



Principal's Leadership in Building Child-Friendly Schools Based on Organizational Culture in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - This study aims to analyze the leadership of school principals in building Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) based on organizational culture in elementary schools.

Methodology - The study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design at SDN Sungai Miai 10 and SDN Sungai Miai 11 in Banjarmasin. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving principals, teachers, students, and educational staff. Data analysis used the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, while data validity was ensured through triangulation of techniques, sources, and time.

Findings - The findings revealed that principals acted as agents of organizational culture transformation through strengthening humanistic communication, teacher development, learning supervision, positive discipline, and the habituation of child-oriented school culture. The implementation of a child-friendly organizational culture was reflected in the development of dialogic communication, increased student participation, reduced verbal violence, and more open social relationships between teachers and students. However, the implementation had not yet been fully optimal due to the influence of old cultural patterns, differences in teachers' understanding, and limitations in strengthening the school institutional system.

Contribution - This study concludes that the success of CFS transformation, based on organizational culture, is strongly influenced by the effectiveness of principals' leadership in continuously internalizing child-friendly values within school culture.

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INTRODUCTION

The realization of a safe, inclusive, and supportive educational environment that serves the best interests of children is an important demand in the implementation of basic education. Schools serve not only as places for knowledge transfer but also as spaces for growth that support students' academic, social, emotional, and psychological development. As educational systems increasingly emphasize children's rights, well-being, and inclusive participation, schools are expected to transform not only their instructional practices but also the organizational environments in which those practices occur. In this context, the concept of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) develops as an educational approach that places children as the main subjects in the educational process through a safe, participatory, non-discriminatory, and violence-free learning environment (UNESCO, 2021; UNICEF, 2021). At the elementary school level, implementing CSF is important because students are in an early developmental phase that strongly shapes character, social behavior, and children's learning experiences. Therefore, creating a child-friendly school should be understood as a comprehensive organizational commitment rather than merely a matter of fulfilling educational standards or policy requirements.

The urgency of implementing CSF in Indonesia is still related to the high cases of violence and educational practices that have not been fully in the best interests of children. Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) shows that cases of violence in the educational environment still occur in the form of verbal violence, bullying, discrimination, and repressive disciplinary approaches. At the elementary school level, authoritative communication practices, hierarchical teacher-student relationships, and low student participation in learning remain evident in daily school life. This condition shows that schools have not fully become a safe and comfortable educational space for students. Therefore, the implementation of CSF is not achieved solely through formal school policies but requires a cultural change within the school organization. These empirical conditions indicate that the challenges of Child-Friendly School implementation are rooted not only in policy execution but also in the organizational dynamics that shape everyday educational practices. Consequently, efforts to establish child-friendly schools require a deeper understanding of how organizational values, communication patterns, and everyday interactions influence the successful implementation of child-friendly principles.

The implementation of CSF is not only related to the provision of school facilities and the fulfillment of policies, but also to the formation of a school social and cultural environment that supports student development. Nuraeni and Suryana (2023) explained that the success of the implementation of CSF is influenced by the involvement of all school residents in building humanistic communication, a safe learning environment, and a school culture that supports child protection. However, various studies show that the implementation of CSF in elementary schools still tends to be programmatic and administrative, such as the fulfillment of infrastructure, the formation of CSF teams, and the drafting of school rules, while the internalization of child-friendly values in school culture has not taken place optimally (Sya'ni et al., 2025; Wiyani, 2020). This condition indicates a gap between the implementation of the CSF program and the cultural transformation of school organizations that supports the sustainability of child-friendly values in daily school life.

The Government of Indonesia has paid attention to the implementation of CSF through the Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Number 4 of 2024 concerning the Implementation of Children's Rights Fulfillment Services. Although this regulation provides a strong policy foundation for protecting children's rights in schools, its implementation largely depends on how child-friendly principles are interpreted, practiced, and sustained within each school's organizational context. Consequently, policy effectiveness cannot be separated from the organizational culture that guides the behavior and decision-making of school members. The policy emphasizes that schools have a responsibility to ensure child protection, create a safe learning environment, and provide students with a space for participation. However, the success of CSF implementation is determined not only by the existence of school policies and programs but also by the school's ability to internalize child-friendly values within its

organizational culture. From an organizational culture perspective, a school is understood as a social system that has values, norms, beliefs, and patterns of interaction that shape the collective behavior of school residents (Schein, 2017). School organizational culture influences communication patterns, learning climate, social relationships, and the behavior of school residents in daily life. Schools with positive organizational cultures tend to create a learning environment that is safe, open, and supportive of student participation (Kools & Stoll, 2016; Marno, 2010). On the other hand, an organizational culture that remains hierarchical and authoritative can hinder the creation of a humanist educational environment that supports children's rights.

