

Principal Leadership for Child-Friendly Schools in the Digital Era: A Comparative Case Study

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Abstract:

The digital transformation in education has brought significant changes to students' learning environments, including the emergence of various new risks such as cyberbullying, exposure to negative content, and misuse of digital technology. These conditions require educational units to develop school environments that are not only physically and socially safe, but also safe in the digital space through the implementation of the Child-Friendly School (SRA) concept. The success of SRA implementation is greatly influenced by the effectiveness of the principal's management in managing various programs related to the protection and fulfillment of children's rights in the school environment. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of principal management in realizing SRA in the digital era in elementary schools in Purwakarta Regency. The study used a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies with principals, teachers, students, and other related parties. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of the SRA program at SD Negeri 1 Pondokbungur and SD Negeri 2 Sindangkasih has been carried out through the application of management functions including planning, organizing, implementing, and monitoring as stated in the POAC concept proposed by George R. Terry. During the planning stage, schools develop various programs, including anti-bullying activities, digital literacy, and fostering a positive school culture. The organizational stage involves the formation of a SRA team involving the principal, teachers, and other school members. Program implementation is realized through various character-building activities, child protection outreach, and the wise use of digital technology. Program oversight is carried out through regular monitoring and evaluation by the principal and the SRA team. Program implementation still faces several obstacles, including limited understanding of the comprehensive SRA concept among some teachers, limited supporting infrastructure, and suboptimal parental involvement in supporting school programs. Efforts to overcome these obstacles include increasing program outreach, strengthening coordination among school members, and developing a collaborative culture to create a safe and child-friendly educational environment in the digital era.

Keywords: principal management; child-friendly schools; digital era; child protection; basic education.

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology over the past two decades has fundamentally transformed the landscape of human life, including in the realm of education. Schools, as formal institutions, no longer operate in isolation from technological transformations but have become part of a learning ecosystem integrated with digital devices, internet networks, and global information flows. At the elementary school level, this change has a highly strategic significance because this phase is a crucial period in character formation, internalization of moral values, and development of children's social behavior. Therefore, elementary schools are not only obliged to improve students' academic achievement but also to ensure the provision of a safe, comfortable, inclusive, and child-friendly learning environment amidst the increasing intensity of digitalization (Sukmana et al., 2025). The concept of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) emerged in response to this need by placing the best interests of children as the primary orientation in all educational governance. CFS is not simply understood as an additional program, but rather as a comprehensive approach that demands a paradigm shift in school management. Within this framework, the principal holds a central position as an educational leader, responsible for designing, organizing, implementing policies, and evaluating all programs to ensure they align with child-friendly principles. The effectiveness of the principal's management is a determining factor in ensuring that school policies and culture truly reflect an environment that protects, respects children's dignity, and supports their comprehensive development (Arifin et al., 2026).

Normatively, the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools in Indonesia has a solid legal basis. This policy is reinforced by Government Regulation Number 4 of 2022 concerning Amendments to Government Regulation Number 57 of 2021 concerning National Education Standards, which emphasizes the importance of implementing student-centered education and ensuring a safe, inclusive, and meaningful learning environment. Furthermore, the 2023 Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia concerning the Implementation of Child-Friendly Schools serves as a key foundation for developing educational units oriented toward the comprehensive protection and fulfillment of children's rights. At the regional level, this commitment is also reflected in Purwakarta Regent Regulation Number 131 of 2022, which regulates the implementation of character education and the strengthening of a safe, comfortable, and culturally diverse school environment as an integral part of efforts to realize child-friendly schools (Hermawansyah et al., 2025). Although adequate regulatory policy tools are available, the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools in the digital era faces increasing complexity. The use of digital technology in schools certainly opens up significant opportunities for learning innovation, broad access to information, and the development of digital literacy from an early age. However, on the other hand, technology also carries potential risks such as cyberbullying, exposure to age-inappropriate content, device addiction, and a decline in the quality of face-to-face social interactions between students. This situation demands strengthened school management that can integrate the use of technology proportionally with child protection principles. School principals are required to transform from mere administrators into transformational leaders who are visionary and adaptive to digital change (Haryono et al., 2025).

