



## Survey on Child-Friendly School Understanding in Guidance and Counseling Students at the University of Borneo Tarakan

Lulu Sumarni<sup>\*</sup>, Siti Rahmi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Universitas Borneo Tarakan

Corresponding author's email: [lulusmrn@gmail.com](mailto:lulusmrn@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

Limited evidence regarding prospective school counselors' understanding of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) highlights the need to examine their preparedness to support child protection and inclusive educational practices. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the level of understanding of Child-Friendly Schools among sixth-semester students of the Guidance and Counseling Study Program at the University of Borneo Tarakan. This study employed a quantitative approach with a survey design. A total of 50 students were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a 30-item questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that students' overall understanding of Child-Friendly Schools was categorized as high, with 60% of respondents classified in the high category and 34% in the very high category. Student participation emerged as the highest-scoring indicator. These findings suggest that prospective school counselors possess adequate knowledge and readiness to support the implementation of child-friendly educational environments that promote children's rights, safety, and well-being.

**Keywords:** children; counseling; education; protection; understanding

### INTRODUCTION

Education plays a fundamental role in developing human resources and improving the quality of life. Beyond the transmission of knowledge, education contributes to the development of cognitive, emotional, social, and moral capacities that enable individuals to adapt to social changes and global challenges. Contemporary educational paradigms emphasize that schools should not only foster academic achievement but also support students' well-being, character development, and social competence. Consequently, educational institutions are expected to provide learning environments that facilitate holistic development and ensure that students can grow in a safe and supportive atmosphere (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2023).

The right to education is closely associated with the fulfillment of children's rights and their protection within educational settings. In Indonesia, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that education is a conscious and planned effort to create learning environments that enable students to actively develop their potential and acquire spiritual, intellectual, personal, and social competencies. Furthermore, Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection emphasizes that every child has the right to receive protection from physical, psychological, sexual, and other forms of violence within educational institutions. These regulations highlight the importance of establishing educational environments that prioritize children's rights and well-being (Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia, 2020; Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, 2021).

Despite various policy initiatives, violence against children in educational environments remains a serious concern worldwide. School violence may take various forms, including physical violence, verbal abuse, psychological intimidation, discrimination, sexual harassment, and bullying. Such experiences have adverse effects on children's academic achievement, emotional development, and psychological well-being. UNESCO (2019) reported that school violence and bullying constitute a global phenomenon affecting millions of children and adolescents and are associated with anxiety, depression, social isolation, and declining academic performance. Similarly, UNICEF (2022) emphasized that unsafe school environments hinder children's cognitive and socio-emotional development and negatively influence their learning experiences. Therefore, creating schools that are free from violence and discrimination has become an essential agenda for educational systems around the world (UNESCO, 2019; UNICEF, 2022).

In Indonesia, cases of violence in educational settings continue to attract public attention. Reports from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia/KPAI) indicate that schools remain among the institutions where children are vulnerable to experiencing violence perpetrated by peers, teachers, or other individuals. Bullying, verbal aggression, discrimination, and gender-based violence are still frequently reported, demonstrating that educational institutions have not entirely fulfilled their function as safe spaces for children (KPAI, 2023; Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, 2024). These conditions underline the necessity of strengthening child protection mechanisms and fostering educational environments that prioritize children's best interests.

In response to these challenges, the Indonesian government introduced the Child-Friendly School (CFS) program, known locally as Sekolah Ramah Anak (SRA), as a strategic effort to create educational institutions that



are safe, inclusive, healthy, and free from violence. According to the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (2021), a Child-Friendly School is an educational institution that guarantees, fulfills, and respects children's rights while protecting them from discrimination, violence, and other forms of maltreatment. The concept is based on the principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life and development, and respect for children's participation and opinions. Through these principles, schools are expected to provide educational services that support students' holistic development and ensure equal opportunities for all learners regardless of their backgrounds.

The Child-Friendly School concept adopted in Indonesia is consistent with the framework developed by UNICEF, which promotes schools that are child-centered, inclusive, gender-sensitive, and conducive to children's physical and psychosocial well-being. Child-Friendly Schools encourage active participation, mutual respect, and positive interactions among all members of the school community. They also emphasize the importance of providing supportive learning environments that enable students to achieve their full potential while feeling protected and valued (UNICEF, 2022). Consequently, the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools requires collaboration among school administrators, teachers, parents, communities, and policymakers.

Successful implementation of Child-Friendly Schools depends not only on policies and infrastructure but also on the competencies and awareness of educational personnel. Teachers and school counselors play significant roles in preventing violence, promoting positive school climates, and ensuring that children's rights are respected. Previous studies have shown that educators' understanding of child protection principles and their commitment to creating supportive learning environments are among the key factors influencing the effectiveness of Child-Friendly School implementation (Fitriani et al., 2021; Khasanah & Hidayati, 2022). Therefore, prospective educators need to develop sufficient knowledge and understanding regarding child-friendly educational practices before entering professional settings.

