

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN CREATING CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS AT MURHUM KINDERGARTEN

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of teachers in creating child-friendly schools at Murhum Kindergarten, especially their role as motivators and role models for children. A child-friendly school is an educational environment that ensures children's rights, safety, comfort, participation, and optimal development during the learning process. Teachers play an important role in creating a positive and supportive atmosphere that helps children develop socially, emotionally, and academically.

This research used a qualitative descriptive method with observation, interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques. The participants included teachers and the principal of Murhum Kindergarten. The findings show that teachers contribute significantly to implementing child-friendly school principles through caring interactions, positive communication, enjoyable learning methods, and non-violent discipline. As motivators, teachers encourage children to participate actively, build self-confidence, and develop enthusiasm for learning through appreciation and emotional support. As role models, teachers demonstrate discipline, honesty, politeness, responsibility, and empathy, which influence children's behavior positively. The study concludes that teachers have a central role in realizing child-friendly schools at Murhum Kindergarten through their functions as educators, motivators, and role models.

Keywords: teacher's role, motivator, role model, child-friendly school, kindergarten.

I. INTRODUCTION

School is the second most important environment for children after the family. A child's time is spent participating in activities at school. A child will also spend years at school developing themselves. It is crucial to create a child-friendly environment for schools. A child-friendly environment must be available in all educational institutions (Aziz et al., 2025). This program was later named Child-Friendly Schools by the government.

Based on Regulation of the Minister of State for Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of the Republic of Indonesia Number 8 of 2014, Child-Friendly Schools encompass formal, non-formal, and informal educational institutions. Child-Friendly Schools are characterized by a safe, clean, healthy, environmentally conscious environment, and the ability to guarantee, fulfill, and respect children's rights, as well as protect children from violence, discrimination, and other forms of abuse (Choudhry et al., 2018)).

Child-friendly schools in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) units are crucial. This is because the PAUD phase provides the initial foundation that determines future human development. Early childhood requires a learning process supported by a positive social, physical, and emotional environment. One of the rooms in a school that is urgently needed to be child-friendly is the classroom. Child-Friendly Classes are representative of Child-Friendly Schools (Liestyasari et al., 2023). Child-friendly classes are more intense, specifically involving teachers and children within a classroom. The classroom environment is a crucial component for student success (Cobanoglu & Sevim, 2019). According to Loris Malaguzzi, there are three teachers for children: adults, other children, and their physical environment. The learning process in early childhood education (PAUD) classes must support children's physical and spiritual needs. Early

childhood interactions with adults, objects, and the surrounding environment during the learning process can enhance children's development (Mangestuti et al., 2022). Therefore, child-friendly classes in PAUD are crucial for children's holistic development.

However, in practice, children's rights are not fully guaranteed, protected, or fulfilled in PAUD (Kihara et al., 2024). The availability of educational facilities and resources is often inadequate for children's characteristics. Previous research has shown that the provision of facilities and infrastructure in early childhood education (PAUD) remains inadequate (Anisa et al., 2024). Other research indicates that some child-friendly classrooms are still substandard. For example, the furniture doesn't align with children's physiological characteristics or developmental stages (Larasati and Astuti, 2020). Sharp-edged tables and chairs that aren't the right size for children are just some of the issues found in early childhood education classrooms. Based on this description, the researcher is interested in conducting research on the role of teachers in realizing a child-friendly school environment at Murhum Kindergarten. This research is expected to provide a concrete picture of the role of teachers in creating a safe, comfortable, and child-friendly school environment, as well as identify aspects of child-friendly school implementation and the challenges faced in its implementation.

Against this background, the researcher will attempt to observe the roles played by teachers in realizing a child-friendly school at Murhum Kindergarten. Therefore, this study is entitled "THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN CREATING A CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL AT MURHUM KINDERGARTEN." This study aims to determine the role of teachers in realizing child-friendly schools at Murhum Kindergarten.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Definition of Early Childhood

According to (Haryanti & Pd, n.d.) early childhood is defined as newborns to children under 6 years of age. Every child is unique, which is why we, as parents, must understand the characteristics of children at each age stage. This allows us to understand their development and how to stimulate them to grow and develop optimally. According to (Santrock, 2011) early childhood is a golden age, characterized by rapid growth and development. Therefore, early childhood development must be maximized by providing age-appropriate stimulation and instruction, and by introducing both formal and informal education to foster child development. By providing children with stimuli that are highly capable of assisting their growth and development, early childhood is the ideal time to provide stimulation to enhance their development. (Morrison et al., 2009) Early childhood education (PAUD) is the level of education before primary education, a form of development aimed at children from birth to age 6. This is done through educational stimulation to help physical and spiritual growth and development so that they are ready to enter further education, which is held through formal, informal, and non-formal channels.

