The Principal's Role in Implementing a Child-Friendly School: A Case Study at SDN 05 Bojongbata, Pemalang

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Abstract: This study explores the role of the principal in implementing Child-Friendly Schools (Sekolah Ramah Anak) at SDN 05 Bojongbata, Pemalang. Despite increasing attention to Child-Friendly Schools in Indonesia, limited research has examined how principals apply managerial functions in this context. Using a qualitative descriptive approach with a phenomenological method, the study investigated the principals' practices in planning, organising, mobilising, and supervising. Findings show that the principal exercised strategic and collaborative leadership by engaging teachers, parents, and students, supported by effective communication, motivation, and routine evaluations. This study contributes by linking phenomenological insights with leadership theory, showing how abstract concepts are translated into practical strategies. It emphasises that visionary, participatory leadership is essential for sustaining inclusive and safe learning environments.

Keywords: Child-Friendly Schools, The Role of Principal, Educational Management.

Abstrak: *Penelitian ini mengkaji peran kepala sekolah dalam implementasi Sekolah Ramah Anak (SRA) di SDN 05 Bojongbata, Pemalang. Meskipun program SRA semakin mendapat perhatian di Indonesia, kajian mengenai bagaimana kepala sekolah menerapkan fungsi manajerial dalam konteks ini masih terbatas. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dan metode fenomenologis, penelitian ini menganalisis praktik kepala sekolah dalam perencanaan, pengorganisasian, penggerakan, dan pengawasan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepala sekolah menjalankan kepemimpinan strategis dan kolaboratif melalui komunikasi efektif, motivasi, serta evaluasi rutin yang melibatkan guru, orang tua, dan siswa. Kontribusi penelitian ini terletak pada integrasi temuan fenomenologis dengan teori kepemimpinan, menegaskan pentingnya kepemimpinan visioner dan partisipatif untuk menjamin keberlanjutan Sekolah Ramah Anak.*

Kata Kunci: *Sekolah ramah anak, Peran kepala sekolah, Manajemen pendidikan.*

INTRODUCTION

A Child-Friendly School (CFS) is a strategic innovation in the Indonesian education system that emphasises the fulfilment of children's rights and the protection of students within the school environment. The concept of CFS is grounded in the principle that schools must be safe, comfortable, and

conducive spaces for children's holistic development, covering physical, psychological, social, and moral aspects. The implementation of CFS aims to create an atmosphere free from violence, intimidation, discrimination, and harmful treatment, thereby supporting the holistic growth of students[1]. In the context of inclusive and equitable education, this program serves as a fundamental foundation for preparing a future generation that is not only academically competent but also possesses strong and responsible character.

The success of the Child-Friendly School program cannot be separated from the leadership role of the principal as the primary manager of all aspects within the school unit. The principal holds a central position in determining the direction, strategy, and implementation of the program to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability. According to Mulyasa and Anasih, the principal is not merely an administrative manager but also a policymaker, mentor, and motivator who can mobilise teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders to actively participate in and commit to the vision and mission of a child-friendly school. This role requires visionary and inclusive leadership, oriented toward upholding children's rights and well-being as the primary concern.

At SDN 05 Bojongbata, Pemalang Regency, the principal has demonstrated a strategic role in implementing the Child-Friendly School program. These efforts began with the formulation of policies based on data and school needs, the establishment of an implementation team involving various members of the school community, and consistent, measurable program supervision. The principal also ensures that every policy is executed correctly and that any obstacles are promptly addressed. Careful management and effective leadership play a crucial role in creating a safe and comfortable learning environment while ensuring the maximum protection of students.

The novelty of this study lies in exploring the role of the principal as a transformational leader in the context of Child-Friendly Schools. Transformational leadership emphasises the principal's ability to motivate and inspire the school community and build shared commitment in achieving humanistic and sustainable educational goals. Studies on school leadership within the CFS framework at the primary school level remain limited, particularly those that examine the managerial functions of planning, organising, implementation, and supervision integrated with child protection principles and a child-friendly school culture.

