

Information Accessibility for Deaf Persons in Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Debate Broadcasts

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ABSTRACT

Background: The 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election debate, broadcasted by several TV stations appointed by KPU, included a sign-language interpreter (Juru Bahasa Isyarat, JBI) box on screen. Yet, Deaf advocacy organization, Gerkatin, identified recurring accessibility flaws in the first broadcast. They matter because Article 28F of the 1945 Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to seek and obtain information, including the Deaf. **Purpose:** This research examines how Indonesia's broadcasting and disability legislation addressed information accessibility for Deaf voters and asks why regulatory framework derived from existing legislation produced an inaccessible broadcast. **Methods:** A qualitative case study design triangulated three sources: (1) legislative document analysis of Act 32/2002 on Broadcasting, Act 19/2011 ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Act 8/2016 on Persons with Disabilities, and regulative document analysis of KPI's Broadcasting Code of Conduct and Broadcast Program Standards (P3SPS), and Dewan Pers' Guidelines for Disability Friendly Reporting; (2) semi-structured interviews with three informants from KPI, Dewan Pers, and Bawaslu; and (3) documentary evidence of Deaf voters' experience drawn from Gerkatin's formal complaint and Debate Broadcast archives from YouTube. **Results:** Indonesia's existing legislation acknowledges Deaf persons' rights of information accessibility, yet P3 SPS and Guidelines for Disability-Inclusive Reporting did not translate legislation's mandate into enforceable broadcast specifications. Interview data further indicate that regulators had engaged only with JBI associations, not with organizations of Deaf persons such as Gerkatin, in developing broadcasting practice. **Conclusion:** Indonesia's existing legislation acknowledges Deaf persons' right to information accessibility in principle but existing regulation frameworks have not translated that recognition into enforceable technical standards for information accessibility in broadcasting. **Implications:** Closing this gap requires measurable standards for JBI visibility and multiplicity, mandatory subtitling for high-stakes information broadcasts, and a formal collaboration with Deaf organizations.

Keywords: accessibility; broadcasting regulation; Deaf persons; information broadcast; presidential election

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INTRODUCTION

Muted Group Theory (MGT), developed by Shirley and Edwin Ardener, extended by Cheris Kramarae, and synthesized into four tenets by Barkman (2018), holds that a society's dominant group controls its principal channels of communication and sets the norms by which communication mode is acceptable, leaving a muted group's own mode of communication structurally unconsidered. For Deaf persons, whose primary mode of communication is sign language, this hearing-majority dominance is not necessarily visible as outright exclusion; it can instead be built into the very standard by which hearing-majority institution set its own communication mode as the norm, a pattern disability-studies scholarship described as access being defined by the accommodating institution (Titchkosky, 2011). Peruzzi (2025) extends this point specifically to Deaf audiences, arguing that institutions frequently treat the presence of an accommodation as the measure of inclusion, but ignore its usability for Deaf persons'. Read together, MGT and this disability-access literature raise a theoretical problem this article investigates empirically: how does dominance operate, and persist, inside regulatory frameworks that already recognize a muted group's rights in principle?

Television remains the primary channel through which Indonesians follow election contestation (Widyatama & Suranto, 2022), and broadcasters' editorial and technical choices about how to present that contestation function as a gatekeeping practice that can either enable or constrain audiences' equal access to political information (Firmansyah et al., 2026). This gatekeeping role is the specific journalistic problem this study examines. Indonesia held its 2024 Presidential Election on February 14, 2024, the first of several major elections held that year and one in which approximately 205 million citizens were registered to vote. Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Election Debates were broadcasted nationally by several TV stations appointed by the General Elections Commission (KPU RI) (Akihary et al., 2023; KPU, 2023).

