Examining Effective Management and Leadership Strategies in Conflict Resolution: A Case Study of Conflict Management in Private Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This study highlights private schools' management and leadership strategies in dealing with conflicts. School conflicts occur for many reasons. To address the conflicts effectively, schools need to have the ability to thoroughly examine the root cause of such conflicts. The impact on school development in terms of performance largely depends on how school leaders effectively manage and address conflicts. This qualitative research specifically chooses private schools due to their autonomy, which distinguishes them from public schools in terms of decision-making and leadership approaches. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, and analysed using manual thematic analysis methods. This study discovered that conflicts often occur within the scope of appointing new school principals, upholding the integrity of school members, and managing the resistance among teachers. The strategy predominantly used in schools in this study is a win-lose approach, where problems are resolved quickly without considering the need for negotiation. The two schools investigated in this study view future conflicts as a form of competition with other schools, placing strong emphasis on the significance of fair policies for all, and the stakeholders' trust as the main key.

Keywords: *conflicts, management, leadership, strategies, secondary schools*

Introduction

It is widely believed that the quality of leadership can have a significant impact on education and student outcomes. It is acknowledged that in order to provide students and learners with the best education possible, schools must be led by efficient leaders, managers, or principals. This emphasizes the need for qualified and dedicated teachers, who in turn require the guidance of highly successful administrators and the support of other senior and intermediate managers (Bush, 2008). Given its influence on the level of service and quality provided by an organization to its users, effective organizational management remains an enduring challenge that is ever present. As mentioned by Larasati and Raharja (2020), an organization is made up of several interconnected components that must work together to achieve its objectives. The composition of an organization is made up of a diverse range of people – each with unique histories, perspectives, personalities, and points of view. This diversity carries the potential to trigger disagreements and differences that if remained unresolved, may eventually lead to conflict. Conflict can be described as a condition in which identifiable human groups oppose one another due to different end goals (Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 1997). The outcome of conflict can vary, ranging from positive to negative consequences, depending on the organization's management, and how the conflict is handled within the organization. As stated by Larasati and Raharja (2020), a good school demonstrates the ability to efficiently manage emerging conflicts and takes them as a benchmark to improve school performance. In other words, the ability to effectively manage conflicts is a crucial factor that indicates the overall success of a school. A good school does not necessarily mean that it has never encountered conflict, as conflicts can arise in any school environment. What distinguishes a good school is its ability in utilizing the conflict management strategies to effectively address and navigate such conflicts. Through the implementation of effective conflict management strategies, schools can not only improve their overall advantage but also foster harmonious relationships among stakeholders. This, in turn, contributes to the attainment of success in their educational mission. Conflict management serves as a crucial means for schools to cultivate a positive and productive environment that facilitates the growth and development of students. It is also in line with the statement made by Hetchinger in Parera (2015), "I've never seen a good principal at a bad school or a bad principal at a good school. I have witnessed failing schools transform into excellent ones and, tragically, outstanding institutions rapidly deteriorate. Each time, it was simple to link the change in performance to the principal's attributes. It is widely understood that in order to effectively run a school, the principal must have great leadership and management

to answer the challenge and latest needs." Given the context of being Indonesia, it is important to explore how principals deal with conflicts within their schools. Acknowledging the fact that every school encounters unique challenges, it depends on the principal to develop appropriate strategies for conflict resolution, and effectively manage their subordinates.

In Indonesia, the Minister of National Education Regulation Number 13 (2007), outlines the standards for principals and schools, providing a comprehensive framework of competency. The regulation highlights five dimensions of competence, including 33 principal competency standards. These standards include managing, leading, and supervising teachers in the development of innovative and creative learning approaches, emphasizing on the qualities such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and entrepreneurial instincts. Considering the importance of aforementioned standards, it is evident that a principal plays a very crucial role in the overall growth of a school, particularly in relation to the potential development of school autonomy. However, it is important to acknowledge that the majority of schools still have a long way to go in the pursuit to achieve desirable success. The challenges lie not only with the leadership of the principals, but also with the overall readiness of the schools to effectively implement the necessary changes (Amini, et al., 2022).

