

Promoting Equity: Examining Participatory Justice in Free Lunch Program Planning to Combat Stunting in Indonesia

Henny Juliani¹ & Kadek Cahya Susila Wibawa²

Abstract

This study examines the organisation of complimentary meal initiatives in Indonesia through the lens of participatory justice. The study methodology employed is a normative juridical approach within a descriptive-analytical framework. Data were gathered via literature reviews and subjectively assessed. The results indicate that public policy should consider the active involvement of different societal stakeholders. Participatory justice fosters socioeconomic inclusivity and equity in the process of decision-making. While the free lunch program is a tangible measure to combat stunting, active involvement from the impacted individuals is crucial to guarantee the efficiency and equity of this program. Challenges in implementing participatory justice are the credibility of public involvement, dispute resolution, and the influence of experts in decision-making procedures.

Keywords: Public Policy, Participatory Justice, Free Lunch Program, Stunting, Indonesia.

Introduction

The most common form of child malnutrition is stunting, with 161 million children globally falling below -2 SD from the World Health Organization (WHO) median Child Growth Standards in 2013. Because the entire z-score distribution of length-for-age/height-for-age shifts to the left, all children, not just those below a threshold, experience growth problems. As there is universal consensus on how to diagnose and evaluate stunting, it often goes unrecognised in civilisations where short height is average because linear growth is not routinely assessed in primary healthcare and is hard to see (de Onis & Branca, 2016; Isanaka et al., 2009).

In this case, the government must act holistically. After Indonesia earned independence in 1945, one of its core values was achieving wealth and welfare for everybody. As a result, the country became a welfare state, focusing on society's interests in governmental administration. The Indonesian national view, as

¹ The author is associated with the Faculty of Law, Universitas Diponegoro, Jalan Dr. Antonius Suroyo, Tembalang, Semarang City, Central Java 50275, Indonesia. She is also the corresponding author, and she can be reached at hennyjuliani@lecturer.undip.ac.id

² The author is associated with the Faculty of Law, Universitas Diponegoro, Jalan Dr. Antonius Suroyo, Tembalang, Semarang City, Central Java 50275, Indonesia. He can be reached at kadekwibawa@lecturer.undip.ac.id

embodied in Pancasila, especially the fifth principle demanding social fairness, provides the moral foundation for taking action to achieve these aims (Dimiyati et al., 2021).

This makes public policy crucial to fighting stunting. Close law-public policy relationships yield actual answers (Kim, 2014). Public policy sometimes produces legal products like laws, and sometimes, legal products require public policy backing, for instance, mandating universal healthcare, including routine child development exams in primary care. The Indonesian elected president and vice president's 2024 free lunch program plan illustrates this link. Tempo estimates that 82.9 million Indonesian schoolchildren and pesantren students will benefit from this program. This program's Rp 450 trillion finance was simulated and planned by the Prabowo-Gibran Expert Team. Malnutrition among schoolchildren is the main focus of this program. This initiative is intended to minimise stunting and improve Indonesian children's welfare. Breaking the stunting cycle and realising the welfare vision since independence is possible (Rahima & Maharso, 2024).

This policy has merits and cons when suggested. This program is criticised for not solving childhood stunting. It cannot be handled in school. It is too late to provide lunch. For those opposed, pregnant women should receive nourishment so treatments can be made early or in the child's first 1,000 days. Stunting can also have enduring effects on a child's development. Thus, feeding kids lunch is too late to combat stunting (Muarabagja, 2024).

However, supporters consider this free lunch program as the government's dedication to the constitution's welfare goals and the state's moral foundation, social justice. Students receive nutritious meals to address their fundamental requirements and build a solid basis for outstanding education. Investing in children's well-being should boost human development and economic progress. However, implementing this strategy takes time and effort. In addition to funding concerns, this program's effectiveness and efficiency in attaining its aims are questioned. For instance, this program should provide free meals momentarily and promote lasting changes in children's eating habits and nutrition. This program must be implemented and monitored using comprehensive methodologies to maximise welfare goals. Recognising that public policy must change with the environment and society is equally crucial. Civil society, academics, and field practitioners must evaluate this program's effectiveness periodically. The state can maximise this program's resources and ensure its sound effects on all social classes.