Among prospective educational professionals, guidance and counseling students occupy a particularly strategic position because they are expected to become school counselors and guidance teachers who interact directly with students. Their professional responsibilities extend beyond providing counseling services to include facilitating students' personal and social development, mediating conflicts, preventing bullying, and advocating for children's rights within schools. Consequently, an adequate understanding of Child-Friendly Schools is essential for guidance and counseling students to perform these responsibilities effectively and professionally (Yusuf & Nurihsan, 2019). A counselor who understands child protection principles is more likely to foster supportive relationships with students and contribute to creating healthy educational environments.

From a theoretical perspective, understanding refers to an individual's ability to interpret, explain, and apply acquired knowledge in different contexts. According to Anderson and Krathwohl's revision of Bloom's taxonomy, understanding involves cognitive processes such as interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, comparing, and explaining information (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). In the context of Child-Friendly Schools, understanding encompasses not only familiarity with the concept and principles of child-friendly education but also the ability to translate these principles into educational practices that respect children's rights and support their well-being. Therefore, examining students' understanding of Child-Friendly Schools is important for assessing their readiness to function as future counselors and educators.

Several previous studies have investigated the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools and their contribution to improving school climate, student well-being, and educational quality (Rahmawati et al., 2020; Fitriani et al., 2021; Khasanah & Hidayati, 2022; Sari et al., 2024). However, most of these studies have focused on elementary and secondary school contexts, while limited attention has been given to the preparedness and understanding of prospective educators, particularly guidance and counseling students. In other words, research exploring how future school counselors understand Child-Friendly School principles remains relatively scarce. This gap is important because counselors are expected to become key actors in promoting child protection and preventing violence within educational settings. Therefore, investigating the level of understanding among guidance and counseling students is necessary to provide empirical evidence regarding their readiness to support the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools in the future.

Considering the importance of prospective counselors' competencies in promoting child-friendly educational practices and the limited evidence concerning their understanding of Child-Friendly Schools, this study aims to examine the level of understanding of Child-Friendly Schools among 2024 cohort students of the Guidance and Counseling Study Program at the University of Borneo Tarakan. The findings are expected to provide valuable information regarding the preparedness of future school counselors in implementing child protection principles and may serve as a basis for curriculum evaluation and the development of educational programs that strengthen competencies related to Child-Friendly Schools and children's rights.

## METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a survey design to examine the level of understanding of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) among students of the Guidance and Counseling Study Program at the University of Borneo Tarakan. Quantitative survey research is appropriate for describing phenomena objectively through numerical data and statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Sugiyono, 2019). The study was conducted during the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The population consisted of active sixth-semester students enrolled in the Guidance and Counseling Study Program, while the sample comprised 50 students selected through



purposive sampling. The inclusion criteria included active enrollment status, willingness to participate, and completion of the questionnaire. The selection of sixth-semester students was based on the assumption that they had acquired knowledge and experiences related to educational settings and guidance services, enabling them to provide relevant information regarding Child-Friendly School concepts.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on the indicators of Child-Friendly School understanding. The instrument consisted of 20 items covering seven dimensions, namely understanding of the basic concepts of Child-Friendly Schools, children's rights at school, safe and supportive learning environments, non-violent learning practices, student participation, non-discriminatory attitudes, and the role of school counselors in implementing Child-Friendly Schools. Responses were measured using a three-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not appropriate), 2 (less appropriate), to 3 (appropriate). According to Sugiyono (2019), questionnaires are efficient instruments for collecting data when the variables and indicators to be measured have been clearly defined. Prior to data analysis, the instrument was subjected to validity testing using Pearson's Product-Moment correlation and reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to ensure that the questionnaire accurately measured the intended construct and produced consistent results (Arikunto, 2018; Hair et al., 2019).

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to provide an overview of students' levels of understanding regarding Child-Friendly Schools. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize and present the data without making generalizations beyond the study sample (Sugiyono, 2019). Data analysis involved scoring respondents' answers, calculating total scores, determining percentages, and classifying the level of understanding into five categories, namely very low, low, moderate, high, and very high. The findings were subsequently presented in tables and graphical forms to facilitate interpretation and provide a comprehensive description of the respondents' understanding of Child-Friendly School principles (Field, 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Overall Level of Students' Understanding of Child-Friendly Schools

Based on the results of a survey of 50 students of the Guidance and Counseling Study Program at Borneo Tarakan University, it was found that in general the level of students' understanding of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) was in the high category with an average score of 2.33. This finding indicates that most students have understood the basic principles of Child-Friendly Schools and have initial readiness as prospective BK teachers and school counselors in supporting the creation of a safe, comfortable, and violence-free educational environment.