B. Teacher Role

The role of a teacher as a professional educator is truly complex, extending beyond the educational interactions taking place in the classroom. By examining this sentence, a teacher must be ready to supervise students anytime and anywhere. As (Harrison & Killion, 2007) stated, the Islamic education curriculum is not limited to

schools but is present at all times. The teacher's role in the teaching process cannot be replaced by machines, robots, TV, radio, or computers. This is because teachers are the main stars and should be idolized by their students. Education is not just about filling students' minds with knowledge; it is more than that; students must be intelligent in their attitudes, emotions, and spirituality, as well as possessing skills that can support their lives.

According (Ritonga, 2022) Many roles are required of teachers as educators, or anyone who has become a teacher. These roles are expected of the following:

1. Corrector

Teachers must be able to distinguish between good and bad values. These two distinct values must be truly understood in social life. Teachers must correct students' attitudes and behaviors not only in school but also outside of school.

2. Inspirator, Teachers must provide sound guidance and direction for their students' progress.

3. Facilitator, Teachers should provide facilities that facilitate students' learning activities. An uncongenial learning environment, or a classroom atmosphere lacking in facilities, can lead to students' reluctance to learn.

4. Mentor

The teacher's role, no less important than all those mentioned above, is as a mentor. This role must be given greater importance, because the teacher's presence in school is to guide children to become competent individuals. Without guidance, children will struggle to experience their development.

5. Class Manager

As a class manager, teachers must be able to manage the class well. A well-managed class will support the educational process. The purpose of classroom management is to ensure that students feel at home in the classroom and are consistently motivated to learn. Regarding the duties of a class manager in the learning process, there are several roles that teachers must fulfill, including:

- a. As a teacher (instructional) whose job is to plan teaching programs, implement the programs, and finally, conduct post-program assessments.
- b. As an educator (educator) who guides students to a good level of personal maturity.
- c. As a leader (managerial) who leads, controls themselves (both themselves, students, and the community), directs, supervises, organizes, controls, and participates in the programs implemented.

6. Evaluator, Teachers are required to be good and honest evaluators, by assessing children's good character.

(Harrison & Killion, 2007) also states that there are three roles of teachers in early childhood learning: observing children, guiding children's learning, and assessing children's learning.

- a. Observing is intended to learn about children by seeing what they do and listening to what they say. What teachers see and hear is very useful for guiding children's learning. Dodge suggests that these observations include descriptions of children's actions, language, facial expressions, and creativity.
 - b. Guidance refers to how teachers use learning strategies to help children with topics, learning, and interests.
 - c. Assessment is the process of gathering information about children to make decisions. Browman identifies four purposes of assessment:
 - a) Facilitating learning.
 - b) Identifying special needs.
 - c) Evaluating and monitoring programs.
 - d) Accountability of school programs.
7. Motivator, (Shaikh & Khoja, 2012) motivation as "a change in energy within a person characterized by the emergence of feelings and reactions to achieve goals." The teacher's role as a motivator is crucial in educational interactions, as it relates to the essence of educational work, which requires social skills. It concerns performance in personalization and self-socialization.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze the role of teachers in creating child-friendly schools at Murhum Kindergarten. Qualitative research was chosen because it allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' roles, behaviors, and interactions in the implementation of child-friendly education. The descriptive approach was used to describe systematically the phenomena found in the research setting. The research was conducted at Murhum Kindergarten. The subjects of this study consisted of the school principal and teachers who were directly involved in teaching and learning activities. They were selected because they had important roles in implementing child-friendly school principles in the classroom and school environment.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to examine teachers' interactions with children, classroom management, learning activities, and the overall school environment. Interviews were conducted with teachers and the principal to obtain information about teachers' roles as motivators, leaders, inspirators, facilitators, class managers, and educators. Documentation such as lesson plans, photographs, school regulations, and learning media were also analyzed to support the research findings. The data were analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques as proposed by Miles and Huberman. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Through this methodology, the researcher was able to obtain comprehensive information regarding the role of teachers in creating a child-friendly school environment at Murhum Kindergarten.

IV RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that teachers at Murhum Kindergarten play a significant role in creating a child-friendly school environment through their functions as motivators, leaders, inspirators, facilitators, class managers, and educators. A child-friendly school is an educational environment that guarantees children's rights, safety, participation, and optimal development. According to UNICEF, child-friendly schools must provide a safe, healthy, inclusive, and supportive environment for children's learning and development. The implementation of child-friendly education at Murhum Kindergarten can be seen from the positive interaction patterns between teachers and children, the absence of physical punishment, and the use of enjoyable learning methods. These findings are supported by previous studies showing that positive teacher involvement contributes greatly to children's emotional security and learning motivation.

As motivators, teachers encourage children to become active and enthusiastic learners. (Shaikh & Khoja, 2012) explains that motivation is an important factor in learning because it can stimulate students' interest, enthusiasm, and confidence. Teachers at Murhum Kindergarten motivate children through praise, rewards, storytelling, singing, and educational games. The findings reveal that children become more confident and actively participate in classroom activities when teachers provide encouragement and appreciation. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by (Azizah et al., 2024), which found that teacher motivation positively influences children's learning participation and emotional development in early childhood education. In addition, Uno (2016) states that learning motivation provided by teachers can improve children's curiosity and willingness to explore their environment.

