

Elder Care Policy in Indonesia: A Literature and Policy Review of Law No. 13/1998, Bappenas 2021, And Ministry of Social Affairs Plan

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ABSTRACT: Indonesia is undergoing a rapid demographic transition, with a growing proportion of older adults that necessitates responsive and integrated elder care policies. This study critically examines three key national frameworks Law No. 13 of 1998 on Elderly Welfare, the 2021–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) by Bappenas, and strategic initiatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs to assess their effectiveness, implementation gaps, and alignment with the needs of older Indonesians, particularly in rural contexts. Using a qualitative document analysis approach combined with a systematic literature review, the research identifies persistent challenges, including policy fragmentation, weak cross-sectoral coordination, inadequate funding mechanisms, and the erosion of family-based informal care without adequate formal alternatives. Findings reveal that while these policies provide a normative foundation for elderly welfare and reflect commitments to regional agreements such as the Yogyakarta Declaration on Ageing and Health, their operationalization remains limited by geographic disparities, lack of local capacity, and insufficient integration of health, social, housing, and mobility services. Programs like Posbindu Lansia suffer from low utilization due to accessibility barriers and inconsistent community engagement. The study concludes that Indonesia urgently needs a comprehensive, integrated national elder care strategy, supported by institutional coordination, sustainable financing, and context-sensitive implementation especially in underserved rural areas to ensure dignified, healthy, and equitable aging for all.

KEYWORDS: elder care policy, aging population, Law No. 13/1998, Bappenas RPJMN 2021-2024, Ministry of Social Affairs, Indonesia, healthy ageing, policy integration

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is facing a rapid demographic transition, with the proportion of the elderly population (60 years and above) continuing to increase. These changes reflect a global trend that requires governments to formulate responsive and adaptive policy frameworks to ensure the well-being of the elderly (Sumini et al., 2020; Vo & Fong, 2025). In response, the government has developed a number of national policy instruments, including Law No. 13 of 1998 concerning Welfare of the Elderly, the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2021–2024 by Bappenas, as well as various strategic initiatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs, aimed at providing social protection, health services, and social participation for the elderly (Amiyoso & Nurhadi, 2020; Putri & Sugiyanto, 2024).

Indonesia's commitment to the issue of ageing is also affirmed through its support for the Yogyakarta Declaration on Ageing and Health, which places the health of the elderly as a national priority in member countries of the WHO Regional Office for Southeast Asia (SEARO) (Murpratiwi & Hastono, 2025). However, the implementation of these policies shows significant variation between regions, especially between urban and rural, where health and social service infrastructure is still very limited (Setijaningrum et al., 2023; Aji et al., 2023). This inequality is exacerbated by the dominance of family-based informal care systems, which are increasingly fragile due to changes in social structure, urbanization, and economic pressures (Abdullah et al., 2024; O'Keefe & Yiengprugsawan, 2023).

Although various national policies have been implemented, integrated service programs such as the Elderly Posbindu designed for early detection and prevention of health problems have not reached their optimal potential (Sari et al., 2024). The low utilization of these services is often caused by a lack of awareness, geographical accessibility barriers, and the absence of a sustainable engagement strategy that meets the needs of the elderly (Sari et al., 2024; Rosnu et al., 2022). On the other hand, resource constraints, intersectoral fragmentation, and weak policy coordination hinder the development of a holistic formal care system (O'Keefe & Yiengprugsawan, 2023; Moncatar et al., 2024).

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Faced with the projection that the elderly population in Southeast Asia will reach 13.7% by 2030 and 20.3% by 2050, Indonesia is at a critical juncture in redesigning inclusive, integrated, and sustainable elderly care policies (Rosnu et al., 2022). This study aims to analyze the three main policy pillars—namely Law No. 13/1998, the 2021–2024 Bappenas RPJMN, and the Ministry of Social Affairs' plan—in the context of implementation effectiveness, structural gaps, and their relevance to the real needs of the elderly, especially in rural areas. Thus, this study contributes to the development of evidence-based policy strategies that are able to answer the challenges of population aging in Indonesia.

