

Discrepancy between Norms and Reality: Structural Barriers to Employment Rights for Persons with Disabilities in Gorontalo City

Fayza Tazkia Suleman¹, Weny Almoravid Dunga², Abdul Hamid Tome³

^{1,2,3}Faculty of Law, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Indonesia

Email: onyoursya@gmail.com, wenyad@ung.ac.id, hamidtome@ung.ac.id

This study analyzes the barriers to fulfilling the right to obtain employment for persons with disabilities in Gorontalo City, focusing on the discrepancy between legal norms and policy implementation as well as structural barriers in socio-cultural and accessibility aspects. Employing a juridical-empirical method with a socio-legal research approach, this study combines normative analysis of legislation with empirical studies through in-depth interviews and documentation studies. The research findings reveal two main problems. First, there is a sharp discrepancy between the mandate of Law Number 8 of 2016 and Gorontalo City Regional Regulation Number 3 of 2023, which mandate a 2% employment quota for persons with disabilities, and the reality that no persons with disabilities work within the Gorontalo City Government environment out of a total of 613 registered persons with disabilities. This implementation failure is caused by weak law enforcement, the non-integration of disability issues in regional planning and budgeting, and the absence of an integrated database. Second, structural barriers in the form of stigma and perspective discrimination, lack of understanding of reasonable accommodation, inaccessible infrastructure, and low levels of education and job training create a systematic vicious cycle of exclusion. This study recommends comprehensive policy interventions encompassing public perspective transformation, accessible infrastructure development, and sustainable capacity-building programs.

Keywords: Disability; Employment Rights; Structural Barriers

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Corresponding Author:

Fayza Tazkia Suleman

Faculty of Law, Universitas Negeri Gorontalo, Indonesia

onyoursya@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Employment constitutes a fundamental element in human life, functioning not only as a means of fulfilling economic needs but also as a medium for self-actualization, social networking, and contribution to society. Through employment, individuals achieve financial independence, develop personal capacity, and participate in the economic cycle, which in turn creates new job opportunities and reduces unemployment. Employment may take the form of formal activities such as working for companies or organizations, as well as informal activities such as entrepreneurship or freelance work. In the workplace, individuals pursue not merely financial compensation but also opportunities for career development, expansion of social networks, and meaningful contributions to their surrounding environment[1].

However, social reality demonstrates that not all members of society have equal access to employment opportunities. Differences in attitudes, behaviors, and treatment are inevitable in social life, including treatment toward groups with conditions different from the majority. Persons with disabilities, as part of human diversity, fundamentally share the same needs and aspirations as individuals in general, including the need to work and contribute productively. For every citizen, including persons with disabilities, to participate optimally in development, capacity building and accessibility to the world of work become absolute prerequisites [2].

Understanding of disability has undergone significant development in academic discourse and public policy. Susanto defines persons with disabilities as individuals who have limitations or impairments in physical, mental, or sensory functions that restrict their capacity to interact and participate in society. Meanwhile, John C. Maxwell views persons with disabilities as individuals with physical or mental conditions that hinder their ability to perform daily tasks consistently. A more comprehensive juridical definition is contained in Article 1 paragraph (1) of Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities, which states that persons with disabilities are "any person who experiences long-term physical, intellectual, mental, and/or sensory limitations that, in interaction with the environment, may encounter barriers and difficulties to participate fully and effectively with other citizens based on equal rights."

From the author's perspective, persons with disabilities constitute a group with distinctive characteristics different from the general population, thus requiring special attention and support according to their specific needs. The physical, mental, sensory, and intellectual limitations they possess do not negate their essence as human beings with potential and capacity to contribute. Persons with disabilities are an inseparable part of society who have equal rights to decent work and equal recognition before the law and the public [3].

The paradigm of protection for persons with disabilities in Indonesia has undergone fundamental shift, marked by the change in nomenclature from "persons with defects" in Law Number 4 of 1997 to "persons with disabilities" in Law Number 8 of 2016. This terminological shift reflects a paradigm transformation from a charity-based approach rooted in pity toward a human rights-based approach that recognizes the dignity and equality of persons with disabilities. However, policy changes at the normative level have not automatically correlated with changes in empirical reality within society.

