

STRATEGY AND IMPACT OF CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL IMPLEMENTATION AT SDN 1 KLECO

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools in education at SDN 1 Kleco, focusing on policy aspects, challenges faced, and the impact on the learning environment and student character building. A qualitative approach with a case study method was used in this research, through interview, observation and documentation techniques involving the principal, teachers, students and parents. The findings show that although the implementation of child-friendly school principles has been ongoing, challenges such as limited physical facilities and differences in understanding among educators are still an obstacle. However, the program has had a positive impact on increasing students' motivation to learn, psychological comfort and character development such as empathy, responsibility and tolerance. This research confirms the importance of parental support and community involvement in strengthening the sustainability of child-friendly school programs. More broadly, the findings contribute to the development of inclusive and child-centered education policies, while strengthening the integration of character education values in the primary school environment. The findings show that although the implementation of child-friendly school principles has been ongoing, challenges such as limited physical facilities and differences in understanding among educators are still an obstacle. However, the program has had a positive impact on increasing students' motivation to learn, psychological comfort and character development such as empathy, responsibility and tolerance.

Keywords: Child-Friendly Schools; Strategy; Impact; Implementation

A. Introduction

In education, efforts to create a safe, comfortable, and holistic learning environment that supports student development are the main concerns in various global and national education policies (Bradshaw et al., 2021; Duffy et al., 2022; Taylor & Baker, 2019). One initiative that continues to receive attention is the concept of child-friendly schools, which aims to ensure children's rights in the educational environment (Jansson et al., 2022). According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), child-friendly schools not only involve aspects of physical safety but also integrate approaches that support students' emotional, social, and academic well-being in a balanced (INEE, 2011).

In Indonesia, implementing child-friendly schools is one of the priorities of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, outlined in the National Strategy for the Elimination of Violence against Children (KEMENPPPA, 2024). This policy aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in the fourth point, which focuses on quality and inclusive education. However, although regulations have been drafted, implementation at the school level often faces challenges.

Previous studies have discussed the implementation of child-friendly schools in various contexts. For example, research by Kartikasari & Nuryasana (2022) shows that the implementation of child-friendly schools faces obstacles in terms of teachers' lack of understanding of this concept and the lack of supporting facilities. Another study by Syahroni et al. (2022) and Triyana et al. (2022) examined the effectiveness of teacher training in improving the implementation of child-friendly values in elementary schools. Meanwhile, Pratiwi's research (2022) highlights the importance of parental and community involvement in creating a child-friendly school environment. However, these studies still do not specifically explore the implementation of child-friendly schools in areas with unique characteristics, such as SDN 1 Kleco, which has a variety of socio-cultural backgrounds of students.

The novelty of this study lies in the focus on analyzing the implementation of child-friendly schools at SDN 1 Kleco, considering the local culture-based approach and the specific constraints the school faces. This research seeks to fill the research gap by providing a new perspective that can enrich the literature on child-friendly schools, especially in elementary schools in urban areas of Indonesia.

This research is necessary because it can provide a more in-depth picture of the strategies, challenges, and impacts of implementing child-friendly elementary school schools. In addition, the results of this study are expected to be a reference for policymakers, educators, and related parties in improving the quality of child-friendly education. The objectives of this study are: 1) Analyze the strategies used by SDN 1 Kleco in implementing child-friendly schools; 2) Identify the challenges faced in the implementation; and 3) Evaluate the impact of the implementation of child-friendly schools on the student learning environment at SDN 1 Kleco. The results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for policy makers, educators and other stakeholders in improving the quality of basic education that is child-friendly and oriented towards strengthening character education as a whole.

B. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to examine the implementation of child-friendly schools at SDN 1 Kleco. This approach was chosen because the research aims to explore in depth the strategies, challenges, and impacts of implementing the concept of child-friendly schools in a specific context. Case studies allow researchers to understand the phenomenon holistically by considering social, cultural, and policy factors that affect the implementation process in the school.