This free lunch program needs a good policy direction based on these difficulties. The introduction of participatory justice is one way. Participatory justice results from government, commercial sector, civil society, and community

participation in public policymaking. Thus, this study examines Indonesia's participatory justice-based free lunch program planning.

Research Methods

This study employs a normative juridical approach with a descriptive-analytical research framework to address the research topics. The normative juridical approach involves analysing literature or secondary data relevant to the study of law (Natalis et al., 2023). The research will analyse literature materials, including legal restrictions, explicitly focusing on the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945 as the primary basis.

The study employs a range of literature sources, including primary and secondary materials. Primary materials consist of legal documents like laws and related regulations, whereas secondary materials comprise sources such as study findings, journals, books, websites, and other important information for this research. This method allows researchers to thoroughly comprehend the legal structure regulating the research topic and examine how the law is interpreted and implemented in specific situations.

Researchers perform the data-collecting procedure by gathering and examining relevant documents and sources of information through literature studies. This method enables researchers to tap into a variety of perspectives and viewpoints present in the literature, enhancing the study performed.

Moreover, qualitative data analysis approaches are utilised in this research. The qualitative technique enables researchers to comprehend the context, meaning, and interpretation of the gathered data and recognise patterns, themes, and links among pertinent concepts or variables. The analysis is thorough, considering multiple views and interpretations found in the examined literature.

Results and Discussion

Empowering Democracy: The Interplay of Public Policy, Direct Democracy, and Participatory Justice in Modern Governance

Governmental entities are essential in overseeing and controlling society's social, economic, and political aspects (Rose & Miller, 1992). The primary role of government is to create public policies, including laws, regulations, policy initiatives, and financing priorities, to steer the course of national development (Porter et al., 2018). Public policy is the main instrument governments utilise to accomplish specific objectives established for the well-being of society (Howlett & Cashore, 2014).

Upon closer analysis of public policy, it is clear that it is shaped not just by internal governmental procedures but also by the active involvement of individuals

and groups in society. This method, which frequently includes education, advocacy, and mobilisation of interest groups, shows that public policy development entails intricate and constantly evolving processes. Policymaking processes differ based on the government type, but all involve interest groups competing to persuade politicians in alignment with their interests (Kilpatrick, 2000; Rasmussen & Reher, 2023).

The formulation of public policy is significantly influenced by law. Law, whether through specific legislation or more significant principles in the constitution or international law, is vital in shaping governmental policy and service delivery to the public. The law can impact the treatment and assistance provided to victims of violence against women. Legislation governs the distribution of finances for programs and projects, establishes government spending priorities, and guides national development (Kilpatrick, 2000).

Understanding the function of direct democracy and the process of public policy formulation is essential in modern government. This notion highlights that communities possess the ability and readiness to self-govern, which is the core of the principle of self-governance in democratic systems. Direct democracy is based on the concept that citizens have the authority to create public policy and that every citizen is equal in the law and politics (Bühlmann, 2013). Direct democracy safeguards freedom of expression and the right to express opinions on public policy. It upholds the principle that the majority should not suppress the voice of the minority while requiring the minority to abide by the majority's decision until it changes (Matusaka, 2019).

Despite the promise of active public engagement in decision-making, direct democracy still faces problems and restrictions. Obtaining consensus among society can be challenging, particularly in the presence of substantial divergences of opinion among citizens. Managing conflicts and maintaining conformity with collective choices can be challenging due to the complexity of modern and diverse civilisations (Krane & Marshall, 2003).

It is crucial to remember that administration by the people, whether through direct or indirect democracy, necessitates adherence to set regulations in all situations. Public policy creation and implementation are legitimate only when the proper procedures are followed (Hanberger, 2003). This highlights the need to avoid the misuse of political authority and ensure it is limited by a system of just and democratic regulations and processes (Krane & Marshall, 2003).