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[1] Kementrian PPPA, *Peraturan Menteri Pemberdayaan Perempuan Dan Perlindungan Anak Republik Indonesia No. 4 Tahun 2024. Penyelenggaraan Sekolah Ramah Anak* (Jakarta: Kementrian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Republik Indonesia, 2024), 6.

Although the government has launched the Child-Friendly School policy, its implementation in practice continues to face various challenges. Not all schools can integrate CFS principles into governance, school culture, and teaching practices. The principal's role as the key actor in ensuring the success of CFS has not been deeply explored, particularly in the context of primary schools in local areas. This raises the question: how does the principal exercise the managerial functions of planning, organising, implementing, and supervising in the implementation of a Child-Friendly School?

Based on the above problem, this study aims to: (1) Describe the principal's role in planning the Child-Friendly School program. (2) Analyse the principal's strategies in organising school resources to support CFS implementation. (3) Examine the principal's efforts in implementing the CFS program through transformational leadership. (4) Evaluate the principal's supervision mechanisms in ensuring the sustainability of the CFS program.

The findings of this study are expected to enrich the literature on educational leadership, particularly in relation to the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools, while also providing practical recommendations for school principals and policymakers. Thus, the CFS program does not remain a mere policy slogan but becomes genuinely implemented and sustainable, bringing positive impacts on children's holistic development. Furthermore, this study holds important implications for educational policy development at both local and national levels. Enhancing principals' leadership capacity deserves serious attention from the government to ensure that the goals of Child-Friendly Schools can be optimally achieved.

LITERATUR REVIEW

The Concept of Child-Friendly Schools

A Child-Friendly School (CFS) is an educational concept that ensures the fulfilment of children's rights within the school environment, while creating a safe, comfortable, and supportive atmosphere for their optimal development[2]. This concept requires not only the protection of children from all forms of violence and discrimination but also encourages their active participation in educational processes and school decision-making[3].

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[2] Muhammad Humaidi and Ahmad Sholeh, *Pendidikan Ramah Anak Di Sekolah Dasar* (Malang: UMM Press, 2016), 12; Lailatul Hajroh, *Sekolah Ramah Anak: Teori Dan Praktik* (Surabaya: UINSA Press, 2017), 21.

[3] Kementrian PPPA, *Peraturan Menteri Pemberdayaan Perempuan Dan Perlindungan Anak Republik Indonesia Nomor 4 Tahun 2024 Tentang Penyelenggaraan Sekolah Ramah Anak* (Jakarta: Kementrian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Republik Indonesia, 2014), 7.

CFS emphasises the principles of non-discrimination, respect for children's views, and transparency in school governance. Its core components include supportive policies, trained educators, child-centred learning processes, safe facilities, and the active involvement of children and parents in school management[4].

Challenges in Implementing CFS

Despite its ideal framework, the implementation of CFS in practice faces significant challenges. Nugroho highlights the persistence of hierarchical school bureaucracies that are often unresponsive to children's aspirations[5]. Rahman further points to the dilemma of balancing strict discipline with the need to maintain a child-friendly environment[6]. These challenges call for adaptive and innovative leadership from school principals to navigate such complexities[7].

The Role of Principals in Educational Management

The role of the principal is highly strategic as both a manager and an educational leader responsible for overseeing all aspects of school operations[8]. From the perspective of classical management, Terry outlines four fundamental management functions: planning, organising, directing, and controlling[9]. Kristiawan et al. further argue that these functions must be executed comprehensively to establish a safe, inclusive, and participatory school environment[10].

Transformational Leadership

The theory of transformational leadership, first introduced by Burns and later developed by Bass, is particularly relevant for understanding the role of principals in advancing CFS[11]. This leadership style emphasises a leader's ability

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[4] Kementrian PPPA, *Buku Pedoman Sekolah Ramah Anak* (Jakarta: Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Republik Indonesia, 2020), 33.