Data was collected through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with principals, teachers, students, and parents to get diverse perspectives on implementing child-friendly schools at SDN 1 Kleco. Participatory observation is carried out to observe daily activities in the school environment, including interactions between teachers and students, facilities that support child-friendly concepts, and learning activities. Document analysis involves a review of school policy documents, work programs, and reports on implementing child-friendly schools. The data obtained was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, which involved the process of coding, theme grouping, and in-depth interpretation of the research findings.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, this study applies a triangulation strategy of data sources and methods. Data from various sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents, are compared to ensure consistency of information. In addition, the member check process was carried out by asking respondents to review the interview results to ensure that the researcher's interpretation was based on their views. With this approach, the research is expected to produce credible findings and provide significant insights for developing the concept of child-friendly schools in Indonesia.



Figure 1. Qualitative Research Methods

C. Finding and Discussion

1. Finding

SDN 1 Kleco's Strategy in Implementing Child-Friendly Schools

Child-Friendly School is an educational concept that aims to create a safe, comfortable, and supportive learning environment that supports children's development holistically. Many schools in Indonesia have begun adopting this principle, including SDN 1 Kleco. According to the principal of SDN 1 Kleco, based on the interview results, *"We realize the importance of creating a safe and comfortable learning environment for children. One of our strategic steps is to involve all school elements in applying positive discipline. Our teachers are trained to avoid corporal punishment and focus more on a motivational approach. In addition, we formed a special team to ensure that the child-friendly school program runs as planned, including supervision of learning facilities and activities."* Teachers supported the statement, *"We participate in regular training to understand how to create a child-friendly learning environment. One of the strategies we often use is giving students verbal rewards to increase their confidence. In the classroom, we also apply a group discussion method to encourage the active participation of each student."*

In addition, an interview with parents stated, *"The school is very open to feedback from us. They hold regular meetings with parents to discuss how to support children at home and school. Their approach makes our children more comfortable and eager to learn."* Students also gave a supportive statement: *"The teachers here are good. If we are wrong, they usually tell us softly. There are play activities outside the classroom, so we don't get bored of learning continuously."*

Observations at SDN 1 Kleco show that the school has facilities that support a child-friendly environment, such as classrooms decorated with bright colours and displays of student work, a playground with safe equipment, and a green zone for outdoor activities. Posters promoting children's rights and anti-violence also adorn some of the school's walls. In the learning process, teachers start with ice-breaking sessions, such as singing songs or light games, and then use interactive methods by dividing students into small groups. Teachers give praise that makes students happy and excited to learn. In addition, extracurricular activities such as morning briefings involve students and teachers in reading prayers, singing national anthems, and sharing short stories to create a positive atmosphere before learning begins. School management is also well monitored, with weekly meetings that routinely evaluate child-friendly programs, including the maintenance of playground facilities and plans to procure child-friendly storybooks in the library.

The observation results were supported by the results documentation of the classroom, which was equipped with educational decorations, interactive whiteboards, and posters that supported the concept of a child-friendly school, such as children's rights and tolerance values. In addition, the documentation of the library facilities is designed to be comfortable, providing a variety of child-friendly storybooks that students can access during recess or teaching and learning activities.



Figure 1. Classroom at SDN 1 Kleco (a) and Reading Corner Room (b)
Challenges Faced by SDN 1 Kleco in the Implementation of Child-Friendly Schools

Although the strategy has been implemented, interviews with some teachers and parents revealed some challenges. This is based on the results of an interview with the principal, namely, *"We are facing big challenges, especially related to limited funds. Many facilities need to be improved to support better child-friendly schools, such as adequate children's toilets and larger playgrounds. In addition, we still need to improve teachers' understanding of this approach, especially for those already familiar with traditional teaching methods."* This statement is also supported by the teacher's statement: *"Changing habits in disciplining students takes time. Sometimes, we deal with students with difficult behaviours and feel we lack the right tools or strategies to deal with them without using conventional punishment approaches. We also need more training to understand more effective techniques."*

In addition, interviews were conducted with parents stating, *"Some parents still consider physical discipline to be an effective way, so they are less supportive of the child-friendly school approach. They feel that children have become less disciplined because there is no strict punishment like in the past. This is a challenge for schools to change this mindset."* Students also stated, *"Some of my friends are still afraid to talk to the teacher if there is a problem. Sometimes, they say they fear being scolded even though the teacher never yells. I think it's because they're still used to the experience elsewhere."*

