



Strategies for Inclusivity and Accessibility of Public Services for the Elderly in the Era of Digitalization (A Study at the Kwadungan District Office, Ngawi Regency)

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyze the strategies for inclusive public service delivery and service accessibility for older adults in the digitalization era at the Kwadungan District Office, Ngawi Regency. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed to explore how public services accommodate the needs of older adults. The informants included the Head of the District, the District Secretary, the Head of the Public Service Section, digital service operators, and older adults as service users. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using an interactive model involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings reveal that inclusivity has been promoted through public consultation forums, community participation, collaboration with village governments, special assistance, equal treatment, non-discriminatory practices, and accountability mechanisms involving complaints, feedback, and information transparency. Service accessibility has also improved through age-friendly facilities, priority services, clear communication, assistance with digital services, and flexible service delivery. However, challenges remain, including limited digital literacy, declining physical abilities, mobility constraints, and inadequate facilities for older adults and persons with disabilities. The study concludes that public services in Kwadungan District have become more inclusive and adaptive, although continuous improvements in digital literacy, service infrastructure, and human-centered innovations are needed to ensure accessible, equitable, and high-quality public services for older adults.

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INTRODUCTION

The advancement of digital technology has brought about significant changes in the delivery of public services in Indonesia. Governments at various levels are now implementing digital systems to enhance service efficiency, transparency, and accountability. The digitalization of public services—ranging from online applications and integrated service portals to electronic-based administrative systems—is expected to accelerate service processes and expand the reach of beneficiaries among the public. However, alongside these advancements, new challenges regarding inclusion and accessibility have emerged, particularly for the elderly. The era of digitalization has transformed the way the government delivers public services through the use of information and communication technology. Digitalization promises greater convenience, transparency, service speed, and bureaucratic efficiency. Nevertheless, the impact of this digital transformation has not been uniform across all segments of society.

Empirical findings indicate that the digital divide remains significant among older adults; despite the increasing availability of digital technology, access and usage within this demographic lag behind, limiting their potential to utilize healthcare and other digital services (Rocío Fernández-Piqueras et al., 2025). Data reveals that the elderly face a serious phenomenon of digital exclusion. In Europe, although over 76% of the population aged 65 and older has internet access, only about 18.74% actively use digital services—including public services—highlighting a significant gap between access and effective usage among the elderly (Ine,

Christine, 2026). In Indonesia, existing data shows that internet usage among the elderly remains very low, with only approximately 8.83% of older adults (aged ≥ 50 years) actively accessing digital technology (Kominfo, 2021).

Similar issues are reflected in various studies and digital literacy programs for the elderly. Barriers such as limited digital literacy, low technological skills, physiological constraints (e.g., visual or motor impairments), and a lack of social support have hindered older adults from independently accessing public digital services (Mazaya Qanita and Ranu Iskandar, 2025). Case studies within Indonesian communities suggest that learning methods not tailored to the specific characteristics of the elderly contribute to the digital literacy gap (Fitriana Tjiptasari, 2025). Conceptually, beyond the access gap, there is a "usability divide" dimension; this emphasizes that the primary issue for the elderly is not merely access to technology, but rather the design of the technology itself—such as interface design, user processes, and application language—which often fails to meet their cognitive and motor capability needs (Ine, Christine, 2026). This broadens the understanding that digitalization, if implemented without an inclusive strategy, can exacerbate inequalities in public service delivery.

For the elderly, the consequences extend beyond a mere digital divide to include potential social exclusion and negative impacts on health and social engagement. International research indicates that digital exclusion among the elderly is associated with social isolation, declining mental health, and limited access to various services, including healthcare and social services (Gunnes et al., 2024). Given this phenomenon, the rapid digitalization of public services must be coupled with strategies prioritizing inclusivity and accessibility to ensure the elderly are not left behind by the benefits of digital transformation. This situation underscores the urgent need for academic study and policy analysis regarding inclusivity strategies for the elderly within the context of digital public services.

