencing sexual violence or double discrimination.[1] In schools, students with disabilities are often marginalized and treated differently,[2] while discriminatory practices in education are reinforced by distinctions based on special needs or socio-economic background.[3] These conditions indicate that the fulfillment of the right to education has not yet been fully realized on an equal basis.

Academic studies on inclusive education in Indonesia have predominantly focused on the technical implementation of policies, such as limitations in teacher management,[4] the social benefits of inclusive student acceptance,[5] the

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[1] Jihan Kamilla Azhar, Eva Nuriyah Hidayat[2], and Santoso Tri Raharjo[2], "Kekerasan Seksual: Perempuan Disabilitas Rentan Menjadi Korban," *Share : Social Work Journal* 13, no. 1 (August 11, 2023): 82–91, https://doi.org/10.24198/SHARE.V13I1.46543; Michael Oliver and Bob Sapey, "Living with Disabilities," in *Social Work with Disabled People*, ed. Michael Oliver and Bob Sapey (Palgrave, London, 1999), 108–32, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-14823-3_5; J. Penton, "Living with Disability: Housing.," *Nursing Times* 75, no. 34 (1979).

[2] Siti Kasiyati and Abdullah Tri Wahyudi, "Disabilitas Dan Pendidikan: Aksesibilitas Pendidikan Bagi Anak Difabel Korban Kekerasan," *Al-Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syari'ah Dan Hukum* 6, no. 1 (June 30, 2021): 73–88, https://doi.org/10.22515/ALAHKAM.V6I1.4031.

[3] Esny Baroroh and Rukiyati Rukiyati, "Pandangan Guru Dan Orang Tua Tentang Pendidikan Inklusif Di Taman Kanak-Kanak," *Jurnal Obsesi : Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* 6, no. 5 (March 27, 2022): 3944–52, https://doi.org/10.31004/OBSESI.V6I5.2510.

[4] Pilar Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., "Barriers to Educational Inclusion in Initial Teacher Training," *Societies 2023, Vol. 13, Page 31* 13, no. 2 (January 31, 2023): 31, https://doi.org/10.3390/SOC13020031; Eka Sari Setianingsih, "Implementasi Pendidikan Inklusi: Manajemen Tenaga Kependidikan (GPK)," *Malih Peddas (Majalah Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar)* 7, no. 2 (April 18, 2017): 126, https://doi.org/10.26877/MALIHPEDDAS.V7I2.1808; Alison L. Zagona, Jennifer A. Kurth, and Stephanie Z.C. MacFarland, "Teachers' Views of Their Preparation for Inclusive Education and Collaboration," *Teacher Education and Special Education* 40, no. 3 (August 1, 2017): 163–78, https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406417692969;REQUESTEDJOURNAL:JOURNAL:TESA;PAGE:STRING:ARTICLE/CHAPTER.

[5] Vitus Furrer et al., "The Role of Teaching Strategies in Social Acceptance and Interactions; Considering Students With Intellectual Disabilities in Inclusive Physical Education," *Frontiers in Education* 5 (October 23, 2020): 586960, https://doi.org/10.3389/FEDUC.2020.586960/BIBTEX; Ariana Garrote et al., "Corrigendum: Social Acceptance in Inclusive Classrooms: The Role of Teacher Attitudes Toward Inclusion and Classroom Management (Frontiers in Education, (2020), 5, (582873),

scarcity of supporting facilities[6], institutional capacity, and issues of social stigma. However, limited attention has been given to the interfaith dimension of educational exclusion and inclusion. Most legal and educational studies treat religion merely as a background variable or cultural context, rather than as a normative and institutional force that actively shapes power relations, values, and practices of inclusion and exclusion within educational settings. Consequently, a significant analytical gap exists in understanding inclusive education as an interfaith legal issue, in which schools, families, and religious communities across different faith traditions function as key actors in producing norms, values, and social legitimacy related to disability. The absence of an interfaith legal analysis constrains existing scholarship in explaining why formal legal guarantees frequently fail to translate into substantive equality for persons with disabilities.