Observations at SDN 1 Kleco show several limitations in infrastructure and the implementation of child-friendly programs. Although the school has a playground, the area is limited, so students often scramble during recess. School toilets are also considered inadequate in terms of number and cleanliness. In the interaction between teachers and students, it can be seen that some teachers still use a loud tone of voice when giving instructions, so students seem hesitant to ask questions or offer opinions, indicating that the child-friendly culture has not been fully internalized. Support from parents also varies, with some still doubting the effectiveness of child-friendly approaches, which affect the implementation of school policies. In addition, program management faces the challenge of budget constraints, so some plans, such as procuring additional facilities, have had to be postponed because they focus on more urgent basic needs.

The observations' results are supported by documentation of the learning process that shows how teachers carry out interactive activities, such as group discussions and educational games, to create a fun learning atmosphere by the principles of child-friendly schools. In addition, documentation about teachers gives praise and rewards to students for their success.



(a)

(b)

Figure 2. Interactive Learning Process (a)(b)



Figure 3. Awarding Outstanding Students

The Impact of Child-Friendly School Implementation on the Student Learning Environment

The results of interviews with students showed that they felt more comfortable and safe studying at SDN 1 Kleco. One student stated that: *"I feel happy studying at this school. The teachers never yelled and always helped me if I was in trouble. So, I'm not afraid to ask questions in class."* Another student backed up the statement: *"We are often invited to play while studying. If I answered the question correctly, the teacher gave me small gifts, such as stickers. It feels like I'm more enthusiastic about learning."*

One of the parents also supported the student's statement, namely, *"My child is more excited to go to school. He often talks about fun activities in class and how his teachers always*

motivate them." Another parent stated that: *"I see positive changes in my child. He became more open and confident. I think this child-friendly approach is very effective."*

In addition to the statements of students and parents above, an interview was conducted with the Principal of SDN 1 Kleco, who stated: *"The implementation of child-friendly schools has an extraordinary impact. Not only does it increase students' motivation to learn, but it also creates a more harmonious school environment. We saw increased student attendance and participation in various activities."* Further interview with the teacher stated, *"After implementing a child-friendly approach, I saw a big change in the students. They are more active in asking questions and are not afraid to express their opinions. Our relationship with students has also become closer."* Another teacher stated something supportive: *"Students look more comfortable and confident. They don't hesitate to ask for help or share any problems they face at school and home."*

The observations at SDN 1 Kleco show a warm interaction between teachers and students, where teachers often give motivating compliments, such as "Great job! Your answer is very creative," thus creating a familiar and enthusiastic classroom atmosphere. Outside the classroom, morning briefings involve students in joint prayer, singing the national anthem, and sharing stories, which help create a positive atmosphere before learning begins. Extracurricular activities also allow students to confidently demonstrate their abilities, especially in the arts and sports. Students' comfort can be seen during breaks, such as playing cheerfully in the playground or reading a book in the colourful reading corner. Documentation data shows the positive impact of this environment, with a 10% increase in student attendance compared to the previous year, as well as progress in academic and non-academic achievements, as recorded in the mid-term evaluation report.

The results of the above observations are supported by photo documentation of extracurricular activities, such as art, sports, and discussion clubs, that support the child-friendly school approach. These photos show how students participate in the activity with enthusiasm and confidence. In addition, improving facilities and continuous teacher training strengthen the application of the concept of child-friendly schools on all fronts.



(a)



(b)



(c)

Figure 4. Scout Activities (a), Art Activities (b), and Disaster Management Simulation Activities (c)



Figure 5. Ongoing Training for Teachers

2. Discussion

Implementing child-friendly schools at SDN 1, Kleco, has several positive impacts but also faces various challenges that must be considered. Based on this study's results, applying the principles of Child-Friendly Schools at SDN 1 Kleco has created a safer, more comfortable, and holistic environment that supports children's development. This can be seen from the warm interaction between teachers and students, child-friendly facilities, and increased student participation in academic and non-academic activities.