[5] Bambang Nugroho, *Birokrasi Pendidikan Dan Sekolah Ramah Anak* (Yogyakarta: Gava Media, 2018), 40.

[6] Dede Rahman, *Disiplin Sekolah Dan Tantangan Ramah Anak* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2020), 56.

[7] Rika Anavia, *Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dalam Konteks Sekolah Ramah Anak* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2021), 77.

[8] Bambang Suprihanto, *Manajemen Kepala Sekolah: Teori Dan Praktik* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2018), 15; Ali Imron, *Kepemimpinan Pendidikan: Teori Dan Aplikasi Di Sekolah* (Jakarta: Rajawali Pers, 2023), 28.

[9] George R Terry, *Principles of Management* (Chicago: Irwin, 2019), 67.

[10] Muhammad Kristiawan, Siska Lestari, and Nurhayati, *Manajemen Pendidikan: Konsep, Prinsip, Dan Aplikasi* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2017).

[11] Ying Yang, "Principals' Transformational Leadership in School Improvement," *Journal of Educational Management* 28, no. 3 (2014): 279–88; Sophia Brown, "Transformational Leadership

to inspire, motivate, and foster collective commitment. From an educational leadership perspective, Fullan stresses the importance of moral purpose and capacity building in driving school change[12].

In the CFS context, principals are expected to act as transformational leaders who can: (1) provide a clear and humanistic vision. (2) Mobilise teachers, students, and parents to engage actively. (3) Foster a school culture that places children at the centre of attention. (4) Innovate and adapt policies to meet school-specific needs.

Principal Leadership Practices in CFS

Previous studies indicate that the effectiveness of principals' leadership strongly influences the success of CFS initiatives [13]. Principals play a crucial role in: (1) **Planning**: formulating program goals, setting strategies, conducting needs analyses, and building partnerships with local education offices. (2) **Organising**: establishing implementation teams, delegating responsibilities, and ensuring effective coordination. (3) **Directing**: providing guidance, motivation, and instructions through both formal and informal communication. (4) **Controlling**: setting performance standards, conducting routine evaluations, comparing outcomes against indicators, and designing corrective follow-up actions. By consistently applying these managerial functions, principals can foster a school culture that is child-friendly, participatory, and sustainable[14].

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in Educational Management: Case Studies," *Journal of Organizational Psychology and Educational Management* 5, no. 2 (2023): 44–52.

[12] Reynold J. S Macpherson, "Building Educative Leadership Theories: A Non-Foundational and Culturally Specific Approach," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 57, no. 5 (2025): 457–75.

[13] Ahmad Rafli, "Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dalam Mewujudkan Sekolah Ramah Anak," *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter* 15, no. 1 (2023): 70–92; Muhammad Abdul, *Implementasi Sekolah Ramah Anak Di Sekolah Dasar* (Yogyakarta: Depublish, 2023), 81; Rahmat Dodi, "Peran Kepala Sekolah Dalam Mengembangkan Sekolah Ramah Anak," *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan* 12, no. 1 (2024): 25–39; S Senang, S Sunardi, and M. W Farchani, "Peningkatan Kualitas Pembelajaran Peserta Didik Melalui Implementasi Supervisi Akademik," *Academicus: Journal of Teaching and Learning* 3, no. 2 (2024): 109–17; Said Aqil Siradj, "Budaya Sekolah Dan Sekolah Ramah Anak," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 2 (2024): 55–65.

[14] Rahmat Yusuf, *Budaya Sekolah Dan Pengembangan Sekolah Ramah Anak* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2022), 36; Teguh Haryanto, Sri Wahyuni, and Rina Kurniawati, "Kepemimpinan Pendidikan Dan Implementasi Sekolah Ramah Anak," *Jurnal Kepemimpinan Pendidikan* 8, no. 2 (2024): 40–55; Ahmad Baihaqi, *Manajemen Pendidikan Dasar Di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2020), 18.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a phenomenological design, aiming to gain a deep understanding of the principal's role in implementing the Child-Friendly School (CFS) program at SDN 05 Bojongbata, Pemalang Regency. The phenomenological approach was chosen to explore the meaning of the principal's experiences and awareness regarding the implementation of CFS in the school environment. The study was conducted at SDN 05 Bojongbata during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year (January–February 2025).