As highlighted previously, principals play a key role in addressing the conflicts, and their efforts to effectively manage and make decisions to produce a win-win solution are not always smooth. The nature and culture of private and public schools differ, which consequently affects the possession of power within the school setting. In the context of public school in Indonesia, the position of a school principal is typically achieved through a long journey of serving as a teacher. In order to be appointed and entrusted with the role, a principal must fulfill the necessary requirements (Nur, et al., 2016). According to Ministerial Regulation No. 40 of 20221, the appointment of a teacher as a principal must be conducted in accordance with the specific guidelines. However, in private schools, the specific requirements for appointing a principal are determined by the regulations set forth by the respective foundations (Wau, 2009). The appointment of a principal at a private school can sometimes be influenced by the conflicts of interest within the board of foundations. Given this factor, this research will focus on understanding the dynamics of conflicts in private schools.

Conflicts in schools often have identifiable causes. Among the most frequent sources of conflict identified in schools are poor communication networks, task interdependence, overlapping authority, role conflicts, inequitable treatment, and limited resources (Isabu, 2017). In the context of private schools, the management has the ability to intervene directly in conflicts and resolve them

promptly to avoid the escalation. Nonetheless, it is often observed that the management of private schools, led by a principal or a director of studies, may be unaware of the conflicts that occur within the organization, leading to detrimental consequences for the schools. It is quite concerning when a leader within the organization is unable to identify or address the internal problems that exist within the organization, as this can have negative consequences. School leaders must possess strong leadership skills to effectively manage the high pressure and demand from school owners, school boards, teachers and education personnel. Maintaining stable and harmonious operations is crucial, as failure to do so can result in increased stress and challenges.

The research questions formulated for this case study are as follows:

1.   What conflicts have occurred in the selected school?
2.   What strategies were taken to overcome the conflicts?
3.   How do schools manage to anticipate the upcoming conflicts?

Conflicts are an inevitable aspect of any organization, including schools. When the school leaders are able to effectively address and overcome the conflicts it does not only help to resolve the immediate issues, but also contributes to the growth and development of their skills. Mastering the art of conflict resolution, influences leadership maturity and prepares the school leaders to tackle future challenges in the dynamic landscape of education.

Literature Review

Definitions of Conflict

Conflict is a natural outcome of human interactions and the establishment of social connections (Laue, 1990). Conflicts between humans have been a part of their history, even dating back to the primitive era (Aminu & Marfo, 2010). Humans are social creatures, therefore, they engage in a multitude of formal and informal relationships within society. In the context of organizations, schools provide a real example where people are required to interact and work together in the field of education. Therefore, it is necessary to clarify whether the nature of conflict in schools can be equated with the context of conflict in society in general. The following paragraphs will focus on the meaning of the conflict.

Many scholars have made significant contributions to the interpretation of conflict, both from the early literature to the recent ones. It is important to look at the word conflict from different perspectives since not all situations generate the same levels of confusion (Okotoni & Okotoni, 2003). The selected early literature provides diverse viewpoints on the explanation of conflict. Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (1997) perceive the conflict as a condition in which distinct human

groups oppose one another due to different end goals. In addition, conflict also can be defined as a competition between two or more parties on deficient resources, capabilities, and reputation (Laue, 1990). Rahim (1983) explained that conflict is a social phenomenon arising from debates and controversies within the context of interpersonal relationships. The recent literature also attempts to provide a clear definition of conflict on display. It is defined as the manifestation of disparities in values, views, thoughts, and needs among individuals (Deutsch, 2006). According to DeNisia and Griffin (2001), conflict arises when two parties have different perceptions, resulting in inconvenience and friction between them. Yaras and Gunduzalp (2021) described conflict as a type of disagreement that arises among individuals and teams which negatively affect the fulfilment of their psychological, physical, and social needs.

Based on the above definitions provided by scholars, it can be concluded that conflict represents a state of disharmony within human relationships, arising from lack of shared understanding, action, and interests. As for the societal context, conflict may differ, ranging from narrow to broad, including both in formal and informal settings. In the conceptual framework, conflicts can occur between two individuals as friends, families, neighbours, and as well as organizations such as schools or at a wider circle, involving entire countries.