Schein (2017) Explains that organizational culture consists of three levels, namely artifacts, organizational values, and basic organizational assumptions. Artifacts are evident in daily organizational behaviors, symbols, and practices, while organizational values are the principles that guide the behavior of school citizens. The basic assumption is a deep belief that has taken root in the organization's life. This three-level perspective provides a relevant analytical framework for examining the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools, as it explains how formal policies and visible school practices (artifacts) are gradually transformed into shared organizational values and ultimately become deeply embedded assumptions that guide the daily behaviors of school members. Accordingly, the successful implementation of Child-Friendly Schools should be understood not merely as policy compliance but as a process of organizational cultural transformation. In the context of CSF, child-friendly values are not enough to be realized through school slogans or rules, but need to develop into collective beliefs that consistently influence the communication patterns, learning, school discipline, and social relations of school residents. The transformation of organizational culture requires internalizing values through leaders' example, organizational communication, and the sustainable habituation of collective behavior. Because organizational culture is continuously created, reinforced, and transformed through leadership practices, understanding the role of school principals is essential to explaining how child-friendly values are institutionalized in elementary schools.

The development of a child-friendly school organizational culture is inseparable from the principal's leadership role. The principal not only serves as an educational administrator but also as a change leader who directs the cultural transformation of the school organization. The principal's leadership plays a strategic role in building a common vision, internalizing organizational values, establishing communication patterns, and directing the collective behavior of school residents to align with child-friendly principles. In this context, school principals serve as cultural leaders who shape the direction of school culture change towards a safe, participatory, humane, and respectful educational environment that upholds children's rights.

Rosyidi (2017) explained that the principal plays an important role in developing organizational culture through the formation of shared values, fostering collective behavior, and strengthening the social relations of school residents. Research Husnah et al. (2021) It also shows that the implementation of school organizational culture is greatly influenced by leaders' commitment and example in internalizing organizational values among all school residents. In addition, Hallinger (2020) emphasized that school leadership plays an important role in encouraging changes in educational organizations and building a conducive learning environment. Leithwood et al. (2020) It also explains that the success of school change is influenced by the principal's ability to build organizational capacity and a school culture that supports learning. Research Ulfah et al. (2024) and Wati et al. (2024) It shows that the principal's leadership plays a role in internalizing organizational values through communication, coaching, and strengthening the collective work culture.

However, research on CSF from the cultural perspective of school organizations remains relatively limited. Previous research has generally focused more on CSF policy implementation, fulfillment of CSF indicators, and the development of child-friendly learning. Studies that position school principals as agents of cultural transformation in school organizations, especially in the context of elementary schools, have not been widely conducted. More importantly, previous studies have offered limited explanations of the organizational mechanisms by which child-friendly values are embedded in everyday school practices. Consequently, the processes by which principals facilitate cultural transformation and sustain child-friendly organizational values remain insufficiently understood. In addition, most studies still view the implementation of CSF as the

implementation of school programs, rather than as a process of organizational cultural transformation that affects communication patterns, collective behavior, and the social relations of school residents in a sustainable manner.

In contrast to previous research, this study adopts organizational culture as the primary perspective for understanding CSF development in elementary schools. This research not only examines the implementation of the CSF program but also analyzes how the principal's leadership internalizes child-friendly values to shape changes in communication patterns, collective behavior, social relations, and school organizational culture. This study argues that the success of development is greatly influenced by the effectiveness of the principal's leadership in internalizing child-friendly values into the school organizational culture in a sustainable manner. This study offers the perspective that the implementation of CSF is a process of organizational culture transformation that occurs at the levels of organizational artifacts, organizational values, and the school's collective culture. By integrating organizational culture theory with the Child-Friendly School framework, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how school leadership facilitates the institutionalization of child-friendly values beyond formal policy implementation. This perspective extends existing discussions on Child-Friendly Schools by conceptualizing implementation as a process of organizational cultural transformation rather than merely the execution of educational programs.

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the leadership of school principals in building CSF within the context of organizational culture in elementary schools, and to understand the process of internalizing child-friendly values through changes in communication patterns, collective behavior, and social interaction among school residents. This article consists of a section on research methods, results, discussions, and research conclusions.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative case study design to gain an in-depth, contextual understanding of the phenomenon under study. The qualitative approach allows researchers to comprehensively explore the meanings, experiences, and perspectives of participants in a natural context (Creswell, 2014). Meanwhile, the case study design was chosen because it was able to study phenomena intensively in real-life contexts through the use of various data sources, so as to provide a holistic picture of the implementation of CSF and the cultural dynamics of school organizations (Yin, 2018).

