



Political Participation of Disability Organizations in Inclusive Elections: Evidence from Perkumpulan Sehati in Sukoharjo Regency, Indonesia

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Abstract

Inclusive elections represent a fundamental principle of democratic governance by ensuring equal political rights for all citizens, including persons with disabilities. However, disability political participation remains constrained by institutional, social, and accessibility barriers, while the role of disability organizations in facilitating electoral inclusion has received limited scholarly attention. This study aims to analyze the political participation of Perkumpulan Sehati as a disability organization in supporting inclusive elections in Sukoharjo Regency during the 2024 General Election. A qualitative case study approach was employed using in-depth interviews, observations, documentation, and triangulation techniques to explore organizational participation and structural challenges. The findings indicate that Perkumpulan Sehati contributed to electoral mobilization, community-based political education, and institutional collaboration with election management bodies, thereby strengthening democratic inclusion for persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, political participation continues to be influenced by limited political education, inadequate polling station accessibility, insufficient family support, social stigma, and low institutional trust. This study contributes to the literature by emphasizing the mediating role of disability organizations as civil society actors in transforming formal political rights into substantive democratic participation. The findings also suggest that collaborative governance involving election organizers, local governments, and disability organizations should be institutionalized to strengthen inclusive electoral governance in Indonesia.

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INTRODUCTION

Democratic governance fundamentally depends on the equal participation of citizens in political processes regardless of their social, economic, or physical conditions. Contemporary democratic theory emphasizes that political equality constitutes one of the essential principles of representative government, ensuring that every citizen possesses equal opportunities to influence public decision-making through electoral participation. Inclusive democracy therefore extends beyond the formal guarantee of voting rights by requiring institutional arrangements that enable marginalized groups to participate effectively in political life. Within this perspective, electoral inclusion becomes an important indicator of democratic quality because it reflects the state's commitment to recognizing diversity and protecting equal political citizenship for all members of society (Bastien et al., 2020; Cardol et al., 2025).

Despite global commitments to inclusive democracy and the protection of human rights, political participation among persons with disabilities remains relatively limited across many countries. Various international studies indicate that structural discrimination, inaccessible electoral facilities, limited political education, and persistent social stigma continue to restrict the participation of persons with disabilities in electoral processes. Although international conventions and national constitutions increasingly recognize disability rights, practical implementation frequently encounters institutional and cultural barriers that prevent equal political engagement. Consequently, discussions regarding disability inclusion have shifted from merely recognizing legal rights toward examining mechanisms capable of facilitating meaningful political participation through institutional and community support (Okura, 2021; Rocklin, 2021).

Indonesia has demonstrated significant progress in strengthening political inclusion through legal and institutional reforms. Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities explicitly guarantees the political rights of persons with disabilities, including the rights to vote, to be elected, to participate in

elections, to receive political education, and to obtain accessibility throughout electoral implementation. These provisions reinforce Indonesia's commitment to conducting inclusive elections that accommodate diverse voter needs without discrimination. The implementation of inclusive electoral governance therefore requires not only legal protection but also practical arrangements that ensure equal access, information dissemination, political education, and participation opportunities for persons with disabilities throughout the electoral process (Dickinson et al., 2023; Jones, 2020).

The implementation of inclusive elections nevertheless continues to encounter practical challenges at the local level. In Sukoharjo Regency, the General Election Commission recorded 6,045 registered voters with disabilities in the 2024 General Election, representing a significant group whose political rights require institutional attention. However, empirical conditions indicate that accessibility barriers remain evident in several polling stations, including physical infrastructure limitations, inadequate voting assistance, and insufficient dissemination of electoral information specifically designed for persons with disabilities. These conditions demonstrate that legal recognition alone cannot automatically guarantee substantive political participation without supportive institutional mechanisms and community engagement capable of addressing local barriers (Austin et al., 2021; Parra, 2024).

