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Principal's Leadership Strategy In Managing Conflict In Schools: A Study At Kayuagung *Information Technology* (It) Junior High School

Hopipah Yuniana Diba
Educational Management, PGRI University of Palembang
Syaiful Eddy
Educational Management, PGRI University of Palembang
Setiyo Nugroho Heri
Educational Management, PGRI University of Palembang

Corresponding Author: hopipahy@gmail.com [1], syaifuleddy@gmail.com [2], herysetiyo47@gmail.com [3]

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the leadership strategies of the principal in managing conflicts at SMP Information Technology (IT) Peradaban Kayuagung. The focus of the study includes the principal's strategies in handling conflicts, challenges encountered, solutions implemented, as well as the impact of these strategies on the school climate. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, observation, and document study with informants including the principal, teachers, students, and students' parents. Data validity was tested through source and technique triangulation. The results of the study indicate that the principal implements strategies of open communication, deliberation, mediation, as well as persuasive and situational approaches in managing conflicts among students, between teachers and the principal, and between the school and students' parents. The obstacles faced include differences in individual character, lack of communication, and time constraints. Solutions implemented include increasing the intensity of communication, involving relevant parties, and strengthening a positive school culture. The implementation of these strategies has an impact on creating a more conducive, harmonious, and supportive school climate for the learning process.

Keywords : school principal leadership; conflict management; school conflict; school climate

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of science, technology, information, art, and culture has brought changes to the needs and conditions of an increasingly dynamic society. These changes impact the world of education, which faces increasingly complex challenges, particularly in the management of educational institutions. This situation demands educational management that can adapt to current developments so that educational goals can be optimally achieved. In this context, the role of the principal is crucial as both a leader and manager responsible for the continuity and quality of education delivery in schools.

As an educational manager, a principal is required to possess adequate managerial competencies to effectively and efficiently manage the school organization. The principal must be able to formulate appropriate policies, make wise decisions, and direct the entire school community toward achieving established educational goals. The quality of the principal's leadership significantly impacts the success of school programs and the improvement of educational quality, as every policy adopted directly impacts the school's work systems and management mechanisms. Therefore, the principal needs to implement high-quality, flexible, and dynamic management by utilizing accurate data and information regarding all components of the school's educational system (Basri et al., 2021).

Effective principal leadership is also reflected in their ability to create a conducive learning environment and develop a school culture that supports the learning process. Principals need to clearly define learning objectives, provide direction and guidance to educators, and effectively communicate the school's vision and mission to all members of the school community. Thus, the principal serves not only as an administrative manager but also as a leader capable of mobilizing all available school resources to optimally achieve educational goals (Pitriyani, 2023).

In carrying out their leadership functions, principals are inextricably linked to various organizational dynamics, one of which is conflict. Conflict is an unavoidable phenomenon in any organization due to differences in interests, perspectives, and individual backgrounds. Conflict can occur both overtly and covertly and encompasses various forms of disagreement that arise in interactions between individuals and groups within the organization (Indra, 1989).

In a school environment, conflict can arise from various factors, both internal and external to the school organization. Differences in interests, misunderstandings in communication, or feelings of being wronged by one party can trigger conflict. Furthermore, some individuals are highly sensitive, easily offended by actions others might consider normal (Mulyasa, 2012).

As a school develops and progresses, the potential for conflict also increases. Unmanaged

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conflict can negatively impact the performance of educational staff and potentially reduce the school's quality and achievement. However, conflict is not always negative. When managed appropriately, it can actually be a source of positive energy that encourages change, innovation, and improvements in the quality of the school organization.

Various forms of conflict can occur in the school environment, such as conflict between students, conflict between teachers and the principal, and conflict between the school and students' parents. Conflict between students is usually caused by differences in character, competition for academic achievement, bullying, or misunderstandings in social interactions. These situations are part of the process of students' social development and need to be addressed through a social-emotional learning approach so that they can be directed positively (Johnson & Johnson, 2005). In addition, conflict can also occur between teachers and the principal regarding policies and discipline, as well as conflict between the school and students' parents, which is generally caused by a lack of communication or a mismatch in expectations regarding school policies (Robbins, 2017).