The research was carried out at SDN Sungai Miai 11 Banjarmasin and SDN Sungai Miai 10 Banjarmasin, which were selected by purposive sampling. The selection of two schools in one group, namely the Miai River Group, aims to maintain the homogeneity of the cultural characteristics of the school organization, so that the data obtained are more consistent in describing the implementation of CSF based on organizational culture. In addition, the two schools have been designated as implementers of the CSF program based on the Decree of the Mayor of Banjarmasin Number 626 of 2020 (Banjarmasin City Government, 2020) so that it is relevant as a research location. The research was conducted during the even semester of the 2024/2025 school year, from January to April 2025.

Participants

The research participants consisted of two principals, four teachers, four students, and two educational staff members from SDN Sungai Miai 10 Banjarmasin and SDN Sungai Miai 11 Banjarmasin. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research objectives and direct involvement in implementing Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) (Scott, 2019). The principals were selected because they were responsible for school management and the implementation of child-friendly school policies. Teachers were included because they directly applied child-friendly principles in classroom practices, while students were selected to provide firsthand perspectives on their learning experiences and school environment. Educational staff participated because they supported the implementation of school policies and

daily organizational practices. These participants possessed relevant knowledge and experience in implementing Child-Friendly Schools and developing organizational culture within their schools.

Data Collection

Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation to obtain comprehensive information regarding the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) and organizational culture. Observations focused on leadership practices, teacher-student interactions, learning activities, communication patterns, student participation, and school routines reflecting child-friendly values. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals, teachers, students, and educational staff using interview guidelines aligned with the research objectives. Documentation included school policy documents related to Child-Friendly Schools, school regulations, the school's vision and mission, photographs of school activities, and other relevant administrative documents. The three data collection techniques were applied in a complementary manner to support data triangulation and enhance the credibility of the findings.

Instruments

In this study, the researcher serves as the primary instrument, directly involved in the reflective collection and analysis of data. The research instruments included interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation prepared based on research focuses on principal leadership and child-friendly organizational culture.

Data Analysis

The research process is carried out through the stages of data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing continuously during the research. Data analysis uses the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which includes data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). The validity of the data is ensured through triangulation techniques, source triangulation, and time triangulation to ensure the credibility and consistency of research findings. In addition, this study applied a *trustworthiness* which includes credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability to maintain the reliability and generalizability of research results (Ahmed, 2024; McKim, 2023)

FINDINGS

The results of the study show that school principals' leadership plays a strategic role in building CSF based on organizational culture at SDN Sungai Miai 11 Banjarmasin and SDN Sungai Miai 10 Banjarmasin. The principal's leadership is evident not only in the school's administrative functions but also in efforts to build an organizational culture that fosters a safe, comfortable, participatory, and supportive school environment for children's rights. In this context, school principals serve as agents of organizational cultural transformation by internalizing child-friendly values into communication patterns, learning practices, school discipline, and the social interactions of school residents.

The implementation of CSF in both schools developed not only as a formal school program, but as a process of organizational culture change that took place in the daily life of the school. These changes can be seen through the development of more open communication patterns, non-violent learning, more dialogical teacher-student relationships, and increased student participation in various school activities. However, the internalization of child-friendly values in the school's organizational culture is not fully optimal because it is still influenced by old habits, differences in teachers' understanding, and insufficient strengthening of the school's organizational system.

Principals' Leadership in Building Child-Friendly Schools

The results of the study show that school principals play a central role in building an organization-based CSF rooted in the primary school's culture. The principal not only functions as an educational administrator but also as a change leader who directs interaction patterns, the behavior of school citizens, and organizational culture to align with child-friendly principles.

The principal interprets CSF as an educational environment that can become a "second home" for students, so that students feel safe and comfortable at school. The principal of SDN Sungai Miai 11 Banjarmasin emphasized that Child-Friendly Schools should provide an inclusive, safe, and supportive environment for all students. As stated:

"Schools must be able to accommodate all children with various characters and backgrounds, as well as make schools a safe and comfortable place for children." (KS1)

The statement shows that the principal views the implementation of the CSF not only as fulfilling the school program but also as part of developing an organizational culture that supports children's rights. In addition, the principal views the implementation of CSF as related to the quality of the student learning environment. A safe, comfortable, and violence-free learning environment is seen as capable of increasing students' motivation to learn and their character development. In its implementation, the principal actively coaches teachers through learning supervision, informal communication, and strengthening child-friendly values in daily school life. This condition shows that the principal not only carries out managerial functions but also builds collective awareness among school residents of the importance of a humanist, child-friendly school culture.

