

Application of The Principles of Equality and Non-Discrimination in Civil Law: Harmonization with International Legal Standards

Maria Yeti Andrias¹✉, Najamuddin Gani², Yulianus Poizon Aituru³, Abdul Rahman Upara⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Universitas Yapis Papua, Indonesia

✉ author e-mail : yetiandrias1973@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the application of the principles of equality and non-discrimination in Indonesian civil law as well as its harmonization with international legal standards. These principles form an essential foundation in protecting human rights and ensuring justice for all citizens without any discriminatory treatment. The research method used is normative, with a documentary study approach and comparative analysis of national legislation and related international legal instruments. The results show that although national legal norms have accommodated the principles of equality and non-discrimination, challenges in implementation still arise due to socio-cultural factors, limited understanding among legal officials, and a lack of regulations addressing modern discrimination issues. This study emphasizes the need to strengthen regulations, enhance the capacity of legal officials, and educate the public as efforts to effectively enforce these principles. A more progressive legal harmonization is expected to support the realization of social justice and human rights protection in Indonesia.

Keywords: Customary Law, Evolution, Modernity, Nusantara, Legal Integration, Cultural Preservation

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Coresponding Author: Maria Yeti Andrias

Email : yetiandrias1973@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The principles of equality and non-discrimination are fundamental foundations in building a just and democratic legal system. In the context of civil law, which governs legal relationships between individuals and legal entities in the private sphere, the application of these principles not only guarantees the protection of individual rights but also ensures the realization of substantive justice in every legal transaction and interaction. Equality before the law means that no party should be subjected to arbitrary discriminatory treatment, while non-discrimination requires that treatment is not based on irrelevant factors such as gender, ethnicity, religion, race, age, socio-economic status, or disability. These principles have become increasingly crucial in an increasingly pluralistic and diverse society, where the protection of individual rights must be guaranteed without exception.

Alongside the development of globalization and the influence of international human rights instruments, the harmonization of national law with international standards has become an urgent necessity. International instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and other conventions regulating civil and political rights have set minimum standards that member states must meet in guaranteeing the principles of equality and non-discrimination. The application of these principles in civil law—which includes various aspects such as property rights, contracts, civil liability, and family law—is a key benchmark in assessing the conformity of national law with international standards. Therefore, harmonizing civil law with these principles is an important



agenda in national legal reform to ensure comprehensive human rights protection.

However, significant challenges remain in this harmonization process. Many countries face difficulties in consistently and effectively integrating international norms into their domestic legal systems. This is due to various factors, including differences in legal systems, cultural and customary resistance deeply rooted in society, as well as limited resources and capacity of law enforcement institutions. In some jurisdictions, strong customary and traditional norms often conflict with the principle of non-discrimination, especially in family and inheritance law. Moreover, the implementation of equality and non-discrimination principles in judicial practice still encounters obstacles such as structural bias, lack of understanding among judges and legal officers, and the absence of effective legal protection mechanisms for discrimination victims. Furthermore, in the context of civil law, there are particular complexities because this body of law primarily governs private legal relationships. This results in a more difficult scope to control and monitor the application of equality and non-discrimination principles compared to public law. For example, in contract practice, although the law prohibits discriminatory clauses, unfair and exclusive contractual practices that disadvantage certain groups are still frequently found. Similarly, in family law, even though legislation regulates equal rights between husband and wife, social reality still shows deep disparities, particularly concerning the rights of women and children.

In line with social changes and global demands for human rights protection, it is time to conduct in-depth studies on how the principles of equality and non-discrimination are concretely implemented in civil law and how harmonization with international standards can be strengthened. This research is important to identify gaps between existing legal provisions and practices in the field, as well as to provide recommendations for improving the legal framework to be more responsive to increasingly complex and diverse societal needs. Thus, this study is expected to contribute concretely to the development of an inclusive, just national legal system that aligns with international commitments to realize social justice and respect for human rights.