Within this context, disability organizations play an increasingly important role as civil society actors bridging electoral institutions and marginalized communities. Community-based organizations possess greater proximity to persons with disabilities through continuous social interaction, empowerment activities, and advocacy initiatives that strengthen political awareness and civic engagement. Beyond functioning as advocacy groups, disability organizations may serve as intermediaries connecting government institutions, election organizers, and disability communities while simultaneously providing political education, facilitating information exchange, and encouraging active participation during elections. Their involvement illustrates how civil society contributes to strengthening democratic

inclusion through collaborative governance at the local level (Fiala-Butora et al., 2024; Scott & Jones, 2024).

The substantially to understanding disability political participation in Indonesia, although most discussions remain concentrated on individual electoral behavior and accessibility issues. Ramadhani examined the political participation of persons with disabilities in local elections and identified limited political engagement primarily confined to voting activities alongside institutional constraints related to electoral accessibility and political socialization. Meanwhile, Merliana and Suhardiyanto highlighted the importance of community participation and local organizations in strengthening democratic processes through grassroots involvement. Other studies similarly emphasize voter participation, political education, and electoral accessibility as key determinants of disability inclusion. Nevertheless, previous studies mainly focus on electoral participation, while organizational mediation remains underexplored, particularly regarding how disability organizations actively facilitate inclusive electoral governance (Evans & Reher, 2025; Garcia Leon & Garcia Leon, 2022).

Accordingly, little attention has been paid to how disability organizations function as political intermediaries during electoral processes by mobilizing participation, disseminating political information, advocating electoral accessibility, and strengthening collaboration between election organizers and disability communities. Existing literature tends to emphasize institutional responsibilities or individual voter behavior while overlooking the strategic role of civil society organizations as mediating institutions capable of transforming formal political rights into substantive political participation. This theoretical and empirical gap indicates the necessity of examining organizational mechanisms through which disability associations contribute to democratic inclusion within local electoral contexts (Kyei & Dogbe, 2020; Vengesai, 2025).

The study aimed to analyze the political participation of Perkumpulan Sehati as a disability organization in supporting inclusive elections in Sukoharjo Regency during the 2024 General Election. Specifically, the study explores

the forms of organizational political participation and identifies structural factors influencing its involvement in electoral processes. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of disability politics literature by emphasizing the organizational dimension of political participation, enrich discussions on the role of civil society in democratic inclusion, and provide practical insights for strengthening inclusive electoral governance through collaboration between election management bodies and disability organizations at the local level.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the political participation of disability organizations in inclusive electoral processes. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because it allows researchers to explore complex social phenomena within their real-life context while capturing the interactions, experiences, and meanings constructed by organizational actors during electoral participation (Halperin & Heath, 2020; Lowndes, 2017). Rather than measuring participation quantitatively, this approach emphasizes the processes through which Perkumpulan Sehati contributes to strengthening political inclusion for persons with disabilities in the 2024 General Election.

The research was conducted in Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, where Perkumpulan Sehati actively operates as a community-based disability organization engaged in advocacy, empowerment, and political education activities. Sukoharjo Regency was selected because it recorded a relatively substantial number of registered voters with disabilities in the 2024 General Election and has established collaboration between the Regional General Election Commission (KPU Sukoharjo) and disability communities in promoting inclusive electoral participation. This local context provides an appropriate setting for examining the interaction between civil society organizations and electoral institutions in facilitating disability political participation.

Research participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in electoral activities and organizational decision-

making. The participants included the Chairperson and administrators of Perkumpulan Sehati, commissioners and officials of the Sukoharjo Regency General Election Commission (KPU), members of the Polling Committee (PPS), members of the Polling Station Working Committee (KPPS), election monitoring personnel, and several members of the disability community who participated in the 2024 General Election. The diversity of participants enabled the study to capture multiple perspectives regarding organizational participation, electoral accessibility, and collaborative governance in inclusive elections.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation studies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and organizational roles in promoting political participation among persons with disabilities. Observations were undertaken to examine electoral accessibility, organizational activities, and interactions between disability organizations and election organizers during electoral implementation. Documentation included organizational archives, election reports, official regulations, photographs, and institutional documents relevant to disability political participation and inclusive electoral governance.