**Table 1** Distribution of Students' Understanding Levels

| Category     | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Moderate     | 3         | 6.0        |
| High         | 30        | 60.0       |
| Very High    | 17        | 34.0       |
| Low          | 0         | 0          |
| Very Low     | 0         | 0          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>50</b> | <b>100</b> |

*Source: research data processing results*

Based on Table 1, the majority of respondents (60%) are in the high category, while the other 34% are in the very high category. No students fall into the low or very low categories. These findings indicate that the issues of child protection and child-friendly education are well understood by the guidance and counseling students. According to Bloom (1956), understanding encompasses not only the ability to remember information but also the ability to explain and interpret concepts meaningfully. Therefore, the dominance of the high and very high categories indicates that students have the ability to connect the concept of Child-Friendly Schools with humanistic educational practices.

### Understanding of Child-Friendly School Indicators

#### *Understanding of Basic Concepts of Child-Friendly Schools*

Understanding the basic concepts of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) is essential for prospective school counselors, as it provides the foundation for promoting educational environments that prioritize children's rights, safety, and well-being. The concept of Child-Friendly Schools emphasizes the creation of inclusive, safe, and supportive learning settings in which children are protected from violence, discrimination, and other forms of harmful treatment. Therefore, a sound understanding of these principles is necessary to ensure that future educators are capable of implementing child-centered approaches in educational practice.



The findings revealed that respondents demonstrated a relatively good understanding of the fundamental principles of Child-Friendly Schools. In general, students recognized that Child-Friendly Schools are designed to protect children's rights and provide safe learning environments that support their physical, emotional, and social development. These results suggest that respondents have acquired a basic awareness of the principles advocated by UNICEF and the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, which serve as the foundation for the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools in Indonesia. The detailed results for each indicator are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2 Basic Concept Indicators of Child-Friendly Schools**

| Statement   | Mean | Category |
|---|------|----------|
| Understanding the definition of CFS                 | 2.28 | Moderate |
| CFS protects children's rights                      | 2.48 | High     |
| CFS creates a safe learning environment             | 2.20 | Moderate |
| CFS supports physical and psychological development | 2.08 | Moderate |
| Implementation of CFS is important                  | 2.20 | Moderate |

*Source: research data processing results*

In general, students understood that education should be oriented toward the best interests of children. This finding aligns with the Child-Friendly Schools concept developed by UNICEF (2022), which emphasizes the safety, protection, and optimal development of students.

#### *Understanding of Children's Rights at School*

Children's rights constitute one of the fundamental principles of Child-Friendly Schools, emphasizing equal access to education, protection from violence, and the provision of safe and supportive learning environments. The findings revealed that respondents demonstrated a high level of understanding regarding children's rights within the school context. Among the indicators examined, the statement "Children have the right to protection at school" obtained the highest mean score ( $M = 2.54$ ), indicating that students strongly recognized the importance of ensuring children's safety and well-being in educational settings. These findings suggest that prospective school counselors possess adequate awareness of the need to uphold and protect children's rights as an integral part of creating child-friendly educational environments. The detailed results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Children's Rights Indicators**

| Statement  | Mean | Category |
|--|------|----------|
| School should be free from violence                          | 2.32 | Moderate |
| School should respect students' opinions                     | 2.20 | Moderate |
| Equal rights for all students                                | 2.24 | Moderate |
| School should provide safety                                 | 2.27 | Moderate |
| Children have the right to protection                        | 2.54 | High     |
| Children have the right to comfortable learning environments | 2.36 | High     |
| Children's rights must be respected                          | 2.14 | Moderate |

*Source: research data processing results*

These findings indicate that students recognize the importance of protecting students' rights in educational settings. These results align with the principles of non-discrimination and the best interests of the child, which are the main foundations of Child-Friendly Schools (UNICEF, 2022).

#### *Understanding of Safe and Supportive School Environments*

A safe and supportive school environment is one of the key components of Child-Friendly Schools, as it contributes significantly to students' physical, emotional, and social well-being. Child-Friendly Schools emphasize not only the availability of adequate facilities but also the importance of maintaining a clean environment and fostering positive relationships among members of the school community. Such conditions are essential for promoting effective learning and ensuring that children feel secure and respected during their educational experiences.