Initial observations in several elementary schools indicate that the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) remains variable in terms of consistency and effectiveness. Some schools have developed policies and programs supporting Child-Friendly Schools (CFS), but their implementation has not been fully internalized in the school culture. Monitoring of students' use of digital technology is also still not systematic. Furthermore, some educators have limited understanding of strategies for managing safe and developmentally appropriate digital learning. This situation has resulted in the suboptimal integration of child-friendly principles into daily learning practices. This gap indicates a significant research gap. While regulations and policies emphasize the urgency of implementing Child-Friendly Schools (CFS), their implementation at the educational unit level still faces various managerial challenges. Previous research has tended to focus on the implementation of CFS policies or child protection issues in general, there is limited research linking the effectiveness of principal management to the dynamics of the digital era. Effective management is a key determinant of the success of school programs, including creating a safe and technology-adaptive educational environment (Syaripudin et al., 2025).

Previous studies have revealed that principal leadership has a significant influence on the formation of a positive and conducive school culture. Targeted management can improve discipline, a sense of security,

and the active participation of all school members in creating a healthy learning climate. However, these studies have not explicitly outlined how the principal's management functions, including planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising, are operationalized within the Child-Friendly School framework in the digital era, which is full of new challenges. The complexity of digitalization demands a more comprehensive and adaptive managerial approach than conventional approaches. The novelty of this research lies in an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of principal management in implementing Child-Friendly Schools, contextualized with the development of digital technology. This research goes beyond describing the SRA program, but examines how principal management functions play a concrete role in creating a safe, inclusive, and responsive learning environment to technological advances. Therefore, this research is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of educational administration, particularly in the field of child protection-based management in the digital era (Bambang et al., 2025).

From a systems perspective, the principal is positioned as the primary actor directing the process of school organizational change. Inputs in this study include educational policies, human resource quality, infrastructure availability, and student characteristics. The core process lies in the effectiveness of the principal's management function, which includes SRA program planning, resource organization, policy implementation, and field oversight. The expected output is the creation of a child-friendly school culture that is safe in the use of digital technology. Meanwhile, the long-term outcome is the formation of students with character, ethics, and the ability to use technology wisely and responsibly. The selection of SDN 1 Pondokbungur and SDN 2 Sindangkasih as research locations was based on empirical considerations that both schools have implemented the Child-Friendly School program, but still face challenges in maintaining consistent management and adapting to digital developments. This situation makes both schools relevant as research loci to examine the effectiveness of principal management in creating a truly child-friendly educational environment amidst technological transformation (Pattipawaej, 2026).

Various studies have discussed the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools, but the majority still focus on general aspects of policy or child protection without deeply linking them to the effectiveness of the principal's management function in the context of digitalization. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the implementation of SRA through the perspective of POAC function-based management in the digital education era. By considering the normative basis, empirical reality, research gaps, and the urgency of academic contributions, this study aims to comprehensively examine the effectiveness of principal management in realizing Child-Friendly Schools in the digital era (Prihatin & Sutangsa, 2025). The results of this study are expected to provide a more comprehensive picture of principals' managerial practices in integrating child protection principles with the challenges and opportunities of digitalization in elementary schools.

The study of child-friendly school management has developed in the educational literature in response to the need to fulfill students' rights, create a safe, inclusive learning environment, and support student character development. Binti Muakhirin's research at Gentan Seyegan Elementary School in Sleman shows that effective child-friendly school management includes the involvement of all stakeholders, such as the principal, teachers, parents, and other school officials, in the planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation of the Child-Friendly School (SRA) program. The study's results indicate that strong collaboration, parental involvement, and school-stakeholder cooperation contribute to improving the quality of educational services and school performance, although factors such as limited land and funding can be obstacles (Mufida et al., 2025). More broadly, the effectiveness of child-friendly schools is understood not only through managerial aspects but also by how educational institutions are able to build student character in the digital era. A study by Heni Suryani and Akhmad Affandi confirms that schools that implement child-friendly principles can effectively help shape students' spiritual character if the approach used is relevant to the demands of the digital era, such as integrating spiritual values into learning. The research findings show that SRA practices that incorporate moral values into the curriculum and school activities can improve student integrity amidst technological challenges (Suryani & Affandi, 2025).