Minority groups everywhere tend not to escape discriminatory treatment, whether in verbal form or behavior. In the employment context, persons with disabilities frequently encounter various structural barriers hindering their access to work. Social stigma viewing persons with disabilities as unproductive individuals remains deeply entrenched. Lack of accessibility in the work environment, both physical access and access to information and technology, constitutes an impenetrable wall. Discriminatory practices in recruitment, selection, and promotion processes remain prevalent, under the pretext of incapacity or concerns about productivity. These negative perceptions of the capacity of persons with disabilities not only harm individuals with disabilities but also reduce their potential contribution to society and the economy in aggregate [4].

The right to work is a fundamental right inherent in every individual without exception. Beyond mere access to entering the workforce, this right encompasses guarantees of opportunities to participate fully in social and economic life, the right to equal treatment in the workplace, the right to obtain training and competency development, the right to reasonable accommodation according to needs, and the right to fair compensation for work performed. Every worker, including persons with disabilities, is entitled to legal protection guaranteeing welfare and justice in employment relations. Such protection can be realized through clear regulation regarding the duration and type of employment contracts, working hours, rest and leave periods, overtime work, and decent wages. All these constitute manifestations of the understanding that every worker has human rights that must be respected in accordance with their mental, physical, and intellectual capacity.

The World Health Organization (WHO) records that the population of persons with disabilities continues to increase annually. There are approximately one billion persons with disabilities worldwide, or about 15% of the global population. This increase is caused, among other factors, by population aging and the rising incidence of non-communicable diseases. These data underscore the urgency of creating a more inclusive

environment, including the work environment, that enables persons with disabilities to participate in decision-making, planning, and development, particularly in the workplace [5].

At the local level, data from Gorontalo Province show 24,434 persons with disabilities, or 1.87% of the provincial population, with concerning educational attainment as almost all have not completed nine-year compulsory education. Furthermore, 17.74% of these persons with disabilities fall into the poor category. In Gorontalo City, based on 2022 data, 613 persons with disabilities were recorded with the following details: Physical Disabilities totaling 214 persons, Mental Disabilities 44 persons, Intellectual Disabilities 107 persons, and Sensory Disabilities 203 persons. These data are sourced from the Gorontalo City Social Service (2025).

Although the number of persons with disabilities in Gorontalo City is relatively significant, reality shows that most of them are unemployed or not working. This condition is exacerbated by the suboptimal attention of the government to disability issues, reflected in the inconsistency of policy implementation as mandated by Law Number 8 of 2016. The existence of regulations that normatively protect the rights of persons with disabilities to employment has evidently not been followed by effective implementation in the field [6].

Based on this gap between norms and reality, this research becomes important to conduct. By analyzing applicable laws and regulations, particularly Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities, Law Number 6 of 2003 concerning Manpower, and Gorontalo City Regional Regulation Number 3 of 2023 concerning Protection and Fulfillment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, this study aims to identify how the fulfillment of employment rights for persons with disabilities is implemented, what structural barriers they face in obtaining employment, and how mechanisms for strengthening these rights can be realized. This research is expected to produce not only normative policy recommendations but also concrete ideas regarding implementation effectiveness and increasing public awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, ultimately creating an inclusive work environment that enables persons with disabilities to participate equally and actively in development.

2. Literature Review

The study of employment rights for persons with disabilities has developed alongside the paradigm shift from a medical approach toward a human rights-based approach. The medical approach views disability as an individual problem caused by impairment, so the solutions offered are oriented toward rehabilitation and individual adjustment to the environment. Conversely, the social approach, as adopted in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) of 2006, views disability as the result of interaction between individuals and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society. The social approach emphasizes that disability is not a personal tragedy but rather a form of social exclusion created by a society that does not accommodate human diversity. This perspective constitutes the philosophical foundation for recognition of the right of persons with disabilities to work as a human right equal to that of other citizens [7].

In the Indonesian context, normative recognition of employment rights for persons with disabilities has been explicitly regulated in Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities. Article 53 of this law mandates a minimum quota of 2% for government agencies and state-owned enterprises/regional-owned enterprises and 1% for private companies to employ persons with disabilities. This provision constitutes implementation of the principle of positive affirmative action aimed at overcoming the historical discrimination experienced by disability groups. Such affirmative policies have been implemented in various countries with varying degrees of success, depending on law enforcement mechanisms and incentives

provided. In Indonesia, the main challenge lies in weak sanctions for non-compliance and the absence of effective monitoring instruments [8].

