



Integration of NCSS Curriculum in Child-Friendly Schools: Character, Socio-Emotional, and Religious Development in Elementary Schools

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Abstract. Moral degradation and juvenile delinquency in Indonesia continue to rise, with data showing a 10.7% annual increase from 6,325 cases (2021) to 8,597 cases (2024). This study examines the implementation of the Child-Friendly School (CFS) program in developing character, socio-emotional competencies, and religious values among 5th and 6th-grade students at SDN Banyu Urip III Surabaya, while mapping its integration into the thematic strand framework of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). This qualitative descriptive case study employed four-source data triangulation: semi-structured interviews with three key informants (principal, curriculum coordinator, CFS program coordinator), non-participant observation using 18 behavioral indicators, document analysis of 27 CFS curriculum components, and a Likert-scale questionnaire administered to students. Findings reveal that the CFS program significantly contributes to character development (88.9%, Excellent), socio-emotional development (88.9%, Excellent), and religious values (66.7%, Adequate) through structured daily habituation, differentiated learning, and a comprehensive school ecosystem. Mapping onto the NCSS framework identified two dominant thematic strands: Strand I (Culture) and Strand IV (Individual Development & Identity). These findings demonstrate that the CFS program possesses a strong epistemological foundation from an international social studies education perspective and holds potential as an integrated curriculum model that meaningfully incorporates affective, social, and civic dimensions. The study recommends more systematic CFS documentation and the development of character assessment rubrics integrated within instructional modules.

Keywords: Child-Friendly School; NCSS Curriculum; Character Education; Socio-Emotional Learning; Religious Values

1. Introduction

Education is not only focused on students' cognitive development but must also address character, socio-emotional, and religious development. In character development, the primary focus is on moral values (moral knowing), the affective

dimension (moral feeling), and actual behavior (moral action), which must be implemented in a structured and consistent manner [1]. Furthermore, socio-emotional development fosters students who excel emotionally and socially and possess strong character traits, such as moral awareness, empathy, and social responsibility (Hayati et al., 2026). Education becomes more robust when there is a connection between spiritual and social values, which serve as the foundation for behavior [2]. Under Law No. 20, Article 3 of 2003 on the National Education System (Sisdiknas), which states that “National education serves to develop abilities and shape the character and civilization of the nation with dignity to enlighten the nation’s life; its purpose is to foster students’ potential so they may become individuals who are faithful and devout to the One and Only God, possess noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, skilled, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens.” Therefore, the objectives of education in Indonesia must be implemented holistically by prioritizing cognitive, character, socio-emotional, and religious development as efforts to create high-quality human resources (HR) with national character.

However, in reality, the creation of high-quality HR still faces various obstacles. One of the most common obstacles is the degradation of morals and juvenile delinquency resulting from the influence of technology in the rapidly developing globalized world [3]. This is because during adolescence, children enter a phase of self-discovery or identity development and are easily influenced by their environment (Ispandiyah & Khotimah, 2024). Early adolescence in elementary school (SD) students occurs in grades 5–6, within the age range of 11–12 years, during which they begin to understand social norms, process emotions, and internalize moral values [4]. Juvenile delinquency, which is currently common—such as bullying, drug abuse, violence, and even involvement in criminal groups—means that teachers play a crucial role as motivators and guides to steer students in the right direction [5]. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) indicates that the rate of juvenile delinquency in Indonesia continues to rise by 10.7% annually, from 6,325 cases in 2021 to 8,597 cases in 2024 [6]. In 2024, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) reported 265 cases of sexual violence against children; 241 cases involving hindrances to education, cultural, and religious fulfillment, as well as the use of leisure time with the highest number of cases involving bullying; 240 cases of psychological and physical violence against children; and 41 cases of children as victims of cybercrime and pornography (KPAI, 2025). Thus, in reality, moral degradation and juvenile delinquency remain prevalent in Indonesia.

