

# From Accessibility to Participation: The Strategy of the General Elections Commission (KPU) in Enhancing the Political Engagement of Persons with Disabilities in the 2024 Local Election in East Jakarta, Indonesia

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## Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the strategies implemented by the General Election Commission (Komisi Pemilihan Umum-KPU) of East Jakarta in enhancing the political participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the 2024 regional elections. This research addresses the persistent challenges faced by PWDs in accessing their political rights, particularly the low voter turnout despite a significant increase in their inclusion within the Permanent Voter List (Daftar Pemilih Tetap-DPT). Employing a qualitative approach with an explanatory case study design, the data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observations, and document analysis involving KPU officials, disability organizations, and community stakeholders. The findings reveal that although the number of registered disabled voters in East Jakarta rose from 1,568 in 2017 to 17,502 in 2024, only 24% of them exercised their voting rights. Key obstacles include limited access to polling stations, insufficient voter education, and a lack of family and social support. However, several strategic innovations were found to be impactful, such as inclusive voter simulations, collaboration with disability organizations (e.g., PPUAD), social media-based outreach, and field-based data validation. The study contributes to electoral studies by highlighting the importance of dual strategies—offensive (proactive outreach and education) and defensive (protection and facilitation measures)—to empower marginalized voters. Moreover, the integration of digital platforms and community engagement models emerges as a key element for enhancing inclusive democratic participation. Compared to prior studies that primarily emphasized accessibility, this research brings an original focus on institutional collaboration, adaptive strategies, and the sociopolitical empowerment of PWDs within urban election systems. The findings underscore the need for continuous policy innovation and interagency cooperation to ensure meaningful participation of all citizens in democratic processes.

**Keywords:** Inclusive Democracy, Electoral Participation, Persons with Disabilities, East Jakarta Elections, Political Empowerment.

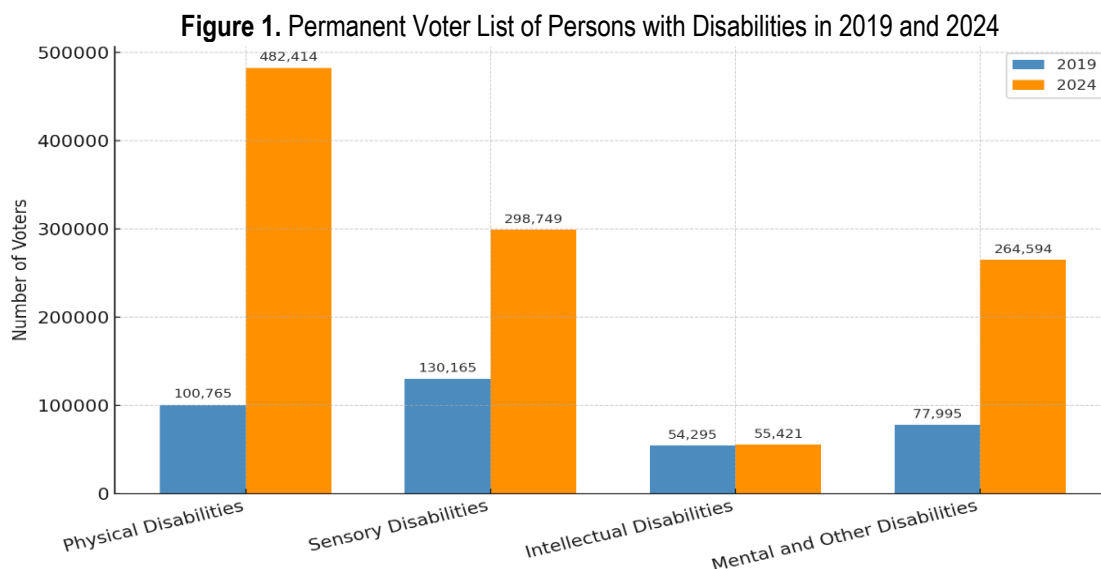
**Abstrak:**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi yang dijalankan oleh Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU) Kota Jakarta Timur dalam meningkatkan partisipasi politik penyandang disabilitas pada Pilkada 2024. Studi ini merespons permasalahan rendahnya tingkat partisipasi pemilih disabilitas, meskipun jumlah mereka dalam Daftar Pemilih Tetap (DPT) meningkat tajam dari 1.568 orang pada tahun 2017 menjadi 17.502 orang pada tahun 2024. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif dan desain studi kasus eksplanatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi langsung, serta analisis dokumen, melibatkan penyelenggara pemilu, organisasi penyandang disabilitas, dan tokoh komunitas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa hanya 24% dari pemilih disabilitas yang terdaftar menggunakan hak pilihnya. Kendala utama yang ditemukan meliputi aksesibilitas TPS yang belum memadai, minimnya sosialisasi dan pendidikan politik yang adaptif, serta kurangnya dukungan sosial dari lingkungan terdekat. Namun demikian, sejumlah strategi inovatif yang dijalankan KPU terbukti memberikan dampak positif, seperti pelibatan organisasi disabilitas (seperti PPUAD), simulasi pemilu inklusif, penggunaan media sosial sebagai kanal informasi, serta perbaikan pendataan berbasis kunjungan langsung. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi ilmiah melalui pemetaan strategi ofensif dan defensif dalam mendorong partisipasi pemilih disabilitas, serta menekankan pentingnya kolaborasi antarlembaga dan pemanfaatan teknologi digital. Keaslian penelitian ini terletak pada pendekatan kolaboratif antara KPU dan komunitas difabel, yang belum banyak dijangkau dalam studi sebelumnya. Temuan ini memperluas cakrawala tentang demokrasi inklusif serta menjadi rekomendasi kebijakan untuk mendorong keberlanjutan inklusi politik di tingkat lokal.

