

## Inclusive Revolution: Children's Right to Participation and Inclusivity in Child-Friendly Schools in Indonesia

### Revolusi Inklusif: Hak Partisipasi Anak dan Inklusivitas dalam Sekolah Ramah Anak di Indonesia

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**Abstract:** *This study aims to examine the implementation of child participation and inclusivity values within Child-Friendly School (CFS) program in Indonesia employing a hexahelix approach to highlight the gap between policy and practice. The CFS strategy is a national initiative to realize inclusive and participatory education in Indonesia, based on children's rights and Sustainable Development Goals. This study applied a qualitative descriptive method through analysis of regulatory documents, guidelines, scientific literature, and collaborative data related to CFS implementation. Vygotsky's theoretical framework on social constructivism and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of child development were used to interpret the dynamics of CFS implementation. The findings indicate the difference in implementation across institutions, particularly in the aspects of child involvement and cross-sector coordination. The hexahelix approach strengthens the effectiveness of CFS through multi-stakeholder collaboration. The study recommends establishing a hexahelix collaboration forum at the local level and developing training programs for educators to optimize CFS principles. This study contributes to the academic gap in understanding and improving the implementation of CFS in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** *Child-Friendly Schools, child participation, inclusivity, Hexahelix Approach, children's rights education.*

**Abstrak:** *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji implementasi partisipasi anak dan nilai inklusivitas dalam Sekolah Ramah Anak (SRA) melalui pendekatan hexahelix, dengan menyoroti kesenjangan antara kebijakan dan praktik di lapangan. Strategi SRA merupakan inisiatif nasional untuk mewujudkan pendidikan inklusif dan partisipatif di Indonesia, berlandaskan hak anak dan Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif yang diaplikasikan melalui analisis dokumen regulasi, pedoman, literatur ilmiah, dan data kolaborasi terkait SRA. Kerangka analisis merujuk pada teori Vygotsky tentang konstruktivisme sosial dan teori ekologi perkembangan anak Bronfenbrenner yang digunakan untuk menafsirkan dinamika pelaksanaan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa perbedaan dalam implementasi antar lembaga merupakan tantangan utama,*

*terutama terkait dengan keterlibatan anak dan koordinasi lintas sektor. Pendekatan hexahelix terbukti memperkuat efektivitas dengan memastikan pemenuhan hak anak serta proses implementasi yang inklusif pada SRA melalui kerjasama multi-aktor. Rekomendasi meliputi pembentukan forum kolaborasi hexahelix di tingkat lokal dan penyusunan program pelatihan bagi pendidik untuk mengoptimalkan prinsip-prinsip SRA. Studi ini mengisi kekosongan akademik untuk memahami dan meningkatkan pelaksanaan SRA di Indonesia.*

**Kata kunci:** Sekolah Ramah Anak, partisipasi anak, inklusivitas, pendekatan Hexahelix, pendidikan hak anak

## **INTRODUCTION**

Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) is a concept that has been implemented in Indonesia to standardize the learning process and create an inclusive learning environment. The objective of this concept is to prioritize child participation. The definition of Child-Friendly Schools has actually been proposed by several figures and organizations, which, in fact, varies greatly and often causes debate. According to UNICEF, Child-Friendly Schools is a concept that focuses on meeting the needs of children as a whole with multidimensional quality coverage and holistic attention to children; this emphasizes education with an orientation towards fulfilling children's rights, which prioritizes protection, participation, and equality for every child (UNICEF, 2009). According to Kristanto (2012), the Child-Friendly School is an open school concept that prioritizes psychological factors that using student-centered approach and students are involved in the curriculum process. Meanwhile, Alfina and Anwar (2020) explain that Child Friendly Schools are an institutional framework that recognizes and upholds children's rights to education, health, play, and protection from violence by promoting and protecting children's rights in the education system.

Based on this local framework, it can be seen that the CFS concept has adapted the global Child Friendly School framework proposed by UNICEF. The definition of Child - Friendly School proposed by UNICEF conceptualizes it as a paradigm that prioritizes the fulfillment of children's rights to quality and inclusive education. In contrast, Alfina & Anwar (2020) underscore the necessity for educational institutions to undergo enhancements to ensure the realization of children's rights. Kristanto (2012), on the other hand, interprets Child Friendly School as an educational system that fulfils children's rights through the curriculum. In summary, these perspectives on the concept of Child-Friendly Schools share a common objective: to ensure the fulfilment of children's rights within the educational environment. The concept of a Child-Friendly School encompasses a wide range of elements, including curriculum review, school facilities, educators, and school children or students.

Globally, there are international commitments that form the basis for the implementation of child-friendly schools. For example, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a foundational document for the fulfilment

of children's rights, including the right to proper education. Additionally, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined in goal number 4 specifically address the imperative of quality education. The overarching objective of the SDGs in the domain of education is to underscore the significance of ensuring inclusive access to education for all individuals, equitable treatment, alignment with contemporary needs, and the attainment of educational quality (Oktavianatun & Nugraheni, 2024).

This goal is also reinforced by the principle of Leave No One Behind (LNOB), which ensures that all segments of society, including marginalized groups can participate equally. This goal also encourages collaboration between all sectors to achieve the goals effectively and inclusively (Mensah, Mensah, & Mensah, 2022), including the participation of children who are put forward in the application of international education values. Other international instruments that also champion inclusiveness as one of the principles of education are the Salamanca Declaration (Unesco, 1994) which is now a turning point for building awareness of providing equal access to education for every child (Surtini & Nenden, 2024), and UNICEF guidelines in the Framework for Rights-Based, Child-Friendly Educational Systems and Schools (2009), which also encourage inclusive education and prioritize child participation.