This research aims to analyze the application of the principles of equality and non-discrimination in national civil law and to examine the extent to which harmonization between national legal provisions and international legal standards has been implemented. Specifically, this study intends to identify the obstacles and challenges faced in the process of integrating international norms into the domestic legal system, particularly regarding the protection of civil and political rights within the civil law domain. Additionally, this research seeks to provide constructive recommendations for policymakers and legal practitioners to strengthen the implementation of equality and non-discrimination principles, so that civil law can function as an effective instrument to guarantee justice and comprehensive human rights protection. Therefore, this study is expected to serve as a basis for more inclusive and responsive legal reform that addresses global developments and the needs of a pluralistic and dynamic society.



2. Method

This study uses a normative method focusing on the study and analysis of legal norms applicable in national civil law as well as international legal regulations governing the principles of equality and non-discrimination. The normative method is chosen because this research aims to examine legal aspects in depth by reviewing written legal sources, including legislation, legal doctrines, and international documents, without conducting field research or collecting empirical data. This approach allows the researcher to assess the conformity and harmonization between national law and relevant international legal standards.

Data collection is carried out through literature study and documentation, by gathering and examining various primary and secondary legal sources. Primary data consist of laws, government regulations, court decisions, and other national legal sources that regulate the principles of equality and non-discrimination in civil law. Secondary data include international legal instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and other international legal documents serving as references in human rights standards. Additionally, the study reviews supporting literature such as books, journals, scientific articles, and previous research to strengthen the theoretical foundation and analysis.

Data analysis is conducted descriptively and analytically by examining, explaining, and interpreting the collected legal norms. This process includes the evaluation of the content and substance of national law and comparison with applicable international legal norms to determine the level of harmonization and alignment between the two. The research also identifies gaps, inconsistencies, and obstacles in the application of the principles of equality and non-discrimination within civil law. This normative approach emphasizes a systematic and logical analysis of legal regulations, thereby providing a clear overview of the current legal conditions and recommendations needed for improvement.

The normative method in this research also enables the researcher to conduct comparative studies of similar legal practices in other countries as benchmarks if necessary. Thus, this study is expected to contribute to understanding and enhancing the harmonization of national law with international legal standards, particularly in applying the principles of equality and non-discrimination in the field of civil law.

Results and Discussion

The following table presents the analysis results of the application of equality and non-discrimination principles in civil law and their harmonization with international standards.

Table 1. Comparison of Equality and Non-Discrimination Provisions in National Civil Law and International Legal Instruments

Aspect	National Civil Law (Indonesia)	International Legal Standards (e.g., ICCPR, CEDAW)
Explicit Provisions on Equality	Article 27 of the 1945 Constitution ensures equality before law	Article 26 of ICCPR guarantees equality and prohibits discrimination
Protection against Gender Discrimination	Limited, some provisions in Marriage Law but gaps remain	CEDAW explicitly mandates elimination of discrimination against women
Protection of Minority Rights	Some provisions, but implementation varies regionally	ICCPR and other treaties require equal protection for minorities
Scope of Non-Discrimination	Mainly focuses on race, religion, and ethnicity	Broader scope including gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc.

Source : Author's own Analysis

This table reveals that Indonesia's national civil law acknowledges the principle of equality primarily

through constitutional provisions such as Article 27, which broadly guarantees equality before the law. However, the scope of these protections tends to be narrower and less detailed compared to international legal instruments like the ICCPR and CEDAW. For instance, protections against gender discrimination in national law are still limited and fragmented, often relying on outdated or partial regulations like the Marriage Law, whereas international conventions provide a comprehensive framework explicitly mandating the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. Furthermore, protections for minority groups in Indonesia are inconsistent and vary by region, while international treaties impose clear obligations to ensure equal treatment regardless of ethnic or religious identity. The scope of non-discrimination under national law remains relatively narrow, focusing mainly on race, religion, and ethnicity, whereas international standards cover a wider array of categories, including sexual orientation and disability. This gap indicates a critical need for Indonesia to reform and expand its civil law provisions to fully comply with international human rights norms, ensuring broader and more effective protection for all vulnerable groups.