**Kata Kunci:** Demokrasi Inklusif, Partisipasi Pemilu, Penyandang Disabilitas, Pilkada Jakarta Timur, Pemberdayaan Politik.

**INTRODUCTION**

The Regional Head Election (*Pilkada*) serves as a form of democratic practice at the local level, allowing citizens to directly elect their leaders every five years (Aminah et al., 2020). As a manifestation of people's sovereignty and regional autonomy, *Pilkada* plays a crucial role in shaping public policy and local development (Ichsan et al., 2020). However, the participation of vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, remains a significant challenge in realizing inclusive democracy. Although Indonesian law guarantees the political equality of all citizens, in practice, people with disabilities still encounter structural, administrative, and cultural barriers that hinder their full participation in electoral processes (Muhamad, 2024; Wisnaeni, 2020).



Source: Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU), 2019, 2024; Muhamad, 2024

Data from the General Elections Commission (KPU) reveal a significant national increase in the number of persons with disabilities included in the permanent voter list (DPT) between 2019 and 2024. In Jakarta Province, particularly, the number of voters with disabilities reached 57,881 individuals. However, only around 21.13% of them exercised their voting rights in the previous election. Figure 1 presents a comparison of the 2019 and 2024

DPT figures for persons with disabilities by category. The most substantial increase occurred among voters with physical and mental disabilities, with numbers rising by more than two to four times. This increase indicates improvements in data collection and greater attention to the political rights of persons with disabilities. At the same time, it shows that growth in voter numbers does not necessarily translate into active participation in *Pilkada* (KPU, 2024). For that reason, it is essential to examine concrete strategies implemented by the KPU—specifically in East Jakarta—to ensure that these quantitative gains genuinely contribute to an inclusive and just democratic process.

This phenomenon deserves particular attention, especially in densely populated areas such as East Jakarta, which has a significant population of people with disabilities. Amid growing attention to the political rights of vulnerable groups, the East Jakarta KPU, as the election management body, bears the responsibility to ensure that persons with disabilities can participate in elections inclusively and fairly (Miqraj & Nurmasari, 2018). This responsibility aligns with existing legal frameworks, such as Article 13 of Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities and Article 5 of Law No. 7 of 2017 on General Elections, both of which guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities to vote and to be elected. KPU Regulation No. 10 of 2018 further designates persons with disabilities as a priority group in voter education and outreach activities (Eka, 2018). Therefore, it is vital to empirically assess the strategies and policies implemented by the East Jakarta KPU to ensure the political participation of persons with disabilities in the 2024 *Pilkada* is realized optimally.

Previous research has identified consistently low levels of electoral participation among persons with disabilities. Mais and Yaum (2019), Dedi (2020), and Bramantyo (2015) highlighted structural barriers such as limited accessibility at polling stations, inaccurate voter registration, and facilities that fail to accommodate disabilities. In addition, cultural barriers—including social stigma, low self-confidence, and minimal political literacy—further diminish participation in this group (Permatasari, 2023).

Other research groups have focused on the role of election bodies in promoting inclusive participation. Santoso (2019), Dewi et al. (2022), and Nugroho and Sukmariningsih (2020) found that KPU has introduced innovations such as community-based outreach, accessible educational media, and election officer training related to disability needs. Nevertheless, evaluations of the effectiveness of these programs remain limited, especially in the context of local-level policies.

Additional studies (Lasida, 2017; Rahmadani, 2025) have noted that inclusive election practices vary widely across regions. Some areas have implemented disability-friendly polling stations and companion volunteers, but such efforts are often symbolic and fail to address the core needs of voters with disabilities. Few studies have systematically examined local-level KPU strategies using evaluative and implementation-oriented approaches.