As a result, organizations run by diverse communities, like schools, inevitably encounter conflicts. There is an expression that says, "different strokes for different folks," which can be referred to various stakeholders involved in education, including school leaders, staff, teachers, parents, and students – each of whom may have different ways and perspectives of various matters. Bronfenbrenner's theory regarding the ecological system has been widely applied in many studies to prove that education cannot be understood from just one dimension (Paquette & Ryan, 2011). Education extends beyond the confines of classrooms, covering various factors such as peers, families, social conditions, economic systems, laws, culture, and even history. Considering conflicts within this context, it is not surprising that schools serve as breeding grounds for such disagreements. Effective school management and good leadership are crucial in addressing and resolving these issues.

Understanding Conflicts in Schools: The Levels and Causes

Having established the vulnerability of schools in the previous section, it is evident that schools involve multiple entities striving to cultivate unity within the realm of education. However, the primitive causes of frequent clashes among these entities have yet to be explained. This section gives a comprehensive explanation

on various levels of conflicts and the specific factors that cause conflicts within the school environment.

Acquiring a deeper understanding of the levels of conflict in schools is crucial, considering that schools function as organized institutions within a defined structure. Exploring the levels of conflict is important in identifying the root causes, analysing, and finding the best possible approaches to address them at their core. Driving from various sources, it can be concluded that conflicts in such schools can be categorized into six levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, intra-group, inter-group, intra-organizational, individual, and institutional.

Intrapersonal conflict happens within the schools when an individual confronts ideas which are contradictory to his/her own beliefs (Rahim, 1986). The main cause of this intrapersonal conflict is a tense and frustrating atmosphere which leaves a negative impact on an individual's work performance at school. According to George and Jones (2006), interpersonal conflict is the most common and tangible type in schools. This type of conflict occurs when people express their disagreement with decisions or policies made by a more authoritative party. Feelings of anger, fear, and distrust generally arise as a result of such conflicts. A real-life example illustrating interpersonal conflict is when teachers resign or are absent because they feel they are not in line with the principal's decision.

Thirdly, intra-group conflict arises when members of a group encounter a mismatch between the agreed-upon decisions and their individual expectations (George & Jones, 2006). For instance, in the classroom setting, conflicts arise between teachers and a minority of students who do not agree with the collective decisions made during class discussions. Such conflicts can actually impact the overall performance and dynamics of the class as a team. Fourth level of conflict, inter-group conflict, described as a result of competition between different groups within the school environment (Molla et al., 2020). A practical example of this conflict can be observed between the academic and the administrative division where disagreement arises in selecting the learning materials for students.

The fifth level of conflict, as explained by Molla et.al. (2020), is intra-organizational conflict, occurring among a specific group or department within the same school system. For instance, there is a disagreement among English teachers, because each individual has a different way of teaching and assigns students with different workloads. Such disagreements can lead to conflicts within that specific department. Lastly, the significant role of praise is very large to suppress the occurrence of institutional and individual conflicts (du Plessis & Cain, 2017). For example, it is important for a teacher to express direct appreciation and gratitude towards the principal for their cooperation, when a principal approves his request. Failing to do so, may ruin the relationship between them within the school. Even

though the levels of conflict vary, they all revolve around two key elements: individual conflicts and collective conflicts.

In order to find out the root causes of conflict, Mullins (2010) formulated them into six factors: insufficient resources, unsatisfying communications, interconnected tasks, overlapping powers, ambiguous role, and unfair treatment. These six causes mainly represent situations that are the outcomes of unfairness, lack of clarity, and independence. When one party receives good treatment while the other party does not, it can lead to conflicts. Similarly, poor communication among school members can result in numerous misunderstandings that will eventually lead to a game of blame rather than maintaining a professional approach. Dependence on a certain scale can also trigger conflict within schools. When the output of a department is heavily dependent on the performance of other departments, any shortcomings can lead to conflicts, and will certainly impact the overall school performance.

Other scholarly sources share a similar perception in regard to the causes of conflict in schools. Msila (2012) highlights factors such as mismatched goals, inaccessible resources, expected results, and school structures as contributing causes. Bankouskaya (2012) emphasizes that structural aspects are the main causes of conflict in schools. These are classified in eight points such as expectations, responsibilities, uncertainty, dissimilarities, power dynamics, interconnection, purposes, and resources. While other scholars perceive the causes of conflict either from a more general or a specific lens, the elemental foundations still remain consistent with what Mullins proposed.