Based on the results of pre-research conducted by the researcher, Peradaban Kayuagung Information Technology (IT) Middle School is one of the schools that is not free from the dynamics of organizational conflict. Conflicts that occur at the school include conflicts between students triggered by excessive gaming that leads to disputes, conflicts between teachers and the principal related to discipline, and conflicts between the school and students' parents, which are generally caused by a lack of communication or differences in perceptions of school policies.

This phenomenon demonstrates that conflict is a dynamic part of school organizational life and must be managed appropriately by the principal, as the leader of the educational institution. The principal's ability to manage conflict is crucial for creating a conducive and harmonious school climate. Therefore, this study aims to examine the principal's leadership in managing conflict in schools, specifically at Peradaban Kayuagung Information Technology (IT) Middle School.

Based on this description, this research focuses on the principal's leadership in managing conflicts that occur in the school environment, including conflicts between students, conflicts between teachers and the principal, and conflicts between the school and students' parents.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach, a research method that focuses on objective and in-depth study and presentation of phenomena to obtain accurate results. This study uses a qualitative descriptive design with a case study approach that is expected to be able

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to collect objective and detailed data to produce accurate findings related to the principal's leadership style in managing conflict at SMP Information Technology (IT) Peradaban Kayuagung.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of conflict management strategies by the Principal of SMP IT Peradaban Kayuagung has shown a number of positive impacts on the school climate and relationships between members of the school community. Mediation efforts, guided deliberations, and strengthened communication have proven effective in reducing the escalation of conflict both among students and between the school and parents. Observations and interviews show that after implementing restorative mediation strategies, the frequency of student conflicts decreased, and students were more open to discussing problems with teachers. These findings align with Moran (2024) who stated that a restorative approach to conflict resolution can rebuild relationships and reduce aggressive behavior in the school environment.

Besides reducing conflict, another significant impact is an increase in students' sense of psychological safety. They feel more valued and have the space to express their opinions fairly. The principal's guided dialogue approach helps foster an atmosphere of mutual respect between students and teachers. A study from Frontiers in Education (2025) supports this finding, stating that the application of empathetic communication in conflict management has a direct impact on improving students' emotional well-being and academic engagement.

The relationship between schools and parents also improved. Transparency of information, parental involvement in case resolution, and consistency in communicating school policies fostered stronger trust. Parents became more active in school activities and more cooperative in supporting their children at home. These findings are consistent with Harini et al. (2024), who asserted that parental involvement in the educational process contributes to a stable school climate and faster conflict resolution.

The principal's strategy also resulted in increased collaboration between teachers. Through basic conflict resolution training and strengthening assertive communication, teachers became more capable of handling minor classroom conflicts independently. This not only reduced the principal's burden but also increased teachers' professionalism and concern for students' emotional well-being. Nugroho and Setyawati (2024) stated that strengthening teachers' capacity in conflict mediation is key to creating a conducive and safe learning environment for students.

Overall, the implementation of the principal's strategies has had a wide-ranging impact, ranging from reducing conflict, improving interpersonal relationships, increasing parental

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involvement, and creating a more harmonious learning climate. This impact reinforces the findings of Rohman and Lestari (2023) that a positive school climate is an indicator of leadership effectiveness in managing social dynamics and conflict within the educational environment.

CONCLUSION

The principal implemented several key strategies for managing conflict, including persuasive communication, interpersonal mediation, a deliberative approach, coordination with teachers, and strengthening school culture. These strategies focused on a humanistic approach that provided space for dialogue for all parties so that conflicts could be resolved peacefully and constructively.

Obstacles that emerged included the limited experience of the principal as a new leader, the influence of social media on student behavior, and teachers' mediation skills which were not yet optimal so that most conflict resolution rested with the principal.

Principals address barriers by increasing collaboration with teachers, strengthening communication with parents, conducting regular outreach on school rules, and utilizing digital platforms to prevent miscommunication. Furthermore, principals strengthen student character development and empower teachers to be more effective in resolving conflicts early.

The implementation of the principal's strategies has had a positive impact on reducing conflict, improving student discipline, strengthening school-parent relationships, and increasing teacher collaboration and concern for problem solving. The school climate has become safer, more harmonious, and more conducive to learning.

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