

Child-Friendly School Indicators in Primary Education: Implications for The Implementation of Gender Equality Approach

Endah Hendarwati¹, Holy Ichda Wahyuni^{2*}

^{1,2} Faculty of Education, Communication, and Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, Surabaya, East Java 60113, Indonesia

* Corresponding Author:

Email: holyichdawahyuni@um-surabaya.ac.id

Abstract.

This study aims to analyze the indicators of Sekolah Ramah Anak (SRA)/Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) in primary education and examine their implications for gender equality content. The study is grounded in the observation that the SRA framework generally emphasizes safety, protection, participation, health, and inclusiveness, yet has not adequately integrated gender as an explicit analytical dimension. In fact, the primary school environment constitutes an important space for shaping children's social experiences, including gender relations, participation, self-expression, and access to equitable learning spaces. This study employed a qualitative approach using a systematic literature review design. Data were collected through a review of academic databases and relevant policy documents, and were analyzed using thematic analysis combined with a critical gender lens. The findings indicate that the dominant SRA indicators include safe and protective environments, anti-discriminatory practices, child participation, health and well-being, and inclusive education. However, most of these indicators are still formulated in neutral terms and remain insufficiently sensitive to capture gender-based inequalities in children's school experiences. Further analysis reveals that gender bias may manifest in teaching practices, classroom participation patterns, the use of school facilities, and social relations that shape children's experiences differently. Therefore, this study recommends the reconstruction of SRA indicators to make them more explicit, contextual, and transformative by positioning gender equality as a cross-cutting principle embedded in school policy, governance, infrastructure, participation, and pedagogical practices in primary education. These findings affirm that a truly child-friendly school is not only administratively safe, but also experientially just for all children.

Keywords: *Child-Friendly Schools; gender equality; primary education and inclusive education.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) framework is a global educational approach that emphasizes the creation of safe, inclusive, and supportive school environments, in alignment with the fulfillment of children's rights as stipulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In Indonesia, this framework has been institutionalized through the concept of *Sekolah Ramah Anak* (SRA) within various national education and child protection policy instruments (Saidi et al., 2024)(Candraningrum et al., 2016)(Baharun et al., 2021). The primary objective of *Sekolah Ramah Anak* (SRA) is to ensure that schools function not only as sites for learning, but also as spaces that protect children from violence, discrimination, and neglect, while simultaneously guaranteeing the participation, safety, health, and well-being of all students (Saidi et al., 2024; Baharun et al., 2021). The academic literature indicates that SRA operates within an inclusive and rights-based educational framework, with the success of its implementation being highly dependent on multiple systemic dimensions, including governance, curriculum alignment, teacher capacity, and the availability of infrastructure (Saidi et al., 2024; Baharun et al., 2021). Nevertheless, the translation of this concept into primary education practice raises critical questions regarding gender equality, particularly concerning the extent to which the responsive design of the CFS/SRA framework is capable of addressing deeply embedded gender norms within classroom interactions, access to facilities, and opportunities for participation (Saidi et al., 2024)(Ilmi et al., 2023).

Existing studies on Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) often emphasize general indicators such as safety, participation, and inclusivity, yet they tend to overlook explicit attention to gender as a central dimension that shapes school life and learning outcomes. (Cobanoglu et al., 2018)(Liestyasari et al., 2023). This gap has the potential to reproduce gender inequality within environments that are intended to be child-friendly. This synthesis examines CFS indicators in primary education through a gender equality perspective, assesses the

relevance of existing indicators to the goals of gender transformation, and formulates a gender-responsive CFS framework based on evidence drawn from multiple relevant sources (Çobanoğlu & Sevim, 2019). The UNICEF-supported CFS framework identifies several core dimensions, including inclusiveness; safe, healthy, and protective environments; effectiveness; democratic participation; and gender responsiveness (gender sensitivity) (Frawley, 2019)(Prayogo & Wardani, 2022) (Arifin et al., 2019). These dimensions provide a framework for evaluating whether gender equality is explicitly embedded in school design, processes, and outcomes.