Other literature highlights the relationship between child-friendly school management and student competency achievement. Nizam Fahmi and Nuril Afifal Wahyu, in their research at Darussalam Blokagung Elementary School, demonstrated that structured child-friendly school management, encompassing planning, organization, implementation, and evaluation, plays a crucial role in creating a learning environment that respects students' rights while encouraging their competency development. Identified obstacles include inadequate facilities and suboptimal administration, but with consistent education and

motivation for all parties, management effectiveness can improve (Fahmi & Wahyu, 2024). Another study on the implementation of the Child-Friendly School program at the secondary level also reinforces the argument that program effectiveness is inseparable from the role and structure of school management. Research at SMPN 2 Ternate City demonstrated that the implementation of the child-friendly school program had a positive impact on creating a more conducive environment and improving the quality of learning despite facing obstacles such as leadership changes and suboptimal training. These findings also demonstrate that the sustainability of the child-friendly school requires ongoing commitment from the principal and the school community in general (Salam et al., 2023).

In the context of student character development through SRA, Rahmawati and Supriyoko's research at MAN 4 Bantul shows that good SRA program management contributes to student character formation, where program planning, implementation, and evaluation are carried out systematically and collaboratively. This research confirms that comprehensive management can address students' needs for a safe, comfortable learning environment that respects their rights as individuals and as part of the school community (Rahmawati & Supriyoko, 2022). The child-friendly school management model approach to instilling character education demonstrates the importance of involving all stakeholders, not just the principal and teachers. Research by Nasarudin et al. in the context of the Independent Curriculum found that collegial management involving teachers, staff, students, parents, and the community in every phase of SRA management can create an inclusive environment and support student well-being as a whole. This research provides evidence that the principles of collaboration and active participation of all parties are supporting factors in the effectiveness of SRA in building character and a safe school culture (Nasarudin et al., 2024).

Several case studies at other levels, such as MTsN 6 Jombang, also demonstrate how the four management functions of planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling and evaluating are systematically implemented to create SRA. The results of this study indicate that the integration of child-friendly values into the school's vision, mission, and activities helps strengthen student engagement, collaboration with parents and external parties, and the development of participatory evaluation mechanisms that involve students in monitoring program implementation. This approach also demonstrates the importance of an organizational structure that supports SRA sustainably (Susilowati & Ernawati, 2025). More specifically, in the context of the principal's role, research by Haryanti et al. explored the principal's managerial competency strategies in realizing SRA in elementary schools. The findings suggest that principals, as leaders, must not only be proficient in planning and organizing but also develop communication, motivation, coordination, and stakeholder engagement skills to ensure a safe, comfortable environment that supports the holistic development of student character. This study emphasizes that good managerial competency is positively correlated with the success of SRA in the context of elementary education (M. R. Saputra et al., 2025). *Principals' Managerial Competence Strategy in Creating Child-Friendly Schools in Elementary Schools*

International literature also provides additional perspectives on digital leadership and management in efforts to create child-friendly education in the digital age. Research exploring digital leadership in child-friendly education found that collaboration between digital leadership, adaptive management, and data-driven planning can help improve educational outcomes and student well-being in the context of digital change. This study underscores the need for principals to integrate digital competencies into their managerial strategies to achieve inclusive and sustainable education in the technological era (Nurjaman, 2026). Furthermore, a literature review on transformational leadership in child-friendly schools indicates that a transformative leadership style that applies dimensions such as idealistic influence, inspirational motivation, individualized attention, and intellectual stimulation can support educational quality within the SRA framework. These findings provide evidence that principals, as agents of change, need to implement a leadership approach that motivates and empowers all parties to create a child-friendly school culture that is adaptive to modern challenges (Sunaengsih et al., 2025).

In a case study at SDN 05 Bojongbata, the principal's role in implementing Child-Friendly Schools was also found to involve collaborative leadership strategies that actively engage teachers, parents, and students in every stage of management, from planning to evaluation. This research confirms that effective communication, consistent motivation, and regular evaluation are important factors in the successful implementation of Child-Friendly Schools at the elementary school level (Wijayanti & Kusumaningsih, 2024). Based on these various studies, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of principal management in

realizing Child-Friendly Schools is primarily determined by a combination of managerial competence, stakeholder involvement, an inclusive school culture, and the ability to adapt to the challenges of the digital era. The literature shows that a comprehensive management approach that includes strategic planning, resource organization, values-based implementation, and participatory monitoring and evaluation can create a child-friendly and safe learning environment that supports the holistic development of students.