The research design focused on describing in detail the principal's managerial functions, including planning, organising, implementing, and supervising the CFS program[15]. The stages of the study followed the standard steps of qualitative research: pre-field preparation, fieldwork, data analysis, and reporting[16].

Data Collection

Data were collected through three main techniques: (1) in-depth interviews, (2) participant observation, and (3) document analysis. The primary instrument of the research was the researcher, supported by interview guides and observation checklists. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured and flexible manner with principals, teachers, school committees, parents, and students as key informants[17]. Documents reviewed included meeting minutes, school administration records, and activity reports relevant to the CFS program.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification[18]. These processes were carried out continuously and iteratively to ensure that the conclusions accurately reflected the data obtained in the field.

Trustworthiness of the Data

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[15] Moh. Pabundu Tika, *Metodologi Penelitian Administrasi* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2015), 87.

[16] Lexy J Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2017), 112.

[17] Muhammad Sahir, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Dalam Pendidikan* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2022), 59.

[18] Matthew B Miles, Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook. 3rd Ed* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publcations, 2018), 16.

To guarantee the rigour of the qualitative data, this study applied Lincoln and Guba's criteria: (1) *Credibility* was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods, prolonged engagement, and member checking. (2) *Transferability* was supported by providing thick descriptions of the research context. (3) *Dependability* was maintained through detailed documentation of the research process. (4) *Confirmability* was enhanced by keeping audit trails and researcher reflexivity notes[19].

Research Ethics

This study received approval from the principal of SDN 05 Bojongbata and was conducted in accordance with ethical research protocols. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection, with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. All data were used solely for academic purposes and stored securely.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study investigates the role of the school principal as a strategic leader in realising the Child-Friendly School program at SDN 05 Bojongbata. The findings show how the principal implements the four managerial functions: planning, organising, mobilising, and controlling, to foster a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment.

Planning

The principal functioned as the central facilitator in planning the SRA program. Planning was not merely a formal requirement but a collaborative and inclusive process. Meetings were held at the beginning of each semester involving teachers, staff, parents, the school committee, and student representatives. These meetings served as a platform for dialogue where each stakeholder could articulate needs and expectations. One teacher described this process:

"During planning, the principal always asked us to express our concerns and ideas. We felt included, and our suggestions became part of the program design." (Teacher Interview, 2024)

Through SWOT analysis, specific needs emerged, such as upgrading the children's restroom facilities, providing a dedicated reading corner, and improving classroom ventilation. The study also revealed external opportunities, including partnerships with local NGOs concerned with children's rights. Based

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[19] Egon G Guba and vonna S. Lincoln, *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publcations, 1985), 301.

on these insights, the principal designed a strategy that included budget allocation, timelines, and measurable objectives.

Organizing

In the organising phase, the principal translated plans into a concrete governance structure. A formal School Decree (SK) was issued to establish the CSF Implementation Team. This team was divided into several divisions: infrastructure, student welfare, extracurricular activities, and monitoring & evaluation. A teacher coordinator led each division, while students were actively engaged through the CFS Student Forum. A student representative shared: *"We were given real responsibilities in the SRA Forum, such as monitoring peer activities. It made us feel trusted and important."* (Student Interview, 2024)

The delegation of authority was not only symbolic but operational. For example, the Student Forum was entrusted with monitoring bullying cases and reporting them to teachers. Meanwhile, parents were included in infrastructure improvement projects. This distributed model of responsibility strengthened coordination and promoted ownership among stakeholders.

