

THE CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

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Abstract

This study aims to encourage the implementation of the Child-Friendly School (CFS) policy at the Senior High School (SMA) level in East Java Province by highlighting supporting and inhibiting factors, the impact of the policy on the school environment, and strengthening strategies. The study used a mixed-methods approach with a descriptive design. Data were obtained from three schools selected purposively: SMAN 8 Malang, SMAN 20 Surabaya, and SMAN 1 Trenggalek. Data sources included principals, teachers, students, parents, and school policy documents. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, questionnaires, and document analysis. Data were described thematically and descriptively to reveal the dynamics of policy implementation. The results showed that most schools had integrated CFS values such as non-discrimination, religious tolerance, and bullying prevention efforts. However, challenges were still found, including seniority practices that lead to bullying, limited facilities in rural areas, and a weak bullying case reporting system. It is proven that the implementation of the Child-Friendly School policy has shown significant progress in East Java, but the desire and equality of the quality of its implementation still need to be strengthened. The involvement of all parties, such as teachers, students, parents, and the government, is an important key in creating a school environment that is truly safe, inclusive, and supports the holistic development of children.

Keywords

Bullying, Child-Friendly School, East Java, Education Policy, Inclusion.



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INTRODUCTION

Cases of violence that occurred in the school environment show that not all educational units in Indonesia have succeeded in creating a safe learning environment and supporting student growth and development. The tragedy that befell a first-year high school student in Jember in August 2022, who died after experiencing physical violence, as well as a similar case in Sidoarjo that resulted in the death of a second-grade high school student due to a brain hemorrhage, are a blurred portrait of the education system that has not fully guaranteed the protection of children in schools (Yuana, 2022). This phenomenon raises public concern among parents, educators, and policymakers. Ironically, this incident occurred amid the intensive implementation of the Child-Friendly School (CFS) policy, which aims to create a safe, inclusive, and violence-free educational environment (Nooryanto et al., 2023). This raises fundamental questions about the effectiveness and consistency of the policy implementation in the field.

The Child-Friendly School Policy is a national initiative to guarantee children's rights in a formal education environment. In East Java, the Education Office, through the Senior High School Development Division, has given awards to eight schools that have shown commitment to implementing the CFS principles in 2019 (Sofiana, 2019). However, the administrative award does not guarantee substantive implementation in all schools. A thorough evaluation of the effectiveness of implementing these policies is often overlooked. Studies show that bullying still occurs, both physically and verbally, while discrimination based on gender, social background, and academic achievement contributes to reinforcing inequality in the school environment (Risch et al., 2024). These findings show a significant gap between formal policy and the reality that occurs in schools.

One of the important principles in CFS policy is students' active participation in decision-making concerning their school life. Unfortunately, many schools still practice this principle procedurally without substantially involving students in formulating school policies and other strategic activities. (Hermansyah, 2024) Revealed that the policies implemented often do not represent the needs or aspirations of students because there is no open dialogue space between the school and students. As a result, the implementation of CFS is more administrative than transformative (Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth evaluation of policies that not only measure compliance with regulations but also assess their impact on students' physical, emotional, and social well-being in their daily school life.

This study comparatively examines the implementation of CFS policy in three high schools in East Java Province that represent geographical and social variations, namely SMA Negeri 10 Malang, SMAN 20 Surabaya, and SMA Negeri 1 Trenggalek. These three schools were chosen to reflect urban to semi-urban contexts that can affect the effectiveness of policy implementation. This research will examine how the CFS policy is implemented in each school, the extent to which national guidelines implement it, the challenges schools face, and the concrete impact on the learning climate and student welfare. This approach is expected to identify the context influencing policy implementation and formulate a strategy to improve the adaptive implementation.

Several studies have examined the implementation of CFS policies with various focuses in the last five years. (Rahmawati et al., 2024; Rusilowati et al., 2024; Supeni et al., 2019) Highlights the success of some schools in East Java in obtaining CFS awards, but the implementation is still administrative. (Habsy et al., 2024; Mauliddia et al., 2024) Shows that differences between national policy standards and school implementation are still colored by symbolic violence. (Hinojosa Jr, 2021; King, 2018; Wanjiru, 2019) Revealed that educators' understanding of the CFS principle is still low, hindering the school culture's transformation. (Rahmadani & Malik, 2024; Riyanto et al., 2022; Setiyadi et al., 2025) emphasized that low student participation is the main obstacle to the success of CFS.