At the global level, the existence of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) further emphasizes that the fulfillment of the right to education for persons with disabilities is not merely a sectoral issue but an integral part of the human rights agenda.[7] The urgency of this study is heightened following the enactment of Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities, which guarantees the right to inclusive education, yet its implementation remains constrained by weak institutional commitment and persistent cultural resistance. In the context of Indonesia's socially and religiously plural society[8], perceptions of disability are shaped not only by social and structural factors but also by the religious values embraced by communities. On the one hand, religious teachings

10.3389/Feduc.2020.582873)," *Frontiers in Education* 6 (April 20, 2021): 677881, https://doi.org/10.3389/FEDUC.2021.677881/BIBTEX.

[6] Delora Jantung Amelia, Ichsan Anshory, and Vivi Kurnia Herviani, "Analysis of Facilities Management on Inclusion Education School in Batu City," *Journal of Science and Education (JSE)* 2, no. 2 (March 31, 2022): 99–110, https://doi.org/10.56003/JSE.V2I2.110; Sri Ayu Irawati, "Sekolah Inklusi Antara Kenyataan Dan Realita," *Dikmas: Jurnal Pendidikan Masyarakat Dan Pengabdian* 3, no. 2 (June 2, 2023): 355–62, https://doi.org/10.37905/DIKMAS.3.2.355-362.2023; Sifiso L. Zwane and Matome M. Malale, "Investigating Barriers Teachers Face in the Implementation of Inclusive Education in High Schools in Gege Branch, Swaziland," *African Journal of Disability* 7, no. 0 (December 6, 2018): 12, https://doi.org/10.4102/AJOD.V7I0.391.

[7] Arkadi Toritsyn and A. H. Monjurul Kabir, "Promoting The Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States: Guide," 2013, http://europeandcis.undp.orghttp//europeandcis.undp.org.

[8] Gunawan Tjokro et al., "The Role of Interfaith Law and Policy in Managing Human Resources: Addressing Religious Diversity in the Workplace," *Contemporary Issues on Interfaith Law and Society* 4, no. 1 (June 27, 2025): 1–44, https://doi.org/10.15294/0DKS2W56.

contain ethical principles such as compassion, justice, and respect for human dignity that can serve as a normative foundation for dismantling stigma. This study is grounded in the view that the state has a constitutional and moral obligation to guarantee educational equality, while society plays a key role in creating an inclusive environment.[9] Equal interactions with persons with disabilities have been shown to foster empathy and strengthen their participation in educational spaces.[10] Furthermore, inclusive education has the potential to reduce marginalization and discrimination that have historically impeded their rights.[11]

This article contributes to interfaith discourse by illustrating how interfaith ethical values can serve as a foundation for promoting inclusive justice. Indonesia's diverse religious traditions offer universal principles, such as compassion, equality, and social justice, that can support interfaith collaboration aimed at eliminating stigma and strengthening human rights.

Method

This study is classified as juridical-empirical research employing a qualitative approach. Legal materials were obtained through the analysis of legal and policy documents, including Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities, its implementing regulations, and international documents such as the CRPD. In addition, legal materials were collected from semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted over three months with inclusive school teachers, special schools (SLB) teachers, parents, and persons with disabilities. A semi-structured format was chosen to allow flexibility in exploring personal experiences while maintaining consistency in research questions.

A total of thirteen respondents were selected using purposive sampling, taking into account their direct involvement in inclusive education practices and

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[9] Zola Permata Sari, Riska Sarofah, and Yusuf Fadli, "The Implementation of Inclusive Education in Indonesia: Challenges and Achievements," *Jurnal Public Policy* 8, no. 4 (October 30, 2022): 264–69, https://doi.org/10.35308/JPP.V8I4.5420.

[10] Margarita Ruseva and Vesela Kazashka, "The Attitudes of Students in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic Towards People with Special Educational Needs," *CBU International Conference Proceedings* 6 (September 27, 2018): 728–33, https://doi.org/10.12955/CBUP.V6.1240; S B Wibowo and J A Muin, "Inclusive Education in Indonesia: Equality Education Access for Disabilities," *KnE Social Sciences* 3, no. 5 (May 23, 2018): 484-493–484–493, https://doi.org/10.18502/KSS.V3I5.2351.