Studies on structural barriers in fulfilling employment rights for persons with disabilities have been extensively conducted by researchers. There are three layers of barriers faced by persons with disabilities in accessing employment: physical barriers such as inaccessible work environments, attitudinal barriers in the form of stigma and negative stereotypes from employers, and institutional barriers such as discriminatory recruitment policies. Meanwhile, research in several cities in Indonesia has found that although regulations mandate employment quotas, implementation remains far from expectations due to low understanding of state apparatus about disability, lack of coordination between institutions, and the absence of a clear roadmap for realizing inclusive employment.

At the local level, studies on fulfilling the rights of persons with disabilities in Gorontalo remain very limited. Data from the Gorontalo City Social Service records 613 persons with disabilities, but no specific data is available regarding the labor force participation rate among them. Implementation of Gorontalo Regional Regulation on disability has not been effective due to weak political commitment and limited budget allocation for disability empowerment programs. The gap between regulatory mandates and empirical reality constitutes the research gap that this study will fill, focusing on identifying specific structural barriers in Gorontalo City.

3. Problem Statement

Based on the literature review and empirical data presented, this research identifies two main problems that constitute the focus of the study. The first problem is the discrepancy between legal norms and policy implementation in fulfilling employment rights for persons with disabilities in Gorontalo City. Normatively, Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities and Gorontalo City Regional Regulation Number 3 of 2023 have mandated the protection and fulfillment of the rights of persons with disabilities, including the right to work with minimum quotas that must be fulfilled by the government and companies. However, data shows that no affirmative policy has been concretely implemented within the Gorontalo City government environment. Of the 613 registered persons with disabilities, the majority are unemployed, while regional government agencies have not demonstrated compliance with the 2% quota mandate. The absence of disability workforce data in the public sector indicates weak government commitment as a role model in implementing inclusive policies. This problem is important to study because it concerns the credibility of the state in enforcing laws it has itself created, as well as its impact on hindering access for persons with disabilities to formal sector employment that provides greater certainty and employment protection [9].

The second problem is structural barriers in socio-cultural and accessibility aspects that reinforce the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the world of work in Gorontalo City. Social stigma viewing persons with disabilities as unproductive individuals unable to compete remains deeply entrenched among employers, both government and private. This perception is reinforced by minimal understanding of the concept of reasonable accommodation, which is precisely the employer's obligation to provide adjustments enabling persons with disabilities to work productively. Furthermore, physical and technological infrastructure in the work environment and public spaces has not been designed accessibly, thus limiting mobility and participation of persons with disabilities. At the educational level, the low rate of basic education completion among persons with disabilities in Gorontalo (almost all have not completed nine-year compulsory education) limits their access to job training and competency development needed by the labor market. The intersection of stigma, inaccessible infrastructure, and low capacity creates a vicious cycle

of exclusion difficult to break without comprehensive policy intervention. These two problems will be elaborated in depth in the research discussion to formulate appropriate policy recommendations for overcoming structural barriers in fulfilling employment rights for persons with disabilities in Gorontalo City.

4. Method

This research employs a juridical-empirical method with a socio-legal research approach that combines normative analysis of legislation with empirical studies regarding its implementation in society [10]. This approach was chosen to examine the discrepancy between legal norms governing employment rights of persons with disabilities and the reality of their implementation in Gorontalo City. The research location was determined in Gorontalo City considering data availability and accessibility to informants. Data sources consist of primary data obtained through in-depth interviews with persons with disabilities, the Social Service, the Manpower Service, and disability organizations, as well as secondary data sourced from legislation, government documents, and related literature studies. Data analysis was conducted descriptively qualitatively with interactive techniques through stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, using legal theory as an analytical tool to identify structural barriers in fulfilling employment rights for persons with disabilities.

