



## Child-Led Decision-Making Process to Assorting Children's Voice in Bandung District

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### Abstract

The research will discuss child participation in the decision-making process, the leadership led by children is essential to be discussed because children often seen as a human who have not capacity to make decisions or always influenced by an adult. Through this research we will seen how children take the decisions using participation in decision-making (PDM) which are upward and downward information flow. The novelty of this research is how children are given the authority to take the decisions. This research are using qualitative research by having FGD with the child members in children's forum and secondary data from literature reviews. As a result of this research, children using upward information flow to compile children's voices and downward information flow as a part of the cognitive model in decision-making process. The participation of children will not be meaningful if an adult that accompany the children was not trained and professional adult as it was mentioned in this research on how adult able to hinder children voice because of her lack of capacity. In implementing meaningful participation in the decision-making process, it is important for children to have the right access of the right information.

**Keywords:** *Children Forum, Decision Making Process, Organization Communication*



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### INTRODUCTION

The historical year for the fulfillment of child rights around the world is the year 1989. United Nations (UN) adopt the Child Rights Conventions as a commitment for leaders around the world to protect and fulfill children's rights (Unicef, 2020). This convention stated that children are not an object that depends on their parents or their caregiver, but as an individual that has a complete identity on themselves (Kartikawati, Roni, & Purwanti, 2022). Children were defined as individuals ages 0 - 18 years old, and in those periods, children need to be given the space, to grow, learn, thrive, and survive following the most ratified conventions from countries around the world and contribute to the transformation for child rights and lives around the world (Wahyuni, 2019). Children were the most vulnerable communities. The situation led to the movement on children's rights, including those who suffer from malnutrition because of the war. Eglantnye Jebb, a teacher from England who fought for children's

rights at that time. In 1924, Eglantyne presented the Declaration of Children's Rights to ask for the rights of the children, including those who are in the most vulnerable positions (Virat, 2023). This declaration was then adopted by United Nations in 1959 and formalized as Child Right Convention in 1989, a milestone in the fulfillment of children's rights.

Child Rights Convention or known as CRC introduces dimensions in looking at children's rights, children not as a subject that should only be protected by an adult, but how those efforts, children have the rights to be listened (Lansdown, 2001). Article 12 of the Child Right Conventions mentioned that children are a complete identity, therefore it is necessary to listen to what they said and consider their feedback. As children have rights, are not meaning that an adult delegates all their responsibilities to the children, but children were not able to fight alone, therefore an adult need to guide the path for them. This is part of the collaboration in helping children in developing the strategy for the fulfillment of children's rights (Jerome & Starkey, 2022). Understanding Article 12 of the Child Rights Convention means that participation doesn't mean giving all the freedom to children, and adults have to control everything (Thomas, 2021). This is against the traditional approach that children only existed to be protected not to be listened to.

In Indonesia, Child Rights Convention is ratified in 1990 and was embedded into law 12 years later through Law 23/2002 about Children Protection, which later has modified in 2014, through Law 35/2014 (Dewi, Dharmawan, Krisnayanti, Samsithawrati, & Kurniawan, 2022). In the following regulation, it was stated consistently that children have the basic rights, to live, grow, be protected, and participate. Article 1 in the Law, specifically mentioned that child protection is any form to guarantee and protect children's rights and their rights so they can live, grow, and participate optimally with their dignity as a human, and protected from any form of violence and discrimination (Laurensius Arliman, 2018). Alongside with the implementation of the regulations, there are four principles, which are non-discrimination, the best interest of the child, respect for children's voices, and the right to live and grow (Clark et al., 2020). There is a struggling effort to fulfill children's rights particularly their rights to participate. The government of Indonesia has provided a space for children to share their voices and needs, which is called the children's forum. Children's forum is the implementation and realization of the rights to participate, and the principles to respect child rights (Sadani, Solin, & Ruwaida, 2022). Children Forum is an organization under the wings of the Government of Indonesia through the Ministry of Child Protection and Women Empowerment, which the members are all children and selected through children nominations.