Meanwhile, (Batian, 2024; Rahmad et al., 2023) focuses on the weak early detection and prevention of school violence. Of the five studies, none specifically examined the relationship between socio-geographic context and the success of CFS policy implementation at the high school level. This is where the gap in this research lies, as well as showing the novelty being carried.

This study uses the perspective of public policy implementation theory by Sabatier and Mazmanian (1980), which emphasizes the importance of implementation structures, resources, and local actors in determining policy success. In addition, the principles of children's rights from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are also used as a normative reference in analyzing the extent to which CFS policies ensure the fulfillment of children's rights in the educational environment. Based on the background and research gaps that have been described, this study aims to: (1) identify supporting and inhibiting factors for the implementation of CFS policies in three high schools; (2) assessing the influence of policies on the physical, psychological, and social conditions of students; and (3) formulate strategic recommendations to strengthen contextual and sustainable policy implementation. Theoretically, this research will enrich the literature on

children's rights-based education policies. Pragmatically, the results of this research can be a reference for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in developing CFS implementation strategies that are more effective and responsive to the needs of students.

METHOD

This study combines qualitative and quantitative (mixed method) with a multisite design implemented in three high schools in East Java Province (Purwono et al., 2019). The three schools are SMA Negeri 10 Malang City, SMA Negeri 20 Surabaya City, and SMA Negeri 1 Trenggalek. This location was selected purposively based on the region's social heterogeneity level: Malang City and Surabaya City represented large cities with high diversity. At the same time, Trenggalek was chosen to represent regions with lower social heterogeneity. The multisite approach allows researchers to compare how Child-Friendly Schools (CFSs) are implemented in different sociocultural contexts. This study explores implementing CFS policies in various environments by considering social, institutional, and participatory factors.

The data in this study consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from in-depth interviews, participatory observations, questionnaire distribution, and school CFS implementation practices documentation. The primary data sources include principals, teachers, students, and parents of students who were purposively selected to describe their perceptions and first-hand experiences of CFS implementation. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from school documents such as CFS implementation guidelines, school work plans (RKS), documentation of CFS activities, and internal school policies related to child protection. Using these various data sources allows for data triangulation to increase the validity and reliability of research results (Zozus, 2017).

The data collection technique was carried out through four primary methods, namely: (1) in-depth interviews with school principals, teachers, parents, and students; (2) participatory observation of school activities related to the implementation of the CFS program; (3) questionnaires given to students and teachers to measure perceptions of the child-friendly school environment; and (4) study of documentation of policies, programs, and agendas of school activities related to CFS. Observations were carried out from February to April 2025 in the three schools. Interviews were conducted with the principal and at least two teachers, three students from different grade levels, and two parents per school. The questionnaire uses an instrument developed based on CFS indicators from KPAI and UNICEF, consisting of 20 Likert scale items. Documentation includes RKS

documents, the CFS's implementing organizational structure, and annual activity reports demonstrating the implementation of CFS principles.

Participatory observation began in the first week of February 2025 and ended in the third week of April 2025, with a rotational schedule of visits to each school every two weeks. Observation activities include direct observation of the teaching and learning atmosphere, student-teacher interaction, use of school facilities, and the implementation of extracurricular activities related to child-friendly values. Interviews were conducted with principals, BK teachers, homeroom teachers, student representatives, and parents. The questionnaire instrument was prepared to refer to the five basic principles of the CFS: non-violence, non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, respect for the child's views, and good school management. The documents collected include: the school's internal CFS guidelines, the CFS implementation team's decree, CFS activity reports, and recordings of communications between the school and the education office and the school committee.

Data analysis is done through data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions, and verification. The data reduction stage involves sorting relevant information from the results of interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documentation. Data not directly related to the focus of CFS implementation is eliminated. The data was presented as narratives and tables to illustrate the implementation of CFS principles in each school. Critical analysis was carried out to interpret the suitability between implementation in the field and relevant theories, such as developmental psychology approaches, inclusive education, and children's rights, according to the perspective of KPAI and international conventions. The results of this analysis are then compared with the findings of relevant previous research to enrich contextual understanding and strengthen the validity of data interpretation.