For Deaf voters, information access in these broadcasts are not automatically met by TV station's general editorial standards. Persons with disabilities participate in elections at markedly lower rates than non-disabled citizens (Kuhlmann & Lewis, 2024), and that gap will only narrow when access barriers are removed (Matsubayashi & Ueda, 2014). Deaf voters face a barrier distinct from other disabilities: in a hearing-dominated broadcast environment, information is conveyed through verbal language, which leaves incidental and informal political information largely out of reach unless a broadcaster deliberately translates it into a visual format such as sign language or captions (Aliyah, 2024; Silva et al., 2020). International literature on Deaf political participation documents this pattern directly: British Deaf youth report being excluded from mainstream campaign coverage that assumes hearing access (Espinoza et al., 2024), and comparative accessibility studies of broadcasters such as the BBC show that legal recognition of accessibility needs does not by itself guarantee usable service for Deaf audiences unless technical broadcasting standards accompany it (García-Prieto & Aguaded, 2021).

After the first debate broadcast, Gerkatin's Board Leader, Bambang Prasetyo, filed a formal complaint against KPU RI and sent carbon copy of the complaint to Indonesian Broadcasting Commission's (KPI) as well. The complaint can be seen in public complaint channel, *Pojok Aduan* on KPI's website. Gerkatin's complaint identified five recurring accessibility problems: an undersized interpreter (JBI) box; station logos and lower-third overlays that obscured the JBI's hands and face; a single JBI tasked to interpret three candidate pairs and moderators, which produced delayed and ambiguous interpretation; no documented involvement of Deaf organizations in planning the broadcast; and no subtitles to complement the JBI box. These points, together with Gerkatin's own suggested remedies, are summarized in Table 2. Independently, SIGAB Indonesia's election-monitoring report found that 45% of polling

stations lacked accurate data on registered voters with disabilities, pointing to a broader pattern of inattention to disability access across the 2024 election, of which broadcast accessibility for Deaf voters was one specific manifestation (Formasi Disabilitas, 2024)

This pattern is difficult to reconcile with Indonesia's stated legal commitments. Article 28F of the 1945 Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to seek, obtain, and convey information through all available channels. Indonesia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) through Act 19/2011, which obligates states to make electoral information and communication technologies accessible (Articles 9, 21, and 29) and to monitor implementation (Article 33) (Caballero Pérez, 2023). Act 32/2002 on Broadcasting (Article 39) and the KPI's Broadcasting Code of Conduct and Broadcast Program Standards, P3SPS (Article 53), require a sign-language interpreter for programs intended for audiences with special needs, and Act 8/2016 on Persons with Disabilities recognizes Deaf persons' rights to political participation (Article 13) and to communicate and obtain information (Article 24). None of these instruments, however, specifies a minimum JBI box size, multiple JBI at multi-speaker events, subtitling requirement, or a consultation mechanism with Deaf organizations, which are the precise implementation gaps that Gerkatin's complaint identified. Comparable regulatory attention to disability-inclusive election information has been documented elsewhere as an ongoing and unresolved problem (Rabitsch et al., 2023; Tan & Zhuang, 2026), which suggests the Indonesian case illustrates a legislative pattern of recognizing Deaf persons accessibility rights without proper regulatory frameworks operationalizing them.

Existing Indonesian scholarship on the 2024 election has examined disability participation broadly: awareness and registration gaps (Alam et al., 2024; Eliyanti & Sinaga, 2025; Ramadhan, 2021), structural and non-structural barriers to polling access (Komendangi et al., 2025; Maling, 2025) and the political rights of persons with disabilities as a category (Muthahhari, 2025; Pratiwi et al., 2023). This body of work establishes that disability access is broadly underserved, but it rarely isolates Deaf voters as a distinct group with distinct communication needs, and it engages broadcast accessibility only in passing (Rahim et al., 2025); nor does it engage the broadcasting and journalism literature on how Indonesian television covers and structures election information for its audiences (Kaligis et al., 2021; Musfialdy et al., 2024). International literature that does center Deaf communication needs, on sign-language interpreting in media (Tamayo, 2022), community-driven captioning and sign-language content creation (Tang et al., 2023), and audiovisual translation for accessibility (Romero-Fresco, 2021; Zarate, 2021), has not yet been applied to a Southeast Asian election broadcast case. This is the gap the present study addresses: it isolates Deaf voters specifically within a journalism and broadcasting studies frame, and it asks not only whether accessibility regulation exists but also why legislation and regulation that formally recognizes Deaf persons' rights still produced Presidential Election Debate broadcast that Deaf persons experienced as inaccessible.