Therefore, to address the issues of moral degradation and juvenile delinquency, the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) established the Child-Friendly School program as a form of protection and prevention for schoolchildren, where schools serve as agents of protection, prevention, and character education against deviant behavior [7]. The Child-Friendly School program is regulated by Regulation of the Minister of State of the Republic of Indonesia No. 8 of 2014 on child-friendly school policies, which supports Law No. 39 of 1999, Chapter III, Section Ten (Articles 52–66) on Human Rights [8]. A Child-Friendly School is a basic educational institution that fosters a healthy, environmentally conscious, and caring atmosphere; ensures safety and friendliness; guarantees children’s rights and

protects them from discrimination; and promotes the development of potential to cultivate high-quality character (Halimah, 2024). The implementation of a Child-Friendly School is highly systematic and encompasses school policies, the learning process, school community participation, violence prevention, and routine program evaluation (Marwati et al., 2025). The scope of student character development in Child-Friendly Schools strongly supports the growth of a sense of responsibility, cooperation, tolerance, empathy, and collaboration through daily habit-forming programs and participatory learning (Baroroh & Ulia, 2025). Thus, this Child-Friendly School program serves as an effort to realize quality education from an early age, centered on the student, and in collaboration with various relevant authorities.

The concepts within the Child-Friendly School program align with the Thematic Strand framework of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). The NCSS serves as a standard for teachers to prepare and explain inquiry-based social studies concepts accurately, such as geography, economics, history, civics, and social behavior (Cuenca et al., 2017). Within the scope of elementary education, the NCSS Thematic Strands must be integrated with concrete learning activities using inquiry-based learning, so that students can experience authentic learning that includes interaction and participation, much like in their daily lives, by integrating knowledge, skills, and social attitudes (NCSS, 2013). There are 10 main themes in the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS): culture; time, continuity, and change; people, places, and environments; individual development and identity; individuals, groups, and institutions; power, authority, and governance; production, distribution, and consumption; science, technology, and society; global connections; and ideals and practices of citizenship. Thus, the Child-Friendly School program aligns with the NCSS curriculum framework as an effort to understand students' backgrounds and character in order to provide targeted interventions that support the development of character, socio-emotional, and religious aspects in elementary schools.

The significance of this research lies in two main aspects. First, it serves as literature for school curriculum development, demonstrating the role of the Child-Friendly School program in addressing moral degradation through three main themes: character, socio-emotional development, and religious education in elementary schools. Second, this study aims to determine how the integration of the Child-Friendly School program and the

NCSS in elementary schools effectively fosters students' character, socio-emotional development, and religious values. This is because the Child-Friendly School program is regarded as a comprehensive and successful strategy for addressing issues related to moral degradation and juvenile delinquency (Baroroh & Ulia, 2025). By mapping the implementation of the Child-Friendly School program into the NCSS thematic strands, this study contributes to the literature on elementary education curriculum development, demonstrating that holistic education programs have a strong epistemological foundation from the perspective of international social science education. Thus, this study offers a dual contribution: practically, it provides guidance for elementary schools to optimize the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools; and

theoretically, it enriches the discourse on the relevance of the NCSS framework within the context of Indonesian elementary education.

Previous studies examining the implementation of the Child-Friendly School program and character development in elementary schools—such as the research by Baroroh & Ulia (2025) at SDN Bangetayu Wetan 02 in Semarang—found that the principles of the Child-Friendly School have been integrated into various aspects of school activities, including enjoyable learning, positive habit-forming routines, and a participatory approach that encourages active student engagement. Through research by Aryani et al. (n.d.), attempts have also been made to integrate Pancasila values into learning activities and habit-forming routines at school to shape student character. However, this research remains general in nature and has not specifically examined the integration of a particular curriculum or its implementation within the Child-Friendly School program. Similar findings have also been reported by [10] regarding routine habit-forming programs and school culture, though their focus remains limited to instilling social and religious values. Meanwhile, in the study by (Yuyun et al. (2022)), daily and contextual habit-forming practices were focused solely on fostering social and religious attitudes. In the study by Setiyadi et al., (2025) it was also noted that the Child-Friendly School program, as implemented, was able to develop students' character through routines and school culture; however, the results remained general and did not provide an in-depth explanation of the processes involved in shaping students' character, socio-emotional development, and religious values. A commonality among previous studies also lies in the methods used, namely observation and interviews. Thus, it can be concluded that in previous studies, the Child-Friendly School program can be integrated with Pancasila values through daily routines, enjoyable learning activities, and participatory and contextual approaches to foster students who are of good character, socially minded, and religious.