METHOD

This study applies a qualitative approach with a descriptive study design to deeply examine the effectiveness of principal management in realizing Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) in the digital era. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study is oriented towards understanding the phenomenon of educational management in a contextual, natural, and comprehensive manner, based on experiences, perceptions, and real practices in the school environment without any variable manipulation. Through this approach, researchers can comprehensively examine the principal's managerial process in implementing the principles of Child-Friendly Schools amidst the dynamics of educational digitalization. Sugiyono stated that qualitative research is a method for studying objects in natural conditions, with the researcher as the main instrument in the process of data collection and analysis. In line with this view, Moleong explained that qualitative research aims to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects holistically through verbal descriptions in specific, natural contexts. With this foundation, this study seeks to fully describe how principal management practices are carried out within the framework of Child-Friendly Schools in the digital era (Moleong et al., 2019; Sugiyono, 2019).

The design used is a qualitative descriptive study because this research focuses on a systematic explanation of the effectiveness of the principal's management functions, which include planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising in realizing Child-Friendly Schools. This design allows researchers to present phenomena factually and objectively according to real conditions in the field, without intervening in the variables studied. The research was conducted at SDN 1 Pondokbungur and SDN 2 Sindangkasih, Darangdan District, Purwakarta Regency. The location selection was carried out purposively with the consideration that both schools have implemented the Child-Friendly School program, but still face challenges in the effectiveness of principal management, particularly related to adaptation to digital technology developments. Therefore, both schools are considered representative in describing the implementation of SRA management at the elementary school level (Creswell, 2016).

The focus of this research is directed at the effectiveness of principal management in implementing Child-Friendly Schools through four main management functions: planning the SRA program in the digital era, organizing school resources to support implementation, implementing child-friendly policies and programs, and monitoring and evaluating the program's implementation. These four functions serve as an analytical framework for assessing the effectiveness of principal management. The research subjects included principals and teachers at both schools. Principals were designated as key informants because they have strategic authority in decision-making, policy formulation, and controlling the implementation of the Child-Friendly School program. Teachers serve as key informants because they are directly involved in the learning process and interactions with students, which are closely related to the implementation of child-friendly principles in schools (Sugiyono, 2020).

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, which is a determination based on specific considerations relevant to the research objectives. Furthermore, informant development was carried out using a snowball sampling technique by requesting recommendations from initial informants to obtain additional relevant informants, thus obtaining richer and more in-depth data. Data collection was carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies used triangulation. Observations were conducted to directly observe the implementation of the SRA policy, teacher-student interactions, school culture, and the use of digital technology. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain information regarding the planning process, organizational strategies, policy implementation, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Documentation studies were conducted by reviewing SRA program documents, school work plans, organizational structures, regulations, activity reports, and visual documentation as supporting data. The researcher acted as the main instrument (human instrument) as emphasized by Sugiyono (2019), supported by observation, interview, and documentation guidelines compiled according to the research focus. Data analysis used the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and continuous conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity

is maintained through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time. According to Denzin, triangulation is an important strategy in qualitative research to increase the credibility and validity of findings (Denzin, 1978; Miles et al., 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted at two public elementary schools, SDN 1 Pondokbungur and SDN 2 Sindangkasih in Darangdan District, Purwakarta Regency. Both schools have implemented the Child-Friendly School (SRA) concept as part of their commitment to protecting and fulfilling children's rights, and creating a safe, comfortable, and violence-free learning environment. In the digital era, SRA implementation encompasses not only physical and psychosocial aspects but also digital safety dimensions related to the use of information technology in the learning process and school interactions (Supeni et al., 2021). In general, the research results indicate that the effectiveness of principal management in realizing Child-Friendly Schools in both research locations is in the category of "quite effective to effective," but with varying levels of consistency across management functions. This effectiveness is greatly influenced by the extent to which the principal is able to systematically integrate the functions of planning, organizing, implementing, and monitoring within a unified managerial system oriented towards child protection in the digital era. This finding confirms that Child-Friendly Schools cannot operate solely as a formal program, but must become a school culture controlled through strong and adaptive leadership management (Djafri, 2017).