The research question this study pursues is therefore: how does the dominance described by Muted Group Theory manifest in information accessibility regulations for Deaf persons during 2024 Presidential Election debate broadcasts, and in the broadcasting and regulatory process by which those regulations were applied? Because this is a single-case, descriptive study, its findings are expected to be a demonstration of how dominance can operate within broadcasting regulatory system, not as a generalizable claim about Indonesian broadcasting or disability regulation as a whole. Broad generalization would require comparative cases beyond the scope of this article.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative, descriptive case study design (Stake, 1995) to examine Indonesia's information accessibility regulation as applied to the 2024 Presidential Election debate broadcasts. The case study approach is suited to research that requires an in-depth, context-bound understanding of a bounded phenomenon (Coombs, 2022; Crowe et al., 2011; Keen & Packwood, 1995), and the bounded phenomenon here is the interaction between Indonesia's existing legislation Act 32/2022 on Broadcasting and Act 8/2016 on Persons with Disabilities, two specific regulatory instruments, the KPI's P3 SPS and Dewan Pers' Guidelines for Disability Friendly Reporting, and one specific broadcast event 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Election Debate broadcasts. The design combines two complementary sources of research data. The first source is documentary: the texts of Act 32/2002, Act 19/2011 ratifying the CRPD, Act 8/2016, the KPI's P3SPS, Dewan Pers' Journalistic Guidelines for Disability Friendly Reporting, and Gerkatin's formal complaint to KPU and KPI as the empirical trace of how those legal instruments were applied in practice. These legislations, regulations, and monitoring documents constitute the study's primary documentary data, analyzed for what each instrument requires and, in the case of Gerkatin's material, for what it reports about the legal instrument's implementation on the broadcasts. The second source is interview data, used to reconstruct how compliance was interpreted and decided by the regulators responsible for enforcing it. The researchers adopted an interpretivist standpoint (Crowe et al., 2011) to analyze how this institutional environment shaped what counted as adequate accessibility.

Interview data were collected from three purposively selected informants, chosen for their direct, authoritative role in monitoring or applying broadcasting regulation: KPI's Expert Staff of Broadcast Content Monitoring (Informant 1), Dewan Pers' Vice Chairperson (Informant 2), and Bawaslu's Expert Staff for P2H (Informant 3). In this design, the regulators, KPI, Dewan Pers, and Bawaslu, function as the communicator side of the broadcasting relationship, since they set and enforce the standards broadcasters must follow; TV stations are the message's direct producer; and Deaf voters are the intended communicant. The study did not include direct interviews with Deaf voters. Their experience is instead evidenced documentarily, through Gerkatin's formal complaint, itself authored by a Deaf-led organization and addressed to the regulator. This is a deliberate scope decision, and it is also the study's principal limitation: findings about what Deaf persons experienced should be read as what Deaf-led organizations documented and reported, not as a survey or interview-based measurement of Deaf persons' experience as a whole.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regulations in Indonesia on Rights of Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (Second Amendment) regulated the very foundation for ensuring the rights of information accessibility in article 28F: "Every person is entitled to communicate and to obtain information for the development of his/her personality and social environment, as well as be entitled to seek, to obtain, to own, to store, to process, and to convey information by means of all kinds of available channels."

There are few existing legislations concerning involvement in politics and access of information for people with disabilities, which are Act of The Republic of Indonesia Number 32 of 2002 (32/2002) on Broadcasting, Act of The Republic of Indonesia Number 19 of 2011 (19/2011) on Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and Act of The Republic of Indonesia Number 8 of 2016 (8/2016) on Persons with Disabilities, and regulations, namely Broadcasting Code of Conduct and Broadcast Program Standards

(P3 SPS) by KPI, Guidelines for Disability-Friendly Reporting by Dewan Pers. Existing broadcasting regulations are derived from Act 32/2002 in which acknowledged Deaf persons rights of information accessibility. The regulation of sign language usage on television broadcast is mentioned in P3SPS KPI article 53 as to be used for certain programs for audiences with special needs (Deaf persons). Guidelines for Disability-Friendly Reporting point 7 demanded that access to news for people with disabilities is provided by providing sign language interpreters, screen readers, subtitles, and technology that helps people with disabilities access information, which is carried out according to the media company's capabilities.