These studies have provided an important foundation, but there are still several research gaps that need to be addressed. First, existing studies on Child-Friendly School programs remain general in nature and have not specifically examined how these programs develop three distinct yet well-integrated dimensions—namely, character, socio-emotional, and religious dimensions—within a unified analytical framework. Second, from a methodological perspective, previous studies have tended to rely on general observation and interview methods without comprehensive data triangulation using measurable behavioral indicators derived from observational activities, curriculum document analysis, in-depth multi-informant interviews, and student questionnaires to obtain a comprehensive picture of Child-Friendly School implementation. Third, the research focus in existing studies has not been sufficiently in-depth or specific to particular grade levels. No study has specifically examined the development of character, socio-emotional, and religious aspects through the Child-Friendly School program in grades 5 and 6 (Phase C), which is a critical transitional phase toward early adolescence. Fourth, no research has mapped the implementation of the Child-Friendly School program within the NCSS thematic strand framework as an epistemological foundation from the perspective of international social science

education; thus, the relationship between Indonesia's local program and global curriculum standards has not been academically explored.

Based on these research gaps, this study introduces three novel research contributions. First, it provides an in-depth analysis of the Child-Friendly School program within the NCSS framework to examine the integrated development of Character, SocioEmotional, and Religious dimensions in grades 5 and 6 of elementary school. This study is the first to map the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools in Indonesia onto the NCSS thematic strands, contributing to the curriculum development literature by linking local educational practices with the framework of international social science education standards. Second, the research methodology employs comprehensive data triangulation, encompassing structured non-participant observation using 18 behavioral indicators, in-depth interviews with three key informants, a student Likert-scale questionnaire, and document analysis of 27 components of the Child-Friendly School curriculum. The triangulation of these four data sources yields findings that are more valid, in-depth, and accountable compared to previous studies. Third, the research focuses specifically on fifth and sixth-grade students (Phase C) regarding Character, Socio-Emotional, and Religious values through the Child-Friendly School program. The selection of Phase C as the research focus is based on the consideration that the 11–12-year-old age range is a critical period during which children begin transitioning into early adolescence; thus, the internalization of values through the Child-Friendly School program during this phase has the most strategic impact on long-term character development.

Based on the background, research gaps, and novelty outlined above, this study is formulated with two research questions, namely: 1) How can the Child-Friendly School program develop the character, socio-emotional skills, and religious values of 5th and 6th-grade students at SDN Banyu Urip III in Surabaya; 2) How does the integration of the Child-Friendly School curriculum within the context of the NCSS thematic strand foster character, socio-emotional aspects, and religious values among 5th and 6th-grade students at the elementary school? This study is expected to contribute to the literature on school curriculum development by demonstrating how the Child-Friendly School program can foster character, social-emotional, and religious values in elementary school students through the integration of the NCSS thematic strand, which meets international standards.

2. Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method using a case study approach, with the research focusing on the implementation of the Child-Friendly School program at SDN Banyu Urip III in Surabaya. Information regarding the implementation of the Child Friendly School program in fostering elementary students' character, socio-emotional, and

religious development will be identified in-depth, in detail, and systematically within a real-world context through the case study research method, which will subsequently be analyzed and integrated with the NCSS thematic strands. The research focuses on elementary schools because the elementary level serves as the foundational

stage that determines readiness for learning before advancing to higher levels, and at this age, students are already in the early phase of value and habit formation, particularly in grades 5–6 (ages 11–12). This aligns with Jean Piaget's theory, which states that at this age, children are cognitively ready to think and act rationally, systematically, and logically to solve problems [13]. Data collection techniques employed data triangulation, namely: 1) Semi-structured interviews with the school principal, curriculum coordinator, and program chair; 2) Non-participant observation using a checklist instrument with 18 indicators covering character, social-emotional, and religious aspects; 3) Document analysis of 27 components of the Child-Friendly School curriculum, including supervision & service documents, service delivery, service facilities, and service staff; 4) A Likert-scale purposive sampling questionnaire as supplementary data with 6 questions for 4 students to explore their perceptions regarding the character, socio-emotional, and religious development of the Child-Friendly School program. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model by Miles, Huberman & Saldaña (2014), consisting of four stages: 1) Data collection; 2) Data reduction; 3) Data presentation; 4) Concluding (Rohman et al., 2023).