Public policy and direct democracy are closely linked concepts that substantially impact the course of development and governance in contemporary society. Comprehending the intricacies and processes involved in public policy

development and the fundamentals of direct democracy is essential for establishing an inclusive and enduring governance structure (Krane & Marshall, 2003).

The primary focus when examining public policy and democracy is the ability to be involved. We aim to explore how the process can maintain fairness, which ultimately introduces the concept of participatory justice.

At first, Participatory Justice was centred on being a novel method of dispute resolution, like mediation, that emphasised voluntarism, secrecy, and the involvement of all parties in managing conflicts. Over time, Participatory Justice has expanded to include a stronger emphasis on education, empowerment, and capacity building for a wide range of individuals, including communities, workers, politicians, and government officials (Foddai, 2016).

The model of participatory justice advocates for both inclusion and socioeconomic equality. The adversarial/disposition system relies on law enforcement, which frequently favours the interests of individuals with higher levels of education and financial means. Stephens (Stephens, 1996) asserts that many individuals who participate as actors in a particular event, be it civil or criminal, have already experienced victimisation, thus necessitating a thorough examination of each person's circumstances. Stahn (2015) stresses the significance of involving victims in the reparations process to ascertain their genuine belief on whether the perpetrators of crimes against them should be incarcerated. Participatory justice, originally popular in Scandinavia, Asia, and Africa, has been introduced to the United States (Christie, 1981).

Participatory justice is a crucial mechanism to monitor state power and validate the rule of law. If citizens have confidence in their capacity to participate in creating and assessing laws, public agreement upholds the rule of law. In the absence of agreement, the government must resort to legal documents and the fear of punishment to uphold order; the government has the authority to implement censorship and monitoring. The law transforms from a justice tool to a bureaucratic, institutional, and dehumanised governance mechanism. Participatory justice decreases societal cynicism towards the law, diminishing the state's tendency to resort to excessively punitive measures in response to this cynicism.

This model tries to improve equitable involvement. When evaluating a qualitative model, it is essential to consider how effectively it enables fair participation by solution designers and end-users in its practical applications. Fair participation refers to efforts that enhance involvement in the social system to ensure that all participants view their engagement as advantageous (Bello-Bravo et al., 2022). Rawls (1971) pointed out that this objective does not provide uniform advantages for all individuals or that every participant receives precisely what they desire. Rawls theory of justice as fairness summarises the core concept of liberalism,

emphasising that collaboration should be equitable for all citizens who are viewed as free and equal.

Participation in the constitutional setting is crucial in transforming theoretical concepts of freedom and equality into practical political freedom and equality, sometimes known as “equal political freedom”. All citizens have equal rights to participate in the political decision-making process and influence its results in this concept. This principle highlights that political freedom involves the capacity to impact the results of democratic processes, while political equality refers to a fair distribution of possibilities to influence those decisions. Although the principle of participation does not require participatory democracy, Rawls believes it can be achieved in a representative democracy if citizens can influence decision-making through voting and public discussions.

Moreover, participation can be explained by differentiating between formal and substantive aspects. This principle’s formal dimension focuses on ensuring an equitable allocation of opportunities to impact political decisions, encompassing the principles of one person, one vote, and equal access to public office. It is essential to recognise that the formal aspect must be considered about the substantive aspect, including fundamental concepts like freedom of speech and organisation within a functioning democracy. All participants must perceive the allocation of gains resulting from their engagement as fair, considering the challenges of distributive justice in every situation.

Participatory justice posits that a public policymaking process’s circumstances, actors, and impacts are very distinctive. Participatory approaches aim to achieve justice without establishing a standardised set of rules (Bello-Bravo et al., 2022). Although not universally applicable, utilising a method centred on conversation and consensus-building can be valuable in a broader range of public policymaking procedures than previously employed. Participatory justice necessitates that all parties involved willingly participate and have adequate ability to engage in discussions and negotiations fully. Each participatory justice procedure is tailored to suit local conditions and individual circumstances (Gururaj et al., 2021).