Technicalities of Indonesian 2024 Presidential Election Broadcast

During the 2024 presidential election debate organized by the KPU and broadcasted by several TV stations, they added a JBI box on the bottom right corner of the screen. Technically, KPU showed some effort to include Deaf voters in the political process (Pratiwi et al., 2023). This met the basic spirit of inclusion under Act 32/2002, Act 19/2011, and Act 8/2016. Multiple TV media appointed by KPU to broadcast the debate are listed in Table 1.

Later after the first broadcast of the 2024 Presidential Election Debate, Gerkatin collated Deaf persons' input voicing strong concerns regarding broadcast technicalities through various social media. Representing Deaf voters, Gerkatin Board Leader Bambang Prasetyo then sent a formal complaint to KPU that can be seen on Pojok Aduan of KPI's website. Listed on Table 2 are points criticized by Deaf voters regarding the 2024 Presidential Election Debate Broadcast.

Table 1. List of TV stations appointed by KPU to broadcast 2024 Presidential Election debate

Debate Phase	Broadcast Date	Appointed TV stations as Broadcaster
1st (President)	December 12, 2023	TVRI and RRI
2nd (Vice President)	December 22, 2023	Trans Corp (TransTV, Trans7, CNN Indonesia), KompasTV, and BTW
3rd (President)	January 7, 2024	MNC Group (MNC TV, iNews TV, RCTI, and GTV)
4th (Vice President)	January 21, 2024	Emtek group (SCTV, Indosiar), and MetroTV
5th (President)	February 4, 2024	Grup Viva (TVOne, ANTV), Net TV, and Garuda TV

Source: Kep. KPU No. 1706 Year 2023, <https://jdih.kpu.go.id/>, 2025

Table 2. Formal Complaint by Gerkatin seen in Pojok Aduan on KPI's Website

No	Point of Critic	Solution suggested by Gerkatin
1	Screen size and TV Logo - The size of JBI box is too small. - TV logo and ads blocked the audience's view of JBI.	Screen size and TV Logo - Enlarge the size of JBI box. - Add a separate line using OBS and Zoom for JBI box so that it is not blocked by logo and ads.
2	Interpreting process - JBI's interpretation appears unprofessional. - Some signs are inappropriate or incomprehensible, often causing misinterpretations. For example, signs of 'power' are similar to signs for 'rape'. - The interpreting process in sign language is often delayed.	Interpreting process Involve deaf people who are members of the Gerkatin who know the quality of JBI to choose capable JBI for the sake of accurate information delivery for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HoH) persons.

(continued on next page)

Table 2 (continued)

3	JBIs for Each Candidate Pair • There was one JBI appointed to interpret all three of the candidate pairs. • JBIs difficulty in translating all candidate pairs well. • One JBI interpreting three Presidential candidates, creates confusion and ambiguity in understanding who was actually speaking and what they were saying, leaving Deaf persons in confusion	JBIs for Each Candidate Pair • Leave some space and divide the TV screen into three boxes for JBIs. One box containing one JBI for presidential candidate number 1, another box containing another JBI for presidential candidate number 2, and so on. • The moderator must be given one more box. • Examples can be seen on Gerkatin's YouTube
4	Deaf Organization Involvement • It is not known nor stated whether the KPU is cooperating with deaf organizations. • The lack of involvement of deaf organizations can result in inadequate and non-inclusive access to JBIs.	Deaf Organization Involvement • Directly involving deaf organizations/ Gerkatin
5	Full Participation and Access • It is unclear what steps the KPU has taken to ensure full participation and access for Deaf persons. • Deaf persons may have difficulty understanding the content of the presidential debate without adequate accessibility.	Full Participation and Access • Ensuring Deaf organizations to participate with full access • Conducting workshops on information accessibility for Deaf persons

Source: KPI's website, 2025

Points mentioned are instruments vital to Deaf persons accessibility regarding information and political activity but have not been regulated yet. Gerkatin also provided solutions to existing problems.