While previous studies have examined digital transformation in public services, they have largely focused on enhancing efficiency and general public satisfaction. There remains a dearth of in-depth research on digital inclusion strategies and policies specifically for the elderly. This creates a research gap that must be addressed to understand how inclusivity strategies can be implemented so that digital public services truly reach all segments of society, including the elderly—a group particularly vulnerable to digital exclusion. Against this backdrop, this study aims to analyze inclusivity and accessibility strategies for public services for the elderly in the digital era, while also formulating policy recommendations to achieve equitable, socially-oriented public services for all citizens.

METHODOLOGY RESEARCH

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. This approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies for inclusivity and accessibility in public services for the elderly in the digital era, and to describe the implementation of these services based on actual conditions in the field. The research was conducted at the Kwadungan District Office in Ngawi Regency, a public service provider at the district level that has implemented various forms of digital-based services.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling—a technique based on the criterion that individuals possess the knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in either the provision or receipt of public services (Sugiyono, 2020). The informants included the Kwadungan District Head, the District Secretary, the Head of the Public Services Section, digital service operators, and elderly community members as service recipients. This composition of informants was chosen to ensure the data obtained could illustrate the implementation of service strategies from the perspectives of both service providers and service users.

Data collection was carried out using three techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Arikunto, 2010). Observation was conducted to gain insight into the condition of service facilities and infrastructure, service mechanisms, and interactions between staff and the elderly during the service process. In-depth interviews were used to explore information regarding implemented service strategies, challenges encountered, and efforts to improve public service accessibility in the digital era. Meanwhile, documentation was used to supplement the research data with policy documents, standard operating procedures (SOPs), service reports, activity photographs, and other supporting documents relevant to the research focus.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (Sugiyono, 2020), which comprises three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved selecting, categorizing, and simplifying the data in alignment with the research focus. The reduced data were then presented in a narrative format, facilitating the identification of patterns, relationships, and meanings within the research findings. The final stage—drawing conclusions—was an ongoing process throughout the research, involving the verification of obtained data to ensure credible conclusions.

To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from various informants, while technique triangulation was carried out by comparing results from observations, interviews, and documentation. The application of these triangulation methods aimed to enhance the credibility, consistency, and objectivity of the research findings, thereby ensuring the results are scientifically sound and defensible.

RESULTS

1. Public Service Inclusivity Strategy for the Elderly

Research findings indicate that the Kwadungan District Office has implemented various strategies to ensure inclusive public services for the elderly. These strategies involve providing opportunities for the elderly to voice their aspirations and service needs through public consultation forums and outreach activities organized by the district government. Community participation serves as a means to ensure that the services provided align with the users' needs. Furthermore, the district government maintains intensive communication with the community through coordination with village administrations and relevant officials. This collaboration aims to facilitate the dissemination of information regarding service procedures, including updates resulting from the implementation of digital service systems. Such cooperation also helps reach elderly individuals who face limitations in accessing information independently.

During service delivery, staff provide assistance to the elderly throughout the administrative process. This support is particularly directed at those who struggle to understand service procedures or the use of digital-based services. The research also reveals that services are administered based on principles of equality and non-discrimination, ensuring that all citizens have equal access to services regardless of age or physical condition. To ensure accountability, the Kwadungan District provides mechanisms for the public to submit complaints, suggestions, and feedback. Information regarding services is also communicated transparently, allowing the public to understand procedures, requirements, and the follow-up actions taken regarding any complaints submitted.

Observations indicate that service staff strive to respond effectively to the needs of the elderly. Elderly individuals who face difficulties filling out forms, understanding administrative requirements, or navigating the service process receive direct assistance from staff. This support is provided from the outset until the service process is complete, ensuring that the elderly can access services without significant obstacles. The staff's communicative and friendly demeanor also fosters a sense of comfort for elderly citizens while they are within the service environment. Interviews with informants reveal that the inclusivity strategy implemented focuses not only on delivering administrative services but also on building public trust in the government. This is evident in the staff's transparency in providing information, their willingness to accept public feedback, and the evaluation of service-related issues raised by service users. These efforts demonstrate the sub-district government's commitment to enhancing the quality of public services, making them more inclusive for all segments of society, particularly the elderly.