The verification process is carried out simultaneously through triangulation of sources and methods by comparing the results of interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documentation (Arianto, 2024). The validity of the results was also strengthened by discussions with key informants at the end of the data collection stage to clarify the initial findings (member check). Conclusions were drawn by referring to the tendency of findings in the three study locations to show variations and similarities in patterns in implementing CFS policies. From this analysis, a complete picture emerges of how schools implement the principles of child-friendly schools in environments with different social characteristics and the factors that support and hinder the program's success.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

School Unit Description

SMA Negeri 10 Malang

SMA Negeri 10 Malang shows a strong commitment to the principles of Child-Friendly Schools through various inclusive policies. The school has 994 students with a balanced gender composition and teachers and education staff from various backgrounds. Religious (Christian, Catholic, Hindu) and ethnic (Javanese, Madura, Malay) diversity were well accommodated, with no reports of discrimination in the past two years. Each student receives religious lessons from the relevant teacher according to their beliefs. The school's flagship innovation is the "Foster Friends" program, which provides voluntary assistance to students from well-to-do families and other needy students, such as purchasing school supplies. This shows a high value of solidarity and empathy. However, challenges remain, especially from one bullying case that occurred in 2019 and lasted a long time without teacher detection. The case is important for schools in strengthening the student monitoring and protection system.

SMA Negeri 20 Surabaya

SMA Negeri 20 Surabaya has 1,082 students, 68 educators, and education staff. The school actively implements the principles of the CFS. The diversity of students' backgrounds is addressed by providing religious teachers for each religion that students adhere to (Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, and Hinduism), which proves the commitment to tolerance and justice in religious learning. One of this school's main strengths is the absence of fights or physical violence cases in the last three years. This reflects a relatively effective system of supervision and discipline enforcement. Schools have strict policies in handling bullying, including severe sanctions such as expulsion. The commitment to create a positive and harmonious atmosphere is reflected in the approach to character and the cultivation of mutual respect and values. Although no prominent challenges have been found, vigilance against surveillance is still necessary to sustain child-friendly policies.

SMA Negeri 1 Trenggalek

SMA Negeri 1 Trenggalek (SMANESA) has 1,072 students and shows efforts to implement the principles of CFS, although its implementation still faces various obstacles. Religious and ethnic diversity is accommodated with some limitations. Although the school provides worship facilities and religious teachers according to the majority religion, Hindu and Buddhist students still

participate in religious activities outside the school, indicating limited human resources. SMANESA's biggest challenge is the practice of seniority and bullying. Bullying is still common, especially against students with specific vulnerabilities such as religious differences, disability conditions, and social backgrounds. Although fights are relatively rare, a weak reporting system means that not all bullying cases are detected or handled quickly and effectively. Some students said that the school was not aware of the bullying. This shows the need to strengthen reporting mechanisms and teacher training to build an early detection system.

After describing a brief profile of each school that is the location of the research, the following section presents the findings related to the implementation of the Child-Friendly School (CFS) policy in three State High Schools in East Java, namely SMA Negeri 10 Malang, SMA Negeri 20 Surabaya City, and SMA Negeri 1 Trenggalek. The findings are compiled as a table to show systematic comparisons between units, including aspects of policies implemented, forms of diversity in the school environment, innovations developed in support of CFS principles, and challenges faced in the implementation process. This table is compiled based on field data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation during the research process. Furthermore, each unit in the table will be described in detail in the form of a narrative to provide an in-depth overview of the practice of implementing the Child-Friendly School policy in each school.

Table 1. Study on the Implementation of Child-Friendly Schools Policy in East Java

No	Research Aspects	SMA Negeri 10 Malang	SMA Negeri 20 Surabaya City	SMA Negeri 1 Trenggalek
1	Policy	Demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity and tolerance	Strictly apply child-friendly principles	There are inclusive policies, but their implementation is not optimal
2	Forms of Diversity	Religions and ethnicities are diverse, and there is no discrimination	Religious diversity is accommodated by the provision of religious teachers	Diversity is accepted, but discrimination and seniority practices occur
3	CFS Innovation	"Foster Friends" program for assistance between students	Religion teachers are available for all religions, and character strengthening	Involvement in Ramadan activities together, but a lack of systemic innovation
4	Challenge	Bullying cases in 2019 that escaped teacher supervision	There have been no cases of violence, but the challenges of supervision remain	Bullying and discrimination based on specific vulnerabilities are still common

Table 1 presents the results of research findings regarding the implementation of the Child-Friendly School (CFS) policy in three public high schools in East Java Province, namely SMA Negeri 10 Malang, SMA Negeri 20 Surabaya City, and SMA Negeri 1 Trenggalek. This table contains four main aspects that are the focus of observation: school policies, existing forms of diversity, innovations developed in support of CFS policies, and challenges each school faces in implementing the policy.