However, many empirical studies operationalize these dimensions without treating gender as a distinct category of analysis, thereby potentially obscuring gender-based differences in experiences, safety, and participation (Fitriani et al., 2021)(Arifin et al., 2019). Several studies have documented gender-based variations in perceptions of school friendliness and safety. For instance, in the contexts of secondary schools and kindergartens, gender differences in perception have been identified, with female students often reporting more positive perceptions, while male students have reported relatively lower levels of safety or encountered gender-based barriers in some studies (Çobanoğlu et al., 2018; Çobanoğlu & Sevim, 2019; Fitriani et al., 2021). These findings underscore the need for gender-sensitive indicators that can specifically capture differences in the experiences of female and male students (as well as other gender identities, where relevant) within the CFS framework (Çobanoğlu et al., 2018; Çobanoğlu & Sevim, 2019). The literature also emphasizes that gender equality is an intrinsic component of inclusive and rights-based education. Studies on gender equality in education highlight equitable access, retention, and learning outcomes, as well as the transformation of gender norms within school culture and the curriculum (for example, through gender-responsive teaching, anti-discrimination policies, gender-balanced staffing, and safe reporting mechanisms) (Psaki et al., 2022). Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the indicators of child-friendly schools and their implications for gender equality in primary education.

II. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a literature study design to analyze the indicators of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS)/Sekolah Ramah Anak (SRA) in primary education and their implications for gender equality content. This approach was selected because the objective of the study was not to statistically test relationships among variables, but rather to identify, examine, compare, and reconstruct child-friendly school indicators based on empirical findings, conceptual documents, and relevant policy literature. Methodologically, this study sought to synthesize existing knowledge on the key dimensions of child-friendly schools such as safe environments, anti-discrimination, participation, health, well-being, and inclusiveness and to reinterpret these dimensions through a gender equality perspective. Accordingly, the study not only mapped existing indicators, but also critically examined the extent to which these indicators have been sensitive to gender relations within primary school life. Data were collected through a systematic literature search across several academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, ERIC, and ScienceDirect, as well as relevant policy documents and institutional reports, such as those published by UNICEF and national regulations related to Child-Friendly Schools.

The search was conducted using a combination of Indonesian and English keywords, including “child-friendly school,” “sekolah ramah anak,” “gender equality in education,” “gender-responsive school,” “inclusive education,” “school safety,” “student participation,” and “primary education.” The data were analyzed using thematic analysis combined with a gender-based critical reading. The first stage of analysis involved data extraction, namely identifying key information from each source, such as the study objectives, research context, CFS/SRA indicators employed, and findings related to gender equality. The second stage consisted of thematic coding, in which the findings were grouped into major recurring themes across the literature. This process generated several central themes, including: (1) safe and protective environments, (2) anti-discriminatory practices, (3) child participation, (4) health and well-being, (5) inclusive education, and (6) gender dimensions in school practices. The third stage involved in-depth interpretive analysis, in which these themes were revisited to assess whether the child-friendly school indicators commonly used thus far are sufficiently responsive to gender-related issues.

At this stage, the researcher examined how the language of the indicators, the design of facilities, pedagogical practices, and patterns of participation within schools may either reproduce or challenge gender inequalities. The final stage was conceptual synthesis, namely reconstructing more gender-responsive Child-Friendly School indicators based on the analyzed findings. This synthesis served as the basis for formulating conceptual and pedagogical implications for strengthening gender equality content in primary education. To ensure the credibility of the review, this study employed source triangulation by comparing findings from empirical articles, conceptual studies, and policy documents. In addition, cross-checking across sources was conducted to identify both consistencies and differences in perspectives regarding child-friendly school indicators and gender dimensions. In this way, the analytical findings were not based on a single type of reference, but were constructed from multiple complementary sources.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Existing Indicators of Child-Friendly Schools

Safe and protective environment

UNICEF-guided frameworks and various national studies emphasize a safe, healthy, and protective environment as a central indicator of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS), including facilities, infrastructure, and anti-violence measures (Gusnimar & Berty, 2022) (Asyifa et al., 2021). These studies underscore safety as a multidimensional construct encompassing physical security, health, and the absence of violence within learning spaces. Empirical assessments in the Indonesian context have documented that safe and healthy physical environments—such as infrastructure that meets established standards and clean facilities—contribute to children's perceptions of safety and well-being, with explicit reference to safety-compliant facilities and the provision of health-related support in school design and policy (Saptono, 2022) (Nasution & Saifuddin, 2022). Cross-national instrument development studies indicate that safe environments are closely associated with environmentally friendly and health-oriented dimensions, reinforcing the view that safety is inseparable from physical and psychosocial well-being in the measurement of CFS (Xiao et al., 2023) (Hlatshwayo, 2017). Although safety is consistently positioned as a primary focus, several studies emphasize the role of teacher supervision and school governance in maintaining safety, suggesting that safety outcomes depend not only on physical provision but also on organizational culture and leadership (Fosu-Ayarkwah et al., 2022) (Jumakir et al., 2021).