One of the countries that have implemented these international regulations and concepts is Indonesia, which has even defined Child-Friendly Schools through Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak [Kemen PPPA] ) No. 4 of 2024. This regulation delineates Child-Friendly Schools as formal, non-formal, and informal education units that are safe, clean, and healthy, provide care, and have an environmental culture. These schools are designed to guarantee, fulfil, and respect children's rights and protect children from violence, discrimination, and other mistreatment. Additionally, they support children's participation, especially in planning, policy, learning, supervision, and complaints mechanisms related to the fulfilment of children's rights and protection in education. According to the report of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia in 2022, approximately 65,877 schools in Indonesia have effectively incorporated CFS principles into their policies, but only 49 schools out of 65,877 have achieved optimal standardization and implementation of these principles in their daily practices (Habibah, 2023). The report indicating a significant gap between policy adoption and practical realization.

The number of child-friendly school implementations certainly cannot be used as a benchmark that schools have been spared from children's problems. This is evidenced by data from the Indonesian Education Monitoring Network, which recorded a trend of 194 cases of violence in schools throughout 2022 after the CFS policy was issued, these cases include discrimination and bullying (Azizah, Fitriawan, Muzhaffarah, Anisa, & Syanur, 2024). In addition, the trend of bullying among students in Indonesia reached 41%, a figure that stands out compared to

the average for OECD member countries, which is only around 22.7% (Permana, 2019). Therefore, Indonesia is ranked fifth out of 78 countries in terms of the most bullying cases. Besides bullying, 15% of students in Indonesia experienced intimidation, 19% of students were ostracized, 22% of students were humiliated, 14% of students in Indonesia claimed to have been threatened, and 20% of students had their alarming news spread (Beaton, Doherty, & Wenger, 2020; Febriansyah & Yuningsih, 2024).

Those reports reflect the gap between policy and implementation in the field. There are still enormous challenges in supporting children's participation and creating inclusive education. Several factors influence this, such as the uneven implementation of CFS principles in schools in Indonesia (Hamdi, Yuliansyah, & Madihah, 2023), unprovided counselling facilities for students, the lack of participation of children in decision making and drafting school to build a sense of responsibility for children to succeed in CFS (Herianto, Jahiban, & Dahlan, 2020), and the limited recognition of the collaboration among parents, external parties and an interdisciplinary approach in overseeing the optimization of Child-Friendly Schools in Indonesia (Alfina & Anwar, 2020).

Those evidence show that the involvement of external stakeholders, collaboration of various parties, and an interdisciplinary approach to encourage optimization have a significant influence on accelerating child participation and inclusiveness. This is because these efforts have been adopted in the application of international regulations.

The integration of international values, such as inclusivity and child participation, within the education sector in Indonesia is inextricably linked to the concept of Child-Friendly Schools. This concept has been incorporated into national policy with the objective of establishing a secure and conducive school environment, thereby facilitating optimal child development in accordance with children's rights as stipulated in the convention on the rights of the child, an international treaty adopted by United Nations. This international treaty is to promote children's welfare, which was formally endorsed through Presidential Decree No. 36 of 1990. However, the implementation of this national policy is subject to modification, with global principles being integrated with local wisdom as encapsulated by the concepts inherent in Child-Friendly Schools. The ambition articulated in various international and regional regulations is likely to encounter significant challenges in the implementation process if it relies exclusively on the education sector. Collaboration and interdisciplinary approaches are needed to ensure the effective implementation of these principles that can facilitate optimization.

International regulations such as the SDGs clearly encourage cross-sector collaboration and adopt the Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) (Annan-Diab & Molinari, 2017). Consequently, this approach is deemed essential for Indonesia's implementation of the hexahelix collaboration concept. The hexahelix model encompasses six primary stakeholders: government, academia, business,

media, community, and international organizations. This approach fosters a collaborative environment, facilitating inclusive and participatory education regulation and implementation. This approach fosters an inclusive and participatory education ecosystem, strengthening children's active involvement through collaboration with social actors and also transforming student from passive learners to active contributors of knowledge. children's participation through social actors in a sustainable manner.

In alignment with this, the concept will shift the perception of students from passive recipients of knowledge to active agents who will shape understanding through social interaction, collaboration, and cultural engagement. Moreover, the necessity of cross-disciplinary collaboration to support sustainable education is underscored by Singha & Singha (2024). This is of paramount importance because cooperation among various disciplines will equip students with the necessary skills to analyze and overcome complex environmental challenges. This knowledge will be applied through corporate partnership to provide practical learning opportunities, community initiatives that encourage local engagement, and international collaborations that expose students to global perspectives, thereby fostering global awareness.

Furthermore, this concept will assist children in maximizing their participation in the decision-making process. This, in turn, will facilitate the creation of an inclusive learning environment that will empower children socially and intellectually. In the study of the implementation and optimization of Child-Friendly Schools, this research also uses the theoretical framework of social constructivism by Lev Vygotsky, which emphasizes the socio-cultural context in shaping children's knowledge. This approach is further reinforced by Bronfenbrenner's concept of the Ecology of Child Development, which acknowledges the influence of interconnected systems, including family, school, community, and national and international policies, on child development. Utilizing this approach enables a balanced examination of CFS, with a focus on the dynamics between actors, ranging from internal to external. Multifactor collaboration, as articulated in the concept of hexahelix collaboration, is pivotal in shaping inclusive, participatory, rights-based education.

Thus, this study aims to examine the concept of hexahelix collaboration in the implementation of Child-Friendly School in Indonesia as an implementing and innovative strategy that has not been widely explored in previous studies. In addition, this research focuses on the implementation process of child friendly schools in Indonesia to integrate the value of child participation and inclusiveness into children's education. As such, the main research question is how the child participation and inclusiveness values implemented in child-friendly schools through the Hexahelix approach. This research is expected to contribute theoretically to policy development, particularly in the field of education in Indonesia.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design with document-based analysis to explore the factors that influence the successful implementation of Child-Friendly Schools in Indonesia. The qualitative approach chosen to facilitate a comprehensive and contextual understanding of how inclusiveness and child participation principles derived from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are applied in the Indonesian educational system. The descriptive design allowed the researcher to systematically interpret the content of various document in order to identify patterns, challenges, and opportunities related to the implementation CFS.

