



Strengthening the Accessibility of Persons with Disabilities through Political Education in the 2024 General Election in Medan City

Faiz Albar Nasution^{1*}, Tonny Pangihutan Situmorang¹, Imam Fahreza¹, Nabila Fahira Nasution²

¹[Political Science Study Program, Faculty of Social Science and Political Science, Universitas Sumatera Utara]

²[Public Administration Science Study Program, Faculty of Social Science and Political Science, Universitas Sumatera Utara]

Abstract. The low participation of people with disabilities in elections is an issue that needs attention. Several studies have shown that people are not yet sensitive to the political rights of persons with disabilities. In addition, the lack of election accessibility for persons with disabilities is also an obstacle. Persons with disabilities are one of the large minority groups in Medan City. Therefore, this service aims to provide an understanding of strengthening the accessibility of persons with disabilities through political education in general elections in Medan City. Participatory Learning and Action methods through learning procedures that combine lecture techniques and participatory discussions to group learning are carried out in this activity. Firstly, this service activity was conducted with the Indonesian Blind Association (Pertuni) of Medan City, which includes learning about political education. Secondly, increasing the understanding of persons with disabilities about the importance of exercising their voting rights. Third, providing an understanding of political accessibility and political rights for persons with disabilities. The service results recommend that activity participants increase their understanding of the rights and obligations of citizens to vote. For the knowledge implemented in political education to run well, continuous coaching and mentoring are needed for the Indonesian Blind Association (Pertuni) in Medan City.

Keyword: Accessibility, Disability, Political Education

Abstrak. Rendahnya partisipasi penyandang disabilitas dalam pemilu menjadi isu yang perlu mendapat perhatian. Beberapa penelitian menunjukkan bahwa masyarakat belum peka terhadap hak-hak politik penyandang disabilitas. Selain itu, minimnya aksesibilitas pemilu bagi penyandang disabilitas juga menjadi kendala. Penyandang disabilitas merupakan salah satu kelompok minoritas yang cukup besar di Kota Medan. Oleh karena itu, pengabdian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan pemahaman tentang penguatan aksesibilitas penyandang disabilitas melalui pendidikan politik dalam pemilihan umum di Kota Medan. Metode Participatory Learning and Action melalui prosedur pembelajaran yang menggabungkan teknik ceramah dan diskusi partisipatif hingga belajar kelompok dilakukan dalam kegiatan ini. Pertama, kegiatan pengabdian ini dilakukan bersama Persatuan Tunanetra Indonesia (Pertuni) Kota Medan, yang meliputi pembelajaran tentang pendidikan politik. Kedua,

*Corresponding author at: Political Science Study Program, Faculty of Social Science and Political Science, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia

E-mail address: faiz@usu.ac.id

meningkatkan pemahaman para penyandang disabilitas tentang pentingnya menggunakan hak pilih. Ketiga, memberikan pemahaman tentang aksesibilitas politik dan hak-hak politik bagi penyandang disabilitas. Hasil pengabdian merekomendasikan agar peserta kegiatan meningkatkan pemahaman tentang hak dan kewajiban warga negara untuk memilih. Agar pengetahuan yang diimplementasikan dalam pendidikan politik dapat berjalan dengan baik, maka diperlukan pembinaan dan pendampingan yang berkesinambungan terhadap Persatuan Tunanetra Indonesia (Pertuni) Kota Medan.

Kata Kunci: *Aksesibilitas, Disabilitas, Pendidikan Politik*

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1 Introduction

The low participation of people with disabilities in elections is an issue that needs attention. Several studies have shown that people are not yet sensitive to the political rights of people with disabilities. In addition, the lack of accessibility of elections for people with disabilities is also an obstacle [1]. People with disabilities are one of the largest minority groups in Indonesia. However, our knowledge of how they relate to the political system is still limited, apart from facing practical barriers such as inaccessible campaign materials and polling stations. They often have fewer resources that facilitate and enhance trust and engagement in politics. In addition, experiences of discrimination and the low number of politicians with disabilities can lead to feelings of powerlessness [2].

In the 2019 Indonesian General Elections, the General Election Commission recorded 1,247,730 voters with disabilities. There were 83,182 disabled voters, 166,364 blind voters, and 249,546 deaf voters. Then, for voters from Tunagrahita, 332,728 disabilities fall into other categories, and as many as 415,910 voters [3] with disabilities face several challenges during elections. These include inaccessible polling stations and voter registration offices, inadequate registration and voting accommodations, and a lack of accessible voting equipment [4]. Voters with disabilities often have difficulty obtaining accessible voting information. Therefore, it is important to ensure that voters with disabilities have access to accessible polling locations, equipment, and assistance if needed [5],[6].