The existence of Children Forum has been legal by the regulation of the Minister of Child Protection and Women Empowerment number 18/2019. The content of the regulations is how the child forum has the yearly meeting to address any problem faced by children, compile the solutions, and disseminate them to the wider public, this is later called the children's voice (Percy-Smith, Thomas, O'Kane, & Imoh, 2023). Children's voices can become the reference and recommendation for coss-sector government policy (Peraturan Menteri PPA No 11/2019). The duty of the children's forum is not only limited to compiling yearly children's voices, but also children can participate in regional community meeting planning called Musrembang. Until the year 2021, there has been developed the National Children Forum, 31 Provincial Children Forums, 415 District Children Forums, 273 Sub-

District Children Forums, and 174 Village Children Forums in Indonesia. The development of the Children Forum reaches the village level, this is to highlight that Children Forum plays a significant role in the development planning starting from the village level (Bomans Wadu, Novita Dua Kasing, Fransiskus Gultom, & Katolik Widya Karya, 2021). In the process of compiling children's voices, children used various processes to ensure that the voice they shared represented all children in their communities aiming to be known by the government and the wider public (Bonati & Andriana, 2021). As the children's forum aims as an organization for children to participate in, the process of decision-making was done by using the principles of meaningful participation. Through this research, the author will discuss how the process of decisions making, particularly meaningful child participation in the decision-making process.

The case study of this research is Children Forum in Bandung District, which reached the Best Forum Anak (District Level) in Indonesia in 2021. This research discus how was the child participation process in the decision-making in the drafting of children's voices through the child forum organization in Bandung District? The goal of this research is to describe how the model of participation in decision-making and to develop the participation model in decision-making are meaningful to building children's self-identity in the organization concerning their dignity as a human. This research contributes to the development of part of the communication organization, mainly in the process of decision-making that is participatory through child-led organizations. This research will be useful to understand the situation of child participation in Indonesia and document it as knowledge management and best practice.

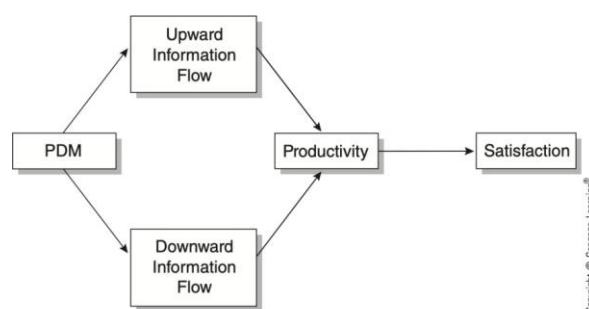
Based on previous research entitled Children Participation in Decision-Making: balancing protection with shared decision making using a situational perspective (Imelda Coyne, 2011) explained children's participation in the decision-making process, including the complex situation. Adult has to consider children as complete individual, not only a group of children that has a similar identity. Coyne argues that children's participation along with the best interest of the child has to be balanced with the capacities of an adult that company the children. In the whole children life's, lives were affected by the decision of the adult, so in giving the space for children to participate, it was important for an adult to present. In the participation process, an adult is not allowed to force children to participate, children can participate with the support, and the capacities that are already given to them. The concept of adult and child decision-making is shared-decision making. This process is the way to respect child competence and to give the chance and protect the children. The argument in this journal is to see children as an individual in the decision maker, in this research what the author will see is a group of children and an adult in the process of decision making.

Children Participation and good governance: Limitation of the Theoretical Literature (Hinton, 2008). Hilton mentioned the importance of a good environment and strong policies that support children's participation. Those involvement has a strong instrument in increasing effectiveness and governance, including the space for the community to be empowered. The challenge of Children's Participation because there were no financial resource sthat directly supports children to have the organizations. This needs to be followed up with strong evidence. Research shows that in promoting a policy that considers children's voices, the evidence happened at

the local level, compare to the national level, and in the agenda-setting compared with the standard of decision makers. In the decision-making process at the Government level that is influenced by children's voices, it is important to see children as the public actor and open the space for them to show themselves as part of the community. The contribution of the children is huge but only can be realized through active and meaningful participation. This journal discusses the decision-maker in good governance that is influenced by the children's voices. The author will see the process of decision-making at the children's level to be part of the group voice. What is the factor that influences the process, and how this process can influence children's self-esteem and self-actualization.

Fulfillment of Children's Participation Rights through Children's Forums in the Implementation of Child Friendly City Policy in Bandung City (Case Study of Bandung Children Communication Forum) (Devi Ayu Rizky, 2016). This journal mentioned the importance of adults supported by training in assisting child forums to explain their opinion as part of the fluffiness of child participation. The argument in this journal shows that the development of space through a child forum has the function of participation space for the children, to share their messages in two situations, which are the facilitator from the adult that has got the appropriate 'child participation' training, and the regulation of the government to support the space of children forum in sharing their opinion. Many adults have different understanding of child's rights to participate and child roles. Therefore it was hard for child forum to understand the decision-making process at the government level. The research discusses the external factor, that influences the affected of children's voices in the district development. Besides in this research, what the author would like to do is to process the decision-making in the organization. So the influence is the output that the decision maker formulates and is known as the children voice.