Gerkatin pointed out that the JBI box proved too small for clear viewing of gestures, facial expression, and lips movement. The view of JBI is also frequently blocked by station logos or other lower third overlays, hiding vital parts of the interpretation and making signs illegible for many Deaf persons. Figure 1 shows examples of TV media logos that block Deaf persons' view of JBIs. During the Vice President Candidate's Debate, the logo of Metro TV blocked the audience's view of JBI almost completely and the logo of Vidio (Indosiar) covered JBI's hand gestures.

In charge of establishing P3 SPS which include obligations, limits, violations, and broadcasting arrangements, KPI has authority to impose sanctions to TV media that do not fulfill broadcasting requirements or violate existing regulations (Saputra & Ambarwati, 2024). When interviewed, Informant 1 explained that TV media's logo blocking JBI box is not punishable by law because it is not considered as a violation.

Regardless of the specific wording of the P3 SPS KPI, TV media are required to provide a sign language interpreter for at least one program, particularly news or current affairs programs, within a 24-hour period. KPI upholds cumulative monitoring process. If TV media already airs a single program with an interpreter during that 24-hour window and there are no technical issues with the visual presentation, they are considered to have fulfilled their obligation (Informant 1, personal communication, May 25, 2026).

According to existing legislation and regulation, KPI will consider that TV media fulfilled their obligation to ensure information accessibility, as long as they provided a JBI box in at least one of their news programs in the span of 24 hours. After that, if certain issues such as the blocking of TV media's logo on the JBI box happened, they will not be considered a broadcasting violation of information accessibility.



Figure 1 (a) Metro TV's logo blocking audience view of JBI; **(b)** Vidio's logo blocking audience view of JBI

Source: (a) YouTube METRO TV, (b) YouTube Indosiar, 2025

Another problem is that a single JBI has to cover three candidates plus the moderator, blurring the difference between speakers and context. Rapid speaker switches lead to confusion over who said what during the debate (Widiastuti et al., 2026). No subtitles were provided as a complement to JBI box, leaving Deaf persons underserved, struggling to follow and understand the ongoing debate. As to why TV media are not obliged to provide JBI for each speakers on screen along with subtitles for information/news programs such as the 2024 Presidential Election Debate, Informant 2 explained that Dewan Pers considered that TV media might not have the budget nor the human resources to provide that yet.

If we recall it right, almost all TV media are now required to provide a JBI for morning news broadcasts. However, it is not feasible to implement this for every single program due to human resources limitations. Screen space can also become too cluttered. During the day, for instance, the frame is sometimes squeezed or crowded with various elements; overlapping visuals are far from ideal. Nevertheless, moving forward, media outlets really ought to honor the diverse needs of their audience and consider those with hearing impairments that rely on sign language interpreters or on-screen text. Yet, imagine if we displayed text constantly, that would not necessarily provide a comfortable viewing experience, would it? And while we could use AI-generated captions for subtitles, news reporting demands absolute accuracy, and AI-generated text is prone to errors. So, the question remains, "Can accessibility requirements be met?" It seems we are not there yet, but it is something that we must keep advocating (Informant 2, personal communication, April 22, 2026).

On the question of who was consulted in setting these standards, Informant 3 stated in an interview that regulators had engaged with organizations working on accessibility, but when asked to name a specific organization of Deaf persons involved in planning or supervising the 2024 debate broadcasts, neither could do so; Informant 1 confirmed that the KPI's engagement had been with associations of sign-language interpreters, not with Deaf-led organizations such as Gerkatin. This is the direct evidence this study relies on for the composition of the standard-setting process: the interpreters whose work Deaf viewers depend on were represented in regulatory dialogue, while the Deaf viewers who must understand that work were not. Gerkatin has stated that neither KPU nor the KPI invited them to collaborate on planning, organizing, or supervising the broadcasts. This study did not independently verify KPU's internal planning records, and this claim is reported as Gerkatin's documented position, not as an independently confirmed fact.