Data analysis followed an interactive qualitative analysis model consisting of data coding, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The coding process was conducted to identify emerging themes related to political participation, organizational roles, collaboration, and structural barriers. Subsequently, relevant information was reduced and categorized into analytical themes before being systematically displayed to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were developed through continuous comparison between empirical findings and existing theoretical perspectives on political participation and civil society organizations. To ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, source triangulation and methodological triangulation were employed by comparing information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentary evidence collected from different participants and institutional sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Disability Organizations as Electoral Mobilizers

Political participation within democratic societies extends beyond individual voting behavior and increasingly involves the collective engagement of civil society organizations in mobilizing marginalized communities. The empirical findings of this study demonstrate that Perkumpulan Sehati has performed an important function as an electoral mobilizer by encouraging persons with disabilities to exercise their political rights during the 2024 General Election in Sukoharjo Regency. Rather than functioning solely as a social association, the organization actively facilitated political awareness, disseminated electoral information, and motivated its members to participate in electoral activities. This organizational role illustrates that disability organizations can serve as strategic intermediaries connecting electoral institutions with disability communities, thereby reducing social exclusion and strengthening inclusive democratic participation (Austin et al., 2021; Bastien et al., 2020; Jones, 2020).

The participation promoted by Perkumpulan Sehati was not limited to encouraging members to cast their votes on election day but also included continuous efforts to increase political awareness and organizational solidarity before the election took place. Through internal meetings, organizational communication, and community-based interactions, members were encouraged to recognize that voting constitutes an important expression of citizenship and equality before the law. Such activities contributed to transforming electoral participation from an individual obligation into a collective organizational movement aimed at ensuring that persons with disabilities are politically represented within democratic institutions. To illustrate the organizational activities that supported electoral participation, the empirical findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 demonstrates that the political participation facilitated by Perkumpulan Sehati extends beyond conventional electoral engagement. Organizational activities include voter mobilization, assistance in voter

Table 1. Forms of Electoral Political Participation by Perkumpulan Sehati

Political Activity	Empirical Evidence	Political Meaning
Voting participation	Members exercised voting rights	Electoral inclusion
Voter mobilization	Internal encouragement among members	Political awareness
Voter registration support	Organizational assistance	Equal political access
Election participation campaign	Community activities	Inclusive democracy

registration, and community campaigns that collectively strengthen the political inclusion of persons with disabilities. These activities indicate that political participation is not merely reflected through voting behavior but also through organizational processes that increase political consciousness and facilitate access to democratic institutions. The findings suggest that community organizations can reduce barriers preventing vulnerable groups from participating in elections by creating supportive social environments that encourage political engagement.

Field observations further reveal that organizational mobilization significantly influenced members' willingness to exercise their voting rights. The internal communication established among members created an atmosphere of mutual encouragement in which electoral participation was perceived as a shared responsibility rather than an individual decision. Organizational leaders continuously reminded members about election schedules, voter registration procedures, polling station locations, and the importance of participating in democratic processes. Consequently, electoral participation became embedded within broader organizational activities that promote empowerment and social inclusion for persons with disabilities (Okura, 2021; Parra, 2024; Schnitzler, 2020).

These findings can be interpreted through Herbert Almond's theory of political participation, which categorizes participation into various conventional forms, including voting, political discussion, organizational activity, and communication with public authorities. Within this theoretical framework, Perkumpulan Sehati performs functions extending beyond individual electoral participation by facilitating collective

organizational engagement that enables members to become active participants in democratic governance. The organization functions as an intermediary institution through which political information, civic education, and democratic values are transmitted to disability communities, thereby expanding opportunities for political inclusion that might otherwise remain inaccessible.