Contextually, both schools have a diverse human resource mix, both in terms of the age range of educators, length of teaching experience, and level of digital literacy proficiency. This diversity creates its own dynamics in the implementation of school programs, particularly when policies must be integrated with the use of learning technology. Some teachers have adapted quite well to the use of digital devices, while others are still adjusting to the demands of technology-based educational transformation. Meanwhile, technological facilities such as computers, internet connections, and the use of various digital learning platforms are already available at both schools. However, their utilization is not yet fully maximized and has not been distributed evenly across the school community. These limitations require targeted management so that technology is not merely an administrative complement but truly supports a safe and child-friendly learning process. In such situations, the principal plays a strategic role as the primary controller and director. He or she is responsible for coordinating all potential resources to ensure that technology utilization remains aligned with child protection principles and does not deviate from ethical and digital security guidelines (Hariyono et al., 2025).

Planning

The results of the study indicate that the planning for the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools at SDN 1 Pondokbungur and SDN 2 Sindangkasih was carried out through a managerial approach based on school policy combined with an analysis of the contextual needs of students and teachers. Planning is not only administrative but also strategic because it includes the integration of child protection values with the challenges of the digital era, such as monitoring device use, digital ethics, and safe interactions in technology-based learning spaces. At SDN 1 Pondokbungur, planning tends to emphasize strengthening a safe school culture and positive discipline by reducing verbal and physical violence and strengthening child-friendly communication in the classroom. Meanwhile, SDN 2 Sindangkasih demonstrates a more adaptive planning orientation towards digitalization by incorporating basic digital literacy aspects for students and teachers as part of the SRA strategy (Hamdi et al., 2023). Theoretically, this practice aligns with the planning function according to George R. Terry, who emphasizes that planning is the process of determining organizational goals and determining the best strategies to achieve them systematically and rationally. In this context, the principal acts as a policymaker who translates national policies into contextual school operational programs.

From a regulatory perspective, the results of this study demonstrate compliance with the 2023 Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia concerning the Implementation of Child-Friendly Schools, which emphasizes the urgency of planning a structured child protection system in every educational unit. This regulation places the protection and fulfillment of children's rights as an integral part of school governance, so program planning cannot be

separated from the principles of student safety and well-being. Furthermore, strengthening a safe and conducive learning environment is also legitimized through Government Regulation Number 4 of 2022, which emphasizes student-oriented learning process standards and ensures comfort and safety during learning activities. This policy directs schools to ensure that all educational activities are carried out in an inclusive atmosphere and support optimal child development. The integration of the digital dimension in the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools aligns with the digital transformation agenda of education, which encourages the creation of a technology-based learning ecosystem that is safe, responsible, and adaptive to current developments (Samsu, 2025). When linked to previous research, these findings reinforce the findings of studies that state that principal planning based on the school's real needs contributes significantly to the successful implementation of educational programs. However, this research provides new enrichment that in the context of SRA in the digital era, planning is not only conventional, but must include the digital safety dimension as a strategic variable.

Organizing

The results of the study indicate that the organization of the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools in both schools was carried out through the establishment of a school work structure involving the principal, teachers, education staff, and the school committee as part of the child protection ecosystem. The organization is not only in the form of a formal structure, but also a collaborative work pattern that emphasizes shared responsibility in creating a child-friendly environment. At SDN 1 Pondokbungur, the organization was carried out through the appointment of a special SRA team tasked with coordinating the child protection program, while at SDN 2 Sindangkasih the organization was more collaborative across functions that integrated SRA tasks into the existing school work structure. These differences indicate a variety of managerial approaches, but still lead to the same goal: strengthening a child-friendly culture (Azizah et al., 2024).

Conceptually, this organizational practice aligns with George R. Terry's view that organization requires a clear division of labor, effective coordination, and the placement of individuals according to their competencies in the right positions (the right man in the right place). Within the Child-Friendly School framework, organization is not merely about establishing a formal structure, but also serves as an instrument of social control that ensures that every element of the school—principals, teachers, education personnel, and committees—has real responsibility in efforts to protect and fulfill children's rights. From the perspective of the community of practice theory, collaborative organizational patterns encourage the formation of professional learning communities among teachers. Through interaction and sharing of experiences, child-friendly values can be internalized more deeply and consistently in daily learning practices. In addition, a flexible and adaptive organizational structure also strengthens the implementation of national policies, as emphasized in Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, which emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development through cooperation and collaboration between educators (Gamar, 2026). This research strengthens the finding that the effectiveness of organization is not only determined by the formal structure, but also by the quality of social interactions and the collective commitment of school residents in implementing the principles of Child-Friendly Schools.