Table 2. Challenges in Implementing Equality and Non-Discrimination in National Civil Law

Challenge	Description	Impact on Legal Implementation
Socio-cultural Barriers	Strong traditional and patriarchal norms	Limits effectiveness of equality principles in practice
Lack of Awareness Among Law Enforcers	Insufficient training and understanding of human rights	Leads to inconsistent and sometimes biased judicial decisions
Regulatory Gaps	Absence of explicit provisions on emerging discrimination issues	Leaves vulnerable groups unprotected
Limited Public Legal Literacy	Low awareness of rights among the population	Reduces the demand for enforcement and accountability

Source : Author's own Analysis

The table outlines significant socio-legal obstacles that impede the effective implementation of equality and non-discrimination principles within Indonesia's civil law framework. Socio-cultural barriers, deeply embedded in traditional and patriarchal societal norms, often conflict with the ideals of equality, making it challenging to transform legal provisions into real social practice. These norms can perpetuate discriminatory behaviors and attitudes, particularly towards women and minority groups, thus undermining legal protections. In addition, many law enforcement officers and judicial actors lack adequate training and awareness regarding international human rights standards and their application, resulting in inconsistent rulings and enforcement that sometimes reflect personal or societal biases rather than objective legal principles. Another critical issue is the existence of regulatory gaps, where the law fails to explicitly address new or evolving forms of discrimination such as those based on sexual orientation or disability. This leaves vulnerable populations without adequate legal recourse. Furthermore, the general public's limited legal literacy means many individuals are unaware of their rights or the mechanisms available to defend them, leading to lower demand for enforcement and weak accountability. Together, these challenges highlight the complex interplay between law, culture, and knowledge that must be addressed to improve the protection of equality and non-discrimination in Indonesia.

Table 3. Recommendations for Harmonizing National Civil Law with International Standards

Recommendation	Description	Expected Outcome
Legal Reform	Amend laws to explicitly include comprehensive equality provisions	Greater legal clarity and stronger protection for all groups
Capacity Building	Training programs for judges, lawyers, and law enforcement	Improved understanding and fair application of laws
Public Awareness Campaigns	Education and outreach to increase legal literacy	Empowered citizens who can advocate for their rights

Collaboration with NGOs	Partnerships with civil society organizations	Enhanced monitoring and advocacy for marginalized communities
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Source : Author's own Analysis

This table presents a strategic framework essential for enhancing the harmonization of Indonesia's civil law with international human rights standards on equality and non-discrimination. The first and foremost recommendation is comprehensive legal reform. This involves reviewing and amending existing laws to explicitly embed broad and clear provisions that address all forms of discrimination, reflecting the full scope of protections outlined in international instruments. Such reforms will provide stronger legal clarity, reduce ambiguities, and ensure that vulnerable groups are adequately protected under national law. Secondly, capacity building is critical to ensure that those responsible for interpreting and enforcing the law—judges, lawyers, and law enforcement officers—are well-versed in both domestic and international legal standards. Training programs will help eliminate biases and inconsistencies, promoting fair and equitable application of the law. Public awareness campaigns are equally important; by educating the population about their rights and available legal remedies, citizens become empowered to demand justice and accountability, fostering a culture of equality. Finally, collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society enhances oversight and advocacy, ensuring continuous monitoring and support for marginalized communities. Collectively, these recommendations aim to build a more inclusive and just legal system, bridging the gap between international commitments and domestic realities.

Based on a normative study of various national legislation and international legal instruments, this research found that the principles of equality and non-discrimination have been formally accommodated within the framework of national civil law. Several laws and regulations explicitly include prohibitions against discrimination in various fields, including aspects of contracts, property rights, and family law. For example, the laws provide equal protection for men and women in terms of property ownership and inheritance rights, as well as rejecting all forms of discrimination based on race, religion, or social status. However, at the practical level, the implementation of these principles still faces a number of obstacles that cause disparities in treatment on the ground.