The evidence also indicates that organizational mobilization contributes to strengthening political equality by reducing informational and psychological barriers commonly experienced by persons with disabilities. Instead of approaching electoral participation solely from a legal perspective, Perkumpulan Sehati frames political participation as an instrument for achieving equal citizenship and social recognition. This organizational approach demonstrates that disability organizations can actively shape political behavior by fostering collective identity, strengthening civic confidence, and encouraging participation through peer support mechanisms that emerge from within the community itself.

The organizational role identified in this study is consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of political participation among persons with disabilities, while simultaneously extending existing discussions by highlighting the mediating function of disability organizations. Ramadhani argued that political participation among persons with disabilities in Indonesia remains largely concentrated on the exercise of voting rights and is constrained by limited political socialization and electoral accessibility. Similarly, Merliana and Suhardiyanto emphasized that community participation contributes significantly to strengthening democratic processes at the local level through collective engagement and

grassroots involvement. However, the present findings demonstrate that disability organizations such as Perkumpulan Sehati perform a broader political function by acting as organizational mobilizers capable of facilitating political awareness, encouraging electoral participation, and connecting marginalized communities with formal electoral institutions. This organizational dimension has received relatively limited attention within previous electoral participation studies.

The findings also indicate that organizational mobilization contributes to the development of political efficacy among persons with disabilities. Through continuous interaction within organizational networks, members acquire political knowledge, exchange electoral information, and receive encouragement from fellow members regarding the importance of exercising their constitutional rights. Such interactions reduce feelings of political marginalization and increase confidence in participating in democratic processes. Rather than perceiving elections as inaccessible state activities, members gradually recognize electoral participation as an opportunity to influence public policies affecting disability rights and social inclusion. This process illustrates that organizational participation strengthens both individual political consciousness and collective civic responsibility (Giordono, 2021; Krantz et al., 2023; Peruzzo & Raaper, 2024; Valentine, 2020).

From a broader democratic perspective, the mobilization conducted by Perkumpulan Sehati reflects the increasingly important role of civil society organizations in promoting inclusive governance. Electoral inclusion cannot be achieved solely through legal guarantees or administrative arrangements established by election management bodies. Instead, sustainable inclusion requires intermediary institutions capable of translating formal political rights into practical opportunities for participation through community empowerment and social advocacy. Disability organizations possess strategic advantages because they maintain close relationships with their members and understand the social, informational, and psychological barriers frequently experienced by persons with disabilities during electoral

processes. Consequently, organizational participation complements institutional efforts undertaken by electoral authorities and contributes to creating a more inclusive democratic environment.

The empirical evidence further suggests that political participation generated through organizational mobilization extends beyond electoral outcomes and contributes to broader processes of democratic citizenship. Participation in elections enables persons with disabilities to affirm their equal political status while simultaneously challenging longstanding stereotypes that portray disability communities as passive recipients of public policy. Organizational encouragement transforms electoral participation into an instrument of social recognition, demonstrating that persons with disabilities possess equal capacity to engage in democratic decision-making and public affairs. In this regard, Perkumpulan Sehati functions not only as a social organization but also as a democratic actor promoting citizenship equality through collective political engagement.

The findings of this study therefore imply that strengthening disability organizations should become an integral component of inclusive electoral governance in Indonesia. Collaboration between election management institutions and community-based disability organizations has the potential to increase voter participation, improve political literacy, expand electoral accessibility, and strengthen democratic legitimacy among marginalized groups. Rather than viewing disability organizations merely as advocacy institutions operating outside government structures, electoral governance should recognize them as strategic partners capable of mobilizing participation and facilitating communication between electoral institutions and disability communities. Such collaborative approaches may contribute significantly to the realization of substantive political equality and the consolidation of inclusive democracy in Indonesia.