Mobilizing

The principal acted as a driver and motivator, ensuring that planned activities were carried out with enthusiasm. Instructions were delivered through staff meetings, written guidelines, and informal interactions. Motivation was strengthened through both material and non-material rewards. Teachers who demonstrated high commitment were publicly recognised during school assemblies, while students were given certificates for exemplary behaviour supporting the CSF program. One teacher explained: *"The principal often reminds us that every child matters. This simple encouragement keeps us motivated."* (Teacher Interview, 2024)

In addition, the principal organised workshops on child rights and positive discipline, inviting experts from local universities. These initiatives enhanced teachers' professional knowledge and reinforced the program's vision.

Controlling

The controlling function was carried out through systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The principal developed indicators based on official SRA guidelines, such as safety of infrastructure, inclusiveness of learning activities, and student well-being. Monitoring was done via classroom observations, peer reports, and monthly evaluation meetings. As the principal stressed:

"We make sure children always feel heard and respected. Evaluation is not just about numbers but about experiences." (Principal Interview, 2024)

Monthly evaluation meetings involved teachers, parents, and sometimes external partners like the local health centre. Concrete improvements resulted from this process: for instance, after students reported discomfort with playground safety, the school immediately repaired damaged equipment. This participatory evaluation ensured that corrective actions were taken promptly and program quality continuously improved. A summary is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis Table

Theme	Evidence from Participants	Managerial Function
Participatory Planning	*"Our voices were included in designing the program."* (Teacher)	Planning
Student Empowerment	*"We were trusted with responsibilities in the CSF Forum."* (Student)	Organizing
Motivation & Support	*"The principal reminds us that every child matters."* (Teacher)	Mobilizing
Respect & Evaluation	*"We make sure children always feel heard and respected."* (Principal)	Controlling

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that the principal's leadership at SDN 05 Bojongbata was not only administrative but also strategic, participatory, and transformative. The integration of managerial functions — planning, organising, mobilising, and controlling — was consistently directed toward building a child-centred learning environment in line with the principles of the Child-Friendly School (CFS) program.

Principal as a Strategic Planner

The results highlight that participatory planning, through the involvement of teachers, parents, school committees, and student representatives, was fundamental in shaping the CFS agenda. This reflects transformational leadership characteristics where leaders create a shared vision and empower stakeholders to contribute[20]. In the context of Indonesian schools, this collaborative planning is essential to accommodate diverse community needs. Similar findings were reported by Rafli, who noted that inclusive

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[20] Yang, "Principals' Transformational Leadership in School Improvement"; Brown, "Transformational Leadership in Educational Management: Case Studies."

planning processes increase stakeholder ownership and reduce resistance to school programs[21].

International studies also emphasise that inclusive and strategic planning enhances school effectiveness[22]. In this study, the use of SWOT analysis demonstrated that principals can adapt modern management tools to local school contexts, ensuring that programs are realistic and resource-based. As Ng et al. (2020) noted, "principals who actively engage communities in the planning stage significantly improve the sustainability of school reforms"[23].

Organising through Distributed Leadership

The establishment of a formal team structure through school decrees and the inclusion of a Student Forum illustrate how distributed leadership was operationalised. Rather than concentrating decision-making in the principal's office, authority was delegated across teachers, parents, and students. From a global perspective, García-Martínez et al. show that student participation in governance leads to higher program sustainability and legitimacy[24]. The present study confirms this by demonstrating how the Student Forum was not symbolic but actively engaged in monitoring bullying and promoting peer support. Such findings align with UNESCO's advocacy for student voice in inclusive education[25]. Supporting this, Harris and Jones argue that "distributed leadership contributes directly to improved organisational outcomes by fostering professional trust and accountability"[26]. In the Indonesian context, Munirah observed that "when students are involved in decision-making, their sense of responsibility toward the program significantly increases"[27].