The leadership role of school principals is also evident in their example in building a humanist organizational culture. The results of the observation show that the principal builds a more open communication pattern with teachers, students, and education staff. The principal was seen actively greeting students, building persuasive communication, and creating a more communicative school atmosphere. In addition, schools also use a liaison book between the school and parents as a medium of communication for student development at home and at school.

The findings show that school principals serve as agents of cultural transformation within school organizations by fostering more child-friendly patterns of communication, social relationships, and collective behavior among school residents. From the perspective of organizational culture, this condition reflects the strengthening of organizational cultural artifacts, such as open communication, humanistic social relationships, and the habituation of positive behavior in daily school life.

Child-Based Organizational Culture Development Strategy

The results of the study show that school principals use various strategies to develop a child-friendly, organization-based culture in schools. The strategy is not only oriented to the administrative implementation of the CSF program but also to the process of internalizing child-friendly values into the school's organizational culture. This process is carried out by strengthening organizational communication, teacher coaching, positive cultural habituation, the application of positive discipline, and the creation of a school environment that is participatory, humane, and responsive to student needs.

From the perspective of organizational culture, the principal's strategy indicates efforts to transform the school organization's values from a hierarchical interaction pattern to a more dialogical school culture that respects children's rights. The principal seeks to build the collective awareness among school residents that the implementation of CSF is not only related to the fulfillment of program indicators but also part of the school's daily culture, as reflected in communication patterns, teacher behavior, social relationships, and classroom learning practices.

One of the main strategies implemented by school principals is fostering more open communication within the school organization between teachers and students. Principals encourage teachers to adopt a dialogical approach to learning, enabling students to feel respected, safe, and actively engaged in the learning process. A Grade 6B teacher at SDN Sungai Miai 10, Banjarmasin, explained:

"Learning is carried out through two-way communication by providing opportunities for students to express their opinions and choose the learning media used in class." (G1)

These findings indicate a shift in classroom communication from a teacher-centered approach to more participatory, student-centered interactions. From the perspective of organizational culture, this transformation reflects the institutionalization of values emphasizing student participation, mutual respect, and more humanistic communication in everyday school practices.

In addition to fostering open organizational communication, the principal also promotes a positive disciplinary culture as an integral part of strengthening the school's organizational culture. A Grade 2B teacher at SDN Sungai Miai 10 Banjarmasin explained:

"Student discipline is implemented through communication and class agreements established together with students, without using harsh or punitive approaches." (G2)

These findings demonstrate a shift in school disciplinary practices from a punishment-oriented approach toward a more educative, supportive, and humanistic culture. Rather than emphasizing sanctions, discipline is developed through mutual understanding, dialogue, and shared responsibility between teachers and students. From an organizational culture perspective, this transformation reflects the internalization of values that promote children's rights, empathy, and respectful educational interactions.

Another strategy used by school principals is fostering a positive culture in daily school life, such as a culture of greetings, polite communication, respect for students' opinions, and more open social relationships between teachers and students. The results of the observation show that teachers are starting to use a more humane communication pattern and provide opportunities for students to express their opinions and learning difficulties during the learning process. This condition shows that child-friendly values are beginning to develop into a collective habit among school residents and are not limited to formal learning situations.

The results of the study also show that changes in communication patterns and learning behavior in schools do not occur instantly, but develop through the process of habituating organizational culture carried out on an ongoing basis by school principals. The example of school principals, strengthening organizational communication, learning supervision, and teacher coaching, is an important factor in building the collective awareness of school residents regarding the importance of applying child-friendly values in daily school life. From the perspective of organizational culture, this condition shows that the principal plays the role of an agent of cultural transformation who actively internalizes organizational values in the form of humanist communication, respect for children's rights, student participation, and learning that favors the needs of students into the school culture collectively and sustainably.

Implementation of Organizational Culture in Schools

The results of the study show that the implementation of a child-friendly organizational culture is beginning to develop in daily school life. The implementation can be seen in changes in communication patterns, learning practices, social relations among school residents, and the development of a safer, more comfortable school environment for students. These changes show that child-friendly values are beginning to be internalized into the culture of school organizations through interaction patterns, behavioral norms, and collective habituation that develop in daily school life. From the perspective of organizational culture, these conditions indicate a shift in the school organization's values towards a more participatory, humanist, and supportive culture that better meets students' needs.

Teachers have increasingly adopted two-way communication in classroom learning by encouraging students to ask questions, express their opinions, and actively participate in learning activities. A Grade 6B teacher at SDN Sungai Miai 10, Banjarmasin, explained:

"Two-way communication helps teachers better understand students' abilities and characteristics, making the learning process more open and participatory." (G1)

These findings indicate that dialogic communication has become an important element of the school's organizational culture, fostering greater respect for students' voices and needs, and encouraging active participation in the learning process. This shift reflects a transition from teacher-centered communication to

more collaborative, student-centered interactions, supporting the development of a child-friendly learning environment.

