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Efforts of Islamic Elementary Schools in Realizing Child-Friendly Schools in Gununganyar District, Surabaya

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Abstract: *This study aims to analyze the efforts of Islamic elementary schools in realizing Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) in Gununganyar District, Surabaya. Schools play a crucial role in supporting children's holistic development by providing safe, inclusive, and supportive environments. The concept of CFS emphasizes the fulfillment of children's rights, active participation, and protection from violence and discrimination. However, preliminary observations indicate that the implementation of CFS principles in Islamic elementary schools has not been fully optimized, particularly in terms of student participation, teacher-centered learning practices, and awareness of children's rights. This research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies involving school principals, teachers, students, and parents as key informants. The data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative and content analysis techniques to identify patterns and themes related to the implementation of child-friendly school principles. The findings reveal that the implementation of CFS is carried out through five main dimensions: child-centered learning, school governance and policy, physical and psychosocial environment, collaboration with parents and the community, and student self-development programs. Islamic values such as rahmah (compassion), 'adl (justice), and ihsan (excellence) are integrated into school practices, strengthening the implementation of CFS. However, challenges remain, including variations in teacher capacity, inconsistent policy implementation, and limited facilities. This study concludes that realizing CFS in Islamic elementary schools requires a transformative approach that integrates educational practices, school culture, and religious values to support children's well-being.*

Keywords: *Elementary School, Child-Friendly, Surabaya*

INTRODUCTION

Schools are important environments for children's growth and development, where they learn, interact, and build their character as independent individuals. Therefore, schools must create a safe, comfortable, and supportive environment for children. The concept of child-friendly schools (CFS) refers to an educational approach that ensures the fulfillment of children's rights, promotes participation, and protects children from violence and discrimination. CFS emphasizes holistic development, including physical, emotional, social, and moral aspects of children. Previous studies highlight that child-friendly schools are characterized by inclusivity, safety, effective learning processes, and child participation in decision-making (UNICEF, 2009; Shaeffer, 2013). Empirical research also shows that implementing child-friendly principles positively impacts students' well-being and learning outcomes (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015; Akyeampong et al., 2012). Thus, the concept of child-friendly schools is not about establishing new institutions, but about transforming existing schools into environments that respect and uphold children's rights.

In the context of Islamic elementary schools in Gununganyar District, Surabaya, several field phenomena indicate that the implementation of child-friendly school principles has not been fully optimized. Based on preliminary observations, some schools still face challenges such as limited child participation in decision-making processes, teacher-centered learning practices, and a lack of awareness regarding children's rights. Additionally, there are indications of verbal discipline practices that may contradict child-friendly principles, as well as limited facilities that support safe and inclusive learning environments. On the other hand, Islamic elementary schools are expected to integrate child-friendly principles with Islamic values such as compassion (*rahmah*), justice (*'adl*), and respect (*ihsan*), which ideally strengthen the implementation of child-friendly education. This gap between ideal conditions and field realities makes it important to explore how Islamic elementary schools in this area attempt to realize child-friendly schools.

The focus of this research is to examine the efforts made by Islamic elementary schools in implementing child-friendly school principles. Specifically, this study focuses on (1) policies and school management in supporting child-friendly environments, (2) teaching and learning practices that reflect child-

centered approaches, (3) student participation in school activities, and (4) protection mechanisms against violence and discrimination within the school environment.

This study also identifies a research gap in previous studies. While many studies have discussed child-friendly schools in general educational contexts, limited research specifically examines the implementation of child-friendly school concepts in Islamic elementary schools, particularly in integrating religious values with child protection principles. Moreover, previous studies tend to focus on policy and outcomes, but lack in-depth exploration of practical efforts and challenges at the school level, especially in urban areas like Surabaya. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by providing a contextual and in-depth analysis of school efforts in implementing child-friendly education within Islamic elementary school settings.

Several literature reviews support this study. Research by UNICEF (2009) emphasizes that child-friendly schools must ensure inclusivity, effectiveness, safety, and participation. Kutsyuruba et al. (2015) found that safe and supportive school environments significantly influence students' academic success and emotional well-being. Meanwhile, Akyeampong et al. (2012) highlight that effective implementation of child-friendly principles requires strong leadership, teacher commitment, and community involvement. In the Islamic education context, Halstead (2007) explains that Islamic educational values strongly support respect for children's dignity and holistic development, which aligns with the principles of child-friendly schools. These studies provide a theoretical foundation that strengthens the relevance of this research.

This study aims to explore the efforts made by Islamic elementary schools in realizing child-friendly schools and to analyze how these efforts contribute to children's well-being in the school environment. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The study was conducted in Islamic elementary schools located in Gununganyar District, Surabaya, during the 2026 academic year. The subjects of this study include school principals, teachers, students, and parents as key informants. Data sources consist of primary data obtained through interviews and observations, as well as secondary data from school documents and related policies. Data collection techniques include in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies. The collected data are

analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis and content analysis techniques to identify patterns, themes, and meanings related to the implementation of child-friendly school principles.