Background of Elder Care in Indonesia

Indonesia faces structural challenges in the provision of elderly care services due to a demographic transition accelerated by rising life expectancy and declining birth rates. Currently, more than 42% of the elderly live below or close to the poverty line, and most experience a double burden due to non-communicable diseases and limited access to primary health services (Kudrna et al., 2022; Poudel et al., 2024). Although governments have launched national health protection programs, geographical and socioeconomic disparities continue to hinder equitable distribution of services especially in rural areas, where poor health infrastructure, scarce trained personnel, and transportation costs and travel time are major barriers (Purwito et al., 2025; Chen & Baithesda, 2020; Rosnu et al., 2022). In addition, the issue of the elderly has not been a priority in the assessment of the national health system, while the financial stability of the national health insurance program continues to be disturbed (Tampubolon, 2024). The *de facto dissolution* of the National Commission on the Elderly further exacerbates this situation by creating a vacuum in cross-sectoral policy advocacy and coordination (Pardomuan & Triadi, 2024).

Elderly care in Indonesia has historically relied on an informal family-based system, which is now increasingly unsustainable due to urbanization, family nucleation, and geographic mobility (Abdullah et al., 2024; Akter et al., 2025). These social changes leave many older people vulnerable to neglect, isolation, and service gaps, especially since formal care systems are still in the early stages of development and have not been effectively integrated between the health, social, housing, and transportation sectors (O'Keefe & Yiengprugsawan, 2023; He & Tang, 2021). Social stigma against aging and structural inequalities such as limited access to prevention services and secondary care for low-income groups also exacerbate inequities in the health of the elderly (Osareme et al., 2024; Mulyanto et al., 2019). In this context, the need for comprehensive social protection policies, responsive to local contexts, and supported by strong institutional frameworks is becoming increasingly urgent (Adioetomo & Pardede, 2022; Hossen et al., 2023).

Indonesia's rapidly aging population, coupled with the erosion of traditional family-based care, necessitates an urgent re-evaluation and strengthening of its elder care policy frameworks to prevent a looming public health crisis (Feng, 2019; Setiati et al., 2021). The current policy landscape, characterized by Law No. 13/1998, Bappenas 2021 plans, and the Ministry of Social Affairs' initiatives, reveals a fragmented approach that struggles to address the multifaceted needs of the elderly population (Aji et al., 2023). Specifically, these frameworks often overlook the practical challenges of location, financial constraints, and inadequate facilities, which significantly impact the sustainability of elder care services (Zakaria et al., 2025). This fragmentation leads to disparities in access and quality of care, particularly for community-dwelling elderly in rural areas who face poor health infrastructure and limited resources (Aji et al., 2023). Furthermore, the lack of a unified national strategy often results in a reactive, rather than proactive, approach to elder care, leading to significant gaps in preventative services and long-term support (Khan et al., 2024). The absence of a cohesive, top-down policy structure further compounds these issues, hindering the effective implementation of existing regulations and the development of innovative care models.

This research aims to address these critical gaps by examining how existing policy frameworks can be better integrated and adapted to support the evolving needs of Indonesia's elderly population. Specifically, it will investigate the efficacy of Law No. 13/1998 in providing a comprehensive legal basis for elder protection, evaluate the strategic alignment and implementation challenges of Bappenas 2021 plans regarding elderly welfare, and analyze the operational impact and limitations of the Ministry of Social Affairs' initiatives in delivering tangible benefits to older Indonesians. This analysis will further explore how these policies address the mobility needs of the aging population, considering the provision of accessible, safe, and affordable transport (Lin & Cui, 2021). Additionally, it will investigate the extent to which current frameworks acknowledge and mitigate the increasing difficulties faced by families in providing comprehensive elderly care due to changing social structures and economic pressures (Ezalina et al., 2019). This study is crucial as it addresses the knowledge gap regarding the efficacy of existing legislative and institutional approaches in addressing the comprehensive needs of older people in Indonesia, particularly concerning their health and well-being (Dovie, 2019; Lin & Cui, 2021). It will also illuminate areas where policy interventions are insufficient or absent, particularly regarding the need for community-based care facilities and enhanced health accessibility in rural regions (Lelyana, 2024; Yang et al., 2024). By providing a critical assessment of current frameworks, this research aims to offer actionable recommendations for policymakers to develop more integrated, responsive, and sustainable elder care strategies that account for socioeconomic factors, cultural beliefs, and geographical limitations (Lelyana, 2024). Furthermore, it underscores the necessity of intergovernmental collaboration and institutional reforms to optimize budget allocation and strengthen integration across all levels of governance, thereby enhancing