Political Education through Community-Based Organizations

Political education represents an essential component of democratic consolidation because it enables citizens to understand their

Table 2. Political Education Programs Conducted through Perkumpulan Sehati

Program	Organizer	Main Objective	Expected Outcome
Election Socialization	KPU Sukoharjo	Electoral information dissemination	Increased voter awareness
Election Kirab	KPU & Perkumpulan Sehati	Political discussion and civic education	Improved political literacy
Community Meetings	Perkumpulan Sehati	Information sharing among members	Strengthened civic engagement
Organizational Advocacy	Perkumpulan Sehati	Rights awareness and political empowerment	Increased political participation

constitutional rights, electoral procedures, and responsibilities within democratic governance. The findings of this study indicate that Perkumpulan Sehati has played an important role in strengthening political education for persons with disabilities through community-based approaches that are adaptive to their social conditions and communication needs. Unlike conventional political education programs that are generally organized through formal institutions, political education implemented by Perkumpulan Sehati was conducted through participatory interactions involving election socialization, Election Kirab activities, political discussions, and organizational meetings. These activities provided opportunities for persons with disabilities to obtain electoral information while simultaneously developing confidence to participate actively in the 2024 General Election (Dickinson et al., 2023; Dimitrova et al., 2024; Evans, 2022; Garcia Leon & Garcia Leon, 2022; Vengesai, 2025).

One of the most significant political education initiatives was the implementation of the 2024 Election Kirab Socialization organized collaboratively by the Sukoharjo Regency General Election Commission (KPU) and Perkumpulan Sehati. The program served not merely as a ceremonial electoral campaign but as an interactive forum where members of the disability community discussed electoral procedures, voting mechanisms, accessibility issues, and the importance of exercising political rights. The participatory nature of the program encouraged two-way communication between election organizers and disability communities, enabling participants to express their concerns while obtaining direct clarification regarding electoral regulations and available support

services. Consequently, political education became a process of dialogue rather than a one-directional dissemination of information.

The empirical findings further reveal that political discussions conducted within the organizational environment strengthened collective political awareness among members. Community meetings facilitated exchanges of experiences regarding previous elections, accessibility challenges, and expectations toward electoral institutions. Such discussions encouraged members to recognize elections as opportunities to influence public policies affecting disability rights rather than merely periodic political events. The existence of organizational communication networks also accelerated the dissemination of electoral information, allowing members to remind one another about registration procedures, polling station arrangements, and election schedules. These community-based interactions contributed significantly to strengthening political literacy among persons with disabilities.

Table 2 demonstrates that political education implemented through Perkumpulan Sehati combined institutional collaboration with community empowerment strategies. Rather than relying exclusively on formal election campaigns, the organization incorporated political education into routine community activities that were more familiar and accessible to persons with disabilities. This approach enabled electoral information to be delivered through trusted organizational networks while simultaneously creating a supportive environment for learning and discussion. The findings suggest that community-based political education possesses greater potential to reduce informational barriers commonly experienced by

marginalized groups because communication occurs through continuous interpersonal interaction rather than isolated public campaigns.

Institutional Collaboration for Inclusive Electoral Governance

Inclusive elections require collaboration among multiple stakeholders to ensure that every citizen can exercise political rights without discrimination. The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of inclusive elections in Sukoharjo Regency was supported by institutional collaboration involving the Sukoharjo Regency General Election Commission (KPU), Perkumpulan Sehati, Polling Committees (PPS), Polling Station Working Committees (KPPS), election monitoring teams, and local government institutions. Rather than operating independently, these actors established complementary relationships aimed at facilitating electoral participation among persons with disabilities through coordination, information exchange, and the provision of accessible electoral services. The findings demonstrate that inclusive electoral governance is not solely determined by regulatory frameworks but also by the effectiveness of institutional collaboration among governmental and civil society organizations (Kyei & Dogbe, 2020; Rahahleh et al., 2021; Reher, 2020; Rocklin, 2021).

The empirical evidence reveals that Perkumpulan Sehati functioned as an intermediary organization connecting disability communities with election management bodies. Through continuous communication with the Sukoharjo Regency KPU, the organization conveyed information regarding the specific needs of persons with disabilities, including accessibility requirements at polling stations, voter registration issues, and political education activities. At the same time, KPU utilized Perkumpulan Sehati as a strategic partner in disseminating electoral information and encouraging disability participation through community-based activities. This reciprocal relationship illustrates that collaboration between formal electoral institutions and disability organizations contributes significantly

to expanding democratic participation among marginalized communities.