5. Results and Discussion

Discrepancy between Legal Norms and Policy Implementation in Fulfilling Employment Rights for Persons with Disabilities in Gorontalo City

Law Number 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities constitutes an important milestone in protecting the rights of persons with disabilities in Indonesia. This law adopts a human rights-based paradigm recognizing persons with disabilities as legal subjects possessing equality with other citizens. In the employment context, such recognition is realized through affirmative mechanisms contained in Article 53. Paragraph (1) of this article requires the central government, regional governments, State-Owned Enterprises, and Regional-Owned Enterprises to employ persons with disabilities at a minimum of 2% of the total number of employees. Meanwhile, paragraph (2) regulates the same obligation for private companies with a minimum quota of 1%. This provision constitutes a form of affirmative action aimed at overcoming the historical inequality experienced by persons with disabilities in accessing employment. This quota regulation aligns with practices in various countries that implement similar policies to promote inclusivity in the workplace [11].

Normative strengthening has also been carried out at the local level through Gorontalo City Regional Regulation Number 3 of 2023 concerning Protection and Fulfillment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This regional regulation adopts the same mandate as Law Number 8 of 2016, even expanding the scope of regulation to aspects of coordination between agencies in fulfilling the rights of persons with disabilities. The existence of this regional regulation indicates that normatively, the Gorontalo City Government has a strong legal foundation for realizing the fulfillment of employment rights for persons with disabilities. Thus, there is no legal vacuum (*rechtsvacuum*) nor vague norm that can be used as justification for non-compliance with the obligation to employ persons with disabilities.

However, empirical reality in Gorontalo City shows a very sharp gap between regulatory mandates and policy implementation. Data from the Gorontalo City Social Service records 613 persons with disabilities spread across four categories: physical disabilities totaling 214 persons, mental disabilities 44 persons, intellectual disabilities 107 persons, and sensory disabilities 203 persons [12]. Of this number, the majority are unemployed or work in the informal sector without legal protection guarantees. The more concerning

condition is the absence of any data showing the existence of persons with disabilities working within the Gorontalo City Government environment, whether as State Civil Apparatus or Government Employees with Employment Agreements. This phenomenon indicates that the 2% quota mandate is completely unfulfilled; even the regional government as the party primarily bound by legal obligations has become the most negligent party in implementation. This failure is not merely administrative in dimension but also reflects the state's failure to fulfill its constitutional obligation to protect the rights of vulnerable citizens.

The failure to implement affirmative policies can be analyzed from several interrelated aspects. First, the weak mechanism of law enforcement against non-compliance. Law Number 8 of 2016 does regulate administrative sanctions for employers who do not fulfill the quota, but these sanctions are not followed by effective monitoring and evaluation instruments. In practice, no institution actively conducts compliance audits regarding the obligation to employ persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Manpower and Regional Manpower Services should have the authority to conduct supervision and law enforcement, but limited capacity and resources hinder supervisory effectiveness. Furthermore, there are no implementing regulations detailing procedures for imposing sanctions, the amount of fines, and mechanisms for forced collection against non-compliant employers. Consequently, sanction provisions become declaratory norms without coercive power (sanctions lacking executory force) [13].

Second, the non-integration of disability issues in regional planning and budgeting. Fulfilling employment rights for persons with disabilities requires planned affirmative policies, such as specialized job training programs tailored to various types of disabilities, provision of accessibility in the work environment, socialization to employers about the concept of reasonable accommodation, and development of inclusive job vacancy information platforms. However, Gorontalo City regional planning documents, both the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan and annual Regional Government Work Plans, have not shown budget allocation and special programs for realizing inclusive employment. From a budgetary law perspective, the absence of budget allocation for affirmative programs reflects the low political priority of the regional government regarding disability issues, even though normatively there is a legislative mandate requiring it. Without adequate budget support, affirmative policies will remain mere slogans without reality [14].

Third, the absence of an integrated database on persons with disabilities ready for employment. Gorontalo City Social Service data only records the number of persons with disabilities based on disability category but does not identify competencies, education levels, work interests, and required special accommodation needs. Inadequate data causes the regional government to lack a clear roadmap in disability workforce placement efforts. In public management science, accurate and comprehensive data is a prerequisite for formulating targeted policies. Without data on the profiles and potential of persons with disabilities, the government cannot map what types of work are suitable, what training is needed, and which companies have potential to absorb disability workers. Consequently, efforts to fulfill employment rights are conducted sporadically and unsystematically, resulting in suboptimal outcomes.