The model to demonstrate the engagement between participation, fulfillment, and productivity developed by Miller and Monge (1986). There are two models of participation, which are the affective model and the cognitive model. In order to have a better understanding of drafting children's voices, the cognitive model has been used because of the participation model that has been done by individuals who understand the work (upward information flow) and individuals to participate in the process of a decision-maker and implement the better decision (downward information flow). The implication of this model is to show the level of satisfaction and productivity that increases by the model of participation (Wilkinson, 2019)



**Figure 1. The model of Participation**

Canary (2011), also mentioned the aim of upward and downward information flow, are

1. Upward information flow is the information from the members to the leaders that aim to understand/identified.
  - a. The problem and exception: this message would like to describe the problem and exception from the situation, so the leaders can understand the barriers.
  - b. Advice to Modified: the messages are the ideas to increase the quality/efficiency of the organization
  - c. Report: The messages are related to the work of the organizations
  - d. Problem and Conflict: the messages are related to the feedback and/or conflict to be solved
  - e. Finance information and accounting: the messages are related to the cost and administrative things for the operational organizations
2. Downward Information Flow is the information that has been convey by the leaders to their members that aim for;
  - a. Vision Implementation, aim, and strategy: The communication that mentions the specified target and attitude that expect to happen.
  - b. Instruction of the works and rationality: information that conveys related with the roles of the individual, and how this situation contributes to the organization
  - c. Procedure and practice: the messages that convey define the policy, and regulations from the organization to the individual
  - d. Feedback mechanism, the appreciation of the individual works and understanding of the contribution of their works to the standard and goal of the organization
  - e. Socialization: Giving the motivation about values by the organization, as well to increase the commitment and the feelings/sense of belonging of the individual in the organizations

In the child forum organization, children's voices convey by the children to the government as part of the children's situation, so that it can be understood and followed up by the government, as advice to modification of policy or to can be seen as the upward information flow. For the government, understanding that children have the role of the agent of change, can develop their participation in children's forums. This can be seen as a downward information flow. In the regulation of the Ministry of Child Protection and Women Empowerment no 18/2018, it has been mentioned that one of the roles of the children forum is part of the agent of change and agent of the initiator. As the initiator, children are expected to contribute to the fulfillment of children's rights and child protection. The agent of change refers to children's role to convey what they see, know, thoughts, and feels, about the barrier in the fulfillment of children's rights and child protection, that happened to them or other people, also to the adults, that they believe to protect them. This role can be done individually, or in groups, as a Children Forum.

To understand the concept of communication organization in the child forum, it needs to be done structurally, the child forum and the local government (Ministry of child protection and women empowerment) are a whole situation that can not be divided because they are facilitated by the Ministry in the national level, or targeted office in the district level. Child forum has the role that they expected to understand the roles, they also are given the space about their recommendation to the government. The participation process in the decision-making role in drafting the

voice recommendation will increase their satisfaction in the organization, as part of the self-respect and self-esteem, which later can encourage them to grow, survive, and thrive as a children.

Based on the law number 23 year 2002, children is the one under 18 years old. Next, in the Ministry regulation of child protection and women empowerment number 3 the year 2011, about the policy of children's participation in development, child participation is defined as child involvement in the process of decision-making about anything related to them and has been done by the agreement, awareness, understanding, and willingness of the children, so he/she can enjoy the results and get the benefit from those decisions. In the convention of children's rights. Article 12 about child rights mentioned the right to listen, there are 9 (nine) basic requirements for meaningful participation, which are Save the Children.