Ongoing structural and systemic barriers continue to restrict full and equal electoral participation for people with disabilities (Bah, 2022). Regulator's commitment on monitoring and enforcing disability-related electoral rights are also weak, with limited and often inaccessible channels for reporting accessibility issues or discrimination during elections (Rahim et al., 2025). Bawaslu and KPI as supervisor of KPU and TV media did not provide fully accessible and transparent complaint mechanisms for inadequate access of the 2024 presidential elections broadcast (Perbawa et al., 2025).

Focus on fulfilling disability rights issues tends to be imposed on legislators, dominantly non-disabled persons who pass the laws that the bureaucracy enforces (Smith, 2026). Accessibility should include participation in all stages of the electoral process, including planning, implementation, and evaluation. Basic awareness for rights of persons with disabilities is required in policies and electoral commissioners to ensure inclusion in the practical implementation (Kuman, 2023). Inclusive policy planning, enforcing, and monitoring can be achieved when regulators collaborate with communities of persons with disabilities during the whole process, with the success of Surabaya's regional election approved by voters with disabilities as evidence (Izdihar et al., 2024).

Role of Existing Legislation and Regulations in Indonesia

Legislation and regulation is a key towards media accessibility (Zarate, 2021). Existing legislation and regulations in Indonesia act to recognize the rights of persons with disabilities, including Deaf persons to participate in politics and have access to information. These regulations acknowledged citizenship rights of Persons with disabilities. Based on Informant 1 and 2, KPU and TV broadcasters did not violate broadcasting regulations under KPI and Dewan Pers' supervision because the debate broadcast followed and fulfilled the provision of P3 SPS and Guidelines for Disability Friendly Reporting such as providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities (read: Deaf persons) with JBI box as aid without additional cost to support their rights of information and to engage in political activity as a voter.

Read together, the findings connect to Muted Group Theory's dominance tenet in a specific, traceable way. First, the applicable regulations, Act 32/2002 Article 39 and P3SPS Article 53, set a norm, one interpreter, one program per day, that reflects what is administratively convenient for broadcasters and regulators rather than what Deaf viewers have identified as legible; this is dominance operating through the content of the standard itself. Second, the KPI's own account of cumulative, 24-hour monitoring (Informant 1) shows that the standard is applied in a way that treats formal presence as sufficient regardless of legibility; this is dominance operating through the enforcement practice. Third, the interview finding that regulators had consulted

interpreter associations but not Deaf-led organizations is direct evidence that Deaf persons were structurally absent from the process that set both the standard and its enforcement; this is dominance operating through the composition of who is consulted. MGT's claim is not simply that Deaf persons faced a poor broadcast, but that the norms governing what counts as an adequate broadcast are set by and for the hearing majority's convenience, with sign language accommodated only to the extent that accommodation does not require rethinking those norms (Setyowati & Watie, 2024). Accessibility is treated as an afterthought, not a core part of news production. Accessibility should not be treated as optional; it is a derivative priority to be considered in screening (Romero-Fresco, 2021).

Gap of Broadcasting Regulation in Ensuring Information Accessibility

To ensure a barrier-free voting environment, regulators must mandate specific execution. Inclusive voting practices can reduce inequality between groups and mitigate other inequalities within the process of election (Rabitsch et al., 2023). Through the experience of Deaf voters themselves, 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election Debate broadcast has not fulfilled their needs for information regarding the election. Lack of accessibility manifests from systemic barrier, including barrier of information and communication (Price et al., 2025). Lack of accessibility is not a natural condition but the result of political and social decisions about priority over others (Titchkosky, 2011). Disability inclusion requires more than small adjustments within existing systems. Berghs et al. (2016) emphasize the need for structural transformation that challenges exclusionary frameworks and creates genuinely inclusive spaces.