2. Public Service Accessibility for the Elderly in the Digitalization Era

Research findings indicate that public service accessibility at the Kwadungan District Office has improved through the provision of facilities that cater to the needs of the elderly. These facilities include priority service lanes, comfortable waiting areas, and services adapted to the physical conditions of older adults. Such facilities make it easier for the elderly to access services safely and comfortably. Regarding service communication, staff members use language that is simple, clear, and easily understood by the elderly. Information is conveyed directly, thereby assisting those who are not accustomed to using digital technology. Furthermore, staff provide assistance to the elderly when accessing digital-based services, such as data entry and electronic administrative processes.

Nevertheless, the study identified several obstacles in the delivery of public services to the elderly. Key challenges include low digital literacy, limited mobility due to age, and facilities and infrastructure that are not yet fully optimized for the elderly or persons with disabilities. Consequently, some elderly individuals still require assistance from staff or family members to access digital public services. In addition to these challenges, observations revealed that certain facilities require upgrades to ensure optimal service accessibility. Some elderly individuals expressed that using digital services remains difficult due to limited experience with electronic devices. This situation results in longer service processing times unless accompanied by assistance from service staff.

Interview results also indicate that staff have endeavored to tailor service processes to the physical conditions and capabilities of individual elderly citizens. When elderly individuals encounter difficulties with reading, writing, or operating digital devices, staff provide step-by-step explanations and assist with administrative procedures in accordance with applicable regulations. Overall, these efforts demonstrate that public services at the Kwadungan District Office are moving toward greater accessibility and adaptability to the needs of the elderly population. Nevertheless, improving public digital literacy and providing facilities that are more accommodating to the elderly and persons with disabilities remain areas requiring attention to enhance the quality of public services in the future.

DISCUSSION

1. Public Service Inclusivity Strategy for the Elderly

Research findings indicate that the public service inclusivity strategy in Kwadungan District has led to services that are more responsive to the needs of the elderly. This is evidenced by the provision of opportunities for the elderly to voice their aspirations, intensive communication between the government and the community, the provision of assistance throughout the service process, and the application of principles of equality and accountability. Although the participation of the elderly in formal forums remains limited, the district government has established various communication channels that enable them to remain involved in conveying their needs and evaluating services.

These findings align with the concept of participatory governance, which emphasizes the importance of community involvement in public service delivery. Furthermore, collaborative practices involving the district government, village governments, families, and the community demonstrate the application of a collaborative public service approach to enhance service quality. This study also reinforces the findings of Pratama and Dewi (2022), which state that inclusive public services require community participation and support for groups with limited digital literacy. Additionally, the results are consistent with the research of Sari and Nugroho (2021), which identifies information transparency, complaint mechanisms, and responsiveness to community aspirations as crucial indicators for achieving public service accountability.

The implementation of this inclusivity strategy demonstrates that the sub-district government is not merely focused on meeting service standards but also strives to create services that take into account the specific characteristics and needs of vulnerable groups. This approach reflects a paradigm shift in public service—moving away from a primary focus on administrative procedures toward a model that is centered on the needs of the community (citizen-centered service). Consequently, the services provided emphasize not only efficiency but also fairness and equality in accessing service rights.

Nevertheless, this study indicates that the inclusivity strategy requires further strengthening, particularly regarding the engagement of the elderly in service planning and evaluation processes. More active participation can provide insights into the actual needs of the elderly, thereby ensuring that service policies are more effectively targeted. Therefore, the sub-district government needs to expand avenues for participation—utilizing both face-to-face forums and digital platforms that are simple and easily accessible to the elderly—to make the delivery of public services more participatory and sustainable.

The study's findings also indicate that the success of inclusivity strategies is influenced not only by implemented policies but also by the commitment of public officials to provide services that adapt to the needs of vulnerable groups. The assistance provided to the elderly during the service process reflects the application of the equity principle in public service—specifically, tailoring treatment to the service recipient's circumstances to ensure equal access for all citizens. This approach is crucial in the digital era, given that not all members of the public possess the same capacity to utilize information technology.