Actuating

The implementation of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) in both schools demonstrates that the principal plays the role of instructional leader, motivating the entire school community to implement child-friendly values in learning activities and daily school life. The implementation of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) is realized through positive habits, non-violent communication, strengthening restorative discipline, and integrating character values into learning. In the context of the digital era, implementation also includes monitoring student use of digital devices, restricting access to age-inappropriate content, and providing basic digital literacy education. Theoretically, this implementation aligns with the actuating function in management, which emphasizes the importance of leadership, motivation, and effective communication in driving an organization. The principal acts not only as an administrator but also as an agent of change, ensuring consistent policy implementation (Supeni et al., 2022).

Within a contemporary pedagogical framework, the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools (SRA) reflects a child-centered learning approach and the creation of a positive school climate that positions students as the primary actors in the educational process. This approach emphasizes that children are not

merely recipients of material but individuals with potential, a voice, and the right to develop optimally in a supportive environment. Therefore, the entire learning process is designed to respect students' needs, interests, and developmental stages. SRA implementation, which focuses on emotional comfort, physical safety, and healthy interpersonal relationships, contributes to a positive school climate. An environment free from violence and discrimination enables children to learn with greater self-confidence and intrinsic motivation. This practice aligns with the Merdeka Belajar policy, which emphasizes the importance of safe, enjoyable, and student-centered learning. In this context, schools are encouraged to provide space for exploration, active participation, and responsible freedom so that the educational process truly facilitates the holistic development of children's character and competencies (Zubaidi et al., 2022). Research findings indicate that successful implementation is greatly influenced by the principal's consistency in strengthening school culture and leading by example in daily practice. The stronger the principal's leadership, the higher the level of internalization of child-friendly values in the school environment.

Controlling

The supervisory function in the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools is carried out through academic supervision, monitoring student behavior, evaluating school programs, and periodically reflecting on the implementation of the Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) policy. In both schools, supervision is carried out routinely by the principal through direct classroom observation, monthly program evaluations, and coordination with teachers regarding cases related to child protection. However, research findings indicate that supervision remains a mix of formal and informal, with a predominance of reflective approaches over standardized evaluative instruments. Theoretically, the supervisory function aligns with George R. Terry's concept, which emphasizes the importance of ensuring alignment between planning and implementation. In the context of CFS, supervision is not only oriented towards compliance but also towards improving the quality of a safe and inclusive learning environment (Suheri, 2026).

From a regulatory perspective, these supervisory practices align with the provisions of the 2023 Regulation of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia, which emphasizes the urgency of preventing violence and strengthening child protection systems within educational institutions through ongoing internal control mechanisms. This regulation positions schools as safe spaces that must be managed with a structured monitoring system, not simply responsive to emerging cases. Research shows that the supervisory function in schools has indeed been carried out through various forms of routine supervision and monitoring. However, its implementation still requires strengthening, particularly in the provision of more standardized and measurable evaluation instruments. Without systematic evaluation tools, the effectiveness of Child-Friendly Schools (SRA) implementation is difficult to analyze objectively and comprehensively. Therefore, the development of performance indicators and ongoing evaluation mechanisms is needed so that the implementation of SRA is not merely administrative but truly able to consistently guarantee child protection and is oriented towards improving the quality of the learning environment (Wafda et al., 2026).

The implementation of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) in the digital era is inseparable from various structural and cultural barriers. The main barrier identified in this study is the limited digital literacy of some teachers, which results in suboptimal supervision of student technology use. Furthermore, there are still differing perceptions among teachers regarding the limitations of technology use in child-friendly learning. Another barrier arises from time constraints due to teachers' high administrative burdens, resulting in inconsistent implementation of Child-Friendly Schools (SRA) strengthening activities. Furthermore, limited digital facilities and infrastructure also hinder the optimization of supervision and safe technology-based learning. Conceptually, these barriers indicate a gap between policy demands and implementation capacity at the school level. This aligns with various studies that suggest that digital-based educational transformation often faces resistance at the practical level due to limited human resources and infrastructure (Ananda et al., 2025).