It is expected that this study will provide valuable insights and contribute to the development of child-friendly school concepts, particularly in Islamic elementary school contexts, as well as offer practical recommendations for improving educational environments that are safe, inclusive, and supportive for children.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is qualitative research. According to Kriyantono, 2011 , qualitative research methods are used to understand a phenomenon in depth by collecting data consisting of words, images, and human actions. This method is suitable for use in research that explores the experiences, perceptions, and meanings given by people to a phenomenon, such as the efforts of elementary schools in Surabaya to create Child- Friendly Schools.

Qualitative research requires specific data collection techniques such as interviews, observations, and document analysis to obtain comprehensive and in-depth data on the phenomenon being studied. The data obtained will then be analyzed inductively, that is, by formulating themes and categories from the data obtained.

In this study, the researcher used interview techniques with the principal, teachers, and parents of students at the elementary school (SD) selected as the research sample to obtain data on the efforts of elementary schools (SD) in the Gununganyar sub- district of Surabaya to create Child-Friendly Schools. In addition, the researcher also conducted direct observations at the school and analyzed documents such as lesson plans, curricula, and school policies. The following are some of the schools used as samples:

Table 1. List of Sample Schools and Key Informants

No	School	Key Informant
1	Miftahul Ulum Elementary School, Surabaya	• Principal • Curriculum Coordinator • Class Teacher
	Kyai Amin Elementary School	• Principal • Curriculum Coordinator • Class Teacher
3	Al Mubarok Islamic Elementary School	• Principal • Curriculum Coordinator • Class Teacher
4	Al Islah Islamic Elementary School	• Principal • Curriculum Coordinator • Class Teacher
5	Dahlanuddin Islamic Elementary School	• Principal • Curriculum Coordinator • Class Teacher

By using qualitative research methods, researchers can gain a deep understanding of the efforts of elementary schools in the Gununganyar subdistrict to create child-friendly schools, so that the results of this study can provide useful information and input to improve the quality of education in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data reduction process derived from in-depth interviews, participatory observations, documentation studies, and content analysis of school publications, this study found that the efforts of Islamic elementary schools in Gununganyar District, Surabaya, in realizing Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) are not fragmented but systematically integrated into multiple aspects of school management and educational practices. The findings indicate that the implementation of CFS can be categorized into five major dimensions, namely: (1) child-centered learning, (2) school governance and policy, (3) physical and psychosocial environment, (4) collaboration with parents and the community, and (5) student self-development programs.

In the dimension of child-centered learning, all schools have adopted the *Merdeka Curriculum* as the primary framework for instructional practices. Its

implementation is not merely administrative but is reflected in more flexible, differentiated, and student-oriented learning processes. Teachers have gradually shifted from traditional lecture-based approaches to more active learning strategies, such as group discussions, collaborative projects, and problem-based learning. The implementation of the *Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5)* also plays a crucial role in fostering student engagement, particularly in developing critical thinking, creativity, and social awareness. However, observational data reveal variations in the level of implementation across schools, especially in teachers' readiness to apply differentiated instruction effectively.

In terms of school governance and policy, all schools have established a Child-Friendly School Implementation Team as a form of institutional commitment. This team consists of school principals, teachers, student representatives, parents, and school committee members, reflecting a participatory governance approach. Furthermore, schools have developed formal policies addressing child protection, including regulations against violence, discrimination, and bullying. These policies are operationalized through concrete programs, such as the formation of anti-bullying ambassadors who act as peer role models and mediators. Despite these efforts, the findings suggest that the internalization of such policies still requires strengthening, particularly in ensuring consistent implementation at the classroom level.

Regarding the physical and psychosocial environment, schools strive to create a safe, clean, and comfortable learning environment through various initiatives, such as regular environmental cleaning programs (e.g., "Clean Friday"), waste management campaigns, and the provision of adequate facilities. Most schools are equipped with essential infrastructure, including comfortable classrooms, libraries, and sports facilities. In addition, schools utilize the Learning Environment Survey as part of the Computer-Based National Assessment (ANBK) to evaluate school climate and instructional quality. From a psychosocial perspective, schools attempt to foster positive teacher-student relationships through more empathetic and supportive interactions. However, some findings indicate that certain verbal disciplinary practices may still contradict child-friendly principles.

In the dimension of collaboration with parents and the community, schools actively involve parents in various activities, including program socialization,

character education initiatives, and participation in school committees. This collaboration is not limited to formal involvement but extends to continuous communication between teachers and parents regarding students' development. Community engagement is also evident in the support provided for school programs, although the level of involvement varies among schools.