The findings indicated that respondents demonstrated a high level of understanding regarding the importance of creating safe and supportive school environments. Students recognized that adequate school facilities, environmental cleanliness, and positive interpersonal relationships among teachers and students are important factors in establishing comfortable learning conditions. These results suggest that prospective school counselors are



aware of the role of school environments in supporting children's development and well-being. Detailed results for each indicator related to safe and supportive school environments are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Safe Environment Indicators**

| Statement                              | Mean | Category |
|--|------|----------|
| Environment supports child development | 2.38 | High     |
| School should provide safety           | 2.22 | Moderate |
| Safe facilities are necessary          | 2.22 | Moderate |
| Cleanliness affects learning comfort   | 2.28 | Moderate |
| Positive relationships create comfort  | 2.38 | High     |
| Schools should prevent bullying        | 2.44 | High     |

Source: research data processing results

These findings support Maslow's (1970) humanistic theory, which explains that a sense of security is a basic need that must be met so that individuals can develop optimally.

#### *Understanding of Non-Violent Learning Practices*

Non-violent learning practices represent an essential component of Child-Friendly Schools, emphasizing the importance of creating educational experiences that are respectful, inclusive, and free from physical or psychological harm. The findings indicate that respondents demonstrated a relatively high level of understanding regarding the importance of implementing humanistic and violence-free approaches in teaching and learning processes. This suggests that students recognize the role of teachers and schools in fostering supportive environments that promote students' well-being and protect them from all forms of violence. Detailed results related to non-violent learning practices are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Non-Violent Learning Indicators**

| Statement                                 | Mean | Category |
|---|------|----------|
| Teachers play important roles in CFS      | 2.22 | Moderate |
| Teachers should treat students fairly     | 2.36 | High     |
| Schools should provide quality services   | 2.38 | High     |
| Teachers should avoid violence            | 2.20 | Moderate |
| Schools should support student well-being | 2.32 | Moderate |

Source: research data processing results

This finding shows that students have understood the importance of the student-centered learning approach as proposed by Rogers (1969), which places students as the main subjects in the learning process.

#### *Understanding of Student Participation*

Student participation emerged as the highest-scoring dimension in this study, suggesting that respondents possess a strong understanding of the importance of children's involvement in school activities and decision-making processes. This finding reflects the recognition of students as active participants in fostering Child-Friendly Schools. The detailed results are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. Student Participation Indicators**

| Statement   | Mean | Category |
|---|------|----------|
| Students should be involved in school activities    | 2.30 | Moderate |
| Students' opinions should be respected              | 2.44 | High     |
| Students participate in maintaining the environment | 2.44 | High     |
| Schools should support students' talents            | 2.66 | High     |
| Student participation is important in CFS           | 2.80 | High     |

Source: research data processing results

The indicator "Student participation is important in creating Child-Friendly Schools" achieved the highest average score (M = 2.80). This result indicates that students recognize that learners are active participants in education. This finding aligns with the principle of participation rights developed by UNICEF (2022), which emphasizes the importance of children's involvement in decision-making processes related to their school life.



Overall, the study results indicate that students in the Guidance and Counseling Study Program at Borneo Tarakan University have a high level of understanding of Child-Friendly Schools. The predominance of high and very high categories indicates that students not only understand the concept of Child-Friendly Schools theoretically but also understand the importance of protecting children's rights, a safe school environment, non-violent learning, and student participation. This finding supports Bloom's theory (1956), which states that understanding is a person's ability to explain and interpret a concept. Furthermore, this study's results align with the humanistic theories of Maslow (1970) and Rogers (1969), which emphasize the importance of a safe learning environment, respect for the individual, and student-centered learning. As prospective BK teachers and school counselors, students are expected to be able to implement the principles of Child-Friendly Schools so as to create an educational environment that is more humanistic, inclusive, and oriented towards protecting children's rights.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the level of understanding of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) among sixth-semester students of the Guidance and Counseling Study Program at the University of Borneo Tarakan. The findings revealed that the overall level of understanding was categorized as high, with the majority of respondents falling into the high (60%) and very high (34%) categories, while only a small proportion (6%) demonstrated a moderate level of understanding. No respondents were classified into the low or very low categories. These findings indicate that most students possess adequate knowledge regarding the principles and implementation of Child-Friendly Schools. Furthermore, the analysis of the indicators showed that students had relatively strong understanding across various dimensions, including children's rights, safe and supportive school environments, non-violent learning practices, and student participation. The highest score was found in the indicator related to the importance of student participation in creating Child-Friendly Schools, suggesting that respondents recognized children as active participants in educational processes. Overall, the findings demonstrate that Guidance and Counseling students are well prepared to support the implementation of Child-Friendly Schools and have the potential to contribute to creating educational environments that are safe, inclusive, and oriented toward the protection and well-being of children.

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