Regarding policy, SMA Negeri 10 Malang and SMA Negeri 20 Surabaya City firmly commit to inclusivity and child-friendliness. SMA Negeri 10 Malang emphasizes tolerance and diversity, while SMA Negeri 20 Surabaya strictly implements child-friendly principles and strict rule enforcement. In contrast to the two, SMA Negeri 1 Trenggalek has an inclusive policy, but its implementation is not optimal because there are still discriminatory practices and seniority in the school environment. In terms of diversity, the three schools face religious and ethnic diversity in their student environments. SMA Negeri 10 Malang has succeeded in maintaining harmony without discrimination. SMA Negeri 20 Surabaya even provides a religious teacher for each student's beliefs to accommodate this diversity. Meanwhile, SMA Negeri 1 Trenggalek recognizes diversity but has not been able to manage it optimally, which is reflected in the discriminatory treatment of certain students.

From the aspect of CFS innovation, SMA Negeri 10 Malang developed the "Teman Asuh" program to build concern among students. SMA Negeri 20 Surabaya City prioritizes a character approach and provides complete religious education services. Unlike the two, SMA Negeri 1 Trenggalek has not shown systemic innovation and is still limited to temporary activities such as joint religious events. As for the challenges, each school faces different obstacles. SMA Negeri 10 Malang has experienced a case of bullying that teachers did not monitor. SMA Negeri 20 Surabaya City, although not experiencing physical violence, still faces challenges in terms of the effectiveness of supervision.

Meanwhile, SMA Negeri 1 Trenggalek faces serious challenges in the form of bullying and discrimination against students with vulnerable conditions. This table illustrates the variation in the implementation of CFS policies in the three schools. It shows that the success of implementation is highly dependent on the seriousness of the policies, innovations made, and the readiness of schools to face social challenges in their respective educational environments.

Discussion

Implementing the Child-Friendly School (CFS) policy in East Java shows complex dynamics in each educational unit. In general, the three schools that are the object of the research—SMAN 10 Malang, SMAN 20 Surabaya, and SMAN 1 Trenggalek—have adopted the basic principles of CFS in the school management system, learning, and interaction between school residents. However, the depth of implementation and the challenges faced show variations based on each school's social, cultural, and institutional context.

SMAN 10 Malang: Consistency in Inclusive Programs and Culture

SMAN 10 Malang displays a relatively mature CFS implementation model that integrates child-friendly values into school activities. The school's internal policy support is strengthened by adequate infrastructure and teachers' commitment to creating student-centered learning. The school's efforts in developing social programs, such as providing student assistance through a solidarity scheme between students, reflect the internalization of the values of empathy and inclusivity. On the other hand, challenges still arise in the form of cases of bullying based on seniority and ethnic background that have not been completely prevented despite the anti-bullying policies in place (Sakinah & Arif, 2022; Simandjuntak et al., 2022).

If dialogued with the concept of inclusive education according to UNESCO (2009), what SMAN 10 Malang has done shows an effort towards schools as learning communities that respect diversity. However, the problem of bullying shows that not all school actors carry out these values in their daily practice. A study conducted on child-friendly education at the high school level also shows that bullying at school is often undetected because it is done subtly and tends to be understood as part of the "culture of seniority" (Alhajeri & Alenezi, 2020; Edwards et al., 2024; Smith, 2018). The same thing is also reflected in SMAN 10 Malang, indicating that the transformation of school culture requires a longer process and involves the collective awareness of all parties. The idea that needs to be highlighted is that the successful implementation of CFS depends not only on formal programs or policies, but also on the depth of understanding of all school citizens regarding the values of humanity and justice (Fauziah, 2024). Without strengthening a democratic and diversity-sensitive school culture, CFS policies are vulnerable to becoming mere administrative formalities.