The absence of government as a role model in implementing inclusive policies has a multiplicative impact on the private sector. In law enforcement theory, the exemplary conduct of state apparatus is an important factor in building public compliance with law. When the government itself does not comply with quota mandates, there is no precedent and moral pressure that can encourage private companies to do likewise. Private companies may argue that since the government does not implement its legal obligations, why should they. Yet Article 53 paragraph (2) of Law Number 8 of 2016 provides the same mandate to private companies. In such a situation, coercive legal mechanisms become the only available instrument, but as previously elaborated, sanction mechanisms do not function effectively. Consequently, all layers of employers, both public and private, are freed from the legal obligations that should bind them [15].

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The cumulative impact of this implementation failure is the loss of access for persons with disabilities to formal sector employment. The formal sector provides legal certainty through written employment agreements, minimum wage protection, employment social security, and employment relationship protection. When access to the formal sector is closed, persons with disabilities are forced to survive in the informal sector with uncertain income, without legal protection, and vulnerable to exploitation. This condition contradicts the principle of the welfare state that mandates the state to guarantee the basic rights of every citizen, including the right to decent work. Furthermore, this discrepancy reflects the weak political commitment of the regional government in realizing an inclusive society as mandated by the constitution and legislation. From a legal development perspective, the existence of legal norms without effective implementation will not bring about expected social change. Legal norms will remain mere symbols (law in books) without transforming social reality (law in action) [16].

To address this discrepancy, institutional strengthening and more effective law enforcement mechanisms are needed. First, an integrated team should be formed involving the Manpower Service, Social Service, and disability organizations to conduct comprehensive data collection and mapping of the potential of persons with disabilities. Second, the regional government must allocate special budgets for inclusive job training programs and provision of accessibility in the government work environment. Third, regional head regulations should be issued detailing supervision mechanisms and sanctions for non-compliance, both within government and private sectors. Fourth, the regional government must begin by providing exemplary conduct through ASN and PPPK recruitment that opens access for persons with disabilities, and creating an accessible work environment. Only through such concrete steps can legal norms guaranteeing employment rights for persons with disabilities be effectively implemented, and the discrepancy between norms and reality be overcome.

Structural Barriers in Socio-Cultural and Accessibility Aspects Reinforcing the Exclusion of Persons with Disabilities from the World of Work in Gorontalo City

Beyond the policy implementation problems previously elaborated, persons with disabilities in Gorontalo City face structural barriers rooted in socio-cultural and accessibility aspects. These barriers are systemic and interrelated, creating a vicious cycle of exclusion difficult to break without comprehensive policy intervention. From a socio-legal research perspective, law cannot be separated from its socio-cultural context, so the failure of legal norm implementation is often caused by non-judicial barriers entrenched in society. The existence of progressive legal norms, however advanced, will not be effective if they collide with discriminatory social values and cultural practices. Therefore, identification and analysis of these structural barriers become important for formulating appropriate intervention strategies to realize the fulfillment of employment rights for persons with disabilities holistically [17].

The first and most fundamental barrier is the socio-cultural barrier in the form of stigma and perspective discrimination against persons with disabilities that remains very strong among employers in Gorontalo City. Stigma refers to negative attributes attached to a person or group that distinguishes them from dominant groups in society. In the disability context, stigma manifests in views positioning persons with disabilities as unproductive individuals, not independent, unable to compete, and becoming burdens to their surrounding environment. This view remains deeply entrenched and significantly influences the labor recruitment process, both in the public and private sectors. This stigma is reinforced by social constructs viewing disability as a family disgrace or as a condition deserving pity (charity-based approach), rather than as a normal variation in society possessing equal potential and contribution. This charity-based approach actually perpetuates the powerlessness of persons with disabilities by placing them as objects of pity, not as legal subjects having rights and capacity for self-determination [18].

As a result of this entrenched stigma, when persons with disabilities apply for work, they often face covert discriminatory practices. Such covert discrimination may take the form of applicants not being called for interviews despite administratively meeting required qualifications, or if called, being placed in positions not matching their competencies and qualifications. In other cases, persons with disabilities who successfully gain employment are often assigned routine tasks not requiring capacity development, thus closing opportunities for promotion and career development. These discriminatory practices are difficult to prove and prosecute legally because they do not manifest explicitly in the form of overt statements or actions. Perpetrators of discrimination can easily plead qualification mismatches or other technical reasons, while the burden of proof falls on discrimination victims who have limited access to information and legal resources. Nevertheless, the impact of these covert discriminatory practices is very real in limiting access for persons with disabilities to decent employment.