3. Result

3.1 The Child-Friendly School Program in Students' Character, Socio-Emotional, and Religious Development

The research findings indicate that SDN Banyu Urip III Surabaya has systematically and structurally implemented the Child-Friendly School program as part of the City of Surabaya's policy toward becoming a Child-Friendly City. Based on data triangulation from interviews, observations, document analysis, and student questionnaires, the CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL program has been proven to make a tangible contribution to three dimensions of student development: character, social-emotional, and religious.

3.1.1 Character Development

Analysis of the curriculum documents revealed that the character component was implemented at 88.9%, rated as "Very Good." Eight out of nine analyzed components were explicitly found in the school's CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL documents. The vision of SDN Banyu Urip III, which states, "Faithful and God-fearing, Cultured, Science and Technology-oriented, of Noble Character, Literate, and Environmentally Conscious," reflects a strong institutional commitment to instilling character values.

The Vice Principal for Curriculum, Husnul Khatimah, S.Pd., emphasized that character development is carried out through a structured daily routine from Monday to Friday:

"Character development for our children begins with daily routines at our school. Monday features the flag ceremony, Tuesday is marked by the Remo dance, Wednesday is communal dining, Thursday involves religious activities, and Friday includes calisthenics and Friday Blessings." (Interview with the Deputy Head of Curriculum, April 10, 2026)

Field observations confirm that the 5S culture (Smile, Greeting, Addressing, Politeness, Courtesy) is consistently evident (T) among all students in their daily activities, supported by the daily practice of greeting students at the school gate each morning. Indicators of cooperation and responsibility appear occasionally consistent (KK), with the observer noting that a small number of students still need encouragement from teachers to complete group tasks thoroughly.

The CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL Program Chair, Katmini, S.Pd., stated that the most prominent character traits developed through the CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL program are discipline, responsibility, and compassion:

"Discipline, Ma'am; the children have discipline. Then they have a sense of responsibility. At the very least, they have a sense of care. This sense of care is the most important." (Interview with the CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL Program Chair, April 10, 2026)

The Little Doctor and Sampurasun programs serve as concrete examples of character integration within non-academic activities. The Little Doctor program not only fosters care for health but also builds students' discipline through daily personal hygiene checks (nails, neatness) every Monday. Meanwhile, the Sampurasun program cultivates responsibility for maintaining the school's environmental cleanliness after recess.

3.1.2 Social-Emotional Development

The social-emotional component in the curriculum document shows an implementation rate of 88.9% (Very Good), equivalent to the character component. Nine components were analysed, with eight rated "Present" and one rated "Partially Present," specifically, daily habit-tracking entries in the teacher's journal that have not yet been documented routinely and systematically.

The three social-emotional sub-dimensions consistently shown to develop through the CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL program are: (1) cooperation skills and positive social interaction, (2) empathy and care for others, and (3) emotion regulation and conflict resolution. Observation data indicate that the social concern indicator (Indicator 8: helping peers in difficulty) consistently appears (T) in the majority of students, while the indicator for emotional control during conflict (Indicator 9) remains at the Sometimes (KK) level.

The differentiated learning strategies outlined in the school's instructional modules are designed to encourage collaborative interaction among students. The Curriculum Coordinator explained that empathy development is carried out through a case study approach:

"We might present a case—for example, if a friend is facing difficulties—and encourage the children to discuss how we should respond." (Interview with the Curriculum Coordinator, April 10, 2026)

The parent clinic program held at the beginning of the school year contributes to the development of broader social relationships, fostering a harmonious triangle between students, parents, and teachers. The school also cultivates peer communities that provide students with space to actively participate in group activities and support one another.