[11] Yuqiong Fang, "The Advantages and Disadvantages of Inclusive Education," *International Journal of New Developments in Education* 4, no. 14 (November 20, 2022): 44–48, https://doi.org/10.25236/IJNDE.2022.041409.

interactions with persons with disabilities. Teachers were chosen for their strategic role in implementing inclusive education, parents for their ability to reflect on caregiving experiences, and persons with disabilities to provide an insider perspective. Respondents were drawn from various areas in Central Java, representing both urban and semi-urban contexts in Central Java and Yogyakarta Special Region.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Respondent	Gender	Profession	Domicile
R1	F	Vocational High School Teacher (Public School)	Semarang Regency
R2	F	Vocational High School Teacher (Public School)	Semarang
R2	F	Senior High School Teacher (Public School)	Semarang
R3	F	Senior High School Teacher (Public School)	Semarang
R4	F	Principal, Inclusive School	Tangerang
R5	F	Special Needs School (SLB) Teacher	Kudus
R6	F	Senior High School Teacher (Public School)	Yogyakarta
R7	F	Junior High School Teacher (Inclusive School)	Semarang
R8	F	Elementary School Teacher (Public School)	Kudus
R9	M	Vocational High School Teacher (Private School)	Jepara
R10	M	Caregiver, Inclusive Islamic Boarding School	Semarang
R11	F	Chairperson, Disability Community	Semarang
R12	M	Master's Student	Bekasi
R13	M	Civil Servant	Kudus

The analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which comprises three stages: data reduction, data display, and

conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved selecting and categorizing information according to the research focus (misconceptions, antipathy, marginalization). The data were then presented in the form of descriptive narratives, tables, and interview excerpts to reveal emerging patterns. The final stage involved drawing conclusions accompanied by verification procedures to ensure the consistency and validity of the findings.[12]

To enhance validity, source triangulation was employed by comparing information from interviews, questionnaires, and legal documents. This approach ensures that data interpretation does not rely on a single source but is cross-verified from multiple perspectives. The study acknowledges its limitations. The number of respondents was relatively small and predominantly composed of teachers, so the voices of persons with disabilities were not fully represented. This limitation serves as an important note for future research, which could expand the participant pool and enrich the diversity of perspectives, for example, by involving more disability communities from varied backgrounds.

Result & Discussion

Table 2. List of Interview Questions

No	Interview Questions
1	Are there persons with disabilities at your school?
2	How does the school environment respond to them? Are they accepted or rejected?
3	Do they receive support and acceptance?
4	How do classmates treat students with disabilities?
5	Does stigma still exist in your school environment?
6	Do students with disabilities receive equal treatment and rights in the educational process?
7	How are the school facilities and infrastructure? Are they accessible for students with disabilities?
8	Are teachers in regular schools prepared to teach students with disabilities?
9	Have teachers in inclusive schools received training to teach students with disabilities?
10	What are the obstacles to fulfilling the right to education for persons with disabilities?

[12] Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldana, "Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook," Sage Publications Ltd., 2014, https://study.sagepub.com/miles3e.

A. From "Deficit" to "Pity": The Reproduction of Misconceptions about Disability

The findings indicate that misconceptions about persons with disabilities persist, rooted in ignorance and a limited understanding of what disability entails. Rather than being recognized as citizens with equal rights, persons with disabilities are often viewed through a stigmatizing lens that emphasizes weakness and deficiency. This is evident from an interview with a special needs school teacher:

> *"The broader society views persons with disabilities as defective, weak, and incapable of doing anything. Some even call special needs schools 'schools for idiots.' This shows that society still does not understand the meaning of disability"* (R5, interview, 11 February 2025).

This statement illustrates how labels such as "defective" and "idiot" are still reproduced in public discourse, narrowing the understanding of disability and positioning persons with disabilities as inferior. In other words, instead of being seen as subjects with capacities and rights, they are positioned as objects of pity or social burden. Society continues to hold flawed perceptions of disability, dominated by assumptions of dependency, absolute weakness, and a pity-oriented view that infantilizes them. Under this paradigm, persons with disabilities are treated as objects of compassion rather than active social subjects with full citizenship rights.