The data collection process involves predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure relevance, reliability, and suitability for the research objectives. First, regulatory documents related to the implementation of CFS in Indonesia, including the Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, Government Regulations (Peraturan Pemerintah), and various regional regulations issued between 2014 and 2024. These types of documents fall under the category of inclusion, as they directly regulate, elaborate on, or support the implementation of CFS policies. Second, international guidelines such as UNICEF's Framework for Rights-Based, Child-Friendly Educational Systems and Schools, which serve as a global normative reference in the application of child rights-based education principles. This document is also categorized as an inclusion document, as it is relevant in assessing the extent to which national policies are in line with international standards on child-friendly schools. Third, scientific literature in the form of journal articles, proceedings, and academic publications discussing the implementation of CFS, inclusiveness, and child participation. This type of document is included in the inclusion category because it provides empirical and conceptual analysis that enriches understanding of policy effectiveness and challenges encountered at the practical level. Fourth, collaborative documents relevant to the hexahelix initiative in the context of CFS, such as government reports, non-governmental organization publications, and the results of cooperation between stakeholders in the field of education. These documents also fall under the category of inclusion, as they directly highlight the forms of collaboration and contributions of multiple actors in the implementation of child-friendly schools.

Meanwhile, documents that are excluded include non-academic materials (such as popular media articles or opinions), duplicative documents that do not add new information, and materials that do not specifically discuss the issues of child-friendly schools, inclusiveness, or child participation. The analysis of this collection of documents has two main objectives. First, to identify policies, practices, challenges, and opportunities that have emerged in the implementation of CFS in Indonesia during the decade of research. Second, to evaluate the extent to which hexahelix collaboration has played a role in overcoming obstacles and strengthening the success of sustainable CFS policy implementation.

The analysis was conducted using a two-layered approach combining thematic coding and content interpretation. First, thematic analysis identified recurring patterns such as stakeholder participation, infrastructure readiness, and collaboration. Themes were developed inductively through repeated readings and coded manually using conceptual categories from the theoretical framework. Content analysis then interpreted how these themes relate to policy texts and institutional frameworks, examining the congruence and divergence between policy intentions and practical outcomes. The results of the analysis are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to the successful implementation of CFS while informing more effective strategies for improving and expanding the adoption of child-friendly school principles in Indonesia.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Results are presented in two layers to enhance analytical transparency. The first presents the thematic analysis of document data, identifying major themes that reflect the dynamics of CFS implementation in Indonesia. The second presents the content analysis, interpreting how these themes align or diverge from national and global policy frameworks. This dual approach provides both inductive and interpretive insights into the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools in Indonesia.

### **Thematic Analysis Results**

This section presents the thematic findings derived from the manual coding through iterative reading and memo-writing, where recurring phrases and conceptual similarities were grouped into preliminary categories. These categories were refined into five dominant themes, which were then interpreted within the policy context.

#### ***Child Participation as the Foundation for the Implementation of Child-Friendly Schools***

Child participation is one of the fundamental pillars of the Child-Friendly Schools concept developed by UNICEF and adopted in Indonesia's national Child-Friendly Schools policy. Based on document analysis, the theme of child participation appears predominantly in almost all national regulations and regional reports related to the implementation of CFS from 2014 to 2024. Documents such as Permen PPPA No. 4 of 2024 concerning the Implementation of Services for the Fulfillment of Children's Rights emphasize that child participation is not merely symbolic involvement, but rather part of the decision-making process in the educational environment. However, further review shows that the interpretation of child participation at the school level is still varied and often limited to ceremonial involvement, such as competitions, children's day celebrations, or temporary children's forums, rather than as a permanent mechanism in school governance (Kepmen PPPA, 2023) .

Analysis of CFS implementation reports from several provinces indicates a gap between the government's normative commitments and implementation. For

example, data from the 2023 National Child-Friendly School Profile shows that of the 10,564 schools that have been awarded the child-friendly status, only about 38% have active children's forums with regular meeting schedules, while the rest do not yet have a clear participatory structure. This disparity shows that most schools still understand child participation as limited to involvement in extracurricular or social activities, rather than at the level of school policy planning and evaluation. This condition is consistent with the results of research by Indraswati, Widodo, Rahmatih, & Maulyda (2020), which found that children are often only treated as beneficiaries, not active partners in the formulation of school policies.

In the context of education policy implementation, meaningful child involvement is in line with the spirit of Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which guarantees children's right to be heard in any decision that affects their lives. However, most regional policy documents do not explicitly describe procedures or indicators for child participation in school management. Some local governments, such as Surabaya and Yogyakarta, have developed technical guidelines that enable children to be involved in school policy evaluation, but this approach has not yet been standardized nationally (UNICEF, 2023). In addition, reports from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection in 2022 and the National Development Planning Agency in 2023 show that there is still a capacity gap among educators in understanding the concept of meaningful participation, so that the implementation of CFS tends to focus on physical and administrative aspects.

From a thematic reading of 48 documents, it was found that the term "child participation" appeared in three main forms; (1) consultative participation, where children provide input without having any influence on the final decision; (2) collaborative participation, in which children work together with teachers or school officials in certain activities; and (3) transformative participation, in which children are part of the school policy planning and evaluation process. The dominant pattern found was consultative participation, while collaborative and transformative forms were still very limited. This was reinforced by the findings of Wahyuni (2022) and Azizah et al. (2023), who noted that school children's forums often lacked formal authority or structural support to effectively channel their aspirations within the school system.