Principal Siti Fatimah, M.Pd., emphasizes that addressing students' social-emotional issues is carried out through cross-institutional collaboration:

"For children whose behavior differs slightly from that of their peers, we bring in their parents, our psychologists, and the teachers provide support. It's truly a collaborative effort." (Interview with the School Principal, April 10, 2026)

Observational findings also noted that the ability to listen to peers' opinions (indicator 11) and an empathetic attitude (indicator 12) were consistently evident in most students. Observers attributed this to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which relies more heavily on discussion-based methods, thereby helping students become accustomed to listening to others' perspectives.

3.1.3 Development of Religious Values

The implementation of the religious component reached 66.7% with a "Satisfactory" rating, lower than the other two aspects. Of the nine components, six are classified as "Present" and three as "Partially Present." Components not yet fully documented include: daily religious practices in formal documents, official letters/assignments for religious advisors, and activity plans for Islamic Holy Days (PHBI).

Nevertheless, findings from interviews and observations indicate that the implementation of religious values in practice is far richer than what is explicitly stated in the documents. SDN Banyu Urip III has declared itself a School of Religious Culture, with the vision of faith and piety as its core values. The Principal explained:

"We have declared ourselves a School of Religious Culture, a school that is ready to embrace a religious culture. One example is that we always start each lesson with a group prayer, followed by Yasin and Tahlil every Thursday, and Friday Blessings every Friday." (Interview with the Principal, April 10, 2026)

The ongoing religious programs include: parallel group prayers every morning, "Bright Thursday" (Yasin, Tahlil, Asmaul Husna), "Blessed Friday" (charity to an orphanage foundation), Dhuha prayer, congregational Dhuhur prayer, the Banjari extracurricular activity, and the Quran memorization program. In 2026, the school successfully held its inaugural Tasmi event with 8 students who had memorized Juz 30, an extraordinary achievement for a public elementary school.

Religious tolerance is a hallmark of the school's religious programs. Non-Muslim students (Christian and Hindu) are provided with separate spaces and religious activities alongside their respective religious teachers. Observation of indicator 17 shows that behavior demonstrating respect for peers who worship according to their beliefs appears consistently (T) in the majority of students, while attitudes of looking down on other religions (indicator 18) are rarely observed.

3.2 Integration of the CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL Curriculum into the NCSS Thematic Strands

Mapping the research findings into the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) framework resulted in the identification of eight thematic strands relevant to the implementation of CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL at SDN Banyu Urip III Surabaya. The following is the mapping matrix:

Table 1. Table of Results of Integration of Child-Friendly School Program in the NCSS thematic strand

NCSS Strand	Child-Friendly School Program/Activity	Evidence	Dimension
I – Culture	Rhythmic Tuesday Dance), Krama every interfaith activities, Student Strengthening Project in arts and culture (Royal Plaza arts performance)	WK (Remointerviews, Javaneseindividual Languageobservations 17–18, Tuesday,document analysis 25–26 religiousitems Pancasila Profile Project arts	Character Religious
IV – Individual Development & Identity	Marching band &for hyperactiveKS students, interest-based extracurriculars (20+ types), parent clinic, counseling & home visits for students, Inspirational School program (parent speakers), self-identity & aspirations	Interviews with KS & KP Child-Friendly School	Character, Child-Social Studies

Note: KS = Principal, KP Child-Friendly School = Child-Friendly School Program Chair, WK = Vice Principal for Curriculum

Of the ten strands identified by the NCSS, Strand I (Culture) and Strand IV (Individual Development & Identity) are the most dominant and best represented by data from all three sources (interviews, observations, and document analysis). This aligns with Child-Friendly School's core philosophy, which places children's individual rights and needs at the center of all school policies and programs.

4. Discussion

4. Discussion

4.1 The Child-Friendly School Program as an Ecosystem for Character, Social-Emotional, and Religious Development

Based on the findings, it is evident that SDN Banyu Urip III Surabaya has comprehensively implemented the Child-Friendly School program, as reflected in institutional policies, the curriculum, learning strategies, and students' daily routines. This approach aligns with [14] framework on child-friendly learning design, which emphasizes four ideal characteristics: fair and non-discriminatory, rooted in local culture, attentive to children's rights, and fostering children's character and self-confidence. These four characteristics are proven to be fulfilled at this school based on data triangulation.