This study aims to investigate in depth the strategies employed by the East Jakarta KPU to increase the political participation of persons with disabilities in the 2024 *Pilkada*. This research seeks to fill gaps left by earlier studies by evaluating programs, approaches, and innovations undertaken by the KPU and assessing how effectively these strategies address barriers to political participation among persons with disabilities. Furthermore, this study aims to formulate context-specific and applicable policy recommendations that can be replicated in other regions.

This research argues that increasing the political participation of persons with disabilities depends significantly on the concrete strategies employed by the KPU, including the provision of accessible information, the involvement of disability communities, and technical facilities that support inclusivity at polling stations. Strategies that are adaptive, grounded in real needs on the ground, and oriented toward social justice have the potential to foster broader participation. In contrast, formalistic approaches that lack empirical evaluation tend to be ineffective. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that the success of political participation among persons with disabilities in *Pilkada* depends on the effectiveness of local strategies carried out consistently and sustainably by election organizers (Althoff, 2003; Rush & Althoff, 1971).

## METHOD

This study focused on the institutional unit of analysis, namely the General Elections Commission (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum*, KPU) of East Jakarta Administrative City, as the organizing body for the 2024 *Pilkada*. The researchers selected this unit because it holds direct authority and responsibility for formulating political

participation strategies, including those for persons with disabilities. This research did not merely examine the institution as a formal structure, but also explored its internal dynamics, policies, programs, and key actors involved in the formulation and implementation of inclusive strategies.

The study employed a qualitative approach using an explanatory case study design (Setia & Rosele, 2024). This approach allowed the researchers to explore in depth the strategies, challenges, and dynamics of implementing disability inclusion programs during the *Pilkada*. The explanatory case study design enabled contextual analysis of the phenomenon, particularly how the KPU responds to local needs in East Jakarta. This design also provided the flexibility to explain causal relationships between policy and field realities in an open and adaptive manner (Creswell, 2016).

The data for this study comprised both primary and secondary sources. The researchers collected primary data through in-depth interviews with six key informants: the Head of the East Jakarta KPU Technical Division, a representative from the Regional Unity and Politics Agency (*Kesbangpol*), representatives from disability organizations—namely the Center for Electoral Access for Persons with Disabilities (*Pusat Pemilihan Umum Akses, PPUA*) Disabilitas, the Indonesian Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities (*Perkumpulan Penyandang Disabilitas Fisik Indonesia, PPDFI*), and the Movement for the Welfare of the Deaf in Indonesia (*Gerakan untuk Kesejahteraan Tunarungu Indonesia, GERKATIN*)—as well as an inclusive election activist. The researchers selected informants using purposive sampling based on their roles, experience, and relevance to the issue of electoral inclusivity for voters with disabilities. Secondary data were obtained from official KPU documents, activity reports, KPU regulations (*Peraturan KPU* or PKPU), and scholarly literature related to political participation and disability.

The data collection process involved semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation. The interviews used open-ended guides to explore subjective experiences and the institutional strategies employed. The researchers conducted observations during outreach activities and inclusive polling station simulations organized by the KPU in the subdistricts of Cakung, Jatinegara, and Cipayung. Meanwhile, documentation included minutes of meetings, photographs of activities, and official policy documents issued by the KPU regarding voters with disabilities. The study adopted this combination of techniques to support data triangulation and enrich the depth of information (Maxwell, 2009).

The researchers conducted data analysis inductively, following the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing as developed by Miles and Huberman (2013). They coded and categorized interview and observation data into key themes such as outreach strategies, accessibility, involvement of disability organizations, and implementation challenges. To enhance data validity, the researchers triangulated sources and techniques and conducted follow-up validations with key informants as needed. They used the criterion of data saturation as the cutoff point for data collection to ensure that the information collected was both deep and sufficiently representative.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the DKI Jakarta Regional Election

Data from the General Elections Commission (KPU) of DKI Jakarta in 2024 show that East Jakarta recorded the highest number of persons with disabilities in the *Daftar Pemilih Tetap* (DPT, Permanent Voter List) among all municipalities in the province, totaling 17,502 individuals. However, only 4,248 persons exercised their voting rights in the *Pilkada*, resulting in a participation rate of 24.27%. Compared to other municipalities in DKI Jakarta, voter turnout among persons with disabilities in East Jakarta ranked fifth in terms of percentage (Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU), 2024).

**Table 1.** Voter Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the DKI Jakarta 2024 *Pilkada*

No	Municipality	Permanent Voter List (DPT)	Voters Who Cast Ballots	Participation Rate
1	Kepulauan Seribu	316	184	58.23%
2	Central Jakarta	6,806	1,703	25.02%
3	North Jakarta	9,114	2,220	24.36%
4	West Jakarta	12,722	2,651	20.84%
5	South Jakarta	11,421	2,929	25.64%
6	East Jakarta	17,502	4,248	24.27%

Source: Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU), 2024.

