

Nature School as a Manifestation of Child-Friendly Schools in Madura Elementary Schools

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Abstract. This study explores the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) through the Nature School model in Madura. The aim is to identify the concrete steps taken by Nature Schools in realizing the principles of SRA and to identify the long-term benefits for child development derived from this approach. The qualitative research method with a case study of Excellentia Nature School in Madura was used, with data collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation from Nature Schools in Madura. The research findings show that Nature Schools in Madura have successfully created a safe, comfortable, and supportive learning environment for the holistic development of children by utilizing the natural environment as an open classroom, interactive learning methods, emphasis on character education, and active involvement of parents and the community. The benefits include increased motivation and academic achievement, positive character development, higher environmental awareness, and better physical and mental health. This study provides insights into best practices in implementing CFS through the Nature School approach and can serve as a reference for other schools wishing to adopt similar concepts.

Key words: Child-Friendly School, Nature School, Madura, Learning Environment

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) has become a major focus in the field of education to ensure a safe, comfortable, and supportive learning environment for children's development. According to UNICEF (2019), CFS aims to create schools that promote children's rights, physical and emotional well-being, and active participation in the learning process. This approach emphasizes the importance of involving all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and the community, in creating a holistic educational environment.

A significant issue in establishing child-friendly schools (CFS) in Madura is the availability of adequate educational infrastructure. As a remote region, Madura often faces challenges in terms of transportation accessibility and the availability of adequate educational facilities. This can include limited classroom space, poor sanitation facilities, and a lack of supporting learning resources such as libraries and laboratories. Research by Smith and Brown (2017) emphasizes that the availability of good educational infrastructure is a key factor in creating a conducive and child-friendly learning environment. Additionally, funding issues are also a concern, as schools in Madura may have

limited budgets to improve the quality of their learning environment.

Madura also faces challenges in terms of empowering the local community and involving parents in the educational process of their children. The local culture and potentially unstable economic conditions can affect the level of parental participation in school activities and supervision of their children. Research by Jones and Smith (2019) shows that parental involvement in their children's education has a significantly positive impact on academic achievement and child well-being. Therefore, it is important for schools in Madura to address these challenges by actively engaging the local community, developing assistance programs for families in need, and finding creative solutions to improve educational accessibility for all children in the region.

Nature Schools have emerged as an innovative model that integrates education with nature to create a child-friendly environment. This educational model combines academic learning with hands-on experiences in nature, which not only enhances cognitive skills but also develops children's social and emotional skills. Research by Sobel (2013) shows that nature-

based learning can improve students' motivation to learn, creativity, and mental health. The current Nature School in the Madura region is the Excellencia Nature School.

The Excellencia Nature School, established on August 19, 2014, with establishment decree number 411.33/182/432.412/2014, is a private educational institution in the form of a Play Group (KB) owned by a Foundation. The school received its operational permit with decree number 6601.1/324/432.310/Dok.Lingk/2020 on April 15, 2015. Located in Pamekasan, the school supports the special needs of children with services for those with special needs types H, K, and Q. Additionally, Excellencia Nature School actively participates in the School Operational Assistance (BOS) program and has an electricity capacity of 4460 VA, along with an internet connection speed of 40 Mb. With a commitment to inclusive education and modern facilities, this school offers a learning environment that supports the holistic development of each student.

This approach serves as an effective solution to address various challenges faced by schools in Madura in their efforts to create child-friendly schools. By utilizing the natural environment as an open classroom, Nature Schools not only offer a more dynamic and engaging learning environment but also reduce dependence on physical infrastructure, which may still be limited in remote areas. This is highly relevant considering the infrastructure challenges in Madura, such as limited classroom space and other supporting facilities.

The importance of this research lies in its ability to demonstrate how Nature Schools can effectively implement the principles of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) in a contextual manner that aligns with local needs. This study aims to fill gaps in existing literature by providing empirical data on the implementation of the Nature School model in Madura and its impact on the holistic development of children. This includes improvements in learning motivation, creativity development, as well as enhanced mental health and emotional well-being of students.

This research also explores the active involvement of parents and the community in the educational process at Nature Schools. According to Jones and Smith (2019), parental involvement has a significantly positive impact on academic achievement and child well-being. Through a holistic and participatory approach, Nature Schools are able to create a strong learning community where all stakeholders—

teachers, students, parents, and the community—work together to create an environment that supports child development.

Previous research has shown various benefits of nature-based learning, such as increased learning motivation, creativity, and student mental health (Sobel, 2013; Louv, 2008; Chawla, 2015). However, there is still limited research specifically examining the implementation of the Nature School model in remote areas like Madura and how this approach can effectively support the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS). This gap in research is what this study aims to address.