Child participation in decision-making should adhere to several key principles. Firstly, it should be transparent and informative, with children understanding their roles in conveying messages while adults share information based on their involvement. Secondly, it should be voluntary, allowing children the choice to participate without coercion, and adults should focus on motivating rather than forcing them to share their voices. Thirdly, respect is paramount, with children feeling free to express their opinions without fear of discrimination from peers or adults. Additionally, child participation should always be relevant, allowing children to share information pertinent to their concerns. It should also be child-friendly, creating a safe and welcoming space for children to voice their thoughts. Inclusivity is vital, ensuring that every child, including marginalized ones, has the opportunity to share their opinions. Furthermore, child participation should be supported by training, equipping children with the necessary skills, and adults with proper guidance to assist them. Safety and risk sensitivity are crucial, involving risk identification and mitigation in the process of child involvement in decision-making. Lastly, accountability is essential. It includes providing feedback on children's input, demonstrating how their voices can make an impact, and ensuring that follow-up actions are taken. The process of children's voice drafting is one of the steps to understanding the participation process in the decision-making in the child forum organization. Implementing the cognitive model is how child participation can give satisfaction because they have already been involved, in this situation is the agent of initiator and change.

## METHODOLOGY

The research method is qualitative, through this research, the author will find the meaning of the decision-making process. In this context, we will discuss the communication process that resulted in the decision-making. By using Focus Group Discussion, the researcher is trying to get the group information, group attitude, group opinion, and group decision towards the phenomenon, which are the decision making (Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, 2018). The Location of the research is the Bandung District, West Java, or in this case Forum Anak Bandung District. This is because Forum Anak In Bandung District got the award as Best Forum Anak in 2021. Besides that, the author also has various of activity in 2019-2020 to build the capacity of the children's forum of Bandung district. The population will be members of the children forum which are total of 30 children that are divided into five clusters/ divided into five working groups. The author will be having FGD with the core team,

and representing each working group. The questions given to the children will be about the process of decision-making, and understanding the fact that influence the cause of the impact. Besides that, the author will have the FGD with the facilitator of children, which is an adult that assists children forum during the process of drafting children's voices. In doing data analysis, the author will analyze the narration that exists from the result of FGD with children. This is because the author will try to see the situation that happened (Ismail Suwardi Weke, n.d.). After seeing the situation, the author will see the result that drafting by the children, and working program as the output of the decision.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this context, the seconder data will complement the research. In the compiling of the priority of children's voice, the author would like to see how children participate in the decision-making. In compiling the data, the author did FGD with Child Forum in Bandung District, there are five children, involved in the FGD

Table 1. Key Informant of the Research

Name	Age	Positions
Informant A	17	Chief of Children Forum in Bandung District
Informant B	17	Vice Chief I of Children Forum in Bandung District
Informant C	17	Vice Chief II of Children Forum in Bandung District
Informant D	17	Secretary I of Children Forum in Bandung District
Informant E	15	Treasury 2 of Children Forum in Bandung District

While discussing with children forum, there are at least three points discussed, first is about the process of compiling children's voices, second is how children take decisions in compiling the priority of children's voices, and last is how adults facilitate the process. Children Forum in Bandung district was doing the compilation with two methods, which are:

1. Observation methods, through the latest activity of the children forum
2. Online forms, by using Google forms that are sent to the children in Bandung District through the children's forum at the sub-district and village level.

In the Focus Group Discussion, the children mentioned that there were adult roles in the compilation of children's voice.

*"So we were assisted by child protection isntitutions (Lembaga perlindungan anak/lpa), about our output when creating an events", Informant A, 17, Bandung*

*"From that, we take a look from our previous activity, we did an event disable children, and we were asking their expectations. Therefore we use that data also", Informant B, 17 Bandung*

Therefore, even though it wasn't intended to compile the children's voices, the output from the activity that has been done has various data that is useful for children's expectations. The next method is writing the key questions in Google form, to be distributed to wider children. In writing the key questions the children do by themselves, without the support of an adult.

*"During pandemic, there were a lot of survey distributed to children from various institutions. So we take a look from that, and modified based on our needs, we create a simple questions like we were chatting with our friends.*

*Mostly it was the open questions" Informant B, 17 Bandung*

From the survey that was done through Google form, children were compiling the list of children voices led by the chief and vice chief of the children forum, it was agreed through the discussion with all the members of children forum.

*"The steps in creating the list is not one time, we did it many times from discussion in zoom, in WhatsApp, until we were agreed. Those who take parts on the discussion is children's forum members who were available at that time", Informant E, 15, Bandung*

From the list that we already agreed on, we then consulted with an adult that took the role of children facilitator. The facilitator gives feedback, based on the data and reality of the problem.