This phenomenon is reflected in respondents' answers linking disability to permanent weakness, portraying physically disabled individuals as perpetually powerless and reliant on others:

> *"When I see someone with a deficiency, I feel very sorry and imagine they will depend on their parents forever"* (R1, interview, 11 February 2025).

Such perspectives demonstrate that social discourse on disability remains heavily influenced by medical and philanthropic logics, which emphasize limitations over potential. Furthermore, the perception of disability as a taboo issue indicates low social literacy. In practice, this leads some people to ignore or pretend not to see persons with disabilities under the guise of "protecting their feelings." Ironically, this attitude subtly reproduces exclusion and impedes social acceptance. Misconceptions are not merely individual but structural, rooted in longstanding social stigma embedded within cultural constructions of disability.

The study shows that society still often views persons with disabilities negatively: as weak, powerless, dependent, and objects of pity. These misconceptions originate from a medical paradigm that frames disability solely as

an individual "deficit." The medical paradigm traps persons with disabilities as care recipients rather than active social agents, generating stigma in forms such as "absolute defect" and infantilization, where persons with disabilities are seen primarily through a lens of pity.[13]

Social antipathy within society plays a central role in reinforcing stigma against persons with disabilities. Most respondents reported tendencies to avoid or ignore persons with disabilities, often justified by practical barriers such as limited communication skills (e.g., the inability to use sign language). However, such avoidance cannot be understood merely as a technical or communicative limitation; rather, it reflects a broader pattern of social exclusion that restricts meaningful interaction. In this context, misunderstandings function not simply as deficits in knowledge but as mechanisms of power that sustain the dominance of the majority group over persons with disabilities, thereby constraining social participation and structural access to fundamental rights.

In addition, several respondents demonstrated a distorted understanding of theological concepts—such as divine trials, destiny, or familial burden—which frequently resulted in excessive compassion and paternalistic attitudes toward persons with disabilities. Conversely, other faith-based communities articulated more progressive interpretations of religious values, emphasizing human dignity, compassion, and moral responsibility toward vulnerable groups. These contrasting interpretations highlight the dual character of religion: while it may reinforce stigma and exclusion, it also possesses the ethical capacity to promote equality and inclusion. Importantly, the antipathy reproduced through everyday language, educational practices, and institutional norms should be understood not as an individual disposition but as a structural mechanism that perpetuates exclusion.

The findings further indicate that certain faith-based communities function as significant agents of social acceptance for persons with disabilities. An inclusive Islamic boarding school, a women's religious study group, and a church community illustrate how religious values can be operationalized into non-discriminatory educational practices. Community leaders within these settings consistently foreground compassion and human dignity as core ethical principles for fostering safe and inclusive learning environments. These observations underscore that religious communities not only shape societal perceptions of disability but also possess substantial potential to serve as key drivers in advancing inclusive education.

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[13] Marco J. Nathan and Jeffrey M. Brown, "An Ecological Approach to Modeling Disability," *Bioethics* 32, no. 9 (November 1, 2018): 593–601, https://doi.org/10.1111/BIOE.12497.

B. Antipathy and Avoidance Strategies: The Hidden Face of Discrimination

Another prominent issue is the persistence of societal antipathy toward persons with disabilities. This antipathy is rooted in negative stereotypes, portraying them as weak, "idiots," family shame, poor, abnormal, or equivalent to sick individuals. Such labels not only reinforce discrimination but also directly impact the psychological well-being of persons with disabilities, who often experience low self-esteem, social withdrawal, and even feel compelled to "hide" behind their disability identity. An interview with an inclusive school principal, who is also a parent of a child with a disability, illustrates this:

> *"As parents of children with disabilities, we recognize the importance of protecting our children from unwelcoming environments to prevent them from becoming targets of ridicule. Furthermore, the environment must be shaped to see persons with disabilities as human beings whose rights are not defined by their limitations. Therefore, as parents, we must select a good educational environment so that children grow well, without experiencing bullying or teasing at school"* (R4, interview, 15 March 2025).