To address these obstacles, principals at both research sites implemented various adaptive strategies based on participatory leadership. Strengthening teachers' digital literacy was carried out through internal school discussions, independent training, and collaboration between teachers in the form of sharing good practices. Furthermore, principals rescheduled school activities to ensure consistent availability of space for the implementation of the SRA program. A supervisory approach based on interpersonal communication was also strengthened to build collective awareness of the importance of child protection in the digital era.

The implemented solutions demonstrated that the effectiveness of principal management is largely determined by the ability to adapt to existing limitations through a creative, collaborative, and reflection-based approach. Thus, emerging obstacles are not merely obstacles but also points of strengthening the school's management system (C. A. Saputra, 2025).

The effectiveness of principal management in realizing Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) in the digital era is a dynamic, contextual process, and is greatly influenced by leadership capacity in integrating management functions as a whole. Findings at SDN 1 Pondokbungur and SDN 2 Sindangkasih show that the implementation of CFS is not merely a matter of fulfilling administrative indicators, but rather a transformation of school culture that demands policy consistency, exemplary leadership, and adaptation to technological developments. In this context, the principal plays a role not only as an institutional manager but also as an agent of change who determines the direction of values, norms, and practices of child protection in the elementary education environment. Conceptually, management effectiveness, which falls into the moderately effective to effective category, indicates that the integration of planning, organizing, implementation, and supervision has been implemented, but has not yet fully reached an optimal, systemic and standardized level. Differences in the level of consistency between management functions indicate that each school has different strengths and challenges, even though they are located in a relatively similar geographic and administrative context. This confirms that management effectiveness is not uniform, but is influenced by the characteristics of human resources, organizational culture, and the principal's ability to understand the school's contextual needs (Budianto et al., 2025).

In terms of planning, both schools appear to have attempted to integrate child protection values with the challenges of digitalization. Their planning is no longer conventional, but incorporates dimensions of device monitoring, digital ethics, and the safety of technology-based interactions. This demonstrates an awareness that the digital space is an integral part of the modern school ecosystem. However, the depth of digital safety integration varies. SDN 2 Sindangkasih appears to more explicitly incorporate digital literacy as part of its SRA strategy, while SDN 1 Pondokbungur places greater emphasis on strengthening a culture of positive communication and non-violent discipline. These differences in orientation indicate that planning is heavily influenced by the principal's perception of priority issues in their respective schools. From an educational management perspective, effective planning should be able to connect normative vision with measurable operational steps. The findings of this study indicate that although planning is strategic, strengthening specific evaluative indicators for digital safety aspects can still be further developed. In other words, the integration between the child protection vision and digital strategy has not been fully documented in a standardized instrument, thus the potential for inconsistencies in implementation remains (Marisanta et al., 2025).

In terms of organizational functions, the two schools demonstrated different but conceptually complementary approaches. SDN 1 Pondokbungur chose to establish a dedicated Child Protection Team (SRA), which structurally provides a clear focus and responsibility for program implementation. This approach offers advantages in terms of coordination and specific task allocation. Meanwhile, SDN 2 Sindangkasih integrated the SRA's duties into the existing work structure, making child protection responsibilities an inherent part of the school's entire organizational system. This model reinforces the principle that SRA is not an add-on program, but rather a collective culture. This discussion demonstrates that organizational effectiveness is determined not only by the presence or absence of a formal structure, but by the quality of collaboration and commitment of the school community. Schools that are able to build a collective awareness that every teacher is a child protector will have stronger cultural resilience than schools that rely on a single team. However, formal structures remain important as accountability mechanisms. Therefore, a hybrid approach that combines dedicated teams with cross-functional integration may be a more ideal model (Raprap et al., 2025).