Public participation is engaging anyone who could be impacted by or have an interest in a decision through official or unofficial means. Public participation aims to empower people to engage in the decision-making process and have their voices heard, thereby impacting the final decision. Public involvement is based on power distribution and is seen as a manifestation of democratic principles. Policy decisions are more genuine when they involve a wide range of impacted persons rather than being made just by policymakers (Lee & Sun, 2018).

Several significant themes arise in participatory theories, emphasising the complexity and complexities present. Legitimacy is a primary theme. Public participation legitimacy is frequently debated due to PR, procedural fairness, sufficient representation, and decision results. If public engagement is not considered legitimate, it can cause societal alienation from the government and hinder the implementation of policy choices.

Legitimacy can be acquired and assessed through several theoretical perspectives. One factor is the quality of information flow in democratic conversations, requiring evident participation and rational arguments. Another consideration is the legitimacy of policy decisions, which pertains to whether the decisions align with the standards of sound policy, such as justice, efficiency, or technological feasibility. Diverse opinions are crucial for guaranteeing fairness in the participation process. Fair and sensible procedures increase the likelihood of decisions being accepted.

Within public engagement, inclusion and exclusion are significant considerations. An essential area for improvement in participation is ensuring the involvement of a wide range of interests, including typically ignored groups. Participation processes often lack inclusivity, typically only involving gathering input or permitting the expression of other perspectives. Examining key stakeholders and effectively handling conflicts and power dynamics are essential to ensure the inclusion of underrepresented and marginalised groups in decision-making processes. Community participation also prompts inquiries into the significance of expertise in the engagement process. Public involvement frequently prompts worries regarding the substantive reasonableness of the ensuing decisions. Many policymaking processes prioritise expert information above lay knowledge. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that empathic understanding and experiences shared through public engagement also play a vital role in decision-making.

Given these fundamental elements, it is clear that public engagement is a complex process. Policymakers and practitioners must address the problems and complexities of guaranteeing fair, inclusive, and genuine public involvement. We must first understand and solve these barriers to make public engagement effective in ensuring policies reflect society's different needs and interests.

Empowering Communities: Toward Inclusive and Participatory Policymaking for Free School Lunch Programs and Addressing Stunting

Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka plan to introduce free lunch and milk programs in schools and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), as well as provide nutritional support for toddlers and pregnant women to combat stunting, in line with their vision, mission, and programs for the 2024-2029 term. Stunting is a significant and urgent issue that necessitates prompt and thorough government involvement to protect the quality of human resources and maintain a high standard of living. This effort includes supplying daily meals to preschoolers, primary schools, secondary schools, and *pesantrens*. Nutritional assistance will be provided to pregnant women and young children throughout Indonesia to improve health results and bolster household finances. The program aims to provide more than 80 million individuals with comprehensive coverage by 2029.

The Indonesian government has made the acceleration of reducing stunting a top priority on a national level. The goal is to decrease stunting to 14 per cent by 2024. The Ministry of Health data shows that the national stunting rate dropped to 21.6 per cent in 2022, a fall of 2.8 per cent from the 24.4 per cent rate in 2021 (Indraswari, 2023).

Stunting, indicated by a low height-for-age (HAZ) z-score, starts before birth, leading to low birth weight and continues with hindered growth in the first two years of life, usually becoming permanent after that. Although there has been a worldwide decrease in stunting prevalence from 1990 to 2018, it still impacts 21.3% of children under five globally. Stunting primarily affects low-income countries since it is linked to poverty, childhood diseases, and insufficient nutrition. The World Health Assembly and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals target a 40% decrease in childhood stunting by 2025, ultimately striving to eliminate all types of malnutrition in children (Roediger et al., 2020).