This statement emphasizes the crucial role of parents in shielding children from discriminatory treatment. However, family protection alone is insufficient. The realization of the rights of persons with disabilities requires support from broader social environments, including schools, communities, and the state. Societal antipathy is often expressed through neglect, avoidance, ridicule, and discrimination that leads to denied opportunities. Most respondents reported tendencies to avoid or ignore persons with disabilities, often justified by communication barriers, such as lack of sign language proficiency. Instead of fostering equal interactions, society reproduces social distance, a form of othering that frames persons with disabilities as "different" and "alien".

Respondents also reported demeaning or mocking practices, including school bullying or dismissive attitudes that position persons with disabilities as an inferior group. This reflects the persistence of culturally embedded negative stigma, reinforced by limited education on inclusion. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this can be understood as symbolic violence: a subtle yet effective mechanism through which dominant groups maintain superiority by labeling persons with disabilities as "weak," "powerless," or "abnormal," while normalizing social distance. This aligns with a respondent's statement:

> *"There is still a lot of rejection of students with disabilities in regular schools. Teachers in regular schools are often reported as lacking the capacity to teach students with disabilities. This does not even touch on bullying, instructional strategies, teaching aids, and other issues that we still frequently encounter"* (R12, interview, 10 March 2025).

Further, societal antipathy is evident in perceptions that special needs schools (SLB) are "schools for idiots." Such labeling not only reflects verbal discrimination but also functions as an instrument to exclude persons with disabilities from wider social spaces. Therefore, antipathy is not merely an issue of individual perception but a structural mechanism that continuously reproduces exclusion and impedes the realization of inclusive education, which aims to dismantle stigma and promote equality.

Existing research consistently demonstrates that persons with disabilities experience multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization. Beyond physical, economic, and educational barriers, they are simultaneously confronted with pervasive social stigma that constrains meaningful participation in community life. Access to education, employment, and public services remains uneven, while opportunities for representation in policymaking processes are severely limited. As a result, persons with disabilities are frequently positioned as passive beneficiaries of policy interventions rather than as active agents capable of shaping public decision-making.

The fulfillment of the right to education for persons with disabilities can be understood through three interrelated dimensions. First, misunderstandings surrounding disability should not be reduced to cognitive or informational deficits; instead, they function as social instruments that reproduce stigma and undermine the social standing of persons with disabilities. Second, inclusive education is not a value-neutral or purely technical policy domain, but a contested arena in which human rights principles intersect with institutional constraints and culturally embedded resistance to difference. Third, persons with disabilities must be recognized as rights-holders and equal citizens, rather than as objects of charity, compassion, or assistance.

This third dimension underscores that the most significant barrier to the realization of inclusive education lies not primarily in inadequate infrastructure or technical preparedness, but in the persistence of paternalistic attitudes within both society and the state. Consequently, addressing misunderstandings and dismantling stigma are not peripheral concerns; they are central prerequisites for advancing transformative and rights-based inclusive education.

C. Educational Discrimination as a Mechanism of Social Exclusion

Marginalization of persons with disabilities has significant implications for the fulfillment of their fundamental rights, particularly in the field of education. Discrimination remains evident in limited access, inadequate disability-friendly facilities, shortages of educators with specialized competencies, and curricula that are not fully adaptive to the needs of students with disabilities. These conditions indicate that marginalization is not merely incidental but systemic, occurring throughout the process of accessing education, the implementation of educational activities, and educational outcomes for persons with disabilities. An interview with a special needs school teacher revealed:

> *"Students with disabilities still experience discrimination in special needs schools, particularly regarding the lack of teaching staff and learning resources, such as the unavailability of appropriate books for visually impaired students"* (R5, interview, 15 March 2025).

Another perspective from a parent of a child with disabilities highlighted:

> *"Children with disabilities face difficulties in finding schools. My child had to transfer multiple times from inclusive schools before finally attending a special needs school (SLB)"* (R13, interview, 15 March 2025).

These statements confirm that marginalization persists in tangible forms, including denial, inaccessible facilities, insufficient specialized teachers, and non-adaptive curricula. Public perceptions align with observable realities, both directly and through media reports. In education, disability-friendly facilities remain largely inadequate, while human resources, budgets, and sanctions for discriminatory practices have not been effectively implemented. Public awareness campaigns about inclusive schools are still limited, making it difficult to create genuinely inclusive educational environments.

