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Policy Analysis on The Removal of Age Limits in Indonesian Labor Recruitment: A Public Policy Perspective

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Abstract: The removal of age limits in recruitment processes is a vital issue in achieving justice and equal opportunity for all citizens. Although the government has not yet issued a formal regulation explicitly abolishing age limits, several non-regulatory policy instruments, including the Circular Letter of the Minister of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia Number M/06/HK.04/V/2025 concerning the Prohibition of Discrimination in the Labor Recruitment Process, indicate a policy shift toward more inclusive recruitment practices. This study aims to analyze the dynamics of the policy to abolish age limits from a public policy perspective, including agenda setting, policy instruments, and public readiness for its implementation. The research uses a qualitative descriptive approach with document analysis and public policy theory. The results show that the policy of abolishing age limits is currently at the "soft policy" stage, but it holds great potential to drive behavioral changes among employers, increase public literacy, and strengthen the cross-age vocational training ecosystem. This study provides important implications for formulating more comprehensive policies, both in the form of legislation and labor competency improvement programs.

Keyword: Public Policy, Age Discrimination, Employment, Recruitment, Soft Policy

INTRODUCTION

Age-based discrimination (ageism) in recruitment processes is a systemic global issue. This practice not only perpetuates social injustice but also hinders the optimal utilization of human resource potential amid increasingly complex economic dynamics and competition. The phenomenon of population ageing has compelled businesses to reassess their human resource management strategies, particularly in fostering a workforce that is adaptive and sustainable. The OECD (2020) emphasizes that workforce age diversification is not merely aimed at increasing labor supply but also contributes significantly to enhancing organizational adaptability and resilience.

In Indonesia, age restrictions in job vacancy advertisements remain widespread, despite the existence of normative legal protections under Law Number 13 of 2003 on Manpower. This situation reflects a gap between macro-level regulations and micro-level organizational

recruitment practices. Such a discrepancy has been one of the driving factors behind the issuance of the Circular Letter of the Minister of Manpower Number M/06/HK.04/V/2025, which prohibits discrimination in recruitment processes including age-based discrimination except for positions that require specific physical characteristics or highly specialized competencies.

From a public policy perspective, the emergence of this policy can be analyzed using Kingdon's (2011) Multiple Streams Framework. The policy to eliminate age limits in recruitment entered the government agenda through the convergence of three key streams: the problem stream, marked by rising unemployment among productive-age workers aged 35 and above; the policy stream, emphasizing the urgency of optimizing the demographic dividend and utilizing experienced labor; and the political stream, reflected in growing public pressure and digital discourse surrounding discriminatory practices in the labor market. The convergence of these streams opened a policy window that enabled ageism to gain serious attention on the national agenda.

The selection of a Circular Letter as the policy instrument indicates the use of a soft policy instrument. According to Howlett and Ramesh (2003), soft policy instruments are non-binding and operate through mechanisms of persuasion, guidance, and information dissemination rather than regulatory coercion. Nevertheless, such instruments hold strategic value as directional signals for national labor policy and as a foundation for potential regulatory strengthening in the future. However, the effectiveness of soft policy instruments is highly dependent on the readiness of implementing actors and policy recipients at the operational level.

The transition toward an age-inclusive recruitment system cannot be achieved through administrative directives alone. Effective policy implementation requires comprehensive public readiness, involving both job seekers and employers. Workers across age groups must possess comparable competitiveness through enhanced technical competencies, digital literacy, and adaptive work ethics in response to technological change. Concurrently, the government plays a strategic role in strengthening the job training ecosystem and vocational education, particularly through reskilling and upskilling programs for middle-aged and older workers.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the policy of eliminating age limits in recruitment from a public policy perspective, focusing on the effectiveness of the policy instrument employed and the challenges of public readiness in supporting an inclusive and sustainable labor market in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method with a document analysis approach. The qualitative descriptive method was selected to provide a profound and systematic overview of the phenomenon of age limit removal within Indonesian employment policies. Document analysis was utilized to critically evaluate regulatory texts and policy instruments to uncover patterns, meanings, and policy directions (Bowen, 2009).

The research stages include

- ❖ **Data Collection:** Data was gathered through documentary studies of primary and secondary sources. Primary sources consist of formal policy instruments such as the Minister of Manpower Circular Letter Number M/06/HK.04/V/2025 and Law Number 13 of 2003 concerning Manpower. Secondary sources include public policy literature (Dye, Kingdon, Howlett & Ramesh), international organization reports (OECD), as well as academic journal articles and official government press releases.
- ❖ **Analytical Framework:** The researcher utilized Kingdon's Agenda Setting theory (2011) to analyze the dynamics of issue emergence and Howlett & Ramesh's Policy Instruments theory (2003) to dissect the "soft policy" characteristics of the instruments employed.

- ❖ **Data Analysis Technique:** Data was analyzed through a process of data reduction, categorization based on research variables (context, content, and implementation), and drawing conclusions from a public policy perspective to address the research objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Agenda Setting Dynamics: The Convergence of the Three Streams (Kingdon)

The analysis of the policy to remove age limits begins by understanding why this issue emerged as a government priority in 2025. Utilizing John W. Kingdon's (2011) Multiple Streams Framework, this phenomenon was triggered by the convergence of three primary streams:

- a. **The Problem Stream:** There has been a rising trend of "structural unemployment" among educated workers aged 35 and older. Data suggests that these individuals are often sidelined not due to a lack of competence, but due to rigid administrative age barriers in recruitment. This represents a failure of the labor market to absorb experienced human capital.
- b. **The Policy Stream:** There is a growing technocratic realization that Indonesia is entering a phase of an aging productive population. This policy serves as a proactive strategy to extend the productive lifespan of the workforce, thereby supporting the national dependency ratio and ensuring stable economic growth through the optimization of multi-generational human resources.
- c. **The Political Stream:** Massive public sentiment across social media platforms indicated widespread dissatisfaction with age discrimination. This social pressure created a "policy window" that was strategically utilized by the Ministry of Manpower to legitimize the removal of age limits through regulatory instruments.