Lack of understanding of the concept of reasonable accommodation among employers further reinforces stigma and discriminatory practices. Reasonable accommodation is defined in Article 1 point 8 of Law Number 8 of 2016 as "appropriate adjustments and modifications necessary to ensure persons with disabilities can enjoy or exercise all human rights and fundamental freedoms on the basis of equality with others." In the employment context, reasonable accommodation may include workplace modifications to be accessible for wheelchair users, adjustments to working hours for persons with disabilities requiring routine care, provision of assistive devices such as screen reader software for blind persons with disabilities, or modification of work tasks to suit the capacity and needs of persons with disabilities. It is important to understand that providing reasonable accommodation is a legal obligation of employers, not a form of pity or voluntary additional burden. This obligation constitutes implementation of the principle of equality recognizing that equal treatment of different people can actually produce injustice, thus requiring special treatment to achieve substantive equality [19].

However, empirical reality shows that employers in Gorontalo City, both in government and private sectors, do not understand the nature of this legal obligation. Reasonable accommodation is still perceived as an additional burden that will increase company operational costs, rather than as a long-term investment for creating an inclusive and productive work environment. Concerns about additional costs cause employers to be reluctant to recruit persons with disabilities. Yet research in various countries shows that most forms of reasonable accommodation do not require significant costs, and many can be done at no cost through adjustment of internal procedures and policies. Furthermore, providing reasonable accommodation can actually increase overall productivity by creating a work environment that values diversity and enables every worker to contribute optimally. Ignorance and misperception about reasonable accommodation constitute epistemic barriers reinforcing the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the world of work.

The second barrier is the aspect of physical and technological accessibility in the work environment and public spaces that significantly limits mobility and participation of persons with disabilities. Accessibility is defined in Article 1 point 17 of Law Number 8 of 2016 as "the convenience provided for persons with disabilities to realize equality of opportunity." The principle of universal design requires that the built environment, including office buildings, public facilities, transportation systems, and information technology, be designed from the outset to be usable by all people without requiring special adjustments. However, urban infrastructure in Gorontalo City has not been universally designed, making it difficult for persons with physical and sensory disabilities to access public places, including government offices and companies where they might work. Office buildings generally lack ramps for wheelchairs, so persons with physical disabilities using mobility aids cannot enter buildings independently. Disability-specific toilets meeting accessibility standards are also rarely found. Similarly, accessible signage for blind persons with

disabilities, such as information boards in Braille or tactile guides, is unavailable in most office buildings [20].

The public transportation system in Gorontalo City is also not disability-friendly, limiting their ability to commute from home to workplace. This causes persons with disabilities to be highly dependent on others for transportation, thus reducing their independence and flexibility in working. In the digital context, access to information and communication technology is also not inclusive. In the current digital era, job vacancy information is mostly conveyed through digital platforms such as websites and social media. However, these platforms are generally not designed considering the needs of persons with sensory disabilities, such as providing screen reader features for blind persons with disabilities or alternative text for audio content for deaf persons with disabilities. Consequently, persons with sensory disabilities lose access to available job vacancy information, further limiting their opportunities to enter the workforce [21].

The third barrier, cumulative in nature, is the low level of education and job training among persons with disabilities in Gorontalo City. Data shows that almost all persons with disabilities in Gorontalo Province have not completed nine-year compulsory education, while 17.74 percent of them fall into the poor category. This low educational attainment is caused by multiple interrelated factors. First, limited access to inclusive education. Although inclusive education policy has been proclaimed nationally, its implementation in regions remains far from expectations. The number of schools capable of accommodating the special needs of persons with disabilities is very limited, as is the availability of special assistant teachers and accessible learning facilities and infrastructure. Second, lack of parental awareness about the importance of education for children with disabilities. Stigma and social constructs viewing disability as a disgrace often cause parents to hide children with disabilities from social interaction, including sending them to school. Third, the economic burden on families forces prioritizing education for non-disabled children deemed to have better prospects for improving family economic conditions [22].