Institutional collaboration was also reflected in the involvement of disability representatives within electoral implementation structures. Several members of Perkumpulan Sehati participated in Polling Committees (PPS), Polling Station Working Committees (KPPS), and election monitoring activities, allowing disability perspectives to be incorporated into electoral administration and supervision. Their participation enhanced communication between election organizers and disability voters while simultaneously increasing institutional sensitivity toward accessibility issues encountered during electoral implementation. The inclusion of disability representatives within electoral committees therefore strengthened the responsiveness of electoral governance by ensuring that disability concerns were recognized throughout various stages of election administration.

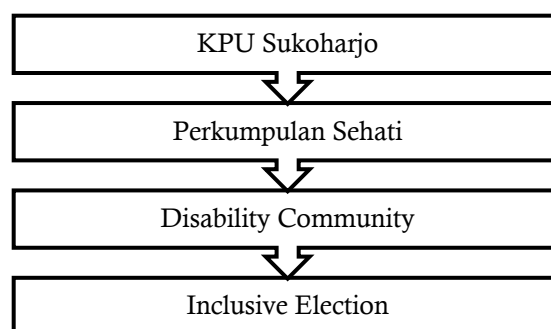


Figure 1. Collaborative Governance Model for Inclusive Elections

The collaborative model illustrated above demonstrates that Perkumpulan Sehati occupies an intermediary position linking electoral institutions with disability communities. The organization functions as a communication bridge through which electoral information, community aspirations, and accessibility needs circulate between formal institutions and citizens. This intermediary function enables electoral governance to become more adaptive and participatory because institutional decisions are informed by direct interaction with disability organizations that possess contextual understanding of community needs. The collaborative mechanisms identified in this study

Table 3. Institutional Collaboration Supporting Inclusive Elections

Institution	Role	Contribution
KPU Sukoharjo	Election organizer	Inclusive election management
Perkumpulan Sehati	Disability organization	Community mobilization
PPS	Local election committee	Local electoral implementation
KPPS	Polling station committee	Election administration
Monitoring Team	Election supervision	Electoral transparency

are further summarized in Table 3.

Table 3 illustrates that inclusive electoral governance emerges through complementary institutional functions rather than isolated organizational performance. KPU provides regulatory and administrative authority, while Perkumpulan Sehati contributes community mobilization and disability advocacy. PPS and KPPS operationalize electoral implementation at the local level, whereas monitoring teams strengthen accountability and transparency throughout the electoral process. The interaction among these institutions creates a governance network that supports equal electoral participation by integrating administrative capacity with community empowerment and social inclusion strategies.

From the perspective of collaborative governance theory, these findings indicate that successful inclusive elections require shared responsibility among public institutions and civil society organizations. Government institutions alone may possess legal authority but often experience limitations in reaching marginalized communities due to institutional distance and communication barriers. Conversely, disability organizations maintain close relationships with community members but require institutional cooperation to transform community aspirations into formal electoral policies and practices. Collaboration therefore becomes an adaptive governance mechanism that combines institutional resources, social trust, and community participation in pursuit of democratic inclusion (Cardol et al., 2025; Evans & Reher, 2025; Herrera & Frei, 2023; Scott & Jones, 2024).

The findings also reinforce the importance of civil society participation within democratic governance. Perkumpulan Sehati does not merely function as an advocacy organization but

actively participates in the implementation of electoral governance through communication, coordination, representation, and political mobilization. Such participation strengthens democratic legitimacy by ensuring that electoral policies are informed by the experiences and needs of marginalized citizens. The collaborative relationship between election organizers and disability organizations thus reflects an inclusive governance model in which policy implementation is supported by continuous interaction between governmental institutions and organized civil society.