The school's vision, which explicitly incorporates character values, namely "Faithful and God-fearing, Culturally Aware, Science and Technology-Oriented, of Noble Character, Literate, and Environmentally Conscious," strongly supports the development of students' character components. This aligns with the phenomenological study conducted by Handoko et al. (2024), which confirms that elementary schools that successfully implement character education consistently demonstrate an institutional vision that makes character values the foundation of their work programs. This reinforces the relevance of SDN Banyu Urip III's strategy, which instills character values from the highest policy level down to students' daily activities. This strategy for implementing character values in daily activities aligns closely with the Merdeka Curriculum framework established by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2021), which emphasizes that the Pancasila Student Profile must be integrated into all learning activities and routines. This has been realized through differentiated instructional modules that incorporate the dimensions of cooperation, critical thinking, and independence. Furthermore, [16] within the context of international character education literature, confirm that repetition and familiarity with routines help students develop self-discipline, as they learn to regulate their own actions to align with established expectations. All results of the analysis are available.

Furthermore, the excellent achievements in the social-emotional aspect align with the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) framework from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) cited by Agustina et al. (2025), which identifies five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL program at SDN Banyu Urip III implicitly develops all these competencies, ranging from self-discovery through interest-based extracurricular activities, discipline through daily routines, care and empathy through peer communities, to positive social norms through language protocols and anti-bullying policies. Nevertheless, Widiastuti (2022) notes that effective SEL implementation requires more systematic assessment tools, not merely relying on informal teacher observations.

Finally, although the achievement rate for the religious component is lower than that of the previous two aspects, interview and observation results indicate that the implementation of religious values in practice is far richer than what is outlined in formal documents. [18] found that schools successfully implementing religious

character education tend to integrate religious practices into daily routines, promote teacher role modeling, and foster an environment supporting national educational goals, including the Pancasila Student Profile. This situation accurately describes SDN Banyu Urip III. Cahyanto et al. (2024) reinforce this finding by stating that schools that make religious values part of their institutional identity demonstrate a stronger and more sustainable impact on student character formation compared to schools that merely convey religious values through the Religious Education subject.

The overall success of the CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL program is also supported by cross-agency collaboration involving psychologists, PUSPAGA, BNN, the Community Health Center, and the School Committee. [19], A meta-analysis review of school-based SEL programs found that programs involving collaboration between schools, families, and communities produce far greater impacts than programs that take place solely within the classroom. This reinforces the relevance of the multi-stakeholder approach implemented by SDN Banyu Urip III as a pillar of the CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL program's success.

4.2 Mapping CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL Implementation into the NCSS Thematic Strands

Mapping the research findings into the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS, 2010) framework identified two of the ten thematic strands as dominant and relevant to the implementation of CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL at SDN Banyu Urip III in Surabaya. NCSS (2010) emphasizes that thematic strands are designed as an integrative framework encompassing various social science disciplines and providing a foundation for the development of meaningful curriculum. (Mahesha et al., 2024) highlights that, in the context of elementary education, NCSS strands must be operationalized through concrete activities that students can directly experience in their real lives a condition naturally fulfilled within the CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL program.

4.3 Strand I (Culture): Authenticity of Local Culture as a Foundation for Character

The integration of local culture into the CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL program at SDN Banyu Urip III represents the most authentic and contextual implementation of NCSS Strand I. The "Tuesday Rhythm" program featuring the Remo dance, a traditional East Javanese dance reflecting spirit and courage, is a prime example. The practice of using formal Javanese (Krama) every Tuesday is not merely an artistic activity but a deliberate statement of cultural identity. The school incorporates Surabaya's local wisdom as a medium for character development that is vibrant and not artificial.

These findings align with Banks's study (in the current context, as cited by Sadiyah et al., 2024) that effective multicultural education is not sufficient if it merely introduces culture as lesson content; rather, it must transform the entire learning environment to authentically reflect cultural diversity. [21], A study on strategies to strengthen the global diversity dimension of the Pancasila Student Profile in elementary schools found that integrating local culture into daily school activities is the most effective strategy for fostering students' multicultural awareness.