The interview findings revealed that students perceived the school environment as becoming safer, more supportive, and more conducive to learning. A student shared:

"Teachers are more open during learning and do not immediately get angry when students make mistakes. We are also given opportunities to express our opinions to teachers and classmates during lessons." (S1)

These findings suggest that the school has begun to cultivate a learning environment that promotes students' psychological safety and active participation. From an organizational culture perspective, this reflects the emergence of more humanistic interaction patterns characterized by mutual respect, open communication, and students' confidence to express their ideas without fear. Such conditions demonstrate the internalization of child-friendly values into everyday relationships among members of the school community.

The implementation of a child-friendly organizational culture was also reflected in the reduction of verbal violence in school interactions. Teachers stated that physical punishment and shouting had gradually been abandoned since the school implemented the Child-Friendly School program. Observations showed that teachers more frequently used persuasive communication and coaching approaches than punishment when addressing student behavior. This condition indicates a shift in the school's disciplinary culture from punitive approaches toward more educational, communicative, and child-respecting practices. These changes also reflect the growing development of empathy, respect for students, and humanistic communication within the school culture.

On the other hand, the school environment has developed into a safer and more comfortable place for students. An educational staff member explained:

"This condition is supported by adequate facilities, a clean school environment, and better social relationships among school members. Child-friendly values are reflected in the culture of greeting one another, polite communication, mutual care, and more open interactions in daily school life." (TU1)

These findings indicate that the implementation of child-friendly values has become increasingly evident in both the school's physical environment and the daily interactions among members of the school community. Such conditions demonstrate the emergence of an organizational culture that promotes respect, safety, and positive social relationships.

However, the findings also revealed that the implementation of a child-friendly organizational culture has not yet been fully consistent across the school. A principal acknowledged:

"Some teachers still apply teaching approaches based on their own perspectives, resulting in the inconsistent implementation of child-friendly values." (KS2)

This finding suggests that the transformation of organizational culture is an ongoing process, as some school members continue to hold traditional assumptions and maintain authoritative teaching practices. Therefore, strengthening a child-friendly organizational culture requires sustained leadership, continuous professional development, and the collective commitment of all school members to ensure the consistent internalization of child-friendly values.

Overall, the study's findings indicate that the change in the culture of school organizations is still in the cultural transition phase. Some teachers are starting to accept child-friendly values as part of the norms of behavior and culture of school interaction, while others still maintain the old authoritarian learning pattern. This condition shows that the internalization of organizational culture requires a process of adaptation, coaching, exemplification, and strengthening of values that occurs in a sustainable manner, so that child-friendly values can develop into common assumptions and the collective culture of the school as a whole.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for the Implementation of a Child-Friendly Organizational Culture

The results of the study show that implementing a child-friendly organizational culture is influenced by various supporting and inhibiting factors related to the internalization of values, changes in interaction

patterns, and the consistency of school residents' behavior in daily life. These factors determine the success of the school culture transformation process towards a more humane, participatory, and student-centered culture. From an organizational culture perspective, the success of building a CSF is determined not only by the implementation of the school's program but also by the school's ability to build shared values, behavioral norms, and a culture of interaction that supports respect for children's rights.

Supporting factors for the implementation of a child-friendly organizational culture include the principal's commitment, the support of some teachers for implementing child-friendly values, developing organizational communication that is becoming more open, and social relations among school residents that are quite conducive. The principal's commitment is the primary factor in encouraging the internalization of organizational culture through example, teacher coaching, strengthening organizational communication, and habituating a positive culture in the school environment. This condition shows that the principal's leadership plays an important role in building the collective awareness of school residents about the importance of a school culture that is safe, comfortable, and respectful of children's rights. In addition, the development of more open organizational communication between teachers and students is also an important factor in supporting changes in school culture. The results of the study show that some teachers are starting to implement dialogical communication, provide students with space for participation, and build more humane learning relationships. This condition marks the beginning of a common assumption in the school environment that students are educational subjects who need to be respected for their opinions, needs, and involvement in the learning process. Habituation to positive cultures, such as greeting culture, polite communication, and more open social relations among school residents, is also a supporting factor in internalizing child-friendly values within the school's collective culture.