Mobilising with Transformational Leadership

Motivational strategies, recognition systems, and professional capacity building characterised mobilisation in this study. The principal's emphasis on

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[21] Ahmad Rafli, "Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah Dalam Mewujudkan Sekolah Ramah Anak," *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter* 15, no. 1 (2023): 70–92.

[22] Philip Hallinger, "Bringing Context Out of the Shadows of Leadership," *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 46, no. 1 (2018): 5–24.

[23] Pak Tee Ng, Jasmine Tan, and Soh Kay, "Community Engagement in School Reforms: A Southeast Asian Perspective," *Educational Research for Policy and Practice* 19, no. 2 (2020): 133–48.

[24] Ignacio García-Martínez, Ana Esteban, and David Torres, "Student Participation and School Improvement: Evidence from Spain," *Educational Review* 73, no. 5 (2021): 603–20.

[25] Unesco, *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education* (Paris: UNESCO, 2019), 59.

[26] Alma Harris and Michelle Jones, "COVID-19 School Leadership in Disruptive Times," *School Leadership & Management* 8, no. 1 (2020): 243–47.

[27] Munirah, "Student Participation and Responsibility in School Governance," *Belajea: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 2 (2022): 85–100.

the phrase *"every child matters"* provided both symbolic and practical motivation for teachers and students. This aligns with Senang et al., who found that recognition and encouragement by school leaders enhances teacher commitment to inclusive practices[28].

Furthermore, the organisation of training workshops on child rights and positive discipline reflects the principal's role in capacity building, consistent with Fullan's concept of deep learning leadership[29]. International evidence also supports this: Leithwood and Sun argue that transformational leaders create professional learning environments where teachers feel empowered to innovate[30]. As Huang and Yoon explain, "transformational leadership inspires teachers' intrinsic motivation, leading to greater commitment to child-centred pedagogy"[31]. Similarly, Astuti found that "principals who provide continuous motivation strengthen teachers' resilience in implementing inclusive education"[32].

Controlling with Participatory Evaluation

The principal's control mechanisms were not authoritarian but collaborative and improvement-oriented. Monthly evaluation meetings served as spaces for reflection, feedback, and collective problem-solving. This approach reflects the learning organisation model[33], where schools continuously adapt based on shared learning.

The use of student and parent feedback in evaluations also resonates with Ainscow's perspective that inclusive schools thrive when multiple voices shape the monitoring process[34]. This study adds nuance by showing how even small-scale inputs (e.g., students reporting unsafe playground equipment) can lead to concrete improvements, reinforcing the credibility of evaluation systems. Recent findings from Kim and Lee emphasise that "participatory monitoring

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[28] Senang, Sunardi, and Farchani, "Peningkatan Kualitas Pembelajaran Peserta Didik Melalui Implementasi Supervisi Akademik."

[29] Reynold J. S Macpherson, "Building Educative Leadership Theories: A Non-Foundational and Culturally Specific Approach," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 57, no. 5 (2025): 457–75.

[30] Kenneth Leithwood and Jingping Sun, "Transformational School Leadership in a Global Perspective," *School Leadership & Management* 38, no. 4 (2018): 409–25.

[31] Haijun Huang and Kyung Yoon, "Transformational Leadership and Teacher Motivation in Asian Schools," *Asia Pacific Education Review* 22, no. 2 (2021): 201–18.

[32] Yuli Astuti, "Transformational Leadership Practices in Inclusive Schools," *Belajea: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2021): 55–70.

[33] Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 185.

[34] Mel Ainscow, *Promoting Equity in Education* (London: Routledge, 2020), 152.

systems enhance the credibility of school governance and foster continuous improvement"[35]. In the Indonesian setting, Rahman (2022) similarly reported that "evaluation involving parents and children makes school programs more adaptive and relevant"[36].