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policy implementation effectiveness (Ningrum et al., 2025). This study will therefore contribute significantly to the ongoing discourse on smart city development and transport planning, especially in the context of fostering sustainable mobility for the elderly within an aging population (Jailani et al., 2023).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining a comprehensive literature review with a detailed policy analysis of Indonesian elder care frameworks. This methodological approach allows for a nuanced understanding of both the theoretical underpinnings and practical applications of policies such as Law No. 13/1998, Bappenas 2021, and the Ministry of Social Affairs Plan. The literature review synthesizes existing research on elder care in Indonesia, identifying key themes, policy gaps, and the historical evolution of relevant legislation. Simultaneously, the policy analysis systematically examines the content, implementation strategies, and stated objectives of these foundational documents to identify areas of coherence and divergence. This approach facilitates a critical assessment of how current policies address the multifaceted challenges of an aging population, including the integration of health and social care services, and the promotion of active and healthy aging. This dual methodology provides a robust framework for identifying critical lacunae in current Indonesian elder care provisions and for formulating evidence-based recommendations to enhance policy effectiveness.

Research Design

The research design will employ a qualitative approach, primarily utilizing documentary analysis to critically evaluate the policy documents and academic literature pertinent to Indonesian elder care. This involves a detailed examination of legal frameworks, governmental plans, and scholarly articles to identify prevailing themes, policy objectives, and implementation challenges in the national context (Cantero, 2024). Specifically, the research will scrutinize Law No. 13/1998 concerning the welfare of the elderly, the Bappenas 2021 National Medium-Term Development Plan, and the Ministry of Social Affairs' strategic plans to understand their individual and collective impact on elder care provision. This analysis will also consider the contextual factors influencing policy design and implementation, such as socio-cultural norms, economic development, and the unique demographic landscape of Indonesia (Ишматова & Hài, 2013). The methodology further incorporates a systematic literature review to synthesize existing knowledge on elder care policies, identifying theoretical frameworks and empirical findings relevant to the Indonesian context (Amiyoso & Nurhadi, 2020; Faisal et al., 2024). Furthermore, the study will analyze regional variations, particularly drawing insights from the Special Region of Yogyakarta, which serves as a crucial case study due to its high proportion of older adults and the evolution of community-based care initiatives (Sukamdi et al., 2025).

Data Collection Strategy

Data collection will primarily involve a thorough examination of legal texts, policy documents from relevant government bodies, and academic publications, complemented by an analysis of reports from non-governmental organizations involved in elder care in Indonesia. This comprehensive approach ensures a multi-faceted understanding of policy formulation, implementation challenges, and the on-the-ground realities of elder care provision (Baidhowi, 2022). The analysis will include a comparative element, contrasting Indonesian frameworks with international best practices in elder care policy to identify potential areas for improvement and adaptation (Młyński & Stankiewicz, 2024; Xu et al., 2023). This will involve analyzing official government publications, parliamentary records, and ministerial statements to understand the legislative intent and administrative directives behind Law No. 13/1998, Bappenas 2021, and the Ministry of Social Affairs Plan (Faozan & Rasyidi, 2023; Hakim & Hanif, 2025). Specifically, the examination will encompass the historical development of elder care provisions, the current legal and regulatory landscape, and the proposed future directions for elder care as outlined in these key documents. The data collection also incorporates a systematic review of academic literature to contextualize policy frameworks within broader theoretical constructs and empirical findings related to aging societies and welfare provisions. Furthermore, attention will be given to qualitative-exploratory studies that examine the formulation processes of local policies and social resilience within the Indonesian context to provide a holistic view of elder care policy development (Abdillah et al., 2025; Utama, 2025).