On the other hand, the study's results show that implementing a child-friendly organizational culture still faces various obstacles. One of the main inhibiting factors is that there are still differences in teachers' understandings regarding the application of child-friendly principles in learning. Some teachers still maintain the old learning pattern that is authoritative and control-oriented, so the process of internalizing child-friendly values has not been consistent. The findings show that changes in the culture of school organizations still face cultural resistance from some school residents who maintain old assumptions about teacher authority and student disciplinary patterns. In addition, the strengthening of the school's institutional system has not proceeded optimally. The results of the study show that the evaluation of the implementation of child-friendly culture has not been carried out systematically and sustainably, so that the strengthening of school values and behavioral norms has not been fully collectively controlled. This condition shows that the process of organizational cultural transformation requires a more consistent culture-strengthening system so that child-friendly values not only develop at the individual teacher level, but can become a common culture for all school residents.

Other challenges in implementing a child-friendly organizational culture stem from the family environment and students' experiences with parenting at home. A teacher explained:

"Some students are difficult to guide because of the influence of their family environment and the lack of parental support in developing children's character." (G2)

These findings indicate that the internalization of child-friendly values is influenced not only by the school's organizational culture but also by students' social and family environments. Differences between the values promoted at school and those experienced at home may reduce the consistency of children's character development and behavioral formation. This suggests that the successful implementation of Child-Friendly Schools requires stronger collaboration between schools and families to ensure that child-friendly values are consistently reinforced across different learning environments.

Overall, the results of the study show that the implementation of a child-friendly organizational culture is still in the process of cultural transition, influenced by both internal and external school factors. The success of building a child-friendly organizational culture is greatly influenced by the consistency of the principal's

leadership in internalizing child-friendly values through coaching, example, strengthening behavioral norms, and the ongoing habituation of a positive culture. From an organizational culture perspective, the process shows that changing school culture requires time, adaptation, and the collective involvement of all school residents so that child-friendly values can become shared assumptions and the school's overall culture.

DISCUSSIONS

Child-Friendly Schools (CSF) are not only related to the implementation of school programs, but also to the development of a school culture that is safe, comfortable, participatory, and respectful of children's rights. In this context, principals play an important role not only as educational managers, but also as agents of organizational culture transformation through strengthening values, communication patterns, and interaction cultures that align with child-friendly principles.

The results of the study show that the development of CSF at SDN Sungai Miai 11 Banjarmasin and SDN Sungai Miai 10 Banjarmasin occurs through the internalization of child-friendly values into the patterns of communication, learning, school discipline, and social relations among school residents. These changes can be seen in the development of more open communication between teachers and students, more participatory learning, reduced use of violent approaches to school discipline, and increased student comfort with participating in learning activities. However, the process of school culture transformation has not been running optimally due to persistent old cultural influences, differences in teachers' understanding, and limitations in strengthening the school's institutional system.

Based on these findings, the discussion of this research focuses on four main aspects: the leadership of school principals, strategies for developing a child-friendly organizational culture, the implementation of organizational culture in daily school life, and the supporting and inhibiting factors for its implementation.

Principals' Leadership in Building Child-Friendly Schools

The results of the study show that school principals have a strategic role in building CSF based on organizational culture in elementary schools. Principals not only perform administrative and managerial functions, but also act as agents of school culture transformation through humanistic communication, teacher development, learning supervision, positive discipline, and the habituation of child-friendly values. These findings indicate that the implementation of CSF is not only related to the execution of school programs but also to the transformation of organizational culture through the internalization of values, changes in communication patterns, and the formation of collective behavior among school members. Therefore, principals play an important role as drivers of school culture oriented toward the protection and fulfillment of children's rights.

Beyond coordinating school programs, the findings indicate that principals act as cultural leaders who shape organizational norms and collective behaviors. By consistently modeling child-friendly values, promoting collaborative communication, and reinforcing shared expectations, principals facilitate the internalization of these values into teachers' and students' daily practices. This process explains how leadership contributes to organizational culture transformation, which subsequently strengthens the sustainable implementation of Child-Friendly Schools.

In practice, school principals build more open communication, more persuasive social relationships, and more dialogical learning through continuous teacher coaching and supervision. This condition marks a shift in the orientation of school leadership from an administrative approach to a humanist leadership that focuses on students' psychological and social well-being. From the perspective of organizational culture, the principal serves as the Cultural Leader, directing changes in organizational values through example, organizational communication, and habituation of behavior. Schein (2017) explains that organizational leaders play an important role in shaping organizational culture by internalizing values and fostering collective behavioral patterns within the organization. In this study, the process of internalizing values can be seen through the development of open communication, more humanistic social relationships, and changes in the pattern of

interaction between teachers and students. The findings show that the transformation of school culture occurs through social learning and behavioral habituation, which are carried out continuously in daily school life.