Finally, in the dimension of student self-development, schools provide a wide range of programs aimed at fostering students' holistic development. These include religious activities such as congregational prayers and Qur'an recitation, extracurricular programs, literacy development initiatives, and academic and non-academic achievement coaching. Schools also provide recognition and rewards for student achievements, contributing to students' sense of accomplishment and self-worth. Literacy programs, such as writing clubs and reading campaigns, further support students' critical thinking and communication skills. Overall, these programs demonstrate that schools are not solely focused on cognitive achievement but also emphasize character building and social skills development.

In general, the findings reveal that the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools in Islamic elementary schools in Gununganyar has been conducted in a relatively systematic manner. However, challenges remain, particularly in terms of consistency of implementation, teacher capacity, and the availability of resources across schools.

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools in Islamic elementary schools is a complex and multidimensional process that involves not only structural aspects, such as policies and programs, but also cultural dimensions reflected in daily practices and values within the school environment. This suggests that the success of CFS implementation depends on the integration of governance, pedagogical practices, and school culture.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings align with the concept of child-friendly schools, which emphasizes inclusive, safe, and participatory learning environments. A positive school climate has been widely recognized as a critical factor influencing student well-being and academic achievement. Kutsyuruba et al. (2015) found that supportive school environments significantly contribute to both academic success and emotional well-being. In the context of this study, initiatives such as active learning strategies, religious activities, and student recognition programs serve as

indicators of efforts to create a supportive and nurturing school climate.

Furthermore, student involvement in programs such as anti-bullying ambassadors reflects a shift from teacher-centered approaches to more participatory educational practices. This finding supports Akyeampong et al. (2012), who emphasize that student participation is a key component in the successful implementation of child-friendly schools. In this regard, students are not merely passive recipients of educational policies but active agents who contribute to shaping a safe and inclusive school environment.

Another significant finding is the integration of Islamic values into the implementation of child-friendly school principles. Values such as *rahmah* (compassion), *'adl* (justice), and *ihsan* (excellence) are not only embedded in the school's normative framework but are also practiced through daily religious activities and character-building programs. This integration provides an additional dimension that strengthens the implementation of CFS. It highlights the potential of Islamic education to support holistic child development while reinforcing moral and ethical values. This finding is consistent with Rizka et al. (2024), who argue that Islamic schools have strong potential to integrate spiritual values with child protection principles.

However, the study also reveals several challenges in implementing child-friendly school principles. One of the main issues is the varying levels of teacher capacity in applying child-centered learning approaches. While policies and programs are in place, their effectiveness largely depends on teachers' understanding and pedagogical competence. Additionally, inconsistencies in policy implementation at the classroom level indicate that institutional commitment alone is insufficient without continuous professional development and monitoring. These findings are in line with Liestyasari et al. (2023), who highlight the importance of aligning policy, practice, and school culture in achieving effective child-friendly school implementation.

Therefore, the key implication of this study is that the realization of Child-Friendly Schools in Islamic elementary education should not be viewed merely as compliance with formal indicators, but as a transformative educational process that prioritizes the dignity, participation, and holistic development of children. The success of this transformation depends on the extent to which schools can integrate policy

frameworks, pedagogical innovation, religious values, and active participation from all stakeholders. In this context, schools function not only as institutions for knowledge transmission but also as safe, inclusive, and meaningful spaces that nurture children's overall development.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools in Islamic elementary schools in Gununganyar District, Surabaya, has been carried out in a relatively systematic and multidimensional manner. Schools have demonstrated efforts to integrate child-friendly principles into various aspects of education, including learning processes, school governance, environmental management, community involvement, and student development programs. These efforts indicate that schools are gradually transforming into more inclusive, participatory, and supportive environments for children.

The integration of Islamic values such as *rahmah*, *'adl*, and *ihsan* serves as a significant strength in reinforcing the implementation of child-friendly education. These values not only support children's moral and spiritual development but also align with the principles of child protection, participation, and respect for children's dignity. Thus, Islamic elementary schools have a strong potential to become models of child-friendly education that combine religious values with modern educational approaches.

However, this study also identifies several challenges that need to be addressed. These include the inconsistency in the implementation of child-centered learning, limited teacher capacity in applying innovative pedagogical approaches, and the persistence of certain disciplinary practices that are not fully aligned with child-friendly principles. In addition, disparities in facilities and resources across schools may affect the effectiveness of CFS implementation.

Therefore, it is recommended that schools strengthen teacher professional development, enhance monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and promote greater collaboration among stakeholders, including parents and the community. Future research is also encouraged to examine the long-term impact of child-friendly school implementation on students' academic achievement and well-being. Ultimately, the realization of Child-Friendly Schools should be viewed as a

continuous and transformative process aimed at ensuring the holistic development and well-being of every child.

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