In contrast, during the 2017 *Pilkada*, East Jakarta demonstrated a remarkably high participation rate among persons with disabilities. In the first round, out of 1,568 registered voters with disabilities, 1,522 turned out to vote, representing a participation rate of 97%. In the second round, although the DPT slightly declined to 1,484, voter turnout remained high at 95.4%. Thus, when comparing the 2017 and 2024 *Pilkada*, we see a drastic increase in DPT numbers—from around 1,500 to over 17,000 individuals—but a sharp decline in actual participation, from 97% to only 24.27% (Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU), 2024).

**Table 2.** Participation of Voters with Disabilities in the DKI Jakarta 2017 *Pilkada* – First Round

No	Municipality	Permanent Voter List (DPT)	Voters Who Cast Ballots	Participation Rate
1	Kepulauan Seribu	42	38	90%
2	Central Jakarta	993	924	93%
3	North Jakarta	956	905	94.6%
4	West Jakarta	2,859	970	33.9%
5	South Jakarta	1,322	1,092	82.6%
6	East Jakarta	1,568	1,522	97%

Source: Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU), 2024.

This data illustrates that the quantitative increase in registered voters with disabilities does not necessarily correspond to improved political participation. The growth in DPT stems from better data accuracy and population increases in East Jakarta, especially in densely populated subdistricts like Cakung. However, the low turnout reflects several non-technical factors, such as a lack of appealing candidates, inadequate accessibility at polling stations, and negative past voting experiences.

**Table 3.** Participation of Voters with Disabilities in the DKI Jakarta 2017 *Pilkada* – Second Round

No	Municipality	Permanent Voter List (DPT)	Voters Who Cast Ballots	Participation Rate
1	Kepulauan Seribu	70	63	90%
2	Central Jakarta	1,008	945	93.8%
3	North Jakarta	1,084	1,041	96%
4	West Jakarta	2,584	1,138	44%
5	South Jakarta	1,338	1,288	96.2%
6	East Jakarta	1,484	1,416	95.4%

Source: Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU), 2024.

This finding is supported by a statement from Carlos Paath, a representative of the East Jakarta KPU (Interview, May 14, 2025), who noted that most persons with disabilities in East Jakarta were reluctant to go to polling stations due to technical and social discomfort. Several polling stations remained inaccessible, and election officers had shown a lack of friendly attitudes in previous elections. Furthermore, candidates in the 2024 *Pilkada* were perceived as lacking emotional resonance or inclusive visions regarding disability issues.

**Table 4.** Participation of Voters with Disabilities in East Jakarta during the 2024 *Pilkada*

No	Subdistrict	Persons with Disabilities (DPT)	Voters with Disabilities Who Voted
1	Cakung	3,128	545
2	Cipayung	2,414	905
3	Ciracas	1,654	299
4	Duren Sawit	1,759	513
5	Jatinegara	1,750	421
6	Kramat Jati	1,639	333
7	Makasar	1,127	253



8	Matraman	1,300	254
9	Pasar Rebo	1,299	353
10	Pulo Gadung	1,432	372
	Total	17,502	4,248

Source: Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU), 2024.

The distribution of participation at the subdistrict level also reveals significant variation. Among the ten subdistricts in East Jakarta, Cakung recorded the highest number of registered voters with disabilities (3,128 individuals). However, Cipayung reported the highest turnout, with 905 voters casting their ballots. This discrepancy suggests that participation is not solely determined by the size of the DPT, but is also influenced by the effectiveness of local KPU strategies, support from disability communities, and the readiness of election infrastructure in each subdistrict (Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU), 2024).

Overall, the data imply a gap between administrative expansion (i.e., increased DPT) and substantive participation (i.e., actual presence at polling stations). Participation of persons with disabilities in the 2024 *Pilkada* in East Jakarta did not exhibit proportional improvement; in fact, it reflected a downward trend compared to previous elections. Therefore, KPU strategies, which have primarily focused on data collection, must be complemented with cultural approaches and programs that genuinely address the real needs of persons with disabilities. This is essential for achieving comprehensive political inclusion, rather than merely fulfilling formal obligations.

The data also reveal a dramatic increase in the number of registered voters with disabilities (DPT) in East Jakarta between 2017 and 2024. In the 2017 *Pilkada*, the number stood at only 1,568 individuals, with an exceptionally high turnout rate of 97%. By 2024, the DPT had surged to 17,502 individuals. Although this figure reflects improvements in data registration, only 4,248 of these individuals voted—amounting to just 24.27%. In other words, while the number of registered voters increased nearly tenfold, actual participation sharply declined (Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU), 2019, 2024).