From a theoretical perspective, the limitations of children's participation in the implementation of CFS can be analyzed through the lens of Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the formation of children's knowledge and self-awareness. When the school environment does not provide space for participation, children lose the opportunity to develop critical thinking, negotiation, and social responsibility skills, which are at the core of child-friendly education (Brooks & Brooks, 2021; Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of CFS, a top-down learning process without child-teacher dialogue contradicts the principle of building children's capacity as active learners and social

agents. Therefore, involving children in school governance not only fulfills the normative aspects of children's rights but also supports the achievement of pedagogical goals and sustainable social development.

In addition to theoretical aspects, Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach also provides a strong analytical framework for understanding the position of children in a complex education system. In the ecological model, child participation occurs at the microsystem level (classroom and school), which is influenced by the mesosystem (relationships between school, family, and community). When schools do not provide two-way communication mechanisms between children and teachers, and do not build bridges with families and communities, the ecosystem of child participation becomes fragile. Several regional reports, such as the 2023 Child-Friendly City Evaluation Report, show that schools with strong support from city children's forums and community institutions have more substantial participation rates than schools without external networks (Bappenas, 2023).

Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that the success of implementing child participation as the core of CFS is highly dependent on three main factors: (1) regulatory support that explains the mechanisms of participation; (2) the institutional capacity of schools and teachers in facilitating participatory spaces; and (3) external collaboration that strengthens the voice of children outside the school environment. Without these three factors, the principle of child participation will remain declarative rather than operational. Therefore, a strategy to strengthen child participation is needed, oriented towards the formation of inclusive school forums, child rights-based teacher training, and the integration of participation indicators into the CFS evaluation system at the national level.

### ***Inclusivity and Equality in the Learning Environment***

The principle of inclusivity is an important component of the Child-Friendly School policy, as emphasized in Peraturan Menteri Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak No. 4 of 2024, which states that every child has the same right to education without discrimination based on gender, physical ability, socioeconomic status, or cultural background. The results of document analysis show that almost all regulations and reports on the implementation of CFS place the aspect of inclusivity as a key indicator of program success. However, implementation data reveals that understanding of the concept of inclusivity at the school level still varies. Some schools interpret inclusivity only in the context of accepting students with disabilities, while other schools have begun to interpret inclusivity more broadly to include gender equality, prevention of identity-based violence, and protection of students from minority groups (UNICEF, 2023).

A thematic analysis of regional reports and academic publications identifies three main dimensions in the implementation of inclusivity: physical access, social acceptance, and pedagogical adaptation. In terms of physical access, many schools have made efforts to improve facilities such as building disability access routes,

providing child-friendly toilets, and safe classrooms for students with special needs. However, in terms of social and pedagogical acceptance, the challenges remain considerable. The 2023 Child-Friendly City Report notes that there is still stigma against children with disabilities in school environments, which prevents them from actively participating in learning activities (Bappenas, 2023). This condition shows that infrastructure policies have not always been followed by a transformation of values and social practices at the school level.

Another important finding emerged from the analysis of teacher training documents and curriculum modules used in several regions. It was found that many schools do not yet have differentiated learning strategies to accommodate the diversity of children in the classroom. Teachers tend to use a uniform, academically-oriented approach without considering the specific needs of children, including those with learning difficulties or from poor families. Research by Sari, Sarofah, Fadli (2022) revealed that 62% of teachers in elementary schools in Indonesia have never participated in training on inclusive education, resulting in minimal pedagogical adaptation to students with special needs. This emphasizes the need to improve teacher capacity through child rights-based training and adaptive teaching methods.

In addition to limited human resources, school culture is also an important factor in the success of inclusivity. Some schools with strong leadership and a commitment to equality demonstrate good practices in creating an environment that values diversity. For example, the Tolerance School program in Yogyakarta has successfully facilitated cross-cultural and interfaith activities at the student level, which strengthens mutual respect and prevents discrimination (Mahendra, 2019). However, other schools still tend to maintain hierarchical patterns in interactions between teachers and students, making it difficult to internalize values of equality. The visionary leadership of the principal and the ability of management to integrate inclusive values into the school's vision are the main differentiators between successful and unsuccessful practices (Wulandari, Mursalin, Sya'roni, & Baharudin, 2024).

Theoretically, the inclusive approach in CFS can be explained through Bronfenbrenner's ecological model. At the microsystem level, teachers and peers play a direct role in creating an environment of acceptance and appreciation for children's diversity. At the mesosystem level, the relationship between school and family determines the extent to which inclusive values are consistently practiced inside and outside the classroom. When families and communities show an open attitude towards children with special needs, schools find it easier to internalize inclusive values. However, if the social environment still views diversity as a burden, then inclusive policies are difficult to implement comprehensively (Cochran, 2007; Sibawaihi, Ratnasari, Purnami, & Brooks, 2025). Therefore, the implementation of inclusivity must involve broader social transformation, not just changes to internal school policies.

In addition to ecological theory, the relevance to Vygotsky's views is also strong. Vygotsky emphasized that children's development occurs optimally through collaborative social interaction. In the context of CFS, inclusivity means providing a learning space where children can learn together without social and psychological barriers. When children with different abilities interact in a safe and respectful environment, the processes of scaffolding and the zone of proximal development can be more effective. Therefore, inclusivity is not only moral or social, but also pedagogical because it enriches the learning process by utilizing diversity as a source of learning (Pena-Vega, Cohen, Flores, Le Treut, Lagos, Castilla, et al, 2022; Vygotsky, 1978).

The analysis also found that collaborative support from local governments and external partners was a key factor in creating truly inclusive schools. Partnership programs between the education office and community organizations such as Yayasan Sayangi Tunas Cilik (Save the Children Indonesia) and Yayasan Setara have proven to help schools in Makassar and Kupang in developing inclusive guidelines and discrimination reporting mechanisms (Abdullah, Hastira, & Hastira, 2025). This collaborative approach shows that inclusivity cannot be built in isolation, but requires a cross-sector network that strengthens policy, resources, and public awareness. Thus, effective implementation of inclusivity in schools requires synergy between national policies, local commitment, and support from the education community that is oriented towards children's rights.