Anti discriminatory practices

The foundational CFS literature frames anti-discrimination as a core dimension, with explicit emphasis on the protection of rights and safeguarding from violence and discrimination (Erdianti & Al-Fatih, 2020) (Ambarsari & Harun, 2018). Empirical and policy analyses suggest that schools should implement non-discriminatory policies and inclusive practices as part of CFS design, including ensuring accessibility and respecting diverse backgrounds in planning and participation (Nafisa et al., 2022) (Rusilowati et al., 2024). On the other hand, several sources address the gap between policy rhetoric and implementation, highlighting the challenges of translating non-discrimination commitments into everyday practice and institutional monitoring. Various references explicitly identify student participation as a key component of CFS indicators, including involvement in decision-making, policy development, and feedback mechanisms (Effendi & Supadi, 2023) (Ro'is Saputri & Hasibuan, 2022) (Htang & Chanseangsee, 2022). Measurement instruments and qualitative studies indicate that children's voices, peer engagement, and parent/community participation strengthen learning environments that respect rights and foster meaningful involvement (Xiao et al., 2023; Jumakir et al., 2021).

Health and well-being

Several sources link health and well-being to the physical conditions of schools and programmatic support as integral components of CFS (Umami & Suryono, 2020) (Fosu-Ayarkwah et al., 2022). Theoretical and empirical studies associate children's health with learning readiness and the protection of rights. Meanwhile, health and safety are understood to depend on school governance and community support (Jumakir et al., 2021; Fosu-Ayarkwah et al., 2022).

Gender Analysis of CFS Indicators

The need for explicit gender-sensitive language in CFS indicators

Berbagai literatur menekankan bahwa pencantuman eksplisit kesetaraan gender dalam indikator pendidikan memperkuat pengukuran dan tindakan kebijakan. Misalnya, kerangka umum pendidikan inklusif menekankan pentingnya ekspektasi yang dirumuskan secara jelas, perhatian eksplisit terhadap identitas gender, serta keselarasan dengan tujuan kesetaraan gender dalam instrumen pemantauan (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016). Analisis ini berargumen bahwa tanpa bahasa yang eksplisit, indikator berisiko menggunakan frasa netral yang mengaburkan kesenjangan gender yang masih ada dan mengurangi akuntabilitas terhadap hasil berbasis gender. Penelitian tentang suara siswa dan pemberdayaan menunjukkan bahwa indikator partisipasi menjadi lebih kuat ketika secara eksplisit memperhatikan gender dan identitas.

Kajian tentang *student voice* di sekolah menekankan bahwa inklusi yang nyata memerlukan pengakuan terhadap pengalaman berbasis gender dalam partisipasi dan pengambilan keputusan (Lac & Mansfield, 2017)(Eddy & Brownell, 2016). Ketika indikator mengabaikan dimensi gender, kemampuan untuk mendiagnosis dan mengatasi kesenjangan dalam suara dan agensi menjadi melemah. Studi tentang gender dalam pendidikan STEM secara konsisten menunjukkan bahwa bias gender dalam partisipasi kelas dan lingkungan belajar dipengaruhi oleh faktor kontekstual seperti gender pengajar dan komposisi kelas; oleh karena itu, indikator memerlukan bahasa sensitif gender yang eksplisit untuk menangkap dinamika ini dan mengarahkan tindakan korektif (El-Hamamsy et al., 2023) (Reinholz & Wilhelm, 2022).

Infrastructure inequalities and gender-responsive facilities

The broader literature on school infrastructure and gender highlights sanitation and safety as critical determinants of girls' attendance and participation, particularly in relation to puberty and daily school routines. Although not all references directly measure sanitation, the importance of safe and gender-responsive facilities consistently emerges in discussions of child-friendly schools and inclusive school design (Fitriani et al., 2021). The literature on child-friendly schools identifies gender-sensitive facilities as a fundamental component of inclusive environments. The scope of CFS components explicitly includes gender sensitivity and safe spaces, indicating that the provision of infrastructure aligned with gender-specific needs constitutes part of the core indicators. Analyses related to inclusive education and gender-based schooling further emphasize that neglecting gender-specific facility needs may reproduce unequal experiences and hinder the participation or school retention of female students (Artiles & Kozleski, 2016).