Data Analysis Approach

The gathered data will be subjected to qualitative analysis, employing content analysis techniques to identify recurring themes, policy objectives, and the underlying assumptions within the legal and strategic documents (Putra & Satria, 2025). This approach will facilitate a critical comparison of Indonesia's elder care framework with international standards and frameworks, such as those observed in Australia or other Southeast Asian nations, to highlight areas of divergence and best practices (Ariesty, 2023; Moncatar et al., 2024). Thematic analysis will be applied to categorize and interpret policy elements, allowing for an in-depth understanding of how different documents address elder care challenges (Massagony et al., 2025; Weryani et al., 2024). This will enable the identification of gaps and inconsistencies within the existing policy landscape, providing a foundation for evidence-based policy recommendations (Aat & Jaafar, 2025; Hamdani et al., 2023). This will involve a systematic evaluation of policy effectiveness, identifying both successful interventions and areas requiring substantial revision or new policy development.

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Scope and Limitations

While this study offers an in-depth analysis of national and local elder care policies, its primary limitation lies in its reliance on secondary data, specifically document analysis, which inherently restricts direct engagement with policymakers or care recipients (Kayesa & Shung-King, 2020). Consequently, the research acknowledges the absence of firsthand perspectives on policy implementation challenges and the lived experiences of older adults within the Indonesian elder care system. Future research could therefore benefit from incorporating primary data collection methods, such as interviews and surveys, to capture these crucial insights and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the policy's impact. Additionally, the study is constrained by its focus on specific policy documents, which may not fully capture the breadth of informal care strategies prevalent in Indonesian communities or the nuanced regional disparities in healthcare infrastructure (Aji et al., 2023).

RESULT

The main findings of this document analysis show that elderly care policies in Indonesia are still fragmentary and have not been fully integrated across sectors and regions. Although Indonesia already has a national legal and policy framework, including Law No. 13 of 1998 concerning Welfare of the Elderly, the 2021–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) by Bappenas, and the Ministry of Social Affairs' Strategic Plan, its implementation faces a number of structural and operational challenges. One of the central issues is the mismatch between policy intentions at the national level and the reality on the ground, especially in rural areas that experience a lack of health infrastructure, trained personnel, and service accessibility. In addition, although the Yogyakarta Declaration on Ageing and Health has placed the health of the elderly as a national priority in member countries of the WHO Regional Office for Southeast Asia (SEARO), its implementation in Indonesia still varies widely between regions, with urban areas tending to be more responsive than rural areas. Programs such as the Elderly Posbindu, which is designed as an integrated service for the prevention and early detection of health problems in the elderly, experience low utilization rates. This is due to the lack of public awareness, long distances to service locations, high transportation costs, and a lack of a sustainable and responsive engagement strategy to the specific needs of the elderly. On the other hand, the family-based informal care system, which has been the main pillar, is weakening due to changes in family structure, urbanization, and economic pressures. However, the formal care system that is expected to replace this role has not developed adequately, both in terms of coverage, quality, and inter-institutional coordination.

A comparison between the three main policy frameworks reveals gaps in terms of operational specifications, funding, and sectoral integration. Law No. 13/1998 is normative and general, without regulating technical implementation mechanisms or special budget allocations. The 2021–2024 RPJMN provides more concrete strategic directions, such as strengthening the social protection system and developing cities worthy of the elderly, but remains limited to the macro policy level. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Social Affairs' plan targets direct interventions such as social assistance (ASLUT) and social institutions, but it is often not coordinated with health programs from the Ministry of Health. The absence of a strong national coordinating institution, especially after the dissolution of the National Commission on the Elderly, further exacerbated this fragmentation. These findings are summarized in the following table 1 which compares the three policy frameworks based on critical dimensions related to elderly care in Indonesia.