Implications for Policy and Practice

This study demonstrates that effective principal leadership in CFS programs requires more than compliance with government regulations. It demands a holistic integration of managerial skills, inclusive practices, and community partnerships. Practically, the findings suggest three implications: (1) **For principals**, leadership should balance managerial efficiency with inclusive values. (2) **For teachers**: participatory planning and recognition systems increase motivation and commitment. (3) **For policymakers**: support mechanisms such as training, funding, and policy flexibility are essential to sustain CFS programs.

As Brown and McNamara (2019) argue, policy effectiveness depends on how school leaders translate regulations into practical, context-sensitive strategies [37]. In line with this, Ningsih (2021) found that policies on child-friendly schools only become meaningful when mediated by strong school leadership[38].

Limitations and Future Research

While the study provides in-depth insights into one school, its single-site focus may limit generalizability. Future research could employ multi-site case studies or comparative analyses across different regions to strengthen external validity. Furthermore, although qualitative data offered rich narratives, incorporating quantitative indicators (e.g., reduction in bullying cases, increased attendance) could provide a more comprehensive assessment of program effectiveness.

Supporting this need, Zhao states that mixed-method designs can capture the complexity of school reforms more comprehensively than single

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[35] Sunhee Kim and Jaehoon Lee, "Participatory Monitoring in School Leadership," *International Journal of Educational Development* 89, no. 4 (2022): 84–95.

[36] Dede Rahman, *Disiplin Sekolah Dan Tantangan Ramah Anak* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2020), 39.

[37] Sophia Brown, "Transformational Leadership in Educational Management: Case Studies," *Journal of Organizational Psychology and Educational Management* 5, no. 2 (2023): 44–52.

[38] Dewi Ningsih, "Kebijakan Sekolah Ramah Anak Dan Peran Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah," *Belajea: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 2 (2021): 105–20.

approaches[39]. Complementing this, Hidayati highlighted that future studies must triangulate narratives with school-level quantitative data to avoid subjective bias[40].

This study contributes to the growing literature on educational leadership in child-friendly schools in Indonesia. It extends previous research[41] by offering empirical evidence of how principals apply the four managerial functions in a holistic and participatory manner. Moreover, it reinforces international frameworks by contextualising them in a developing country setting[42]. As Robinson noted, effective leadership is culturally contingent, yet grounded in universal principles of equity and inclusion[43].

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that the principal played a central role in realising the Child-Friendly School (CSF) program at SDN 05 Bojongbata. The principal was actively involved in planning, organising, motivating, and supervising the program systematically and comprehensively. Clear direction, fair task distribution, and consistent motivation enabled the formation of a solid and competent implementation team. Regular evaluations ensured continuous improvement, while intensive communication with the team and external partners supported program success. These findings affirm that visionary and communicative leadership is crucial in fostering participation from all stakeholders and creating a school environment that supports children's holistic development. It is recommended that the principal further strengthen two-way communication with teachers, staff, and external partners through regular discussion forums. This will enhance problem-solving, encourage greater ownership, and ensure broader support for the CFS program. Recognition and motivation for teachers who make significant contributions should also be prioritised to maintain commitment and sustainability.

This study is limited to a single school context and the perspective of one principal, which may restrict the generalizability of its findings. Future research could involve multi-site case studies across different socio-cultural contexts to provide a broader understanding of principal leadership in CSF.

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[39] Yong Zhao, *An Education Crisis Is a Terrible Thing to Waste: How Radical Changes Can Spark Student Success* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2020), 59.

[40] Siti Hidayati, "Triangulasi Data dalam Penelitian Pendidikan," *Belajea: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 1 (2023): 20–35.

[41] Muhammad Abdul, *Implementasi Sekolah Ramah Anak Di Sekolah Dasar* (Yogyakarta: Depublish, 2023), 82.

[42] Mel Ainscow, *Promoting Equity in Education* (London: Routledge, 2020), 159.

[43] Viviane Robinson, *Student-Centered Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2020), 17.

Further studies may also incorporate mixed methods by combining qualitative insights with quantitative indicators, such as reductions in bullying cases or improvements in attendance rates, to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of program effectiveness.

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