Political accessibility refers to the extent to which people with disabilities can access and use certain services or facilities in exercising their right to vote in elections. It can support the ability of people with disabilities to participate in activities at the General Election. Accessibility can be achieved through the provision of physical accommodations, such as ramps and accessible toilets, as well as through the provision of information in accessible formats, such as Braille and audio. Lack of accessibility can result in social exclusion and discrimination against people with disabilities [7]. There are concerns about the participation of voters with disabilities in Medan's elections. The author observed low voter participation in Medan City in elections, especially in the Regional Head Election. It is important to encourage the political participation of persons with disabilities by providing access to official documents such as birth certificates, ID cards, and voter

cards, adapting strategies to raise the profile of disability rights issues in public events, political debates, and rallies, improving the accessibility of elections and closing the participation gap through tools and resources, and committing to ensuring equal rights for all persons with disabilities, including the right to political participation. In addition, political parties should prioritize programs that support people with disabilities in public life and local politics.

Before the service activity, the head of the service team discussed directly to find out the problems and needs of the partners. Furthermore, the service team held discussions and formed a concept. The interview results showed that the Indonesian Tunatera Association (Pertuni) of Medan City needed political education socialization about the accessibility of persons with disabilities in elections. Therefore, this service was carried out at the Indonesian Tunatera Association (Pertuni) of Medan City to provide political education about the accessibility of persons with disabilities and education about the importance of using voting rights. Hopefully, this service activity can foster political awareness for people with disabilities about the importance of understanding their rights and obligations in every election in Medan City. Thus, people with disabilities in Medan City will participate in every stage of the upcoming elections. People with disabilities need to be given more comprehensive knowledge about the importance of understanding the rights and obligations of citizens in every election. Thus, universities have a positive impact on political education and political socialization for the people of the University of North Sumatra. By looking at the above conditions, several opportunities and obstacles can illustrate that there need to be several approaches to political education in realizing accessibility for disabilities in managing the Indonesian Blind Association of Medan City. The activity will provide a renewable political education and socialization module. Thus, Disabilities in the Indonesian Blind Association of Medan City will participate in every stage of the upcoming elections.

2 Method of Implementation

The socialization of strengthening the accessibility of persons with disabilities through political education in the 2024 elections was carried out using the Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) method. PLA is a learning procedure that combines lectures, participatory discussions, and visual techniques to accelerate the process of group analysis and learning [8]. This method can be applied to project and program planning, needs identification, monitoring, and evaluation. Apart from being a powerful consultation tool, this method also provides an opportunity to move beyond simple consultation and encourages the Medan City organization of Persatuan Tunatera Indonesia (Pertuni) to participate in political education issues that affect their lives actively. The following is a description of each stage of the activities that will be carried out in this program:

1. The first stage. The head of the service team coordinates the entire service team to determine the job description for all service members. As part of an effort to find out more about the complaints, problems, and needs of partners in implementing activities, the

service team also discussed activity plans and conducted an initial survey of service partners at the Secretariat of the Indonesian Tunatera Association (Pertuni) Medan City, Jalan Sampul No.30, Medan City.

2. In the second stage, to determine the training plan and provide information to the training participants, the team leader met with the Chairperson of the Indonesian Blind Association (Pertuni) of Medan City and several administrators of the Indonesian Blind Association (Pertuni) of Medan City. A total of 25 participants have confirmed to join this activity. However, due to the enthusiasm of the partners, a total of 26 participants attended the training.
3. The third stage was a one-day activity of strengthening accessibility for persons with disabilities through political education on Sunday, 11 September 2023, at the Secretariat of the Indonesian Association of the Blind (Pertuni) Medan City, Jalan Sampul No.30, Medan City. First, the Head of the Community Service Team conveyed the purpose and objectives of implementing community service at the University of North Sumatra. The following are some of the objectives of the training activities: First, learning about political education. Second, increasing the understanding of persons with disabilities about the importance of exercising their voting rights. Third, providing an understanding of political accessibility and political rights for persons with disabilities.

3 Results and Discussion

The main strategy to engage partners of the Indonesian Association of the Blind in Medan City to increase voter turnout of people with disabilities in Medan City is through political education. The originality of the political education approach provided is a mechanism to build a relationship between the election organizing body, universities, and the Indonesian Association of the Blind of Medan City. Persons with disabilities will be able to understand their rights and responsibilities in elections due to the partnership. The involvement of qualified and unbiased facilitators, such as higher education professionals and practitioners, will further hone this activity.