As a result of this low educational attainment, persons with disabilities enter productive age without adequate competency capital to compete in the labor market. They lack formal education diplomas that constitute administrative requirements for most formal sector job vacancies. They also lack access to job training and capacity development tailored to their needs and potential. Yet vocational job training designed inclusively can become an entry point for persons with disabilities to acquire practical skills needed by the labor market. This condition is exacerbated by the absence of special job training programs from the regional government designed to increase the employability of persons with disabilities. Existing job training programs are generally general in nature and do not consider the specific needs of persons with disabilities, thus being inaccessible or irrelevant to them. Consequently, persons with disabilities become trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion: low education causes low skills, low skills causes non-absorption in the labor market, unemployment causes poverty, and poverty causes inability to access better education [23].

The intersection of stigma, inaccessible infrastructure, and low capacity creates mutually reinforcing situations forming robust structural barriers. Stigma and perspective discrimination make employers reluctant to recruit persons with disabilities, even before they have opportunities to demonstrate their competence. Lack of physical and technological accessibility limits mobility and participation of persons with disabilities, so they cannot access workplaces and job vacancy information [24]. Meanwhile, low education and job training limits the competence persons with disabilities can offer employers. These three factors interact dialectically, each reinforcing and deepening the negative impacts of the others. Stigma not only hinders recruitment but also influences investment policies in accessible infrastructure and budget allocation for inclusive education. Low education not only limits competence but also reinforces stigma

about the incapacity of persons with disabilities. Inaccessible infrastructure not only limits mobility but also hinders access to education and job training.

Such complex structural barriers cannot be overcome merely by the presence of legal norms alone. Legal norms regulating employment quotas and anti-discrimination, while important, will not be effective if not accompanied by public perspective transformation and comprehensive policy interventions across various sectors. Simultaneous and coordinated intervention strategies are needed encompassing three main fronts. First, transformation of public perspective through ongoing socialization and education about the rights of persons with disabilities, the concept of reasonable accommodation, and the benefits of diversity in the workplace. This socialization must target not only employers but also the wider community, families of persons with disabilities, and persons with disabilities themselves. Second, development of accessible infrastructure according to universal design standards, both in the work environment, public spaces, transportation systems, and digital platforms. This infrastructure development must become an integral part of regional development planning with adequate budget allocation. Third, sustainable capacity-building programs for persons with disabilities through inclusive education and vocational job training designed participatorily involving disability organizations. These programs must be integrated with workforce placement systems and post-placement support to ensure employment sustainability.

Without simultaneous efforts on these three fronts, the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the world of work will continue, and constitutional mandates regarding equal rights will remain mere slogans without reality. These deeply entrenched structural barriers require policy interventions that are not merely reactive and curative but also preventive and transformative. The regional government must take leadership in orchestrating collaborative efforts involving various stakeholders, including disability organizations, the private sector, educational institutions, and civil society. Only through a holistic and sustainable approach can the structural barriers that have long reinforced exclusion be overcome, and persons with disabilities participate fully and equally in the world of work and regional development.

6. Conclusion

This research concludes that the fulfillment of the right to obtain employment for persons with disabilities in Gorontalo City faces two main interrelated problems. First, there is a sharp discrepancy between legal norms and policy implementation. Although Law Number 8 of 2016 and Gorontalo City Regional Regulation Number 3 of 2023 normatively mandate a 2% employment quota for persons with disabilities within the government environment, reality shows that no persons with disabilities work in regional government agencies. This implementation failure is caused by weak law enforcement, the non-integration of disability issues in regional planning and budgeting, and the absence of an integrated database of persons with disabilities ready for employment. Second, structural barriers in socio-cultural and accessibility aspects further reinforce exclusion. Stigma and perspective discrimination from employers, lack of understanding of reasonable accommodation, inaccessible physical and technological infrastructure, and low levels of education and job training among persons with disabilities form a systemic vicious cycle of exclusion. The intersection of these three factors creates robust barriers that cannot be overcome merely by the presence of legal norms. Comprehensive policy interventions are needed encompassing public perspective transformation, accessible infrastructure development, and sustainable capacity-building programs, with the regional government as the leading sector, so that constitutional mandates regarding equal rights can be realized in reality.

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