The findings of this study are in line with Hallinger (2020) and Leithwood et al. (2008) which emphasizes that the success of school change is influenced by the principal's ability to build an organizational culture that supports students' learning and development. Research Irfan et al., (2025). It also shows that the principal's supportive leadership affects the formation of a school organizational culture that is more collaborative and adaptive to students' needs. In addition, Kurniasari et al. (2026) explains that transformational leadership and participatory communication can create a safe, inclusive learning environment and support student engagement in school life. Research Elman et al. (2026) It also shows that the success of internalizing educational values is greatly influenced by the ability of educational institution leaders to build an adaptive, humanistic organizational culture. These findings collectively suggest that the influence of school leadership extends beyond administrative and managerial responsibilities to the transformation of organizational culture. By consistently modeling child-friendly values, promoting collaborative communication, and reinforcing shared expectations, principals facilitate the internalization of these values into teachers' and students' everyday practices. Through this process, organizational culture becomes the mechanism that translates leadership into the sustainable implementation of Child-Friendly Schools. These findings reinforce this study's results: the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools is strongly influenced by the effectiveness of principal leadership in fostering a participatory, inclusive, and child-centered school culture. Therefore, this study extends the literature on school leadership by demonstrating not only that principals influence the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools, but also by explaining the organizational process through which leadership shapes shared values and everyday practices that sustain child-friendly education.

Child-Based Organizational Culture Development Strategy

The results of the study show that the strategy for developing a child-friendly organizational culture is implemented through strengthening organizational communication, teacher development, positive discipline, the habituation to a positive culture, and the creation of a participatory and humanistic school environment. These findings indicate that the transformation of school culture occurs through the internalization of values and social interactions that continuously shape the norms, habits, and collective behavior of school members. One of the principal's strategies was to develop more open organizational communication between teachers and students. Teachers were encouraged to use dialogic approaches by providing students with opportunities to ask questions, express opinions, and actively participate in learning. These changes indicate a transformation of pedagogical relationships from a teacher-centered approach toward more participatory learning that respects children's rights. From the perspective of organizational culture, this condition reflects the development of student participation, humanistic communication, and more democratic social relationships within the school environment.

The principal also develops positive discipline through communication and class agreements with students, without resorting to harsh measures or physical punishment. This strategy shows a paradigm shift in school discipline from a culture of punishment to a more educational, restorative, and persuasive coaching culture. This change is not only related to student discipline techniques but also reflects a shift in the basic assumptions of school residents regarding power relations in the educational process. In the context of organizational culture, these changes reflect the process of reconstructing organizational values from a culture of control to one of coaching and respect for children's rights.

The findings of this study reinforce Suriansyah's (2014) view that the culture of the school organization influences the communication patterns, work behavior, and social relations of school residents. Research by Deguara (2025) also explains that an inclusive school culture develops through open communication, collaboration, and the involvement of all school members in creating a safe, non-discriminatory learning environment. In addition, Herliana et al. (2026) It shows that organizational communication and transformational leadership have a significant effect on the formation of a positive and collaborative school

organizational culture. Research by Abrori and Muali (2020) also shows that school leadership plays an important role in fostering an organizational culture that supports human resource development and the quality of the learning environment. Thus, the findings suggest that the development of a child-friendly organizational culture is a dynamic process in which leadership-driven value internalization, collaborative communication, and the habituation of collective behaviors interact to shape sustainable organizational change. Rather than merely representing the implementation of administrative policies, Child-Friendly Schools emerge through the continuous transformation of organizational culture, in which child-friendly values become embedded in everyday practices and guide the behavior of the entire school community.

Implementation of Child-Friendly Organizational Culture

The results of the study show that the implementation of a child-friendly organizational culture is beginning to develop in daily school life. The implementation can be seen in changes in communication patterns, learning practices, social relations among school residents, and the development of a safer, more comfortable school environment for students. This condition shows that child-friendly values are beginning to be internalized into the behavioral norms and culture of interaction of school residents. Thus, the implementation of a child-friendly organizational culture in this study is evident not only in changes to formal school policies but also in changes in the culture of interaction and social behavior among school residents on a daily basis.

Teachers begin to implement two-way communication in the learning process by providing opportunities for students to ask questions, express opinions, and actively engage in learning activities. The change in communication patterns reflects a transformation of pedagogical relationships from previously more hierarchical interaction patterns to more dialogical and participatory ones. From an organizational culture perspective, these changes show the development of a school culture that values student participation and the diversity of students' learning experiences. These findings show that school culture change occurs through a process of social adaptation that gradually shapes new norms of interaction within the school environment.