The Perception and Implications of Conflict within Institutions

The existence of conflict within an institution is mostly regarded as a negative phenomenon, as it is commonly seen as a sign of dysfunction. However, scholars like Robbins (1978) and Manesis et al. (2019) present three distinct perspectives on interpreting conflict within an institution. Traditionally, conflict is seen as a negative phenomenon, an indication that an institution is not functioning well. On the other hand, from a human relations standpoint, conflict is considered a normal and unavoidable occurrence that has the potential to yield positive outcomes. From an interactive perspective, conflict is considered as the fundamental element of organizational growth and positive performance of teams. Based on the modern viewpoint, organizations that do not experience conflict likely cannot adapt well to changes. In similar terms, experiencing conflict within an organization is not always negative and can serve as an incentive for growth and adaptation.

The implications of conflict will likely become heavily negative in schools when the conflicts are not addressed immediately. When the conflicts are left unresolved, they have the potential to escalate into more substantial problems within the school environment. Omisore and Abiodun (2014) emphasized that conflicts within institutions can give rise to problems in various aspects, and have serious implications on its members such as physical health, mental health, and employee's behaviour. In particular, conflicts have been identified as one of the contributing factors that can influence teachers' decision to quit their jobs (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). Catana (2015), furthermore added that conflict can leave a significant impact on the quality of the learning environment for students. Mainly, conflicts that arise from issues among principals and teachers can have destructive implications on the students' learning process, no matter how well they suppress those conflicts. Additionally, conflicts extend beyond the internal relationships, it has the potential to affect the overall relationship between schools and stakeholders. Fundamentally, the negative implications of conflicts in schools are extensive that hinder the smooth operation of the educational institution.

Omisore and Abiodun (2014) also presented a different perspective that when conflicts are appropriately managed, can improve trust and strengthen cooperation between the stakeholders and schools. Conflicts may actually contribute to the favorable development and growth of an institution when they are addressed with the proper mentality and resolved through acceptable solutions. Conflicts can motivate organizations to re-evaluate their strategies and be prepared for change. It has the potential to promote a healthy competition among individuals and maintain a balance of creativity. As a result, conflicts can affect employee job satisfaction and the organization can benefit from the diverse perspectives that arise from conflicts, leading to improved performance, and a culture of continuous improvement.

To emphasize the importance of the issue, it is essential to analyse school conflicts from different perspectives both from the level of the conflict and as well as from the levels of causes and implications. It is important to understand that school conflicts do not solely revolve around teachers, they can arise from other internal factors, including staff members and even the principal. In the context of external factors, conflicts may arise as a result of various circumstances involving parents and a wider range of stakeholders. It is essential to investigate the causes of the conflict thoroughly and adopt an appropriate and effective approach to resolve it in order to restore harmony within the school community.

Effective School Conflict Resolution Management and Leadership Strategies

As outlined in the previous section, the implications of conflict can be both positive and negative. The next paragraph on dealing with school conflicts places more emphasis on active management in conflict resolution rather than solely focusing on prevention or eradication of conflict.

Dunham (2003) proposed several stages in conflict management. The initial stage involves a careful examination of the conflict's nature, which aligns with the six levels of conflict that were discussed previously. These levels include intrapersonal, interpersonal, intra-group, inter-group, intra-organizational, individual, and institutional conflicts. The second stage involves adopting an appropriate approach to respond to the conflict. The third stage, known as pre-negotiation, serves as a preparation phase before taking an actual action for the negotiation process. In practical action, this phase provides an opportunity for the principals to make sure that the necessary conditions required are met to ensure the success of the upcoming stage. This upcoming stage involves negotiation, during which in-depth discussions are expected to occur. It is important for all parties involved to maintain a neutral and objective stance so that the existing conflict can be addressed effectively. Finally, the stage concludes with post-negotiation, where the final decisions are made, and the conflict is marked as resolved. In this phase, the desired outcome is for the involved parties to gain benefits or have their needs met sufficiently.