Table 1. Comparison of Elderly Care Policy Frameworks in Indonesia

Policy Dimensions	Law No. 13/1998	RPJMN Bappenas 2021–2024	Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Social Affairs
Key Focus	Protection of the rights of the elderly, the role of the family, and social participation	Strengthening the social protection system and community-based health services	Provision of direct social assistance and orphanage services
Scope of Service	General: health, social, economic, and participation	Emphasizing community-based primary services, including Posbindu and age-worthy cities	Focus on social assistance (ASLUT), PSTW, and social assistance
Rural Implementation	No specific guidelines	Acknowledging disparities but lack of operational solutions	Limited; Programs tend to be concentrated in urban areas
Cross-Sector Coordination	Not explicitly regulated	Encouraging cross-sectoral integration in regional planning	Limited to the social sector; lack of synergy with health and transport
The Role of Technology	Not mentioned	Implying the use of digitalization in public services	Not yet integrated in live services
Funding	No special budget allocation	Allocated in the social protection and health budget	Sourced from the State Budget/Regional Budget; inconsistent

Response to	Acknowledging family	
Changes in Emphasizing family responsibilities without systemic alternatives	transformation but not yet providing strong institutional support	Provides assistance to poor families, but does not replace the function of care
Conformity with the Yogyakarta Declaration	In line with the principles of *healthy ageing* and an elderly-friendly environment	The Posbindu program is in accordance with the principle of prevention, but its implementation is limited
Not explicit		

Overall, these findings indicate that while the foundations of national policies are in place, there is an urgent need to develop an integrated national strategy for aged care that integrates health, social, economic, and infrastructure aspects, and is supported by strong coordination mechanisms, sustainable budget allocation, and a responsive approach to geographic and social contexts particularly in rural areas. Without these measures, existing policies risk remaining normative documents with no real impact on the welfare of the elderly in Indonesia. Discussion

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore that aged care policies in Indonesia, despite having a legal basis and a national strategic plan, still face serious obstacles in terms of integration, implementation, and response to local contexts—especially in rural areas. Law No. 13 of 1998, as the main legal framework, provides a strong normative foundation in ensuring the welfare of the elderly, but its overly general nature and lack of regulation of operational mechanisms or specific funding allocations cause a gap between policy and implementation in the field (Aji et al., 2023; Pardomuan & Triadi, 2024). This is exacerbated by the absence of an independent national coordinating institution since the dissolution of the National Commission on the Elderly, so that advocacy efforts and policy monitoring have become weak (Pardomuan & Triadi, 2024).The 2021–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) prepared by Bappenas shows progress in integrating elderly issues into the national development agenda, including through strengthening social protection systems and developing cities for the elderly (Putri & Sugiyanto, 2024). However, as acknowledged in the literature, the plan is still macro and lacks structural challenges at the regional level, especially in terms of human resource capacity, primary health infrastructure, and geographic inequality (Setijaningrum et al., 2023; Rosnu et al., 2022). In rural areas, access to health services is often hampered by long distances, high transportation costs, and limited medical personnel—factors that are not adequately addressed by non-contextual national policies alone (Purwito et al., 2025; Aji et al., 2023).

On the other hand, initiatives of the Ministry of Social Affairs, such as the elderly social assistance program (ASLUT) and the Tresna Werdha social institution (PSTW), provide direct interventions but tend to be temporary and unsustainable. These programs are often not coordinated with the health services of the Ministry of Health, creating system fragmentation that hinders a holistic approach to elderly care (O'Keefe & Yiengprugsawan, 2023; He & Tang, 2021). In addition, Posbindu Lansia—which is conceptually designed as an integrated service for early detection and prevention—experiences low utilization rates due to lack of public awareness, lack of sustainable promotion strategies, and incompatibility with the availability of the elderly in the community (Sari et al., 2024; Trisfayeti & Idris, 2023).