The empirical evidence ultimately suggests that institutional collaboration contributes significantly to strengthening inclusive elections in Sukoharjo Regency. The integration of election management bodies, disability organizations, electoral committees, monitoring institutions, and local government creates opportunities for expanding political participation while simultaneously improving electoral accessibility and transparency. Consequently, collaborative governance should be regarded as an essential strategy for promoting democratic inclusion because it enables multiple stakeholders to share responsibility for protecting political equality and ensuring that persons with disabilities can participate fully in electoral processes as equal citizens.

Structural Barriers to Disability Political Participation

Although Perkumpulan Sehati has actively promoted electoral participation and strengthened political education through community-based initiatives, the findings of this study demonstrate that the political participation of persons with disabilities continues to face multiple structural barriers. These barriers should not be understood as isolated problems but rather

Table 4. Structural Barriers Affecting Disability Political Participation

Barrier	Empirical Findings	Political Consequence
Limited political education	Organizers and community lack understanding	Low participation quality
Polling station accessibility	Physical barriers remain	Voting difficulties
Family support	Limited assistance	Reduced confidence
Social stigma	Cultural discrimination	Political exclusion
Distrust toward government	Low institutional trust	Political apathy

as interconnected institutional and social conditions that collectively influence electoral inclusion. The empirical evidence indicates that limitations in political education, polling station accessibility, family support, social culture, and public trust interact to shape the quality of political participation among persons with disabilities in Sukoharjo Regency. Consequently, inclusive elections require comprehensive interventions addressing structural constraints rather than focusing solely on increasing voter turnout. The empirical findings are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4 illustrates that the barriers influencing disability political participation originate from institutional, social, and cultural dimensions that reinforce one another. The interaction among these factors produces cumulative disadvantages that restrict opportunities for equal electoral participation despite the existence of legal protections guaranteeing political rights for persons with disabilities.

One of the most influential barriers identified in this study concerns the limited effectiveness of political education among election organizers and the wider community. Although electoral socialization activities were implemented before the election, empirical findings indicate that understanding regarding disability inclusion remained uneven among polling officers and community members. As a result, many disability voters continued to experience uncertainty regarding available assistance, voting procedures, and accessible electoral services. From the perspective of democratic participation theory, political education functions not merely as information dissemination but also as a mechanism for developing political efficacy and civic competence. Inadequate political education therefore weakens citizens' confidence in

participating effectively in democratic processes and limits the realization of substantive political equality. These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that insufficient political socialization contributes significantly to limited electoral participation among persons with disabilities (Evans, 2023; Evans & Reher, 2022; Fiala-Butora et al., 2024; Gamble & McCrary, 2024; Trevisan, 2020).

Accessibility constitutes another structural barrier that directly influences electoral participation. Field observations indicate that several polling stations continued to exhibit physical obstacles, including inadequate pathways for wheelchair users, limited spatial arrangements within polling locations, and insufficient accessibility facilities for voters with visual impairments. Such conditions demonstrate that electoral accessibility remains uneven despite institutional commitments to inclusive elections. From the perspective of universal design principles, public facilities should accommodate diverse physical conditions without requiring special adaptation by users. However, empirical findings suggest that accessibility remains largely dependent on local administrative capacity and institutional awareness rather than standardized implementation across polling stations. Consequently, accessibility barriers not only complicate voting procedures but also reinforce perceptions of exclusion among persons with disabilities, thereby reducing opportunities for equal political participation.

The findings further reveal that family support significantly influences the willingness of persons with disabilities to participate in elections. Several participants indicated that emotional encouragement, transportation assistance, and practical support provided by family members played an important role in facilitating electoral participation. Conversely,

limited family involvement often reduced confidence and discouraged individuals from attending polling stations independently. These findings can be interpreted through the concept of social capital, which emphasizes the importance of interpersonal networks and supportive social relationships in facilitating collective action and civic participation. Families therefore function as primary social institutions that either strengthen or weaken political efficacy among persons with disabilities. Without adequate family support, formal political rights may remain inaccessible in practical terms despite institutional efforts to promote electoral inclusion.