As leaders, teachers play a role in guiding children and creating a disciplined learning atmosphere. (Mangestuti et al., 2022) states that teachers as leaders must be able to direct, guide, and manage classroom activities effectively. At Murhum Kindergarten, teachers establish classroom rules politely and guide children patiently during learning activities. The findings show that children become more disciplined, responsible, and independent through teachers' leadership. Teachers also encourage children to practice responsibility through simple daily tasks such as tidying up toys and organizing learning materials. This result supports the findings of Sari and Nugroho ((Mambu et al., 2023), which state that democratic teacher leadership helps children develop discipline, responsibility, and social awareness in early childhood classrooms.

As inspirators, teachers become role models who influence children's character formation. (Azman, 2020) explains that teachers as inspirators should demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviors that can inspire students. Teachers at Murhum Kindergarten consistently show honesty, politeness, patience, empathy, and respect toward children. The findings reveal that children tend to imitate their teachers' positive behavior, such as helping friends, greeting politely, and following classroom rules. Bandura's Social Learning Theory also explains that children learn behaviors through observation and imitation of adults around them. This theory strengthens the finding that teachers' positive behavior significantly influences children's social and emotional development. Previous research by Lestari (2019) also found that teachers' exemplary behavior contributes positively to children's character building in kindergarten settings.

As facilitators, teachers provide learning resources, media, and experiences that support children's development. (Hamalik & Thobroni, 2024) states that teachers as facilitators are responsible for creating learning conditions that help students learn actively and comfortably. The study found that teachers at Murhum Kindergarten use educational toys, pictures, storybooks, videos, and interactive games to support learning activities. Teachers also provide opportunities for children to ask questions, express opinions, and explore their creativity freely. Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism explains that children learn effectively through interaction, guidance, and supportive learning environments. The findings indicate that the availability of creative learning media increases children's participation, imagination, and communication skills. This result is supported by the research of (Malik & Darti, 2025), which found that interactive learning media improve children's engagement and creativity in early childhood education.

As class managers, teachers organize classroom conditions to create a comfortable, safe, and conducive learning environment. According to (Sanjaya, 2016), classroom management is an effort to create optimal learning conditions and maintain a positive classroom atmosphere. Teachers at Murhum Kindergarten arrange seating positions, learning corners, educational displays, and classroom decorations according to children's needs and interests. The classroom environment is maintained clean, attractive, and safe to support children's comfort during learning activities. The findings show that children become more focused, active, and comfortable when learning in a well-organized classroom. This finding is supported by research conducted by (Rizka et al., 2024) which states that child-friendly classroom management positively affects children's concentration and emotional well-being during learning.

As teachers and educators, teachers at Murhum Kindergarten guide children academically, socially, emotionally, and morally. Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers explains that teachers are professional educators responsible for educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students. Teachers at Murhum Kindergarten help children develop basic literacy, communication skills, discipline, independence, and moral values through daily learning activities. Piaget's cognitive development theory explains that children learn best through direct experiences and active interaction with their environment. Therefore, teachers apply play-based learning methods that allow children to learn through exploration and experience. The findings reveal that children show improvements in communication skills, self-confidence, discipline, and social interaction as a result of supportive teaching practices. Previous studies by (Syahroni et al., 2022) also found that child-centered teaching approaches significantly support children's cognitive and social development in kindergarten education. This study concludes that teachers play multiple and interconnected roles in realizing child-friendly schools at Murhum Kindergarten. Teachers not only transfer knowledge but also serve as motivators, leaders, inspirators, facilitators, class managers, and educators who shape children's character and development holistically. The integration of these roles creates a safe, inclusive, supportive, and enjoyable learning environment that supports the successful implementation of child-friendly education.

V CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that teachers at Murhum Kindergarten play a very important role in creating a child-friendly school environment. Teachers are not only responsible for delivering learning materials but also for ensuring that children feel safe, comfortable, respected, and supported during the learning process. The implementation of child-friendly school principles is reflected in positive interactions, non-violent discipline, enjoyable learning activities, and supportive classroom environments. Teachers perform various interconnected roles in supporting the success of child-friendly education. As motivators, teachers encourage children's enthusiasm, confidence, and active participation in learning activities through praise, support, and enjoyable teaching methods. As leaders, teachers guide children patiently and create a disciplined yet friendly classroom atmosphere. As inspirators, teachers become positive role models by demonstrating honesty, politeness, empathy, and responsibility in daily interactions. Furthermore, as facilitators and class managers, teachers provide appropriate learning media and organize classrooms to create safe, attractive, and conducive learning environments. As educators, teachers help children develop academic abilities, social skills, emotional intelligence, discipline, and positive character values. Therefore, the study concludes that the multiple roles performed by teachers significantly contribute to the successful implementation of child-friendly schools at Murhum Kindergarten and support children's holistic development.

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