Multiple nations have effectively decreased the occurrence of stunting in children by implementing treatments that target socioeconomic and geographical inequalities, both inside and outside the healthcare system. The approaches encompass enhancements in maternal education, nutrition, maternity and newborn care, and fertility management. To reduce childhood stunting, a thorough strategy includes diagnostic evaluations, engagement with stakeholders, and the execution of nutrition interventions in both health and non-health sectors (Bhutta et al., 2020).

Under Law No. 17 of 2023 on Health, initiatives to combat stunting are included in family planning health. Family planning health initiatives focus on controlling pregnancies, promoting the birth of healthy, intellectual, and high-quality offspring, and decreasing maternal and newborn mortality rates. These endeavours are conducted during the reproductive stage to guarantee that all

persons have access to family planning services. In collaboration with the community, the central and regional governments are accountable for executing family planning services by standardised, safe, high-quality, and accessible criteria.

Addressing nutritional requirements aims to enhance the nutritional quality of individuals and communities. This involves enhancing dietary variety, providing access to high-quality nutrition services, and establishing early warning systems for food and nutrition risks. The task of ensuring fair and reasonably priced food distribution lies with the national and regional governments per applicable rules. Education and precise nutritional information are shared with the public, and cooperative actions are taken to reach the best nutritional status. This includes surveillance, teaching, management, and nutritional supplement interventions aimed at different demographic groups, such as pregnant and breastfeeding women, newborns, school-age children, adolescent females, and working women.

Community health development, particularly in addressing stunting, necessitates health initiatives, resources, and management to enhance public health to the highest standard. This should be based on welfare, equity, non-discrimination principles, participation, and sustainability in developing high-quality and productive human resources. The goals include reducing disparities, improving health services, enhancing health resilience, ensuring well-being, and promoting the nation's competitiveness to meet national development objectives.

The "participatory principle", as defined in Law No. 17 of 2023, refers to the active involvement of the community in health improvement. The community engages in various forms and stages of health development, individually and collectively, to expedite attaining optimal public health. Participation involves active and creative engagement. Community involvement in health initiatives aims to enhance public health by engaging in activities such as implementing health programs, supporting health resources, researching health technology development, creating national health strategy policies, providing guidance and supervision, and other forms of community participation. The Central Government and Regional Governments collaborate to organise participation.

When creating a free lunch policy based on participatory justice, it is crucial to incorporate people most impacted by a decision in the decision-making process, whether it involves legal judgments or policy creation. Authentic and significant involvement in participatory policymaking vary significantly across various situations and can be categorised on a spectrum. The continuum described in the FAO document consists of seven distinct stages. Initially, stakeholders may contribute voluntarily or offer advice on pre-established programs and projects. Stakeholders are then notified about their rights, obligations, and options, promoting a culture of shared information. Consultation allows stakeholders to

interact, provide input, and voice thoughts and concerns, but decisions usually lie with other entities. Collaboration and consensus-building require parties to discuss their viewpoints and establish priorities, usually with external guidance. As participatory engagement advances, stakeholders become more involved in decision-making concerning policies, project designs, and implementations. A partnership forms when stakeholders work together as equals to achieve common goals. Empowerment happens when control over decision-making and resources is transferred to stakeholders. Participatory policymaking can be a standalone event for a particular policy initiative or be part of a broader approach to participatory government. Established committees consisting of community groups and society people can help maintain continuous involvement. Participatory policymaking can encompass activities at many levels, from local to international, and include participation in policy design, monitoring, assessment, and change (Rietbergen-McCracken, 2017).

The methods used in participatory policymaking are crucial for including stakeholders and promoting inclusive decision-making processes. Information-sharing technologies help distribute draft policy documents or progress updates through many channels, including traditional media like radio and television and electronic platforms like websites and email. Interactive methods such as information kiosks in public locations and telephone information lines can increase accessibility. Working together with civil society organisations improves the spread of information, as citizen groups and unions are crucial in communicating with their members. Consultation tools include various methods such as roundtable talks, public hearings, computerised surveys, and feedback mechanisms. These technologies allow stakeholders to express their ideas, concerns, and suggestions, ensuring their viewpoints are considered during decision-making.