Based on all collected data, four key trends emerge: First, East Jakarta experienced a substantial increase in the number of registered voters with disabilities, from 1,568 in the 2017 *Pilkada* to 17,502 in 2024. This dramatic rise reflects improvements in voter registration systems and formal recognition of the voting rights of persons with disabilities, particularly within the KPU's administrative processes. Second, despite the significant increase in registration, actual participation decreased drastically—from 97% in 2017 to just 24.27% in 2024. This indicates a serious disconnect between administrative records and actual voter turnout, suggesting that concrete support for voters with disabilities remains inadequate. Third, geographic variation across East Jakarta subdistricts highlights uneven participation. Cakung had the largest number of registered voters with disabilities but reported a relatively low turnout. In contrast, Cipayung had the highest number of voters who cast ballots, even though it did not have the largest DPT. This implies that local context and micro-level strategy implementation significantly affect participation outcomes. Fourth, the factors hindering participation have shifted over time. In the 2017 *Pilkada*, issues such as political polarization and identity politics dominated (Habibi, 2017; IPAC, 2018). However, in the 2024 *Pilkada*, the dominant factors included voter disinterest in candidates and negative past experiences with voting (Sulistya, 2024), such as unfriendly election officials and limited accessibility at polling stations.

Together, these four patterns suggest that resolving participation issues for voters with disabilities requires more than administrative adjustments. It demands a multidimensional approach that incorporates cultural sensitivity, technical readiness, and a deep understanding of the lived social experiences of voters with disabilities at the ground level.

### Strategies and the Role of the KPU

The increased political participation of persons with disabilities in the 2024 *Pilkada* in East Jakarta cannot be separated from the active role of the East Jakarta General Elections Commission (KPU) in designing and implementing inclusive strategies that respond to the needs of vulnerable groups. One of the main strategies involved directly engaging disability communities in various outreach programs. The KPU did not merely treat persons with disabilities as passive recipients of information; instead, it empowered them as agents of change—including as democracy volunteers who helped disseminate electoral information within their communities. This created a more accommodating and effective information delivery mechanism, as it originated from within the community itself.

The KPU also expanded outreach efforts through the use of social media as an information channel. One such example is the use of the official Facebook page of the East Jakarta KPU, which actively disseminated

election-related information, including accessibility features for voters with disabilities. The inclusion of voice and subtitle features in digital content proved especially helpful for deaf and blind voters in understanding the material. Galang, a member of GERKATIN, responded positively, stating that this approach made *Pilkada* information more accessible and trustworthy (Interview, May 14, 2025).

**Figure 2.** Facebook Page of East Jakarta KPU



Source: East Jakarta KPU Facebook, 2024.

The KPU's efforts to strengthen inclusion were also reflected in the "Disability-Friendly Election" declaration, held on July 6, 2023. This event involved the KPU, Bawaslu, the National Commission on Disabilities (KND), and PPUAD. The declaration was not merely ceremonial; it served as a concrete symbol of institutional commitment to mainstream voters with disabilities at every stage of the electoral process. Carlos Paath, a representative of the East Jakarta KPU, noted that since the declaration, attention to the needs of persons with disabilities has significantly increased—in voter registration, technical policy formulation, and physical infrastructure at polling stations (TPS).

**Figure 3.** Disability-Friendly Election Declaration



Source: Personal Documentation, 2023.

Strategically, the KPU adopted both offensive and defensive approaches. The offensive strategy was evident in its expansive efforts to educate, engage, and involve the disability community, while the defensive strategy focused on securing voting rights through procedures such as providing companions and special ballot templates. This synergy reflected the KPU's understanding that achieving electoral inclusion for persons with disabilities requires more than regulations—it must be realized through concrete practices in the field.

Another important finding was the KPU's consistency in building two-way communication. Rather than disseminating information unilaterally, the KPU involved disability organizations such as PPUAD in developing outreach materials. This ensured that the materials truly reflected the needs of persons with disabilities. The KPU also improved voter data validation to prevent duplication and omissions, thereby safeguarding the voting rights of all eligible voters with disabilities.

**Figure 4.** Voting Simulation for Persons with Disabilities in Jatinegara and Cipayung



Source: Personal Documentation, 2023.

The implementation of voting simulations for persons with disabilities further demonstrated the KPU's seriousness. One such simulation took place in the Jatinegara and Cipayung subdistricts, where voters with disabilities were invited to participate directly in a mock election, supported by trained KPPS officials. David, a voter with a speech impairment, expressed that this experience made him feel respected and more confident about voting. He added that such simulations are important because they provide a sense of safety and reduce anxiety on election day (Interview, July 6, 2023).