This research aims to identify specific steps taken by Nature Schools in Madura to implement the principles of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) and to identify long-term benefits for child development. The educational approach used by Nature Schools in Madura is expected to provide new insights into best practices in implementing CFS. Additionally, this study also seeks to examine community involvement and school support in creating a comprehensive and child-friendly learning environment.

This research can provide useful data and recommendations for policymakers to develop more inclusive and sustainable education programs, as well as to provide a model that can be adopted by other schools, especially in remote areas, to create safe, comfortable, and supportive learning environments for child development.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a systematically detailed case study method. The first step, preparation, involves identifying and selecting Nature Schools in Madura as the research location. Subsequently, researchers obtain permits and coordinate with the schools to ensure support and participation from all stakeholders. The second step involves data collection through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews are conducted with school principals, teachers, students, and parents. Participatory observation involves observing daily activities at the school, noting interactions between teachers and students, and observing the teaching methods employed. The third step is data analysis.

Data from interviews are transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to identify patterns and themes relevant to the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools.

Observational findings are integrated with interview findings to provide context and enrich data interpretation. Document analysis involves reviewing school policies, program activities, and evaluation reports. Each document is analyzed to understand the structure, strategies, and effectiveness of implementing the Nature School model. The fourth step is interpretation and report writing. Analyzed data are interpreted to answer research questions and achieve research objectives. Researchers compile a report summarizing key findings, discussing implications of the research results, and providing recommendations for better educational practices and policies. This report also includes practical insights that can be adopted by other schools interested in implementing the concept of Child-Friendly Schools through the Nature School approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on in-depth interviews and participatory observations, Nature Schools in Madura optimally utilize the natural environment as an open learning space. Interactive and participatory teaching methods strongly encourage students to actively engage in activities such as gardening, caring for animals, and conducting outdoor scientific experiments. Character education and independence are primary focuses, with values such as cooperation, responsibility, and environmental care taught practically in daily activities. Strict anti-violence policies are also clearly evident, creating a safe and comfortable school environment conducive to student development. Additionally, active involvement of parents and the local community in supporting school activities is a cornerstone in creating a holistic and empowering educational environment. Here are the tangible steps described in achieving child-friendly schools through Nature Schools in Madura.

Table 1. Real Steps in Realizing Child-Friendly Schools through Alam Schools in Madura

Real Steps	Description
Utilization of Natural Environment as an Open Classroom	The Nature School in Madura utilizes the natural environment as an open-air classroom. Learning takes place in gardens, orchards, and other natural areas that allow children to learn directly from nature.
Interactive and Participatory Learning Methods	The learning methods at the Alam School are highly interactive and participatory. Children are encouraged to actively participate in learning activities such as gardening, caring for animals, and conducting outdoor scientific experiments.
Focus on Character Education and Independence	The Nature School emphasizes character education and independence. Children are taught values such as cooperation, responsibility, and environmental awareness. Daily activities are designed to develop children's independence skills.
Anti-Violence Policy and Safe Environment	The Nature School implements a strict anti-violence policy. The school environment is designed to prevent physical and verbal violence, creating a safe and comfortable atmosphere for children.
Parent and Community Involvement	Parents and the local community actively participate in school activities. They engage in the planning and execution of activities, providing both moral and material support.

The results of interviews and participatory observations show that at Nature School, children experience increased motivation and academic achievement due to a fun atmosphere and integration with nature. Engaging and

relevant learning methods contribute to their academic performance. Additionally, character education helps children develop positive traits such as cooperation, empathy, and responsibility, while enhancing their independence in

completing tasks. Direct interaction with nature also enhances their awareness of the importance of environmental conservation and promotes sustainability principles. The physical and mental health benefits of outdoor learning are evident, with children being more physically active and experiencing reduced stress. Close

involvement between the school, parents, and local community strengthens the support network for children, creating a holistic and empowering educational environment. Below is a table summarizing the benefits of implementing the nature school based on interview and participatory observation results.

Table 2. The benefits of implementing Nature School as Child-Friendly Schools

Benefit	Description
Improvement in motivation and academic achievement	Children show increased learning motivation due to a fun learning environment close to nature. Academic achievement also improves due to engaging and relevant everyday life learning methods.
Development of positive character	The character education implemented at Sekolah Alam helps children develop positive traits such as cooperation, empathy, and responsibility. Children also become more independent in completing their tasks.
Heightened Environmental Awareness	Through direct interaction with nature, children become more aware of the importance of environmental conservation. They learn about sustainability and how to care for nature responsibly.
Improved Physical and Mental Health	Learning outdoors provides physical and mental health benefits. Children are more physically active, breathe fresh air, and experience reduced stress compared to learning indoors all day.
Stronger Relationship between School, Parents, and Community	Parental and community involvement creates closer and supportive relationships between the school and the surrounding community. This strengthens the support network for children in various aspects of their lives.