The results of interviews with students show that students feel more comfortable and safe in the school environment because teachers use a more humane approach and do not directly punish students when they make mistakes. This condition shows that implementing a child-friendly organizational culture contributes to a positive school climate that supports psychological safety, comfort in learning, and students' courage to express themselves. A safe and supportive school environment is an important factor in building student involvement in the learning process. The findings of this study are strengthened by research on *School Climate*, which explains that a positive school environment affects learning comfort, student participation, and healthier social relationships in the educational environment (Lombardi et al., 2019; Wulan & Sanjaya, 2022). In addition, Tanzi and Hermanto (2024) explained that the successful implementation of inclusive education is influenced by the ability of school principals to build an environment that accepts diversity and supports student involvement in school life.

Research Elman et al. (2026) and Abrori and Muali (2020) It also shows that a positive school organizational culture can create a safer, more participatory, and more supportive learning environment for students. These findings reinforce the close association between the successful implementation of Child-Friendly Schools and the development of an organizational culture that promotes psychological safety, participatory communication, and humanistic social relationships. Nevertheless, the findings also indicate that organizational culture transformation remains incomplete, as some teachers continue to maintain authoritative beliefs and instructional practices that are inconsistent with child-friendly values. This suggests that the internalization of organizational values is a gradual process in which new practices must be continuously reinforced before they become shared norms and deeply embedded organizational assumptions. Therefore, sustaining Child-Friendly Schools requires consistent leadership, continuous professional development, and collective commitment to ensure that child-friendly values become an integral part of the school's organizational culture rather than isolated educational practices.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for the Implementation of a Child-Friendly Organizational Culture

The results of the study show that the implementation of a child-friendly organizational culture is influenced by both supporting and inhibiting factors related to the internalization of values, changes in interaction patterns, and the consistency of school residents' behavior in daily life. The main supporting factors include the commitment of the principal, the support of some teachers for the implementation of child-friendly values, organizational communication that is beginning to develop openly, and conducive social relations among school residents. The principal's commitment is an important factor in encouraging the transformation of school culture through teacher coaching, for example, by strengthening organizational communication and habituating a positive culture in a sustainable manner. This condition indicates that the successful implementation of a child-friendly organizational culture is strongly influenced by leadership strength and the collective culture of school residents.

On the other hand, implementing a child-friendly organizational culture still faces various obstacles. One of the main obstacles is that there are still differences in teachers' understanding of how to apply child-friendly principles in learning. Some teachers still maintain the old learning pattern that is authoritative and control-oriented, so the process of internalizing child-friendly values has not been consistent. From the perspective of organizational culture, such resistance arises because old values and habits have been part of the organization's mindset and behavior for quite some time. Schein (2017) Explains that changing organizational culture requires a profound shift in beliefs that cannot be achieved instantly, as it involves basic organizational assumptions rooted in the lives of organizational members.

In addition to internal school factors, the family environment and student parenting patterns also affect the process of internalizing child-friendly values at school. Some students are still accustomed to a pattern of hard communication in the family environment, so they need an adaptation period when they enter a more dialogical and humanistic school environment. These conditions show that implementing a child-friendly organizational culture cannot be achieved solely by the school but requires the support of students' families and social environment. The findings of this study are in line with Minsih et al. (2019) which explains that changes in school culture often face resistance from some members of the organization due to old habits and work patterns that have taken root in school life. In addition, (Sya'ni et al., 2025) and Susanty and Suriansyah (2025) emphasized that the success of the implementation of CSF is influenced by the readiness of school culture, the support of all school residents, and the strengthening of organizational culture that is carried out on an ongoing basis. Thus, the sustainable implementation of Child-Friendly Schools depends on collective commitment, consistent principal leadership, and collaboration among schools, families, and the wider community. Through these interconnected efforts, child-friendly values can be progressively internalized and transformed into a shared organizational culture that shapes the everyday behaviors and decisions of all school members.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the successful implementation of Child-Friendly Schools depends not only on compliance with policies but also on transforming organizational culture to embed child-friendly values in everyday school practices. The findings highlight the pivotal role of school principals in fostering a safe, inclusive, participatory, and child-centered learning environment through shared values, collaborative practices, and positive organizational behaviors. Theoretically, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how organizational culture supports the sustainable implementation of Child-Friendly Schools by explaining how child-friendly values are integrated into school life. The novelty of this study lies in positioning the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools as a process of organizational culture transformation rather than merely the execution of educational policies.

In practice, the findings suggest that school principals should strengthen organizational culture by promoting shared child-friendly values and collaborative school practices, while policymakers should support

schools through policies and capacity-building programs that foster sustainable cultural change. This study was limited to two public elementary schools in Banjarmasin; therefore, future research is recommended to examine this organizational culture transformation model across different educational contexts and school levels. Overall, this study underscores that sustainable Child-Friendly Schools are achieved not only through supportive policies but also through a strong organizational culture that consistently promotes children's rights and well-being.

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