Furthermore, the East Jakarta KPU conducted outreach directly to social institutions such as *Panti Cahaya Batin*. They used an interpersonal approach so that the information could be tailored to different types and degrees of disability. Carlos Paath stated that during these sessions, KPU representatives explained various technical aspects of the *Pilkada*, including how voters could exercise their rights independently or with assistance.

**Figure 5.** KPU Outreach at Panti Cahaya Batin



Source: Personal Documentation, 2023.

To support these efforts, PPUAD also played an active role by drafting accessibility guidelines and distributing materials tailored to different types of disabilities. However, challenges remained in field implementation, such as limited funding and uneven training among KPPS officials. These findings indicate that although KPU outreach strategies have been inclusive and interactive, technical and logistical support must be strengthened.



Overall, these findings demonstrate that adaptive and collaborative outreach strategies can enhance political awareness and active participation among persons with disabilities. The strategies adopted by the East Jakarta KPU align with responsive and participatory outreach models as recommended by Rush and Althoff (1971), though implementation still requires technical strengthening at polling stations. By reinforcing synergy between the KPU, disability organizations, and the broader community, a more inclusive and democratic *Pilkada* at the local level can become a reality.

Based on the study's findings, the strategies implemented by the East Jakarta KPU to increase the political participation of persons with disabilities in the 2024 *Pilkada* indicate an inclusive and proactive direction. These strategies included community-based outreach, collaboration with disability organizations, the use of digital technology, and the organization of disability-friendly voting simulations. The KPU also demonstrated serious commitment through the direct involvement of persons with disabilities as democracy volunteers and the development of outreach materials tailored to diverse disability needs. These efforts were further supported by two-way communication approaches, accurate voter data collection, and policy development that responds to the needs of vulnerable groups. Thus, the strategies implemented reflect not merely administrative formality, but a cultural and structural approach to removing real barriers to participation.

The study identified four main patterns in the East Jakarta KPU's strategy that reflect a systematic and inclusive approach to the political participation of persons with disabilities. First, the KPU actively involved disability communities in the outreach process—not only as recipients of information but also as democracy volunteers who helped disseminate electoral messages. This participation created a space for persons with disabilities to take ownership of the democratic process. Second, the KPU used digital technology, particularly social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, as information channels enhanced with accessibility features such as subtitles and visual narration. These features helped blind and deaf individuals access election-related content more easily. Third, the KPU implemented experiential approaches through hands-on voting simulations in subdistricts like Jatinegara and Cipayung. These simulations significantly improved understanding and boosted the confidence of voters with disabilities in exercising their rights at polling stations. Fourth, the KPU maintained intensive coordination with institutions such as Bawaslu, PPUAD, and disability-focused social organizations. This coordination helped develop materials, respond to community feedback, and formulate technical policies that were more adaptive to on-the-ground needs. These four patterns form a strategy model that is collaborative, empathetic, and data-driven—serving as a strong foundation for realizing a more inclusive and equitable *Pilkada*.

### Barriers in Strategy Implementation

The significant discrepancy between the number of persons with disabilities listed in the *Daftar Pemilih Tetap* (DPT, Permanent Voter List) and their actual participation in the 2024 *Pilkada* reveals persistent fundamental obstacles in the implementation of inclusive strategies by the East Jakarta General Elections Commission (KPU). One of the main barriers identified was the resistance from families during the registration process of members with disabilities. In an interview conducted on May 14, 2025, Carlos Paath from the East Jakarta KPU stated, “*Many families still refuse to be open during data collection—whether out of shame or lack of awareness about the importance of voting rights for persons with disabilities. As a result, the voter data becomes inaccurate, and many are left unregistered.*” He also added that some families still believe their disabled relatives are unfit or do not need to participate in elections.

This issue was confirmed by Mahmud Fasa, Head of the Political Division for Persons with Disabilities at PPUAD, who remarked, “*Family support is the key. Many disabled friends are actually eager to vote, but their families hold them back, thinking it's too troublesome or not important*” (Interview, May 19, 2025). The lack of emotional and social support from close surroundings has made persons with disabilities feel unconfident about exercising their voting rights. This situation highlights that political education and social transformation are not only necessary at the institutional level, but also within micro-level environments such as families and communities.

In addition to family support, technical barriers also emerged, especially regarding physical accessibility and the understanding of election officers. Although the KPU had organized simulations and outreach activities, some KPPS officers in the field still lacked awareness of inclusive service standards. Consequently, several voters with disabilities experienced difficulties at polling stations—whether due to wheelchair access, the positioning of voting

booths, or lack of information assistance. In an interview on May 19, 2025, Nurul from PPDFI noted, *“At certain polling stations, some officers acted rigidly. They hesitated to assist disabled voters, as if afraid to do something wrong, even though they could just ask us directly.”* This type of technical unpreparedness directly impacts voter experience and may discourage future electoral participation.