Positive Impact of the Implementation of Child-Friendly Schools at SDN 1 Kleco

Implementing the Child-Friendly School strategy at SDN 1 Kleco has increased students' comfort and sense of security in the learning process. In this study, most students felt more comfortable learning, felt valued through verbal praise, and were more open to asking questions. This aligns with previous studies' findings that positive approaches such as verbal rewards can increase students' confidence and create a pleasant learning atmosphere (Chen, 2023; Fatimannisa, 2024). Other research also supports that the

application of a child-friendly approach has an impact on increasing learning motivation and student involvement in various school activities (Barnas et al., 2023; Cordero-Vinueza et al., 2023; Fitriani et al., 2021; Fitriani & Istaryatiningtias, 2020; Zein et al., 2023). Interactive methods, such as group discussions and educational games, have been shown to strengthen students' active participation in learning (Chen et al., 2022; Sivarajah et al., 2019). In addition, extracurricular activities, such as morning briefings, which involve students in joint prayer and singing the national anthem, create a positive atmosphere before learning begins, which supports character building and closeness between students and teachers.

Challenges Faced in the Implementation of Child-Friendly Schools at SDN 1 Kleco

However, SDN 1 Kleco also faces several challenges in implementing the Child-Friendly School concept. One is the budget limitations to improve supportive facilities, such as more adequate toilets and a more expansive playground. This is by the findings of research by Aprilia (2024), Nair et al. (2023), and Sari et al. (2023), which stated that lack of funding is often an obstacle for schools to implement the concept of Child-Friendly Schools optimally. In addition, there is a challenge in changing the mindset of some parents who still consider physical discipline as an effective method. In line with this, research by Fevre et al. (2020) and Fischer et al. (2019) found that paradigm shifts in education, especially related to child discipline, require time and consistent socialization between schools and parents.

Improving Teachers' Skills in the Implementation of Child-Friendly Schools at SDN 1 Kleco

Teachers at SDN 1 Kleco have also shown readiness to adapt to the new approach but still need ongoing training. Some teachers admit that changing from traditional teaching methods to more child-friendly methods requires more time and effort. This is consistent with the research results showing the importance of training teachers to understand and apply the principles of Child-Friendly Schools (Pratiwi, 2022; Triyana et al., 2022). Regular training can help teachers be more effective in managing classrooms and applying positive discipline, which strengthens the success of implementing Child-Friendly Schools in schools.

Overall, the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools at SDN 1 Kleco has a positive impact on increasing student comfort and motivation to learn. However, challenges still need to be overcome, especially regarding updating facilities and a growing understanding of positive discipline among teachers and parents. The successful implementation of child-friendly schools in this school also emphasizes the importance of support from various parties, such as parents and the government, to create a learning environment that supports children's development. In the long term, continuous training for teachers and adequate infrastructure improvements are urgently needed to support the success of the Child-Friendly School concept at SDN 1 Kleco.

E. Conclusion

This study shows that the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools at SDN 1 Kleco has positively impacted various aspects of education, especially in creating a comfortable learning environment and supporting student development. Despite challenges, such as limited physical facilities and variations in educators' understanding of the concept of child-friendly schools, schools have created better interaction between teachers and students and increased students' motivation to learn. In addition, this approach also contributes to forming students' character who are more confident, tolerant, and active in teaching and learning activities. However, to increase the effectiveness of the implementation of this program, support from various parties, including the government, parents, and the community, is critical. Strong cooperation can help overcome obstacles, especially in providing adequate facilities and training for educators to explore child-friendly approaches consistently. More targeted support from various parties is needed to increase the success of implementing Child-Friendly Schools at SDN 1 Kleco. Local governments and related parties are expected to provide adequate budgets to improve school facilities, such as toilets, classrooms, and playgrounds, to meet child-friendly standards. In addition, continuous training for teachers needs to be carried out to improve their understanding and ability to apply a child-friendly approach in the classroom consistently. Parent involvement must also be increased through socialization programs and school activities that support synergy between school and home in supporting student development. Periodic evaluations through student satisfaction surveys and analysis of academic development and student character are essential to ensure the program runs according to its goals. With solid support and targeted implementation, SDN 1 Kleco can inspire other schools to create inclusive and sustainable education.

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