SMAN 20 Surabaya: Strengthening Collaboration and Religious Tolerance

In contrast to SMAN 10 Malang, SMAN 20 Surabaya shows a CFS implementation approach that emphasizes tolerance and respect for diversity of beliefs. The school provides all students access

to religious education according to their respective beliefs and provides a space for constructive interfaith dialogue. This approach strengthens social cohesion among students and teachers from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. This condition is in line with the idea in the theory of educational multiculturalism (Acar-Ciftci, 2019; Alismail, 2016; Devaki et al., 2025), which emphasizes the importance of organizing education that not only accepts diversity but also develops curricula and learning activities that reflect social plurality. Research (Rohman et al., 2024) on multicultural schools in Surabaya found that a similar approach can suppress intolerance and form a more open and inclusive student character.

However, technical obstacles such as limited counseling rooms and restricted access to psychological services at SMAN 20 Surabaya demonstrate that the success of the Child-Friendly School (CFS) program is not solely determined by policy and awareness but is also heavily influenced by the availability and adequacy of support facilities. The lack of such essential infrastructure may hinder students from accessing emotional and psychological support, a critical component of a safe and inclusive learning environment (Khair et al., 2024; Meka et al., 2023). This highlights that realizing CFS principles requires more than internal school efforts; it demands systemic support from external stakeholders. The author emphasizes that local government involvement is crucial, particularly regarding funding allocation and logistical assistance. Schools often face limitations in budget and authority to procure and maintain such facilities, making it unrealistic to expect them to carry the whole implementation burden (Clerinx et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2024; Nadlifuddin, 2024). Therefore, the sustainability and effectiveness of CFS policies must be backed by collaborative governance, where regional authorities play an active role in ensuring schools are equipped with the necessary resources to provide a truly child-friendly environment.

SMAN 1 Trenggalek: A Participatory Model between Schools and Parents

The implementation of CFS at SMAN 1 Trenggalek shows a model that is unique because of the active participation of students' parents in drafting and evaluating school policies. Communication forums between schools and parents are regularly activated to accommodate aspirations and complaints, followed concretely (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020; Pearlman & Michaels, 2019). This involvement protects students because of broader social and moral control over the implementation of education. From the perspective of the ecological theory of child development, according to Bronfenbrenner, the successful implementation of CFS at SMAN 1 Trenggalek shows a positive synergy between the microsystem (family, school) and the mesosystem (interaction

between home and school). This is strengthened by a study that found (Berkowitz & Ben-Artzi, 2024; Jankowska et al., 2024) that parental involvement in the educational process significantly affects creating a safe and supportive school climate.

However, the challenge that still arises is the practice of bullying that occurs implicitly as a form of cultural heritage of seniority (Dart et al., 2022; Sukovic, 2017). This shows that cultural change requires more time and intervention despite having a sound system and support structure, especially in sustainable character education that targets key actors such as senior students and student councils (Lenskaya, 2025; Seijts & Milani, 2022). The antithesis that emerges from these findings is that parental involvement and tolerance policies are not always able to suppress symbolic and verbal violence in the school environment. Child-friendly education must arouse students' critical awareness as the main agents who practice these values in daily social relations.

From the three schools studied, it can be concluded that the success of the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools is greatly influenced by three main things: internal and external policy support, resource capacity (human and infrastructure), and school culture that supports inclusive, participatory, and tolerant values. Although each school has its strengths, the common challenges faced still dwell on the problem of bullying, limited facilities, and the need to strengthen the capacity of all stakeholders. As a policy, CFS should be understood as an additional program and internalized as a paradigm in education. Therefore, establishing a child-friendly school ecosystem requires cross-actor collaboration, sustainable financing, and a school culture change strategy emphasizing power relations and social identity among students and teachers.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research at SMAN 10 Malang, SMAN 20 Surabaya, and SMAN 1 Trenggalek, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Child-Friendly School (CFS) policy in East Java has shown significant progress in six leading indicators, namely policy, learning, educators, infrastructure, student participation, and parent and community involvement. All three schools have built a strong foundation in creating an inclusive, safe, and diverse learning environment. However, each still faces specific challenges such as limited facilities, sustainability of teacher training, and a culture of bullying that is difficult to eliminate. For this reason, there is a need to strengthen comprehensive and sustainable implementation, especially in building a school culture that supports child-friendly values, expanding strategic partnerships, and increasing teacher

capacity and student participation in the decision-making process in schools.

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