One important finding is the gap between written legal norms and the socio-cultural realities that remain deeply rooted in society. In the context of family law, for example, customs and traditions that still dominate often contradict the principle of gender equality, especially concerning inheritance rights and authority in family decision-making. This shows that although the principle of non-discrimination is legally regulated, its implementation in practice is still limited by cultural and social factors that are difficult to change in a short time. This condition becomes a major challenge in achieving effective harmonization between national law and international standards. Furthermore, the study also found that the law enforcement mechanisms to address violations of the principles of equality and non-discrimination in civil law are not yet optimal. Many discrimination cases are difficult to resolve fairly due to the limited understanding of law enforcement officers about human rights principles, including judges and court officials. This causes court decisions often to not fully reflect maximum protection of rights for parties harmed by discrimination. Therefore, enhancing the capacity and legal education for law enforcement officers becomes one of the main recommendations so that the principles of equality and non-discrimination can be applied more effectively.

In terms of harmonization with international law, the study shows that generally international norms have become a reference in the formulation of national regulations. However, there are some discrepancies in terminology and scope of norms that cause the application of international principles to not be entirely consistent. For example, some international instruments set protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, which have not yet been explicitly accommodated in national civil law. This opens room for further studies and possible regulatory revisions to be more inclusive and in accordance with the development of global human rights.

Overall, the results of this study underline the importance of continuous efforts to strengthen the harmonization of national law with international standards as well as improving the implementation of the principles of equality and non-discrimination on the ground. This not only requires adaptive legal rule revisions but also changes in social paradigms and increased awareness and competence of legal

officers. Thus, the principles of equality and non-discrimination can truly become the foundation in civil law that protects the rights of all citizens fairly and equally.

DISCUSSION

Harmonization of Legal Norms and Socio-Cultural Realities

The research results indicate a formal alignment between national legal norms and the principles of equality and non-discrimination as regulated in applicable international legal instruments. However, it is important to emphasize in further discussion that this harmonization remains textual and normative. The socio-cultural reality, which still firmly holds on to customs and traditions, is the main obstacle to implementing these principles in society. For example, in family law, patriarchal values remain dominant and often override equal legal protection for women. Therefore, efforts to harmonize laws cannot be limited to legislation alone but must be followed by programs of socialization, education, and cultural change that can erode discriminatory practices based on customs and traditions.

Challenges in Law Enforcement and the Role of Officials

The discussion also highlights that the implementation of the principles of equality and non-discrimination heavily depends on the capacity of law enforcement officials to understand and apply these norms consistently. Based on research findings, a lack of understanding among legal officials about human rights aspects results in court decisions that are not yet optimal in protecting victims of discrimination. This raises critical questions about the readiness of the national legal system to respond to the challenges of advancing human rights more progressively. Therefore, it is necessary to enhance competence through intensive training, as well as develop clear guidelines or standard operating procedures for legal officials to effectively apply the principles of equality and non-discrimination in every decision made.

Regulatory Limitations in Accommodating Contemporary Issues

Furthermore, the discussion finds that national civil law has not yet fully accommodated modern discrimination issues developing globally, such as discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. International instruments have established protections for these groups, but national law has not explicitly adopted these aspects. This limitation indicates the need for revision and modernization of civil law to be responsive to continuously changing social dynamics. Moreover, this opens up discussions on how national law can integrate universal human rights principles with local values without sacrificing justice and equality for all citizens.