The results of the documentation of activities at the Madura nature school can be seen as follows.



Picture 1. Interactive and participatory learning activities at the nature school



Picture 2. Development of positive character activities



Picture 3. Activities to increase environmental awareness



Picture 4. Daily activities in maintaining physical and mental health



Picture 5. Activities for character building and independence

The Nature School in Madura has adopted a unique approach by utilizing the natural environment as an open-air classroom (Aminpour, 2023). They not only teach children indoors but also integrate learning in parks,

gardens, and other natural areas. Table 1 outlines the concrete steps taken by Nature School to implement the Child-Friendly School (CFS) concept. Activities such as gardening, caring for animals, and conducting scientific experiments

not only develop students' academic skills but also enhance their environmental awareness and positive character traits, as illustrated in Picture 1, which depicts interactive and participatory learning activities. As a result, children not only gain knowledge from textbooks but also learn directly from their interactions with the surrounding environment. They can observe plants growing firsthand, study the life cycles of insects in the garden, or even understand the importance of preserving nature through direct experiences in their natural habitats (Saragih & Subroto, 2023).

Picture 2 demonstrates positive character development activities, where children are taught to collaborate and take responsibility for their actions. This aligns with Table 2, which details the benefits of implementing Nature School, including increased motivation to learn, academic achievement, and positive character development. This approach not only enhances children's understanding of natural sciences but also helps them develop a sense of responsibility towards the environment. By spending time outdoors, they learn to appreciate the beauty of nature and the importance of preserving ecosystem sustainability. Furthermore, learning in natural environments stimulates children's creativity and curiosity, as they often have opportunities to observe and explore natural phenomena that cannot be found in traditional school classrooms (Utami et al., 2023). Thus, this approach not only provides practical knowledge but also helps shape character and instill positive values in future generations.

Nature School, the applied teaching methods are highly interactive and participatory. Children are not merely passive listeners but are actively engaged in every aspect of learning. One example is through gardening activities, where they learn about the plant cycle, hands-on plant care, and the importance of plants in the environment. In this way, they not only understand the theory but also experience firsthand the process of plant growth. Children also participate in caring for small animals at school. They learn about animal care and needs, while understanding how human-animal interactions can benefit both parties (Suharsiwi et al., 2023). Through outdoor scientific experiments, such as observing natural phenomena or conducting simple experiments, they develop practical skills and deep scientific knowledge. Moreover, the direct interaction with nature depicted in Picture 3 raises children's awareness of the importance of environmental conservation and introduces them to

sustainability principles. The physical and mental health benefits of outdoor learning are also evident in Picture 4, where children are more physically active and experience reduced stress.

This approach not only makes learning more enjoyable and relevant for children but also helps them develop important social and life skills. They learn to cooperate in teams, appreciate different viewpoints, and build confidence through firsthand experience and active interaction in the learning process (Effendi & Supadi, 2023; Maisaroh et al., 2024). Thus, the interactive and participatory learning methods at Nature School not only prepare them for academic success but also equip them with the skills needed to face challenges in the real world.

Nature School excels in character education and fostering independence, with a strong focus on values such as cooperation, responsibility, and environmental concern (Eka Aulia et al., 2023; Sovieti et al., 2023). Through daily activities designed to enhance children's independence, such as tending gardens, caring for animals, and participating in collaborative projects, they not only learn to work together as a team and take responsibility for their actions but also become more self-reliant in managing their time and making decisions that positively impact themselves and the environment. The involvement of parents and the community in supporting school activities, as shown in Figure 5, strengthens the support network for children and creates a holistic and empowering educational environment. Thus, the concrete steps outlined in Table 2 and Picture 1-5 demonstrate the positive impact of implementing Nature School as a Child-Friendly School in Madura.

CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that Nature Schools in Madura have effectively implemented the principles of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) through several key steps. These include the optimal use of the natural environment as an open classroom, interactive and participatory teaching methods, a strong focus on character education and independence, anti-violence policies, and active involvement of parents and the community. This approach has proven to create a learning environment that is safe, comfortable, and conducive to the holistic development of children.

The research highlights several long-term benefits from this approach, including improved student motivation and academic performance,

the development of positive character traits, increased environmental awareness, and enhanced physical and mental well-being. Furthermore, the active participation of parents and the community has strengthened the relationship between the school and society, providing consistent support for children's growth and education.

These findings offer valuable insights into best practices for implementing Child-Friendly Schools and demonstrate the significant benefits of the Nature School model for children's development in Madura. The steps taken by these schools can serve as a reference for other institutions aiming to adopt inclusive, empowering, and supportive educational approaches.

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