### ***School Infrastructure and Physical Environment Readiness***

Infrastructure is one of the most prominent aspects in the implementation of CFS in Indonesia. Based on the analysis of policy documents and reports on the implementation of CFS from various regions, it was found that the readiness of physical infrastructure is often the main benchmark for the success of the program. Permen PPPA No. 4 of 2024 explicitly states that the provision of a safe, clean, healthy, green, inclusive, and comfortable learning environment is a mandatory indicator for schools that want to obtain a child-friendly rating. A report by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection shows that by 2023, there has been a significant increase in the number of schools that meet physical indicators, such as the availability of gender-separated toilets, safe play areas, and handwashing facilities. However, a more in-depth analysis reveals that an excessive emphasis on physical aspects has the potential to shift the focus of the program from children's rights to participation and pedagogy to administrative compliance.

Data from the 2023 National Child-Friendly School Profile shows that 76% of schools that have obtained child-friendly status meet the basic infrastructure indicators, but only 42% meet the indicators for a violence-free environment and meaningful participation. This reinforces the argument that many schools seek certification through facility development without making substantive changes in school governance or culture (Bappenas, 2023). For example, a number of schools

have built gardens and playgrounds to meet physical indicators, but do not yet have effective counseling mechanisms for children who are victims of violence or bullying. This phenomenon indicates the existence of infrastructure bias in the implementation of CFS, where success is more easily measured through visual and material aspects than through the relational and psychological dimensions of children (Azizah et al., 2024).

From a regulatory perspective, many regions have drafted local regulations that emphasize the obligation to provide physical facilities for child-friendly schools. However, the implementation is greatly influenced by the fiscal capacity of the region and local education policy priorities. A review of 17 local regulations documents and regional head decrees shows that several city governments, such as Surabaya, Yogyakarta, and Denpasar, have successfully allocated special budgets for school facility improvements, while other regions with low fiscal capacity tend to rely on CSR assistance or NGO support (Kemen PPPA, 2024; UNICEF Indonesia, 2023). This dependence has led to disparities in infrastructure quality between regions, with schools in urban areas tending to be better equipped than those in rural or remote areas.

Conceptually, the existence of adequate infrastructure is indeed a basic prerequisite for fulfilling children's rights to safe and comfortable education. However, Bronfenbrenner (2005) emphasizes that the physical environment is only one element in the microsystem that influences child development. Good infrastructure will not have an optimal impact if it is not balanced with a supportive social environment and pedagogical interactions. In this context, clean classrooms and complete facilities do not automatically guarantee the establishment of an inclusive and violence-free school culture. Conversely, schools with simple facilities can still embody child-friendly principles if teachers and school management foster values of empathy, openness, and respect for children's voices (Brooks & Brooks, 2021).

An analysis of UNICEF Indonesia's reporting documents (2023) shows that several good practices have emerged from schools that integrate infrastructure planning with character education and child participation. For example, in Surakarta City, the Green School Area was developed by involving students in the planning of the school garden, which not only increased environmental awareness but also built a sense of ownership of the school space. This approach shows that when physical development is accompanied by the involvement of children in decision-making, the results are not only cosmetic but also transformative. Conversely, development projects carried out unilaterally without consulting children often result in underutilized facilities because they do not meet their needs.

The sustainability of infrastructure is also an important issue in the implementation of CFS. Many regional reports show that facilities that have been built are not always well maintained due to limited operational budgets and weak monitoring mechanisms. A study by Wulandari et al. (2024) confirms that without a sustainable evaluation system, infrastructure indicators only serve as "tick-box

compliance" that does not contribute to changes in the quality of the learning environment. Therefore, strengthening the monitoring system and child participation in the evaluation of physical facilities is important to ensure that infrastructure is actually used in accordance with child-friendly principles. In this context, schools need to develop child-led facility audits, that is, periodic evaluations that involve students in assessing the safety, cleanliness, and comfort of the school environment.

From a public policy perspective, equitable physical infrastructure readiness requires integration between education development planning and child protection policies at the national and regional levels. Education facility development programs should not stand alone, but rather be part of a national strategy for fulfilling children's rights. This is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4.a), which emphasize the importance of building and improving education facilities that are child, disability, and gender-friendly. An analysis of the Bappenas (2023) document shows that when school infrastructure development is synergized with social inclusion policies, the impact is broader in terms of increasing access to education and reducing regional disparities. Thus, the infrastructure approach in CFS should move from a facility provision paradigm to child-centered environment development, where physical space becomes a means to foster children's overall engagement, comfort, and safety.

### ***Teachers' Capacity and Pedagogical Adaptation***

Teachers play a central role in the successful implementation of Child-Friendly Schools as they are the main actors who translate child-friendly principles into classroom learning practices. Based on an analysis of training documents and evaluations of the CFS program published by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Kemen PPPA) (2024) and UNICEF Indonesia (2023), it was found that most teachers in Indonesia still understand the concept of CFS in a narrow sense, namely as merely creating a safe and violence-free learning environment. In fact, CFS requires a more profound pedagogical transformation, including respect for children's voices, the application of participatory learning methods, and recognition of diverse learning styles. The 2023 National Child-Friendly School Profile Report noted that of the 8,600 schools surveyed, only 39% of teachers routinely involved students in the process of reflection or learning planning. This figure shows that reflective and dialogical pedagogical practices are still limited in Indonesian schools, especially outside urban areas (Bappenas, 2023).