Communication barriers also stood out as a key field finding. According to Mahmud Fasa from PPUAD, *“Communication is a major challenge, especially when dealing with voters with intellectual or hearing disabilities. Officers need training on how to simplify language and convey messages with empathy, not just by reading guidelines”* (Interview, May 19, 2025). This demonstrates that even well-designed outreach strategies can fail if they are not supported by inclusive communication skills in practice.

Furthermore, Galang from GERKATIN emphasized that much of the information still fails to reach the deaf community effectively. *“We need information with subtitles, sign language, or visual aids. If it's only audio or long brochures, many of us can't understand. But we're citizens too and we have voting rights”* (Interview, May 19, 2025). This testimony underscores that one-directional approaches that ignore the diversity of disabilities will only create new forms of exclusion.

Thus, although the East Jakarta KPU has demonstrated commitment and implemented various strategic efforts to build an inclusive *Pilkada*, persistent obstacles at the individual, familial, technical, and institutional levels remain significant challenges that must be addressed. Without comprehensive improvements and cross-sectoral synergy, the goals of inclusivity in local democracy will be difficult to achieve.

The findings of this study reveal that although the East Jakarta KPU has adopted several strategies to enhance the participation of voters with disabilities, implementation in the field still encounters a variety of challenges. These include the lack of transparency from families during the registration process, minimal social support for political participation, limited KPPS officer competence in providing inclusive services, and a communication gap that fails to accommodate the specific needs of each disability group (Hidayat, 2024). Additionally, the absence of outreach materials tailored to the characteristics of disability communities, along with the suboptimal distribution of accessible digital information, has exacerbated the participation gap between voters with disabilities and the general public. All of these point to the fact that inclusive strategies have yet to fully address the structural and cultural roots that restrict full participation by persons with disabilities.

Based on the analysis of data and interview excerpts, at least four key patterns of barriers emerged: First, a pattern of resistance from families during the registration process, rooted in stigma or social concerns regarding disability identity. Second, a pattern of limited social support—both internal and external—where persons with disabilities feel they lack the psychological and logistical encouragement needed to participate in elections. Third, a pattern of technical and institutional weaknesses, especially in training for KPPS officers and the availability of disability-friendly facilities at polling stations (Hidayat, 2024). Fourth, a pattern of mismatched media and communication methods, as outreach strategies still fail to fully incorporate sign language, visual literacy, and information formats that are easily digestible for diverse disability types. These patterns indicate that the current inclusion strategies remain partial and lack an intersectional approach that accounts for the diverse lived experiences of persons with disabilities.

## DISCUSSION

This study revealed that although the number of registered voters with disabilities in East Jakarta rose sharply from 1,568 in 2017 to 17,502 in 2024, their actual participation rate declined significantly—only about 24% of them exercised their voting rights. This finding indicates that a quantitative increase in the *Daftar Pemilih Tetap* (DPT, Permanent Voter List) does not automatically translate into improved quality or effectiveness of political participation for this vulnerable group. The decline reflects structural, cultural, and technical challenges in the implementation of inclusive strategies by the East Jakarta General Elections Commission (KPU). Nevertheless, several strategies—including direct outreach to disability communities, collaboration with organizations such as PPUAD, election simulations, and the use of social media—have played a positive role in increasing political awareness and access to information among people with disabilities.

A closer analysis reveals that the relationship between KPU strategies and political participation of persons with disabilities is influenced by several key factors. First, the adaptation of outreach materials and methods to match specific types of disabilities has effectively minimized information barriers. Second, involving disability organizations in the planning and implementation of outreach activities has strengthened trust among disability communities toward the electoral institution. Third, the use of social media—with accessibility features such as subtitles and visual elements—has proven effective in reaching younger voters with disabilities. However, the impact of these strategies remains limited due to recurring technical and social barriers, such as families' reluctance

to disclose a relative's disability status or insufficient capacity of KPPS officers to deliver inclusive services at polling stations.

These findings reinforce previous studies by Bramantyo (2015) and Dedi (2020), both of which emphasized the importance of accessibility and political education in increasing the political participation of persons with disabilities. They identified the lack of outreach, inaccessible physical infrastructure, and persistent social stigma as major obstacles. Dewi et al. (2022) similarly supported these conclusions, stressing that the success of inclusive strategies depends on the extent to which electoral institutions develop adaptive educational programs. However, this study adds new dimensions to the literature by highlighting innovations in digital communication, community-based approaches, and concrete collaboration between the KPU and disability organizations—elements that have been relatively overlooked in previous research. As such, this study proposes a more contextual and applicable approach to increasing political participation among people with disabilities.