Social and cultural factors also emerged as significant barriers affecting disability political participation. The findings indicate that negative stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes toward persons with disabilities continue to exist within certain community environments. Disability is frequently associated with dependency and limited social capability, resulting in reduced expectations regarding the political role of persons with disabilities within democratic society. Such cultural perceptions contribute to social exclusion by discouraging active participation and reinforcing marginal positions within political life. Social exclusion theory suggests that discrimination operating through everyday social interactions may generate cumulative disadvantages that restrict access to political institutions and civic opportunities. Accordingly, cultural stigma should be understood as a structural phenomenon embedded within social relations rather than merely an individual prejudice held by particular community members.

Institutional trust represents another critical factor influencing electoral participation among persons with disabilities. Several participants expressed skepticism regarding the government's long-term commitment to addressing disability issues, particularly when previous electoral promises were perceived as producing limited tangible improvements in accessibility and social inclusion. Low levels of political trust contribute to political apathy because citizens become less confident that participation will generate meaningful policy change. Political trust theory argues that

confidence in governmental institutions constitutes an essential determinant of democratic legitimacy and citizen participation. When institutional trust declines, marginalized groups may perceive electoral participation as ineffective, thereby reducing motivation to engage in democratic processes despite possessing formal voting rights. The findings therefore suggest that strengthening electoral participation requires not only administrative improvements but also sustained institutional responsiveness capable of building long-term public trust among disability communities.

Rather than functioning independently, these structural barriers interact through mutually reinforcing mechanisms that collectively influence political participation among persons with disabilities. Limited political education reduces awareness regarding electoral rights and accessibility services, while physical barriers at polling stations reinforce perceptions of exclusion. Weak family support further decreases individual confidence, whereas social stigma strengthens discriminatory attitudes that marginalize disability communities from political life. Finally, declining institutional trust discourages continued engagement with democratic processes because electoral participation is perceived as unlikely to produce substantive policy change. These interconnected factors demonstrate that disability political participation cannot be explained solely by individual motivation but must be understood within broader institutional and socio-cultural contexts that shape opportunities for democratic inclusion (Hirschmann, 2020; Kramer et al., 2024; Lorenzo & Duncan, 2021).

The findings of this study therefore emphasize that strengthening inclusive electoral governance requires integrated policy interventions involving election management bodies, local government institutions, civil society organizations, families, and community stakeholders. Political education should be expanded through continuous community engagement, electoral accessibility should be standardized according to universal design principles, family involvement should be encouraged through disability empowerment programs, and anti-discrimination initiatives should be strengthened to reduce cultural stigma

within society. Furthermore, improving governmental responsiveness toward disability issues is essential for rebuilding political trust and strengthening democratic legitimacy. Through collaborative institutional efforts addressing these structural barriers simultaneously, inclusive elections can move beyond formal legal recognition toward the realization of substantive political equality for persons with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Perkumpulan Sehati plays a strategic role in strengthening inclusive elections by functioning as an electoral mobilizer, a provider of community-based political education, and an intermediary institution facilitating collaboration between disability communities and electoral management bodies in Sukoharjo Regency. The findings further reveal that the political participation of persons with disabilities is influenced not only by individual willingness to vote but also by organizational support and structural factors, including limited political education, inadequate electoral accessibility, insufficient family support, persistent social stigma, and low institutional trust. Theoretically, this study extends political participation literature by emphasizing the mediating role of disability organizations as civil society actors that transform formal political rights into substantive democratic participation through organizational mobilization and collaborative governance. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of strengthening partnerships between election management institutions, local governments, and disability organizations to improve political literacy, electoral accessibility, and community empowerment for persons with disabilities. Therefore, policies promoting inclusive elections should institutionalize collaborative governance mechanisms that actively involve disability organizations in electoral planning, implementation, and evaluation. Future research is recommended to examine comparative experiences across different regions and explore the long-term contribution of disability organizations to democratic inclusion and public policy development in Indonesia.

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