Furthermore, continuous consultation endeavours, such as citizen panels and advisory groups, offer continued involvement and discussion opportunities. Advanced involvement technologies at higher levels of the participation spectrum enable citizens and communities to influence policy agendas and suggest alternatives. Although the final decision lies with the government, these methods help to enable significant engagement and cooperation. Examples include consensus conferences, citizen juries, and participatory vision formulation, among other methods. NGOs and external stakeholders frequently introduce strategies like campaigns, partnerships, and policy research to enhance the debate and provide varied perspectives in the policymaking process. Using these tools highlights the significance of inclusive and participatory methods in developing policies that represent the needs and desires of society in its entirety (Cadei & Deluigi, 2016).

Everyone functions as both a producer and recipient of knowledge, although each individual possesses unique cognitive frameworks shaped by prior experiences. The receiver selects important material based on personal background, interests, and experiences. Personal context and data serve as the foundational elements for developing opinions necessary for engagement. The initial phase of authentic engagement involves exchanging information and conversing about present subjects with people. The next phase of authentic engagement involves endorsing current programs and activities, which encompasses decision-making and voting, the most traditional form of participation. Self-organisation is the highest level of engagement, involving bottom-up self-management of the social system in its fundamental process. The direct involvement of individuals directly impacted by specific policies or programs is crucial in designing justice-oriented free lunch programs to prioritise participation. Public participation is more than just offering feedback; it includes including the community in the decision-making process. One consideration is incorporating community involvement at different stages of program development and execution, from identifying issues to assessing results. Participatory justice enables stakeholders to influence the development of policies and initiatives that will impact their lives (Fuchs et al., 2006).

By actively involving people, the solutions created are expected to match the community's needs and desires better. This can also bolster the credibility of policies and programs among the public since people perceive the policies as a product of their participation in the decision-making process. When creating a free lunch policy, participatory justice-based planning necessitates actively engaging several stakeholders, such as the government, educational institutions, civil organisations, and the general public. Creating consultation forums and conversations between the government and the community is essential to guarantee that the community's needs and aspirations are accurately reflected in the development and execution of the program. Participation in policymaking can vary and be illustrated on a continuum displaying various levels of engagement. Participation can range from voluntary donations to empowerment, reflecting the extent of community involvement in decision-making. Authentic and significant involvement in developing the free lunch policy is crucial for the program's effectiveness and longevity (Fuchs et al., 2006).

Moreover, the execution of free lunch programs necessitates utilising diverse participation techniques and methods. Utilising traditional and electronic media, engaging in discussion forums and polls, and actively involving the community in decision-making are critical for ensuring widespread and meaningful community engagement. Participatory justice significantly influences democratic and inclusive government in the broader scope. Involving the community in

decision-making ensures that the policies and programs created more accurately reflect the community's interests and goals. This can bolster public trust in the administration and reinforce the legitimacy of the entire political system.

Conclusion

Public policy is the primary tool used by the government to attain societal welfare objectives, and its development process should involve input from many stakeholders in society. Community involvement is crucial in direct democracy but comes with difficulties and intricacies.

Participatory justice guarantees equitable involvement from all parties impacted by a policy or program. This paradigm fosters both inclusiveness and socioeconomic equality. Engaging stakeholders directly will result in solutions addressing the community's needs more effectively. When applying this idea, it is essential to consider the constraints and intricacies to ensure successful involvement. The evaluation of the free lunch program planning shows specific actions taken to address the problem of stunting in Indonesia. For this program to be effective and fair, it is essential to have direct involvement from those impacted, such as the general public, educational institutions, and civil society organisations. Involvement highlights the necessity of creating consultation forums and exchanges between the government and the community to guarantee equitable representation in the development and execution of the program.

However, this study also needs to emphasise difficulties in executing participatory justice. Multiple aspects must be considered, such as legitimacy in public participation and inclusion/exclusion in decision-making. Adequate and equitable participation relies on conflict management, power dynamics, and the role of knowledge in participation.

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