Interfaith religious programs where Muslim, Christian, and Hindu students are provided with spiritual activities that are equitable and dignified constitute the implementation of Strand I within the context of Indonesia's religious pluralism. [22] emphasize that in schools with religious diversity, the promotion of religious moderation and tolerance must be an integral part of the entire school ecosystem, not merely the domain of the Religious Education subject.

4.4 Strand IV (Individual Development & Identity): The Most Dominant Strand

Strand IV (Individual Development & Identity) is the most dominant strand and the one with the richest body of evidence. This reflects a deep philosophical alignment between the principles of CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL and the substance of Strand IV. CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL is rooted in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which affirms that every child has the right to have their unique identity recognized, to be supported according to their potential, and to be protected from all forms of discrimination. This is precisely what Strand IV examines: how individuals construct their identities through social and cultural interactions and life experiences. The Innovative School program's initiative to invite parents from various professions to share their life experiences with students reflects a deep understanding of Strand IV. An anecdote about a student who aspired to become a rickshaw driver because of the joy he shared with his father illustrates an authentic process of identity formation: the child builds a sense of self and aspirations through significant figures in his life. The Principal reflected: "We found that when the children were asked about their aspirations, it turned out there was a child who raised their hand, wanting to become a rickshaw driver. 'Yes, ma'am, because every time I come home from school, my father, who works as a rickshaw driver, always takes me for a ride on his rickshaw, driving me around. Because he's happy, he aspires to become a rickshaw driver like his father.' (Principal Interview, April 10, 2026) [23] found that the values of the Pancasila Student Profile related to independence and self-confidence are the dimensions that most need to be strengthened in the Indonesian elementary school curriculum. The program for identifying non-academic potential and the inspirational program at SDN Banyu Urip III directly address these needs. Xiao et al. (2023) emphasize that a child-friendly school environment encompassing humanistic dimensions and self-development has been proven to have a profound impact on children's development and growth

5. Conclusion

This study yields two main conclusions. First, the Child-Friendly School program at SDN Banyu Urip III in Surabaya has been shown to significantly contribute to students' character development (88.9% Very Good), social-emotional development (88.9% Very Good), and religious values (66.7% Fair), as reflected in the triangulation of interview data, observations, and document analysis. This development occurred primarily through a structured daily routine, community-based programs, and a holistic school ecosystem.

Second, the implementation of CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL in this school corresponds predominantly with two of the ten NCSS thematic strands, namely Strand I (Culture) and IV (Individual Development & Identity). This finding indicates that

CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL holds great potential as an integrated curriculum model that incorporates affective, social, and citizenship dimensions within a meaningful and contextual educational framework. Based on all findings and analyses, this study proposes a CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL -NCSS integration model that can serve as a framework for the development of elementary school curricula. This model positions the CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL program as an implementation platform that brings NCSS thematic strands to life within the context of students' real-world experiences, rather than merely as cognitive content in textbooks.

The three main principles underpinning this model are: (1) Authenticity of the local context through the integration of local culture, language, and values as entry points for character and identity development; (2) The integration of character, social-emotional, and religious dimensions—not developed in isolation, but as a mutually reinforcing ecosystem of values; and (3) Multi-stakeholder collaboration, wherein the school functions as a hub orchestrating the involvement of families, communities, and institutions in supporting children's holistic development.

Practical implications for education policy include the need for: (a) the development of more systematic CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL documentation guidelines, particularly for the daily religious practice component, which currently scores only moderately; (b) the development of integrated character and social-emotional assessment rubrics within instructional modules; and (c) strengthening teachers' capacity to identify the connection between daily CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL activities and the NCSS thematic strands as an epistemological foundation.

Further research is recommended to examine the long-term impact of the CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL program on various other strands besides Strand I (Culture) and Strand IV (Individual Development & Identity) within the NCSS. Additionally, it is necessary to examine how the CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOL -NCSS integration model is implemented in schools with different socio-cultural backgrounds to determine whether the findings of this study can be applied elsewhere.

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