2. Analysis of the Manpower Circular as Soft Policy: Between Persuasion and Normative Change

The issuance of Circular Letter No. M/06/HK.04/V/2025 is an embodiment of a soft policy instrument (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). Descriptively, this policy does not operate through punitive legal mechanisms, but rather through:

- a. **Moral Legitimacy:** The government establishes a new ethical standard, signaling that age limits without functional justification constitute a form of discrimination.
- b. **Shifting Organizational Behavior:** This Circular encourages Human Resources departments to review their recruitment criteria. While not criminally binding, companies tend to comply to protect their "employer branding" and avoid the risks of social audits.
- c. **Educational Function:** The policy acts as a transitional guide for corporations to shift from administrative screening toward skill-based recruitment systems.

3. Public Readiness: Paradigm Transformation and Human Resource Capacity

The removal of age limits presents a "double-edged sword": it opens vast opportunities while simultaneously raising the bar for competitive competence.

- a. **Mastery of Technical Competence and Digital Literacy:** With age limits removed, senior workers will compete directly with "digital natives." Public readiness depends heavily on the success of reskilling and upskilling programs. Digital literacy is no longer a "value-added" bonus but a fundamental requirement for workers of all ages to operate within an Industry 4.0 ecosystem that is increasingly automated and data driven.
- b. **Lifelong Learning Mentality and Intergenerational Collaboration:** The transformation from "school-based learning" to lifelong learning is crucial. The workforce must adopt an adaptive ethic to work effectively in age-diverse teams. Senior workers must be

prepared to be led by younger managers, and conversely, young managers must be capable of strategically managing the experience of senior staff.

- c. **Revitalization of Cross-Age Vocational Training:** The government must reform Vocational Training Centers (BLK) so they no longer focus solely on fresh graduates. Inclusive "career transition" modules are needed for middle-aged workers to ensure they possess competency certifications recognized by the industrial sector.

4. Multi-Stakeholder Synergy: Building a Resilient HR Ecosystem

The effectiveness of this policy is ultimately determined by the synergy of three main pillars in the employment ecosystem:

- a. **Government as Facilitator:** Moving beyond the role of a regulator by providing incentives for companies that implement age diversity and by building vocational infrastructure that is adaptive to global market shifts.
- b. **The Business World as Implementer:** Organizations must redesign their HR Management. Age diversity is proven to increase organizational resilience; it is the junction where the innovative energy of youth meets the "strategic wisdom" of the senior generation.
- c. **The Public as Active Participants:** Job seekers across all age groups must proactively increase their competitiveness through professional certifications and consistent skill updates, ensuring they remain relevant assets to organizations regardless of age.

Through this synergy, the removal of age limits will not only create social justice but also strengthen national economic competitiveness in the face of increasingly complex global challenges.

CONCLUSION

Based on a profound analysis of the policy to remove age limits in Indonesian labor recruitment through a public policy perspective, this study formulates the following descriptive conclusions:

1. **Transformation of the Policy Agenda:** The removal of age limits is not merely a technical employment issue but the result of a strategic convergence between public pressure demanding social justice (the political stream), the economic urgency to anticipate the aging of the productive population (the policy stream), and the reality of rising structural unemployment among those aged 35 and older (the problem stream). The opening of this "policy window" has compelled the government to legitimize the issue within the formal national agenda.
2. **Effectiveness of Soft Policy Instruments:** The implementation of the Minister of Manpower's Circular Letter No. M/06/HK.04/V/2025 serves as an astute transitional step in policy management. As a soft policy instrument, this Circular successfully performs educational and moral persuasion functions for employers without causing drastic regulatory shocks. It plays a pivotal role in deconstructing obsolete, administrative-heavy recruitment norms in favor of a more inclusive, skill-based recruitment culture.
3. **Human Resource Readiness as a Determinant:** The substantive success of this policy depends heavily on the transformation of public capacity. Abolishing age limits necessitates that the workforce adopts a lifelong learning mentality. Without an increase in digital literacy and mastery of adaptive technical competencies, this policy risks becoming a mere formal right without a tangible impact on the absorption of senior workers into the competitive labor market.
4. **Urgency of Organizational Resilience:** From an organizational standpoint, the removal of age limits provides an opportunity to strengthen corporate resilience. The integration

of innovative energy from younger workers with the tactical wisdom and experience of senior staff creates a stable work ecosystem rich in perspective. This synergy is essential for companies navigating the fluctuations of the global economy.

Suggestions

1. For the Government
 - a. Strengthening Legal Foundations: It is recommended that this policy be elevated to a Government Regulation (PP) or integrated into future revisions of the Manpower Law to ensure stronger legal enforcement and sanctions against discriminatory practices.
 - b. Vocational Reform: Infrastructure for training centers should be rebuilt to not only target fresh graduates but also provide specific career transition programs and competency certifications for mid-career workers (ages 35–50).
2. For the Business World
 - a. Recruitment System Audit: Companies should conduct internal audits of their HR management systems to ensure that selection criteria are strictly based on functional job requirements rather than irrelevant age constraints.
 - b. Age-Inclusion Programs: Organizations should develop orientation or training programs that facilitate and support intergenerational collaboration within the workplace.
3. For the Public

Skill Investment: Job seekers must independently and proactively improve their digital literacy and technical skills (reskilling). This ensures they remain competitive and possess high bargaining power in modern recruitment systems that increasingly prioritize skill verification over administrative data.

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