Classroom dynamics and gender norms in teaching practices

Research on classroom participation indicates that gender disparities in participation are influenced by teaching practices and instructor characteristics. Some studies report that the presence of female teachers can alter participation dynamics, while others suggest that the effects are mixed or context-dependent (Bailey et al., 2020). This implies that the design of indicators should take into account the learning context and gender dynamics. Analyses of classroom discourse and gender reveal differentiated patterns of participation shaped by gender expectations, in which boys often dominate verbal participation in certain contexts, such as STEM, although this pattern is not universal (Eddy & Brownell, 2016; Reinholz & Wilhelm, 2022). Research on student voice and leadership underscores that authentic classroom practices require attention to how gender identity shapes participation, and therefore indicators need to explicitly monitor opportunities for girls to contribute (Lac & Mansfield, 2017; Eddy & Brownell, 2016).

Participation gaps and opportunities for expression

Several studies document gender disparities in participation, particularly in large classrooms and STEM-related contexts, where girls tend to participate less voluntarily or are less frequently heard (Nadile et al., 2021); Eddy et al., 2014; Reinholz & Wilhelm, 2022). This suggests that participation indicators should differentiate types of participation and assess gender equality in a more specific manner. Research on student voice further emphasizes that participatory mechanisms should be designed to ensure that girls' voices are not merely symbolic and that leadership opportunities are open to all genders (Lac & Mansfield, 2017; Eddy & Brownell, 2016). In cross-cultural contexts, gender differences in participation are shaped by social norms and educational practices, thereby requiring context-sensitive indicators (Braden, 2020) ; Reinholz & Wilhelm, 2022).

Reconstruction of gender-responsive cfs indicators

Gender equality is a cross-sectoral component of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (quality education) and is aligned with the direction of education policies oriented toward gender justice across various regions (Durrani et al., 2023)(Parkes et al., 2020). Conceptually, gender-responsive Child-Friendly School (CFS)/Sekolah Ramah Anak (SRA) indicators require explicit policy commitment, safe and accessible facilities, inclusive participation, and pedagogical practices that are conscious of gender bias in order for policy to be effectively implemented at the school level (Hailu et al., 2023); Fitriani et al., 2021; Parkes et al., 2020). The reconstruction of gender-responsive Child-Friendly School (CFS) indicators should not be understood merely as the addition of a “gender” component to existing indicators, but rather as an epistemological and pedagogical repositioning of how schools define children’s safety, participation, protection, and inclusiveness. To date, many Child-Friendly School indicators have been formulated in language that appears universal and neutral; yet precisely because of their excessive generality, such indicators often fail to capture how children’s school experiences are differently shaped by gender-based norms, expectations, and power relations. In the context of primary education, this issue becomes particularly crucial because school constitutes one of the earliest social spaces in which children begin to understand their bodies, social roles, self-expression, authority, obedience, confidence in speaking, and the boundaries of what is considered “appropriate” for girls and boys.

Accordingly, child-friendly school indicators that are not gender-responsive risk producing schools that are merely “administratively safe”, but not necessarily experientially just. Ideally, gender-responsive CFS indicators should function as structural, cultural, and pedagogical enablers for the implementation of a gender-equal approach for children in primary schools. As a form of structural support, indicators should not be limited to examining whether child protection policies formally exist; they must also ensure that school policies explicitly include commitments to gender-based non-discrimination, protection from stereotyping, and the prevention of symbolic and verbal forms of violence that are often normalized from an early age. Primary schools frequently become spaces for the reproduction of seemingly simple yet deeply consequential social messages, such as the labeling of girls as “tidier and more obedient” and boys as “more active and naturally aggressive.” If indicators are not designed to capture such dynamics, schools may appear orderly and child-friendly on the surface while continuing to sustain practices that restrict children’s identities and potential according to traditional gender constructions. Within this framework, the reconstruction of indicators must place relational justice at the center of the concept of school friendliness. A child-friendly school should not be assessed solely through the presence of fences, clean toilets, or disciplinary regulations, but also through the extent to which relationships among school members enable children to feel safe to be themselves, safe to speak, safe to refuse uncomfortable treatment, and safe to develop their interests without being constrained by gendered assumptions.