*"During the consultations, there wasn't any intervention. We got new information, because of the issues that we haven't though previously"*  
*Informant D, 17, Bandung*

Based on the FGD with children, it was shown that the process of children's participation is under the Standard Procedure of Compiling Children Voice based on the Law of Child Forum Implementation. This was demonstrated by how children led the discussion, asking for the input of an adult to strengthen their knowledge. This is also their right to get the right information.

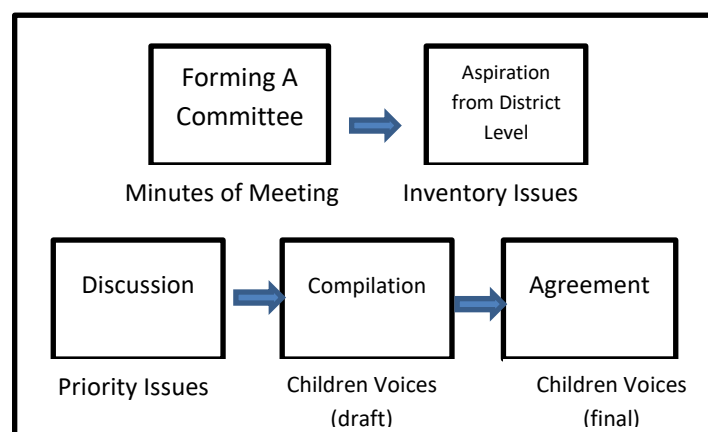
In compiling the data, the author also analyzes the draft of children's voices that have been compiled by children compared to the draft that has the results after it consults with the adult. The draft was having 10 (ten) points of children's voices that discuss the issues of education during the pandemic, advertisement of smoking to be banned, bullying, infrastructure that is friendly for children including education, 12 years of inclusive education, promoting the talents of students, parenting quality, prevention of child marriage, child certificate of birth, and routine immunizations. While in the memo that was signed, the issues reduce to 9 (nine) points, and it hindered the issues of promoting the talent of students, routine immunizations, and adding the issues of disaster risk reductions, for natural or human disasters made (Ferdian Utama, 2020).

The hindered of various issues, if looking at the primary data, shows there was feedback from an adult, to add more relevant issues with the situations of The Children Forum in Bandung Districts. The disaster risk reduction issues were important, as Bandung District, is one of the five areas in West Java that were vulnerable to disasters. (Ramdan, 2021). For the hindered issues, it was considered not realistic with the situations in the children forum. Promoting talent can be merged with the point of education during the pandemic. While for routine immunization, children don't have any data so it was considered not relevant to the current situation during the pandemic. If we see the data in the national or Bandung district, the number of routine immunizations was decrease significantly in the year 2020 and 2021, This has happened because there are a lot of community health center was closed during the pandemic. The community was also worried about coming to the community health center because the government told them to stay at home. If children didn't get routine immunization, there were concerns about the existence of the disease that can be prevented by immunizations. This shows that the facilitators couldn't understand the current reality, therefore as was mentioned in the nine basics of meaningful participation, the roles of trained facilitators were very important.



Not only in the written forums, children that were involved in the children forum also created a video to share their voice. Interestingly, while creating the video, children not only read their list of children's voices but also demonstrated it through various of activity. The video was created by children in Bandung district aiming to the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection, because at that time the political situation in Bandung District, was in the transition of the new Regent and Vice Regent. Based on the primary data, children feel, it was important to them to share their voice to the wider audiences.

In Indonesia, child participation was realized in the development of The Children Forum. Children Forum in Indonesia was established at the national level, provincial level, district level, sub-district level, and village level. This structure has become the guide in the children's forum's daily activity, which shows there was the role of adults as facilitators and other committees. In conveying the messages, the children's forum has the role of agent of initiator and agent of change. The mechanism of compiling children's voices using the mechanism of "I see, I know, and I will" (Hastuti & Utomo, 2022). This mechanism was gone through various briefings and assistance from the facilitators. In this situation, facilitators should ensure that all the principles of child rights are implemented. To increase the capacity of the Children Forum as as agent of initiator and agent of change, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection office hold the annual meeting for Child Forum members on the commemoration of National Children's Day. In this meeting, children will discuss various children's issues which resulted of Indonesian Children's Voice. This material can become the consideration for policy-making in various issues. Herewith the process of Children's Voice compilation from village level to the national level.