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The Yogyakarta Declaration on Aging and Health provides a clear regional policy direction, emphasizing the importance of *healthy ageing* and an elderly-friendly environment (Murpratiwi & Hastono, 2025). However, this commitment has not been fully transformed into measurable and adequately funded national policies. Indonesia, like many other developing countries in Southeast Asia, still faces similar challenges: the dominance of informal care, uneven service infrastructure, and a lack of cross-sectoral integration (Vo & Fong, 2025; Moncatar et al., 2024). International comparisons show that countries with more advanced

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aged care systems such as Taiwan and Singapore—have developed integrated policies that combine health, social, and housing services, and are supported by sustainable funding and active community participation (Peckham et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2024). Furthermore, the potential of digital technologies—including artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT)—have not been strategically utilized in elderly care policies in Indonesia, even though these technologies can improve service efficiency, expand reach in remote areas, and support the concept of *aging in place* (Wu, 2025; Zhao & Li, 2024). The absence of a policy framework that governs the integration of technology with health and social services causes this opportunity to be missed (Li, 2025; Chien et al., 2025).

Overall, this discussion emphasized that elderly care policies in Indonesia require a more integrated, contextual, and sustainable approach. Strong coordination between ministries (health, social, housing, transport), consistent budget allocation, and capacity building at the local level is needed especially to strengthen community-based services in rural areas. Without these measures, existing policies risk remaining a normative document with no real impact on the millions of elderly who are increasingly vulnerable in Indonesia's rapidly aging society.

CONCLUSION

The findings in this study show that Indonesia has laid the initial foundation for elderly care policies through Law No. 13 of 1998, the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2021–2024, as well as various initiatives of the Ministry of Social Affairs. However, the implementation of these policies still faces significant structural challenges, especially in terms of cross-sectoral fragmentation, inequality of access between urban and rural, and mismatches between normative frameworks and operational realities on the ground. Although principles such as *healthy ageing* and *aging in place* have been adopted in national policy documents—including through commitments to the Yogyakarta Declaration on Ageing and Health—their implementation is still uneven and less measurable (Murpratiwi & Hastono, 2025; Putri & Sugiyanto, 2024). The historical reliance on family-based informal care systems, which have been weakened due to demographic and social changes, has not been balanced with an integrated and sustainable formal system (Abdullah et al., 2024; Akter et al., 2025). Programs such as the Elderly Posbindu, although designed as an integrated service, face serious barriers to utilization due to limited accessibility, lack of continuous promotion, and lack of community involvement (Sari et al., 2024; Trisfayeti & Idris, 2023). On the other hand, national policies have not been sufficiently responsive to local contexts, especially in rural areas that lack adequate health infrastructure, trained personnel, and transportation services (Aji et al., 2023; Rosnu et al., 2022).

Furthermore, current policies have not integrated the potential of digital technologies—such as artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT)—that can expand service coverage, increase efficiency, and support the concept of home-based care (Wu, 2025; Zhao & Li, 2024). Without a strong national coordinating institution and a systematic cross-ministerial approach, elderly care efforts will continue to be fragmented and unable to meet the needs of a rapidly aging population. Therefore, Indonesia needs an integrated national strategy for elderly care that not only integrates health, social, housing, and transportation aspects, but also strengthens the capacity of local governments, actively engages communities, and ensures sustainable and equitable budget allocation. Without such strategic measures, existing policies risk remaining a normative framework with no real impact on the well-being of millions of Indonesia's elderly, especially those living in remote and low-income areas. In the face of the inevitable demographic transition, a holistic, responsive, and evidence-based approach is key to ensuring that old age in Indonesia is not only long, but also dignified and healthy.

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