At the primary school level, this is particularly important because children are in the process of forming their initial understanding of who they are and how they are accepted in social environments. Consequently, gender-responsive indicators should be capable of measuring not only protection from physical violence, but also protection from symbolic subordination, such as exclusion in play, gender-biased allocation of classroom tasks, unequal role representation in learning materials, and patterns of teacher interaction that unconsciously grant more space to one gender than another. The reconstruction of indicators must also move beyond an access-based approach toward a transformative understanding of children’s learning experiences. In many inclusive education frameworks, equality is often interpreted as equal opportunity to attend school, participate in learning, and access school facilities. However, a genuinely gender-equal approach cannot stop at equal access; it must also ensure that children’s learning experiences are free from bias, stereotyping, and role restrictions. In this sense, revised CFS indicators should assess not only whether schools “open the door” to all children, but whether they genuinely create learning conditions that allow every child to grow without being burdened by specific gender expectations. For example, participation indicators should not merely assess whether students are involved in classroom discussions, but should also examine who speaks more frequently, who is more often selected, who remains silent, and how teachers respond to different expressions of confidence among children.

These questions are essential because gender inequality in primary schools often operates subtly, not necessarily through explicit prohibition, but through the repetition of patterns that come to be seen as normal. From a pedagogical perspective, gender-responsive indicators should ideally serve as the foundation for equitable and emancipatory teaching practices. This means that indicators should not be confined to evaluating schools' administrative outputs, but should also reach into the everyday practices of classroom life. As a site of character formation, primary school requires indicators capable of examining whether teachers use equitable language, whether classroom interactions provide balanced opportunities for girls and boys to ask questions, lead, try, fail, and explore, and whether learning materials and illustrations represent social roles more fairly. This is important because children do not learn only from what is formally taught, but also from what they repeatedly observe in examples, symbols, praise, reprimands, and the organization of activities. When CFS indicators incorporate this pedagogical dimension, schools are no longer positioned merely as protective institutions, but as early spaces of social transformation capable of interrupting the reproduction of gender inequality from an early age. One aspect that requires serious reconstruction is the dimension of safety. In many child-friendly school frameworks, safety is commonly understood in physical and procedural terms, such as adequate buildings, clean environments, and the absence of direct violence. While these elements are undeniably important, such a conception remains too narrow when examined through the lens of gender equality.

Safety that is genuinely gender-responsive must also encompass emotional, social, and identity safety—that is, a condition in which children do not feel ashamed of their self-expression, are not afraid of being blamed when sharing uncomfortable experiences, and are not restricted simply because they are girls or boys. In primary school practice, such safety is highly relevant to everyday situations: who feels comfortable speaking in front of the class, who feels embarrassed when mocked for their interests or preferred games, and who does not dare to report unfair treatment. Therefore, safety indicators need to be reconstructed so that they assess not only the absence of visible violence, but also the presence of a school climate in which children feel equally respected. In addition, gender-responsive CFS indicators must give greater attention to infrastructure and school space as social experiences. School facilities have often been assessed primarily in terms of general adequacy, whereas from a gender perspective, school spaces also shape feelings of safety, belonging, and comfort in participation. Toilets, school health rooms, play areas, changing spaces, and even classroom layouts may have different implications for girls and boys, especially as children begin to develop bodily awareness, privacy, and feelings of embarrassment. In this context, ideal indicators should not merely state that facilities are “available,” but should also consider whether those facilities are accessible, safe, preserve children's dignity, and do not place one group of children in a more vulnerable or restricted position than another. In this regard, child-friendly schools must shift from a logic of facility provision toward a logic of spatial justice.

Furthermore, reconstructed indicators should encourage primary schools to build a culture of gender-equal participation, rather than symbolic participation. Thus far, child participation has often been interpreted simply as involvement in classroom activities, school forums, or opportunities to express opinions. In practice, however, not all children have equal opportunities to be present and heard within these spaces. In some cultural contexts, girls may be socialized to be more cautious, polite, and less visible, while boys may be given greater tolerance to appear dominant or vocal. If participation indicators fail to account for these dynamics, schools may claim to have provided space for all children while merely reproducing unequal participation in subtler forms. Therefore, the reconstruction of indicators should ensure that participation is not measured only in terms of whether children are involved, but also in terms of whether every child has a fair opportunity to be heard, recognized, and able to influence decisions. In relation to gender equality content in primary education, revised CFS indicators should also function as pedagogical and reflective tools for schools, rather than solely as evaluation instruments. In other words, indicators should be designed in such a way that they help schools identify points of bias within their own practices. A gender-responsive school is not one that merely claims to be free from discrimination, but one that possesses the reflective awareness to recognize how inequality may appear in small, everyday forms.