Normatively, inclusive education is understood as an approach that ensures equal access for all students, regardless of background, ability, or disability.[14] This perspective emerges from a human rights paradigm, rejecting any form of discrimination in educational settings. However, the ideal of inclusion often clashes with practical implementation. Inclusive education is thus not merely a technical policy but an arena of contestation among competing interests,

[14] Zh N. Shmeleva and V. I. Litovchenko, "The Use of Digital Technologies in the Inclusive Education Implementation at the University," *AIP Conference Proceedings* 2647, no. 1 (November 1, 2022), https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0105269/2831887.

resources, and social constructions of "normality." Studies indicate that challenges in inclusive education are not only technical, such as insufficient facilities and lack of teacher preparedness,[15] but also structural, rooted in how society, schools, and policymakers perceive persons with disabilities. In many cases, inclusive education remains rhetorical, unsupported by adequate resource allocation, which inadvertently reinforces segregation in new forms.[16]

Moreover, inclusive education is often politicized, emphasizing quantitative achievements (number of inclusive schools, trained teachers, or enrolled students with disabilities) while neglecting the quality of participation for persons with disabilities. Consequently, inclusion risks being reduced to administrative logic rather than driving social transformation. Teachers may be encouraged to accept students with disabilities but lack sufficient training, perpetuating old stigmas in the classroom.[17] Infrastructure readiness and teacher quality are essential prerequisites for successful inclusive schools, and failures in these aspects reinforce inequality.[18] Therefore, marginalization of persons with disabilities is systemic and institutionalized. Education, employment, and political arenas often strengthen exclusion rather than fostering full participation.

The concept of inclusion also carries political implications, particularly regarding the relationship between regular schools and special needs schools (SLB). On one hand, SLBs are seen as reinforcing segregation; on the other hand,

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[15] Arnaiz-Sánchez et al., "Barriers to Educational Inclusion in Initial Teacher Training"; Irawati, "Sekolah Inklusi Antara Kenyataan Dan Realita"; Zagona, Kurth, and MacFarland, "Teachers' Views of Their Preparation for Inclusive Education and Collaboration."

[16] Norma S. Blecker and Norma J. Boakes, "Creating a Learning Environment for All Children: Are Teachers Able and Willing?," *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 14, no. 5 (August 2010): 435–47, https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110802504937; Penelope J.S. Stein et al., "Advancing Disability-Inclusive Climate Research and Action, Climate Justice, and Climate-Resilient Development," *The Lancet Planetary Health* 8, no. 4 (April 1, 2024): e242–55, https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(24)00024-X.

[17] Natalia Triviño-Amigo et al., "Spanish Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparation for Inclusive Education: The Relationship between Age and Years of Teaching Experience," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 2022, Vol. 19, Page 5750* 19, no. 9 (May 9, 2022): 5750, https://doi.org/10.3390/IJERPH19095750; Triyanto et al., "Teachers' Perspectives Concerning Students with Disabilities in Indonesian Inclusive Schools," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 24, no. 3 (September 1, 2023): 291–301, https://doi.org/10.1007/S12564-022-09745-W/FIGURES/1; Linda Ware, "The Aftermath of the Articulate Debate: The Invention of Inclusive Education," *Towards Inclusive Schools?*, January 1, 2018, 127–46, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429469084-10/AFTERMATH-ARTICULATE-DEBATE-INVENTION-INCLUSIVE-EDUCATION-LINDA-WARE.

[18] Irawati, "Sekolah Inklusi Antara Kenyataan Dan Realita."

they remain necessary because regular schools are not yet ready to accommodate diverse students' needs. This situation illustrates that inclusive education is a contested space reflecting tensions between human rights paradigms, institutional limitations, and societal resistance to difference. A critical question arises: does inclusive education genuinely open spaces for equality, or does it function symbolically to obscure ongoing discriminatory practices?