The Role of Education and Public Awareness

The discussion also underscores the importance of legal education and public awareness in encouraging the application of equality and non-discrimination principles. Without strong understanding from the broader public about their rights and the legal protection mechanisms available, the existence of progressive regulations becomes less effective. Therefore, collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and civil society organizations is needed to conduct campaigns and training to increase legal literacy and human rights awareness. High public awareness will trigger demands for fairer and more transparent law enforcement and encourage cultural changes supporting the elimination of discrimination.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

In terms of policy, this discussion affirms that harmonizing national laws with international standards must be supported by comprehensive and integrated policies. Recommendations emerging from this research include the need for legislative revisions to cover all aspects of discrimination, increasing the capacity of legal officials, and implementing extensive education and socialization programs for the public. The government also needs to establish transparent and accountable oversight and law enforcement mechanisms to ensure effective protection of human rights. These steps will strengthen civil law's position as an instrument that not only regulates legal relationships among citizens but also serves as a tool for promoting social justice and equality.

Complexity of Integrating International Principles into National Law

Beyond the challenges already mentioned, it is important to discuss the complexity of integrating international principles into the national legal system. Each country has unique social, cultural, and



political characteristics, so international standards cannot always be applied directly without careful adaptation. In Indonesia, for instance, the plurality of society and the richness of customary cultures provide distinct dynamics in adopting global legal norms. Therefore, integrating equality and non-discrimination principles must consider local conditions to avoid resistance or rejection from society. This demands inclusive and dialogical legal policies among legal actors, the government, and the broader public.

The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society

The discussion also highlights the strategic role of non-governmental organizations and civil society groups in supporting the implementation of equality and non-discrimination principles. These organizations often serve as independent monitors and effective advocacy drivers in identifying and addressing discriminatory practices in society. Through public campaigns, strategic litigation, and legal education, they can promote public awareness and push for policy changes. Therefore, strong synergy between the government and the private sector in empowering these organizations is crucial to accelerating the realization of equitable legal harmonization.

Socio-Economic Implications of Discrimination in Civil Law

Besides legal and cultural aspects, it is also important to discuss the socio-economic implications of implementing or failing to implement the principles of equality and non-discrimination in civil law. Ongoing discrimination, especially in access to asset ownership and economic opportunities, has the potential to reinforce social inequalities and hinder inclusive national development. For example, discrimination against women in inheritance rights or land ownership access can limit their participation in economic activities and decision-making in families and communities. This condition has long-term impacts on social welfare and equitable development. Therefore, enforcing equality principles is important not only legally but also as a strategy for sustainable socio-economic development.

Influence of Globalization and Technological Developments

Further discussion includes the influence of globalization and information technology developments as factors affecting the dynamics of applying equality and non-discrimination principles. In the digital era, information and international norms are more easily accessible to the public, thereby raising awareness of civil rights and the need for fair treatment. However, the other side of technological progress also brings new challenges, such as digital discrimination and unequal access to technology, which can deepen social gaps. Therefore, civil law and related policies need to be developed to anticipate and address these new impacts, including fair digital rights protection for all social groups.

Implementation Strategies and Monitoring

Finally, the discussion emphasizes the importance of comprehensive implementation strategies and effective monitoring mechanisms as keys to the successful harmonization of equality and non-discrimination principles in civil law. This includes strengthening the judicial system, involving all stakeholders, and using information technology for transparency and accountability. Regular monitoring and evaluation of implementation are also needed to adjust existing policies and regulations responsively to social and legal developments. This strategy must be holistic, focusing not only on formal legal aspects but also on the social and cultural changes underlying discriminatory practices.

Conclusions

This study concludes that the application of the principles of equality and non-discrimination in Indonesian civil law has normatively demonstrated a fairly good harmonization with international legal standards. However, in practice, there are still various obstacles that hinder the full implementation of these principles, particularly those related to socio-cultural factors, the understanding of law enforcement officials, and regulatory limitations in accommodating contemporary discrimination issues. Moreover, the active role of civil society and non-governmental organizations is crucial in strengthening the enforcement of these principles on the ground. This study emphasizes that the harmonization of national law with international instruments must be supported by a comprehensive strategy, including education, regulatory revision, and effective monitoring mechanisms, in order for the principles of equality and non-

discrimination to be truly realized in the legal and social life of Indonesian society.

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