**Figure 1. The Process of Compilation Children Voice**

The mechanism in compiling Indonesian Children's Voice arranged from the lowest level to the upper up level (*bottom up*), coordinated by the committee in each level. In the guidance to compile Children Voice from Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection, the involvement of an adult only allowed until the level of aspiration and facilitate child forum to have the inventory issues. While in the discussion issues, the involvement of adult only allowed to give knowledge for issues to be discusses, or to assisted if the forum didn't get to the agreement. This means to avoid adult issues in having relevant and meaningful children voice that answered the needs of the children.

Child Rights Convention ratified by the Government of Indonesia gives the mandate to the Government of Indonesia in the fulfillment of children's rights by guaranteeing child welfare and preparing the quality of the next generations. The Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection did the scoring for children's welfare through Children Welfare Composite Index (Indeks Komposit Kesejahteraan Anak. - IKKA). The scoring from IKKA is necessary to see the advancement of child welfare at all government levels. (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak, 2018). Five dimensions of children's rights score through IKKA are rights to survive, be protected, thrive, participation, and identity. At the national level, the scoring of IKKA for 2015 – 2018 demonstrated a better indication for child advancement in Indonesia, which are 64,0 in 2015 to 70,5 in 2018 (the scoring was done every three years). However, the component of participation is the lowest indicator. IKKA in 2015 showed that the index of child participation level is 51,29, which is the lowest compared to others. While IKKA in 2018, showed that the participation index decreased to 41,7, which is also the lowest. The framework to score the dimension of rights to participate only in the tourism level. The reason was this is the first lesson for children to interact with the community and in the implementation of children's existence in the community. This score was limited to children's roles that played a significant contribution in the development context. To evaluate child participation, at least need to be seen from an individual, family, community, and institution level (Jason Hart, 2004).

Understanding the process of decision-makers in the child forum organizations can be analyzed by the PDM (participation in decision-making) through the cognitive model. Children Forum has a basic understanding of the issues that are relevant to them. They also created the method of compiling that the issues they highlighted are relevant to the current reality (upward information flow). This was shown during the FGD, the children's forum can explain in detail how the process was done. When they consulted the result to seek feedback from the adult, the result was shared with the wider audiences from the local government to the ministry office, per the downward information flow. The standards of procedure that were developed by the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Children's Voice have given the right directions for children to take decisions. This demonstrated how children are capable of taking the lead in decision-making, and how parents have the role to strengthen the voice of the children. Next, if we analyze it based on the level of satisfaction and productivity of the children's forum, it shows that.

During the compilation of the children's forum, a notable willingness among the children was evident, driven by their desire to improve the process and adhere to a more efficient timeline. They expressed their hope that the process could be expedited, as they noticed it followed a similar annual routine, and they wished to reach a broader audience without delay. Furthermore, the children exhibited satisfaction with the identity of the children's forum, recognizing that it effectively captured their voices. They were also mindful of the various activities happening externally, emphasizing the importance of continued advocacy for children's rights. Additionally, the children displayed an awareness of the complexities involved in decision-making and prioritizing issues. They acknowledged the need for careful consideration, accurate information compilation, and feedback from experts in this intricate process. As a result of the theoretical analysis, it was shown that in the decisions in the Children Forum organizations, the satisfaction of children was increased but productivity wasn't

directly seen, however looking at how children plan on what to do next it can be mentioned it will lead to productivity, as planning is the most important thing to ensure more productive activity. In the child forum organizations, as most of the decisions maker are children, their participation couldn't be done without the support of trained adults. This was also mentioned in the conventions on the rights of the child. So the assistance of an adult should be a learning situation for children. Looking on the communications side, this can strengthen the children's thinking to self-improve and learn to be better in the future

## CONCLUSION

The child-led decision-making process in the children's forum organization was supported by an adult. Children share their voices with an adult based on the problem that their face in the field (upward information flow) and adults give guidance on how the process of decision-making should be done (downward information flow). Implementing meaningful participation in the decision, maker it was also affected the productivity and satisfaction level of children based on the statement from children. That means the decision-making process in the children's forum, can explain the cognitive model of participation in the decision-making process. However the next research needs to research the impact on productivity and satisfaction in quantitative research, so we will understand if the model has affected children or not in the forum. In the decision-making, it was also a learning situation for children to improve their capacity, this also can be discussed in future research. An interesting finding in the research was how an adult deletes important points in the issues, because of the capacity of an adult, will directly influence the results of children's voices. Children might not consider this as an intervention, however, it will lead to a new problem in the future, this finding also can be discussed in the next research in the future.

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