From the results of a review of teacher training documents, it was found that most capacity building programs are still informative and oriented towards theoretical understanding, rather than practical skills mastery. Many teachers receive training on children's rights and the principle of inclusion, but do not yet have concrete pedagogical tools to integrate these into the teaching and learning process. Research by Mulyadi et al. (2021) tidak ada dalam daftar referensi shows that 65% of teachers admit that they are not yet able to adapt their teaching methods to the

individual needs of students, including children with disabilities or children from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Another challenge arises from the high administrative workload, which reduces the time teachers have for pedagogical reflection or learning innovation. In this context, teacher capacity building policies need to focus on pedagogical empowerment based on direct experience, collaboration between teachers, and contextual problem-based learning (Wulandari et al., 2024).

Theoretically, the low implementation of participatory pedagogy in CFS can be explained through Vygotsky's socio-cultural learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and scaffolding as the foundation for children's cognitive development. When teachers act more as directors than facilitators, children lose the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills and social responsibility through collaborative learning processes (Vygotsky, 1978; Brooks & Brooks, 2021). Therefore, teachers need to shift their paradigm from teacher-centered to child-centered learning, where students are considered active subjects in constructing knowledge. In addition, Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework also shows that the quality of interactions at the micro level (between teachers and students) greatly determines the effectiveness of the learning environment. Teachers who act as positive ecological agents not only create a safe learning space but also foster a psychological climate that supports freedom of expression and appreciation for student diversity (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

To strengthen teachers' pedagogical capacity, document analysis shows the importance of synergy between the government, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations. Integrated training programs such as the Child-Friendly Teaching Module developed by UNICEF in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology are examples of good practices that combine a child rights approach with active learning methodologies. The module not only provides practical guidance on violence prevention and child participation, but also trains teachers to integrate the values of empathy, dialogue, and critical reflection into daily learning activities. In addition, the implementation of a peer mentoring system among teachers in several cities, such as Surabaya and Makassar, has proven effective in encouraging child-based learning innovation. By strengthening teachers' pedagogical capacity through continuous training, peer mentoring, and professional recognition, the implementation of CFS can be more oriented towards profound changes in learning culture, rather than merely fulfilling administrative indicators.

### ***Collaborative Governance and Multi-Actor Engagement***

The implementation of Child-Friendly Schools in Indonesia cannot be separated from the synergy between actors in a collaborative governance model known as the Hexahelix approach. Based on an analysis of 48 policy documents and cross-sector cooperation reports, it was found that the success of the CFS program is largely determined by the extent to which the six main actors, namely, government,

academia, industry, community/NGOs, media, and international organizations, collaborate consistently. Documents from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Peraturan Menteri Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, 2024) and UNICEF Indonesia (2023) show that schools that have successfully maintained their CFS status for more than three years are those that actively build partnerships with external institutions, both for technical support and funding. However, in a number of regions, the pattern of collaboration is still ad hoc and depends on the initiative of the school principal or short-term project support. Dependence on individuals without systemic support makes program sustainability vulnerable to leadership changes or reductions in funding (Putrihana, 2023).

Further analysis of regional reports shows that local governments play a strategic role in creating a collaborative ecosystem that supports the sustainability of CFS. The municipal governments of Surabaya and Denpasar, for example, have established Child-Friendly City Forums involving education agencies, social agencies, women's organizations, and local media to monitor and evaluate the implementation of CFS in schools (Bappenas, 2023). This practice shows that coordinated collaborative governance can strengthen monitoring and public accountability functions. However, not all regions have adequate institutional and fiscal capacity to implement similar mechanisms. Several reports mention that regions with limited budgets tend to prioritize the fulfillment of physical and administrative indicators, while collaborative aspects have not been formalized in regional policy structures (Kemen PPPA, 2024). This indicates the importance of strengthening regulations that govern the roles of each actor in the Hexahelix model so that collaboration does not depend on temporary initiatives.

In theoretical terms, collaborative CFS governance can be explained through Bronfenbrenner's social ecology approach, which views schools as part of an interacting system. The government and international organizations are at the exosystem level, providing the policy framework, while the community, teachers, and families play a role at the microsystem and mesosystem levels, which determine how policies are implemented. When coordination among these ecological levels is effective, there is synergy between macro policies and micro practices that directly impact child welfare (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In practice, good cross-sector collaboration not only improves program quality but also strengthens social legitimacy and a shared sense of ownership of child-friendly principles. This collaborative approach is also in line with the paradigm of sustainable education development that emphasizes a whole of society approach, namely, the involvement of all elements of society in creating a fair, inclusive, and sustainable education system (Singha & Singha, 2024).

Empirically, a number of studies show that strong partnerships between schools and external institutions can expand the impact of CFS programs to the community level. For example, the collaboration between UNICEF, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, and Save the Children in the Child-Friendly City

Initiative program in Makassar has succeeded in strengthening teacher capacity and expanding the scope of child-based anti-violence advocacy (UNICEF Indonesia, 2023). This success demonstrates the importance of cross-sectoral policy integration and sustained support from various stakeholders. Therefore, future national CFS strategies need to prioritize the establishment of formal coordination mechanisms between hexahelix actors at the regional level, including collaborative forums that function for joint planning, implementation, and evaluation. Thus, the principle of child-friendliness is not only the responsibility of schools, but a shared commitment of all elements of society in the Indonesian education system.

### **Content Analysis Results**

This section compares and interprets the relationship between textual content from international frameworks (e.g., UNICEF, SDGs) and Indonesian regulatory and institutional practices, highlighting both convergences and divergences.

#### ***Convergence between Global Norms and National Frameworks***

Content analysis of the documents shows that Indonesia's national policy framework for Child-Friendly Schools is highly aligned with the international principles set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and UNICEF's Child-Friendly Schools Framework. Both Permen PPPA No. 4 of 2024 and the National Action Plan for the Fulfillment of Children's Rights 2020–2024 directly adopt the four main principles of the CRC, namely, non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life and development, and respect for the views of the child. In addition, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4.7) document also serves as a strong normative reference for the development of national policies in creating an inclusive, safe, and equitable learning environment (UNICEF Indonesia, 2023).