Ideologically and historically, the findings of this study point to a paradigm shift in Indonesia's local democracy. Whereas persons with disabilities were once seen as a marginal group, they are now increasingly recognized as equal political subjects within the democratic system. This shift reflects a movement away from *patrimonial democracy*, which tended to exclude vulnerable groups, toward a more inclusive, participatory democratic model (Hadiz, 2003; Webber, 2006). This change not only reinforces the importance of inclusion in electoral processes, but also demonstrates that affirmative efforts grounded in collaborative and adaptive strategies can strengthen the substantive values of democracy—particularly in the context of decentralization and public service reform at the local level (Salim & Drenth, 2020). This study also confirms that involving communities in designing election strategies can generate social benefits, such as boosting voter confidence among persons with disabilities, reducing social stigma, and increasing collective awareness of the political rights of all citizens. Accordingly, the participation of marginalized groups like persons with disabilities in local democracy should be viewed both as resistance to democratic regression and as an expansion of egalitarian participation within Indonesia's contemporary political landscape (Fossati et al., 2020).

Even so, a reflection on this study's findings also highlights both functional and dysfunctional aspects of inclusive electoral strategies. On the one hand, collaborative strategies have succeeded in creating open dialogue between the KPU and disability communities, while expanding grassroots political education. On the other hand, various dysfunctions persist, including insufficient training for KPPS officers, uneven distribution of information, and tokenistic practices in involving persons with disabilities—efforts that remain formalistic and yield little substantive impact. These findings are consistent with critiques of weak electoral governance in Indonesia, characterized by overlapping dispute resolution authorities, poor inter-agency coordination, and administrative flaws that undermine electoral integrity (Butt, 2021; Taufiqurrohman et al., 2021). Additionally, inconsistent disability engagement practices risk reinforcing public perceptions of low institutional commitment to protecting the political rights of vulnerable groups, thereby weakening trust in electoral institutions overall (Haris et al., 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2024). As such, there is a pressing need to strengthen regulatory frameworks and sustainable inclusion governance to ensure that the principle of substantive justice is truly reflected in electoral practice.

Therefore, more outcome-oriented and measurable policy actions are needed. The KPU should implement mandatory technical training for field officers on inclusive elections, conduct audits of disability-friendly polling station infrastructure, and collaborate with disability organizations in developing outreach modules and evaluating *Pilkada* implementation. Local governments must also allocate dedicated budgets for political inclusion programs and ensure the participation of persons with disabilities in electoral policy-making. In addition, integrating principles of continuous evaluation is essential to prevent affirmative efforts from becoming mere formalities and to ensure that these initiatives lead to structural change in the local democratic system. Through this approach, the goal of building inclusive, participatory, and just elections for all segments of society can be genuinely realized.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the political participation of persons with disabilities in the 2024 *Pilkada* in East Jakarta continues to face various structural, social, and technical barriers, despite the significant increase in their registration in the *Daftar Pemilih Tetap* (DPT, Permanent Voter List) compared to previous years. The inclusive

strategies implemented by the East Jakarta General Elections Commission (KPU)—including direct outreach, collaboration with disability organizations, the use of social media, and disability-friendly election simulations—have had a positive impact in raising political awareness among persons with disabilities. However, actual voter turnout remains low—only 24% of registered voters with disabilities cast their ballots. This finding serves as a crucial lesson: numerical growth does not necessarily translate into meaningful participation. Therefore, inclusion strategies must be designed not only at the administrative level, but also address the cultural, psychological, and social dimensions experienced by disabled voters.

The primary scholarly contribution of this study lies in its integrative approach, which combines institutional analysis, community responses, and the evaluation of KPU strategies from a local perspective. In addition to presenting up-to-date empirical data on participation patterns among voters with disabilities in the 2024 *Pilkada*, this study introduces an analytical framework based on offensive and defensive strategies adopted by election organizers. It highlights the use of technology (social media) as a medium for inclusive political outreach and emphasizes the importance of substantive partnerships between the KPU and disability communities as key assets in building participatory democracy. These findings enrich the discourse on democratic studies and inclusive politics and provide a practical foundation for policymakers to design electoral policies that are more responsive to vulnerable groups.

Nonetheless, this study has several limitations. Geographically, the research is confined to East Jakarta, so generalizing the findings to other regions in Indonesia must be done with caution. Moreover, the number of informants was limited to key actors within communities and institutions, and therefore may not fully capture the broader experiences and aspirations of grassroots voters with disabilities. Future research should expand the regional scope, explore diverse disability experiences in greater depth, and conduct longitudinal evaluations of the effectiveness of inclusion strategies in elections. Such efforts will enable a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of political participation among persons with disabilities and offer concrete insights for electoral institutional reform in Indonesia.

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