For this reason, ideal indicators should be capable of prompting reflective questions at the school level: Do teachers hold the same academic expectations for all children? Do textbooks and learning media represent professions, family roles, and leadership in equitable ways? Are children taught to respect bodies, personal boundaries, and differences in expression without shame? Are reporting mechanisms sufficiently safe for children to disclose experiences related to gender-based bullying or harassment? When indicators function in this way, they no longer operate as an administrative checklist, but as instruments of school culture transformation. From this perspective, the reconstruction of gender-responsive Child-Friendly School indicators should move toward cross-dimensional integration, rather than the simple addition of isolated sub-indicators. In other words, gender should not be positioned as a separate add-on component at the end of the framework, but should instead be embedded transversally across all core indicators, including policy, governance, safety, facilities, teaching and learning, participation, and school social relations. This approach is crucial so that gender equality is not treated as an incidental program or a special agenda, but rather as a foundational principle in defining what it truly means for a school to be child-friendly. If gender is treated only as an additional element, its implementation will likely remain ceremonial and easily marginalized when schools face competing administrative demands.

Accordingly, the reconstruction proposed in this study points to the need for a more explicit, contextual, and transformative evaluation framework for Child-Friendly Schools. *Explicit* means that indicators must clearly articulate the dimension of gender equality, rather than concealing it behind overly general and neutral terminology. *Contextual* means that indicators must be sufficiently flexible to capture how gender norms operate within primary school life as shaped by local culture, family values, and differing institutional practices. *Transformative*, in turn, means that indicators should function not merely to identify school compliance with particular standards, but also to encourage changes in school culture, social relations, and educational practices toward greater justice for all children. Ultimately, gender-responsive Child-Friendly School indicators should be understood as a value architecture that shapes how schools treat children, rather than merely as technical evaluation tools. Primary school is an early space of social subject formation, where children begin to learn about self-worth, bodily boundaries, healthy relationships, and the possibility of imagining their futures. Therefore, when child-friendly school indicators are reconstructed through a strong gender perspective, schools can become not only places where children are safe to be present, but also spaces in which they are treated justly—where they are free to grow, speak, choose, and become fully human without being constrained by gender stereotypes.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the indicators of *Sekolah Ramah Anak* (SRA)/Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) are fundamentally grounded in key principles of child rights-based education, such as safety, protection, inclusiveness, participation, health, and well-being. However, the findings of this synthesis reveal that these indicators continue to be formulated within a largely general and neutral framework, and therefore remain insufficient to fully capture how children's experiences in primary school are differently shaped by gender-based norms, expectations, and social relations. In other words, the existing child-friendly school framework remains strong in terms of formal protection, yet has not fully reached the dimension of experiential justice. The analysis presented in this study further shows that gender-related issues in primary schools do not always emerge in the form of explicit discrimination, but are often manifested more subtly through teaching practices, the distribution of participation, representations in learning materials, the use of school spaces and facilities, and interactional cultures that reproduce gender stereotypes. Consequently, SRA indicators that are not gender-responsive may result in schools that appear administratively child-friendly, but do not necessarily function as spaces that are genuinely just, safe, and empowering for all children.

Based on these findings, this study underscores the need to reconstruct Child-Friendly School indicators in a gender-responsive manner, namely by treating gender not as an additional element, but as a cross-cutting perspective embedded across all dimensions of school life. Such reconstruction includes strengthening gender-based anti-discrimination policies, creating safe and dignified facilities and spaces, fostering a culture of equitable participation, and promoting pedagogical practices that are free from bias and

that support children's expression and agency in a fair manner. In this way, primary schools may function not only as spaces of protection, but also as spaces of social transformation that support children's development as subjects who are valued, heard, and treated equally. Conceptually, this study contributes to strengthening the discourse on Child-Friendly Schools by positioning gender equality as a central rather than peripheral dimension. Practically, the findings may serve as a reference for schools, teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers in designing more reflective, equitable, and contextually grounded frameworks for the evaluation and implementation of Child-Friendly Schools in primary education.

V. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Majelis Diktilitbang Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah for providing financial support for this study.

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