This alignment is evident in the objectives of the CFS policy, which not only focuses on protecting children from violence but also on strengthening children's participation in education governance. For example, national CFS indicators include the existence of children's forums, student involvement in school activity planning, and the implementation of learning that respects diversity. This is in line with the UNICEF Global Education Strategy (2023–2030), which emphasizes that schools should be places where children can actively participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives (UNICEF, 2023).

In addition to the substance of the principles, harmony is also evident in the systemic approach used. Both international and national documents place child-friendly education as a cross-sectoral responsibility. The whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach promoted in the SDG Agenda 2030 is translated by Indonesia through the Hexahelix Collaboration model, which emphasizes the role of government, society, industry, media, academia, and international organizations in supporting the implementation of CFS. Thus, it can be concluded that, normatively,

Indonesia's national policies have succeeded in integrating global principles into the regulatory structure and educational development planning.

### ***Divergence between Policy Intentions and Local Practices***

Although there is alignment between global and national documents, content analysis shows significant differences between policy objectives and their implementation at the local level. Implementation reports from 15 provinces (2019–2023) show that many schools still interpret CFS in administrative and ceremonial terms. For example, some schools obtained the child-friendly label simply because they met physical indicators such as play areas, green spaces, and clean toilets, without actually implementing the principles of participation and inclusivity in the learning process (Bappenas, 2023). This finding indicates a policy-practice gap, where the focus on meeting quantitative indicators shifts the substantive meaning of child rights-based education.

In addition, a comparison of the contents of the documents shows that many local regulations on CFS do not specify in detail the mechanisms for child participation in program monitoring and evaluation. In fact, in UNICEF's Global Framework, child involvement in evaluation is referred to as a key requirement to ensure that programs truly respond to their needs. Permen PPPA No.4 of 2024 only mentions child involvement in general terms without providing operational guidelines or measurable indicators. As a result, implementation in the field depends on the interpretation of schools and local governments, which leads to significant variations between regions.

Another gap was also found in the aspect of human resources. Most regional reports noted limited training for teachers and educational personnel in implementing child-friendly pedagogy. Research by Sari, Sarofah, and Fadli (2022), shows that the low readiness of teachers to adopt an inclusive approach has an impact on the weak involvement of students in participatory learning activities. In this context, it can be said that national policies have succeeded in setting the right direction, but have not yet fully provided sufficient implementation tools to ensure consistent implementation across all regions.

### ***Policy Gaps and Implications for the Hexahelix Collaboration Model***

Further content analysis identified three main gaps in the CFS policy that directly impact the effectiveness of cross-sector collaboration. First, there is an instrumental gap, namely the absence of clear technical guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of each actor in the Hexahelix model. Policy documents tend to be declarative in nature without standard operating procedures (SOPs) that govern coordination, financing, and monitoring mechanisms between actors. Second, there is a capacity gap, whereby many institutions at the regional level do not yet have the human resources and institutional infrastructure to carry out collaborative functions effectively. Third, there is an accountability gap, as there is no integrated reporting

system that can monitor the contribution of each sector to the successful implementation of CFS (Kemen PPPA, 2024; Putrihana, 2023).

To address this gap, the document analysis recommends strengthening more operational derivative regulations, such as technical guidelines for cross-sector collaboration at the regional level, strengthening child-friendly city/district forums, and involving children in the monitoring process. This approach not only strengthens collaborative governance but also ensures that the principle of child participation is implemented substantively at every level of policy. The Hexahelix model adopted by Indonesia can be a strategic instrument to bridge the gap between macro policies and micro practices, provided that it is managed with the principles of transparency, accountability, and sustainability. Thus, the success of CFS depends not only on the completeness of policy documents, but also on the ability of all actors to build systematic, responsive, and participatory cross-sector coordination.

### ***Challenges in integrating the values of child participation and inclusiveness in children's education***

The results of the thematic analysis show that the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools in Indonesia is a complex and multi-layered process, in which each theme that emerges reflects the interaction between policy, school culture, and social dynamics. Five main themes, namely, child participation, inclusiveness, infrastructure readiness, teachers' pedagogical capacity, and collaborative governance, describe the dimensions of educational ecology as outlined in Bronfenbrenner's theory (2005). This theory emphasizes that child development is influenced by various interconnected systems, ranging from the micro environment (classroom and teachers) to the macro environment (national policies and social values). Thus, the implementation of CFS cannot be understood as a single administrative process, but rather as an interdependent effort to build an educational ecosystem that supports holistic child development.

From the first to the fifth theme, it appears that the CFS policy has attempted to manifest the main principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) into national education practices. However, the transformation of these values faces structural and cultural barriers. For example, child participation is often understood symbolically, and inclusivity has not been fully implemented in classrooms due to limited teacher training. This shows that the paradigm shift from instruction-oriented education to child rights-based education is still in a transitional stage (Brooks & Brooks, 2021). As explained by Vygotsky (1978), meaningful learning can only occur when social interaction and active participation of children are consciously facilitated by teachers. In the context of CFS, this means that teachers need to be positioned as facilitators of social and emotional development, not merely academic instructors.

Analysis of infrastructure readiness shows that many schools focus on physical dimensions as evidence of CFS implementation, but have not consistently integrated

child-friendly values into social interactions and internal school policies. This condition can be explained through the concept of infrastructure bias, where policies tend to be more easily measured through material achievements than behavioral changes (Azizah, Nuria Fitriawan, Muzhaffarah, Anisa, & Syanur, 2023). In a theoretical framework, this confirms the importance of the social ecology of learning, namely that physical infrastructure should be treated as a prerequisite, not the ultimate goal of child-friendly education.

In addition, the fourth theme regarding teachers' pedagogical capacity highlights that human factors remain the main determinants of the success of CFS policies. Teachers' insufficient ability to implement participatory learning shows a gap between regulations and resource readiness. In the context of Vygotsky's theory, this can be understood as a weak scaffolding function, where teachers are not yet able to provide adaptive learning support to children's needs. Theoretically, these results reinforce the argument that the success of child rights-based education depends not only on good policies but also on teachers' epistemic transformation of their role in the learning process (Sari, Sarofah, & Fadli, 2022).