In terms of implementation, principals at both research locations have played the role of instructional leaders, actively promoting child-friendly practices in learning. The implementation of values such as non-violent communication, restorative discipline, and positive habits demonstrates that the principles of SRA have been incorporated into daily practice. The integration of digital literacy and monitoring of technological device use also indicate that schools are beginning to recognize the risks and opportunities of the digital era. However, the effectiveness of implementation depends heavily on the consistency and exemplary behavior of the principal. Findings indicate that the stronger the transformative leadership demonstrated by the principal, the higher the level of internalization of child-friendly values among teachers. This supports

the theory that school culture is shaped through visionary and communicative leadership. Furthermore, variations in teachers' digital literacy contribute to uneven implementation of digital safety policies. Some teachers are able to utilize technology creatively and safely, while others are still at the basic adaptation stage (Maharani et al., 2025).

This discussion emphasized that the transformation towards Child-Friendly Schools in the digital era requires more than just normative policies, but also investment in continuously improving teacher competency. Without strengthening human resource capacity, digital safety policies risk becoming a formality that is not fully internalized in learning practices. In terms of oversight, both schools have conducted routine supervision and periodic evaluations, but the approach used is still predominantly reflective and not fully based on standardized evaluative instruments. Supervision through direct observation and informal coordination is indeed effective in building emotional closeness and a dialogical culture, but from a quality management perspective, more measurable performance indicators are needed to objectively evaluate the effectiveness of SRA implementation. This discussion demonstrated that supervision in the context of SRA should not only be oriented towards administrative compliance but also focus on measuring the quality of a safe, inclusive, and technology-adaptive learning environment (Surahman et al., 2025). With a more systematic evaluation instrument, schools can make continuous improvements based on data, not just perceptions.

The obstacles identified in this study demonstrate a gap between national policy demands and implementation capacity at the school level. Limited teacher digital literacy is a major factor affecting the effectiveness of supervision and technology utilization. Furthermore, the high administrative burden on teachers reduces the space for reflection and consistent strengthening of the SRA program. This situation demonstrates that digital transformation and child protection cannot be separated from the issues of workload management and teacher professional development. Limited facilities and infrastructure also reinforce the finding that digitalization of education at the elementary school level still faces challenges in equity. Without adequate infrastructure support, digital safety supervision is less than optimal. This demonstrates the need for synergy between school policies and external support from local governments and education policymakers (Nashrullah et al., 2025).

The solutions implemented by the principal demonstrate a strong adaptive capacity. Participatory approaches, internal discussions, and the sharing of best practices among teachers are effective strategies for gradually improving digital literacy. Rescheduling activities and strengthening interpersonal communication also demonstrate that flexible leadership can respond to limitations with creativity. This analysis confirms that the effectiveness of principal management in realizing Child-Friendly Schools in the digital era is determined not only by the comprehensiveness of the program, but also by the simultaneous integration of values, structures, competencies, and school culture. The transformation towards sustainable Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) requires reflective, adaptive, and collaborative leadership. The obstacles that arise are not merely technical constraints, but reflect the complexity of educational change in the digital era (Mulyono, 2025). Therefore, strengthening principals' managerial capacity and developing teachers' digital competencies are key prerequisites for ensuring that Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) are not merely a policy label but rather a living and sustainable cultural reality of education.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the success of implementing Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) in the digital era is largely determined by the effectiveness of the principal's management. Optimizing the CFS program depends not only on the existence of formal policies, but primarily on the principal's ability to integrate the management functions of planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising in an integrated, systematic manner, and oriented towards the best interests of students. When these four functions are implemented consistently, school governance is created that can ensure a safe, comfortable learning environment and support the holistic development of children. The research findings indicate that the principal plays a strategic role as a learning leader and agent of change in school culture. He or she serves not only as an administrator but also as a driver of child-friendly values in all educational policies and practices, including in responding to the challenges of digitalization. Adaptive leadership to technological developments is key to building an inclusive school environment and being able to utilize technology safely and responsibly. However, the implementation of CFS still faces several obstacles, including limited teacher digital literacy,

inadequate supporting facilities and infrastructure, and suboptimal parental participation in supporting school programs. The implications of this study emphasize the need to strengthen the managerial competency of principals through ongoing training and professional mentoring. Furthermore, synergistic collaboration between schools, families, and education policymakers needs to be strengthened to ensure the sustainable implementation of child-friendly principles. Developing a more structured monitoring system based on regular evaluations is also a strategic step to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of Child-Friendly Schools amidst the dynamics of the digital era.

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