These results align with the study by Isma et al. (2026), which concluded that inclusive public service requires a combination of digital technology utilization and direct assistance for vulnerable groups to prevent disparities in service access. Furthermore, the successful implementation of inclusive public services is heavily influenced by the capacity of public officials, communication with the community, and collaboration among stakeholders to deliver services centered on user needs. These findings reinforce the conclusion that the inclusivity strategy in Kwadungan District is on the right track, although it still requires strengthening in areas such as elderly participation and digital-based service innovation.

2. Public Service Accessibility in the Digital Era

Research results indicate that public service accessibility in Kwadungan District has improved through the provision of priority services, the use of easily understandable language, assistance with digital services, and flexible service procedures. However, accessibility is not yet fully optimal due to limitations regarding disability-friendly physical facilities, accessible information media, and digital service systems that lack supporting features for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

These findings suggest that the digital transformation of public services is still in the adaptation phase; consequently, face-to-face services and staff assistance remain essential for the elderly. This situation aligns with the concepts of digital accessibility and universal design, which emphasize that service systems must be accessible to the entire community without barriers. The study also supports research by Herwanto et al. (2023), which concluded that the digitalization of public services is not yet fully inclusive of vulnerable groups, making hybrid service models necessary. Furthermore, this study is consistent with Riri, Hapsa, and Qibtiyah (2023), who stated that system ease of use, user-friendly interface design, and accessibility features are crucial factors in enhancing digital service access for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

The research findings indicate that the success of public service digitalization depends not only on the availability of technology but also on the community's ability to utilize it. Low digital literacy among some elderly individuals means that digital services cannot be optimally utilized without staff assistance. Therefore, digital transformation must be balanced with efforts to build community capacity through continuous education and support, ensuring that the benefits of digitalization are experienced equitably.

Beyond improving digital literacy, enhancing accessibility requires support through more inclusive facilities and infrastructure. Providing dedicated pathways, handrails, and easy-to-read information signage, alongside developing digital systems with accessibility features, will foster greater independence among the elderly when accessing public services. Consequently, efforts to improve accessibility should focus not only on leveraging technology but also on creating a service environment that is safe, comfortable, easily accessible, and capable of equitably accommodating the needs of all segments of society.

In addition to the technological aspect, this study reveals that public service accessibility is heavily influenced by organizational readiness to provide an elderly-friendly service environment. Digitalization cannot fully replace face-to-face services, as many elderly individuals still require assistance in understanding procedures and navigating service applications. Therefore, a hybrid public service model—combining digital and conventional services—emerges as a relevant approach to ensure that all community groups enjoy equal access to services.

Digital transformation in public services must be accompanied by efforts to boost public digital literacy and provide inclusive infrastructure to prevent service disparities for vulnerable groups. Public service accessibility is measured not only by the availability of digital technology but also by procedural simplicity, access to information, disability-friendly physical facilities, and the competence of officials in providing assistance to the public. Thus, initiatives to improve service accessibility in Kwadungan District should focus on developing more elderly-friendly digital service systems, upgrading service facilities, and strengthening human resource capacity to ensure public services become more inclusive and sustainable.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that: An inclusive public service strategy for the elderly has been implemented through community participation in policy formulation, dialogue and collaboration between the government and citizens, recognition of social diversity, and democratic accountability. However, formal participation by the elderly remains limited, often occurring indirectly through village officials or family caregivers. Efforts to ensure public service accessibility in the digital era have been commendable, particularly regarding physical, informational, digital, and procedural access. Nevertheless, supporting facilities—such as wheelchair ramps, Braille services, screen-reading features, and elderly-friendly digital systems—remain suboptimal; consequently, service delivery still relies heavily on staff assistance. While digital-based public services have been implemented in Kwadungan District, they do not yet allow for full independence among the elderly due to limited digital literacy and a lack of accessibility features within the service systems. Overall, the quality of public services in Kwadungan District is quite good, characterized by responsive staff, relatively fast service, and priority treatment for the elderly. However, further improvements are needed regarding technology, facilities for persons with disabilities, and the creation of more inclusive service systems.

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