The fifth theme, collaborative governance, illustrates that CFS is a policy that requires a multi-actor approach through the Hexahelix model. Collaboration between public, private, and community actors is key to the sustainability of the program. However, without strong institutional coordination, this collaboration risks becoming symbolic. These findings resonate with the theory of collaborative governance, which emphasizes the importance of formal mechanisms, long-term commitment, and clarity of roles between actors (Putrihana, 2023). In the context of education policy, this means that the success of CFS can only be achieved if there is an integrated cross-sector incentive, regulation, and evaluation system. Thus, this thematic synthesis confirms that CFS is a form of policy ecosystem that requires integration between pedagogical renewal, institutional strengthening, and cross-sector collaboration.

### ***Policy Analysis: Contrasts between Global Norms and Local Practices***

Content analysis of documents shows that, normatively, Indonesia's national policies are aligned with global standards, particularly with UNICEF's Child-Friendly Schools framework and SDG number 4 Agenda. This alignment is evident in the inclusion of the four basic principles of the CRC in Kemen PPPA No. 4 of 2024 as well as the adoption of a cross-sectoral approach in the CFS policy. However, the implementation shows a sharp contrast between policy intention and actual policy practice. This gap arises mainly due to the weak mechanisms for operationalizing global principles into regional policies and school practices.

This policy-practice gap phenomenon can be explained through Lipsky's (1980) policy implementation theory framework, which states that lower-level policy implementers (street-level bureaucrats) often interpret policies according to local capacities and values. In the context of CFS, school principals and teachers become

interpretive agents who determine how child-friendly principles are translated in the classroom. When structural support and training are minimal, policies tend to be reduced to ceremonial activities. These findings are in line with reports from UNICEF Indonesia (2023) and Bappenas (2023), which highlight that indicators of child participation are rarely measured substantively, but are only represented by the presence of children's forums without real involvement in decision-making.

From a public policy perspective, these findings emphasize the importance of differentiating between policy compliance and policy internalization. Administrative compliance with indicators does not automatically reflect the internalization of child-friendly values at the practical level. Therefore, the formulation of CFS policies needs to be oriented towards value-based implementation, namely the translation of global norms into more contextual local value systems. This can be done through a participatory governance approach, in which children, teachers, and local communities are involved in the policy cycle, from planning to evaluation. This strategy not only reduces policy gaps but also strengthens program sustainability by building a sense of shared ownership.

The theoretical implications of this analysis suggest that the implementation of child rights-based education policies requires synergy between ecological systems theory and collaborative governance theory. Both emphasize that policy success cannot be achieved linearly, but rather through adaptive interactions between actors and systems. Meanwhile, the policy implications require reformulating the CFS approach into a policy that focuses more on learning ecosystems, rather than merely school certification. Central and local governments need to strengthen collaboration instruments within the Hexahelix framework, with an emphasis on transparency of roles, child-based monitoring mechanisms, and incentives for schools that are able to realize substantive participation. In this way, Indonesia can ensure that CFS is not only a procedurally "friendly" policy, but also epistemically and culturally, an education system that truly places children as the main subjects of social change.

## **CONCLUSION**

Indonesia exemplifies integrated efforts to build an inclusive, participatory education ecosystem based on the fulfillment of children's rights. This study found that, despite the establishment of a comprehensive policy framework, such as regulations issued by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, the implementation of these principles in schools remains variable. The gap between policy and practice is reflected in the limited application of Child-Friendly School values and the continued existence of violence and bullying in schools. Contributing factors include inadequate facilities, low levels of child participation in decision-making, and a lack of cross-sectoral coordination.

In addressing these challenges, the hexahelix collaboration model, which brings together government, academia, the private sector, media, communities, and

international organizations, offers a structured mechanism for shared responsibility. The theoretical perspective underlying this research emphasizes that children's learning and development are shaped by social interactions, contextual environments, and the collective engagement of various actors. Within this framework, the roles of various stakeholders relate to different systemic layers. These layers include the micro level (schools and families), the meso level (local education agencies and communities), the exo level (the influence of the media and the private sector), and the macro level (national policy and international support). These interconnected layers illustrate how hexahelix collaboration can create an environment that supports inclusive and participatory learning.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To strengthen the implementation of Child-Friendly School (CFS) principles throughout Indonesia, several strategic actions are recommended. Policymakers should provide institutional support and tangible incentives for educational units that effectively integrate multi-stakeholder collaboration and uphold child participation in school governance. This form of recognition will not only motivate schools to implement inclusive practices but also serve as a model for replication in other regions. In addition, capacity-building initiatives are essential to improve educators' understanding of participatory learning approaches and inclusive classroom management. Tailored training programs need to be developed to equip teachers and school administrators with the competencies necessary to facilitate children's active involvement in decision-making processes.

Furthermore, effective implementation requires ongoing cross-sector collaboration. The establishment of local multi-stakeholder task forces can serve as a mechanism to coordinate efforts among government agencies, communities, the private sector, and the media. Such coordination will enable shared responsibility and pooling of resources in advancing children's rights in the educational environment.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation should also be prioritized. The application of participatory assessment tools, where children contribute their perspectives, can provide valuable insights into how CFS programs operate in practice and identify areas for improvement.

Finally, further research is encouraged to explore how hexahelix collaboration functions in different regional and socioeconomic contexts. Comparative and longitudinal studies can provide a deeper understanding of its impact on the inclusivity and empowerment of children in the Indonesian education system. Through these interconnected efforts, the CFS model can evolve beyond policy rhetoric into a concrete and context-sensitive framework that fosters participation, inclusivity, and the holistic development of every child.

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