Simply providing one sign language interpreter is often insufficient. This case illustrates, in a broadcasting-specific setting, what disability-access scholarship describes as accommodation measured by the accommodating institution's own convenience, not by the accommodated person's actual use of it (Peruzzi, 2025; Titchkosky, 2011), a JBI box that satisfies a 24-hour cumulative monitoring rule is, by that same institutional measure, accessible, even when Deaf viewers cannot follow it. Understood as a journalism and broadcasting problem, this is a gatekeeping failure. Broadcasters and their regulator treated the decision of how to present sign-language interpretation, box size, number of interpreters, subtitling, as an internal production choice rather than as an editorial decision with direct consequences for who can access politically consequential information (Firmansyah et al., 2026). This case extends MGT's dominance tenet in one specific respect beyond its more common application to interpersonal or media-representation contexts. It shows dominance operating through the technical language of formal regulatory compliance. A regulatory system can recognize a muted group's rights explicitly, as Act 8/2016 does, and still reproduce dominance procedurally, by defining compliance in terms convenient to the dominant group's institutions rather than in terms of the muted group's actual communication needs. This is the study's specific contribution, not that regulatory gaps exist in Indonesian disability policy in general (Cahyono et al., 2025; Salim & Yulianto, 2021), but that dominance can be located precisely in how broadcasting compliance itself is operationalized and monitored, even inside a regulatory framework that is not, on its face, discriminatory

Gerkatin's Alternative Model and Recommendations

Gerkatin stepped up with their own "*Nobar Ramah Tuli*" (watch-together) sessions on YouTube showing what equal access looks like (see Figure 2), setting a benchmark to follow. It stands as a practical fix that mainstream media could learn from. They provided an alternative broadcasting model by using four separate JBIs: one JBI for each candidate and one for the moderator, in a larger visible box free of caption overlays. Full subtitles are also provided as multi-interpreter setup for extra clarity. This setup gave Deaf voters reliable real-time access



Figure 2 (a) Gerkatina's 'Nobar Ramah Tuli'; **(b)** Gerkatina's 'Nobar Ramah Tuli'
Source: YouTube GERKATIN, 2025

to the same information as hearing persons. When the broadcast is handled by those who are knowledgeable in diverse needs of Deaf persons, it is properly tailored to fulfil the needs of Deaf persons making access equal (Tang et al., 2023).

Initiatives led and designed by persons with disabilities are often the most effective combating barriers to ensuring inclusion of access and participation in politics and elections not only as voters but also as officials, campaigners, political party executives, candidates, and elected representatives (García-Prieto & Aguaded, 2021). Ensuring political participation should not be limited to polling day accessibility but opportunities for people with disabilities to fully engage in the whole process from regulation, execution, to evaluation (Baker & Kelly, 2025). Movements by communities of persons with disabilities can positively influence improvements to ensure the fulfilment of rights for persons with disabilities despite ongoing challenges posed by limitations to access information, public perceptions of disability, and domination of non-disabled persons in politics and media (Kramer et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This case study shows that Indonesia's existing legislation, Act 32/2002 on Broadcasting, Act 19/2011 ratifying the CRPD, Act 8/2016 on Persons with Disabilities, and existing regulatory framework by KPI and Dewan Pers implements standards, recognizes Deaf persons' right to information accessibility and political participation in principle, but did not, as evident in the 2024 presidential debate broadcasts, translate that recognition into technical

broadcasting standards capable of making the broadcasts legible to Deaf viewers. Reading through Muted Group Theory's dominance tenet, the gap is not incidental: it appears in the content of the applicable standard, in how compliance was monitored, and in who was and was not consulted in setting the standard. For journalism and broadcasting studies specifically, the new contribution this case offers is that gatekeeping and editorial dominance can operate through ostensibly neutral, technical compliance decisions, not only through overt exclusion or bias, which broadens where journalism scholars might look for structural inequality in political broadcasting.

Consistent with the scope of the evidence gathered, three specific and measurable recommendations follow directly from the gap identified in this case. First, P3 SPS KPI should set a minimum JBI box size, one interpreter per speaker for multi-speaker events. Second, Dewan Pers and the KPI should regulate subtitles as a mandatory complement to sign-language interpretation for debate broadcasts specifically. Third, KPU and the KPI should establish a documented consultation mechanism with organizations of Deaf persons such as Gerkatin, distinct from existing engagement with JBI associations. These conclusions are bounded to the case examined here; it does not, on its own, support a claim about Indonesian disability regulation or broadcasting practice in general, and it should not be read as a measurement of Deaf voters' experience nationally. Future research with a comparative multi-election design, and with direct engagement of Deaf voters as research participants, is required to test whether this mechanism recurs across election cycles.

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