Students from the University of North Sumatra helped strengthen political education materials as part of this initiative. In addition, Pertuni administrators involved in this service activity became politically aware. As a result, the increased accessibility through political education offered by the service team leader will collaborate with the students in stimulating the partners. As a result, the University of North Sumatra and its partners must collaborate in providing political education to the management of the Indonesian Blind Association of Medan City.

The presence of political education facilities has the potential to produce inclusive accessibility and a new spirit for people with disabilities at the Secretariat of the Indonesian Association of the Blind in Medan City. Providing such facilities will at least foster a shared vision to increase voter participation of persons with disabilities in elections in Medan City. This is expected to foster a

sense of responsibility towards the implementation, sustainability, and interconnectedness of efforts to promote accessibility through political education for the Indonesian Association of the Blind of Medan City.

As discussed in Law Number 8 Year 2016 on Persons with Disabilities. This regulation discusses the political rights of persons with disabilities in Article 13 regarding accessibility of facilities and infrastructure for organising general elections. This is regulated so that persons with disabilities have the same rights with certain standards to participate in elections. In addition, Article 13 also discusses the need for persons with disabilities to receive political education. However, people with disabilities in Indonesia still face various challenges, including stigma and discrimination, so they have not been able to contribute optimally to development actively. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the accessibility of public services for persons with disabilities in Indonesia.

In line with the holding of this service, it aims to provide an understanding of the importance of accessibility for people with disabilities. All materials delivered to service partners aim to increase political awareness for persons with disabilities in Medan City. This service seeks to understand the importance of using voting rights. At the same time, complaints and problems experienced by persons with disabilities must be quickly responded to by-election organisers, namely the General Election Commission (KPU). The KPU must realise the importance of the participation of persons with disabilities in elections and commit to continuously improving the accessibility and participation of persons with disabilities.



Figure 1. Photo of Activities for Strengthening Accessibility of Persons with Disabilities through Political Education in the 2024 Election with the Medan City Indonesian Blind Association (Pertuni).

To improve accessibility for people with disabilities in elections in Medan City, the following efforts are important for partners to make:

1. Collect specific data on people with disabilities to ensure their voting rights are fulfilled. This includes recording their identity and highlighting their specific needs so that election organizers can prepare appropriate services and facilities.
2. Assist persons with disabilities, including providing assistance to help them fill in the necessary forms.
3. Ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to the electoral process, including the right to hold public office.
4. Utilize new technologies to assist persons with disabilities in exercising their right to vote.
5. Conduct socialization campaigns to increase the awareness of election officials and the public about the needs of persons with disabilities.
6. Developing modules to guide election officials in providing services to voters with disabilities at polling stations.

Efforts to improve accessibility for people with disabilities in elections are ongoing, and it is important to raise awareness and address remaining challenges. The program results showed the interest and involvement of the service participants, namely persons with disabilities in the Pertuni organization in Medan City, through socialization and discussion on accessibility for persons with disabilities through political education. In addition, the implementation of community service activities was carried out according to schedule and ran smoothly, which was appreciated by the participants. The results of the service activities in delivering material on accessibility for persons with disabilities through political education at the Indonesian Blind Association (Pertuni) of Medan City include:

1. The material presented regarding the accessibility of persons with disabilities, improvement of political education, and political rights based on laws and regulations, as well as discussions related to issues and facts that occur during elections for persons with disabilities, can be understood by participants. This success is evidenced by the interactive discussion between presenters and participants and the participants' recognition of this success.
2. Participants understood the material presented by the resource person on Strengthening the Accessibility of Persons with Disabilities through Political Education in General Elections in Medan City.
3. Participants showed a new spirit in raising political awareness for persons with disabilities on the importance of understanding their rights and obligations in every General Election in Medan City through various responses.

4 Conclusion

Accessibility of persons with disabilities through political education in elections to increase political awareness for persons with disabilities, especially in Medan City. The importance of political education in shaping character, behavior, and political participation as an answer to the voter participation problem of persons with disabilities in Medan City. The service's results with the Indonesian Blind Association (Pertuni) of Medan City include learning about political education. In addition, it increases the understanding of persons with disabilities about the importance of exercising their voting rights. Furthermore, it explains political accessibility and political rights for persons with disabilities. The service results recommend that activity participants increase their understanding of the rights and obligations of citizens to vote. For the knowledge implemented in political education to run well, continuous coaching and mentoring are needed for the Indonesian Blind Association (Pertuni) of Medan City.

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