In plural societies, inclusive justice cannot rely solely on legal frameworks but must also be supported by interfaith solidarity. Stigma against disability appears across religious communities, making cross-faith dialogue essential for building a shared understanding of equality and human dignity. Universal ethical values—compassion, justice, and mutual respect—embedded in various religious traditions can serve as a collective foundation for interfaith collaboration in promoting inclusive education. Therefore, the fulfillment of educational rights for persons with disabilities is not only a legal obligation but also a moral project shared across religious communities.

The three main findings of this study suggest that disability issues in Indonesia are still understood partially and symbolically. Inclusive education often operates more as policy rhetoric than practical reality. True inclusivity requires a paradigm shift: viewing persons with disabilities not as burdens or objects of pity, but as citizens with equal rights. Strategic steps include:

1. Enhancing public literacy on disability beyond empathetic awareness, incorporating practical knowledge, such as communication skills (e.g., sign language) and understanding disability rights.
2. Developing a new paradigm of social acceptance that rejects stigma and promotes recognition of equality.
3. Legal and policy reform across three dimensions: legal substance (formulating more pro-disability regulations), legal structure (enhancing the capacity of implementing institutions), and legal culture (collective societal awareness of inclusive values).

Furthermore, inclusive education should serve as a strategic medium to dismantle social barriers between persons with and without disabilities. Successful inclusion demands more than regulations; it requires cultural change and systemic commitment.[19] If a new inclusivity paradigm is realized, stigma can be diminished, antipathy transformed into acceptance, and marginalization

[19] Christina Hajisoteriou and Georgios Sorkos, "Towards a New Paradigm of 'Sustainable Intercultural and Inclusive Education': A Comparative 'Blended' Approach," *Education Inquiry* 14, no. 4 (October 2, 2023): 496–512, https://doi.org/10.1080/20004508.2022.2071016.

replaced by full participation of persons with disabilities in social, economic, and political life.

From a normative legal perspective, the persistent stigma against people with disabilities reflects a failure to realize substantive justice in providing the right to inclusive education. Although Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning the Access to Disabilities affirms equality and non-discrimination, its normative objectives are not fully aligned with Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which continues to emphasize a standardized education model and has not been reformulated to adequately accommodate diverse learning needs. This lack of normative harmonization results in legal ambiguity and weak law enforcement, allowing exclusionary practices to persist under the guise of administrative compliance.

Furthermore, the ineffectiveness of inclusive education cannot be separated from the role of religious and belief-based norms operating in society. Religious interpretations function as a double-edged normative force. On the one hand, certain theological views that frame disability as destiny, divine punishment, or a family burden reinforce paternalistic attitudes and legitimize social exclusion. These interpretations involve fulfilling the law by normalizing discrimination as morally acceptable. On the other hand, religious values such as compassion, justice, equality, and respect for human dignity have strong normative potential to support legal compliance and social acceptance. When mobilized through interfaith engagement, these values can transform religious communities into strategic actors that strengthen inclusive norms and counter stigma.

These findings suggest that the provision of the right to inclusive education is hampered not only by technical limitations or institutional capacity, but also by the absence of an integrated normative framework that aligns state law, education policy, and religious ethics. Without legal harmonization and interfaith engagement, formal legal guarantees remain symbolic and fail to deliver substantive equality for persons with disabilities. Therefore, reformulating education regulations to ensure consistency with laws on the rights of persons with disabilities must be accompanied by active interfaith collaboration to foster inclusive values in schools, families, and communities. Such an approach positions inclusive education not only as a legal obligation of the state but also as a shared moral responsibility across various religious traditions in a pluralistic society.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the suboptimal fulfillment of the right to inclusive education for persons with disabilities in Indonesia cannot be attributed solely to technical or institutional limitations. Rather, it is embedded in normative dynamics shaped by the interaction between state law, religious norms, and social practices. The lack of harmonization between Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities and Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System weakens the normative force of inclusive education, rendering legal guarantees largely symbolic. Moreover, religion emerges as a dual normative force, functioning both as a barrier and as a potential enabler of inclusion. While paternalistic religious interpretations reinforce stigma and social exclusion, interfaith values such as justice, compassion, and respect for human dignity offer substantial normative potential to promote legal compliance and social acceptance. Accordingly, the reformulation and harmonization of educational regulations must be complemented by active interfaith engagement to foster an inclusive and equitable educational environment.

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