Griffin and Moorhead (2007) propose a different approach consisting of five strategies for dealing with school conflicts. One of the strategies is accommodation, which places a strong emphasis on the importance of maintaining human relationships. In such cases, this approach is beneficial when the primary focus is on maintaining a relationship despite the presence of conflicts. So, the focus shifts towards neglecting individuals' needs, as people choose to prioritize maintaining relationships. This approach often involves choosing the most appropriate stance to promote cooperation and cultivate the seeds of harmony, both of which are regarded as the fundamental aspects of accommodating strategy.

In contrast to the previous approach, the second strategy, avoidance, revolves around a passive approach. Cooperation is not a priority in this point, and conflicts may persist, resulting in potential harm to individuals or groups involved. While this approach may, at some point, help maintain a prioritized relationship, it does not lead to a complete resolution of conflicts.

The third approach is competition, which emphasizes on a win-lose solution when dealing with conflicts. Therefore, this strategy is famous for its aggressive

conflict resolution approach. It often involves the authoritarian behaviour of an uncooperative and intimidating leader. On the positive side, if carried out properly, this approach then can lead to relatively swift conflict resolution because no compromise is needed. However, the negative aspect is that this approach may trigger hatred towards the leader or those who apply it.

Collaboration, as the fourth approach, involves an effort to resolve conflicts through the pursuit of a win-win solution. To achieve that, collaboration and multiple negotiation processes are required. Therefore, even though this method focuses on the interests of all parties, it may not be effective in dealing with urgent conflicts which require immediate decision-making.

The final strategy is compromise. This method is suitable when all parties hold similar power status and share a strong desire for resolution. Therefore, conflict resolution through compromise often ends in a win-lose or lose situation, where each party should give up certain aspects to reach a middle ground and achieve a resolution.

Every organization, including schools, encounters conflicts that need to be addressed. In such cases, there is no quick approach or strategy. The most suitable course of action depends on the specific context of the conflict itself within the school and individuals involved in the resolution process. Other factors such as timing also affect how a conflict will be taken care of.

Research Methodology

The primary objective of this study is to explore conflicts experienced by school leaders and members in private secondary schools, as well as to examine their management and leadership strategies.

Therefore, the most appropriate choice for this research is qualitative methodology. Qualitative research relies on narratives, opinions, thoughts, and emotions of the participants rather than focusing on numerical data or statistics (Creswell & Guettermann, 2019). Acquiring consent from participants is one of the main priorities before conducting interviews as ethics forms the fundamental foundation of the research process. Researchers hold a moral responsibility to uphold respect, confidentiality and accurate representation of the participants' experiences and viewpoints throughout the study.

Two private secondary schools, namely School A and School B, were selected in this study. In order to obtain permission from School A, the researchers initiated an approach through a telephone conversation. A representative from the school agreed to participate in the interview on a suitable day, taking into consideration the availability of the school members. On the designated day of the

interview, the researchers provided School A with a written overview detailing the research topic, as well as other additional requirements for data collection. The participants from School A, mainly consisted of education consultants who carried comprehensive knowledge about the school, as well as other school members, including the principal, staff, and teachers, demonstrated excellent cooperation throughout the session. During the interview, the researchers applied a dual approach to data documentation. They utilized a phone to record the entire session, and as well as took notes. Gay et al. (2011) emphasized that taking notes during interviews potentially impacts the accuracy of the data. However, in this case, the participants expressed feelings of uncertainty and made a polite request to the researchers to write down important details when discussing their experiences related to school conflicts. The interview duration extended to approximately two hours due to an event at the school on that particular day. The main participant of the interview was the education consultant, who played a central role in providing insights and perspectives while other school members participated and contributed from time to time based on their availability and involvement in the topic being discussed.

For School B, the researchers followed a similar approach. However, one notable difference was that School B requested the researchers to provide an official research permit letter signed by the faculty. The interview at School B was conducted in the office of the Director of Education with the knowledge and presence of the head of the foundation, the school principal, and the teachers. The duration of the interview was also around two hours with other school members temporarily joining and contributing to the discussion. Before commencing the interview, the researchers obtained the Director's consent to record all conversations for the purpose of the subsequent data analysis.

The language used during the interviews was Bahasa Indonesia. The researchers informed the participants that the final research paper would be written in English. In addition, the participants were assured that they would be given an opportunity to review the interview findings and the research paper before its official submission. This participant-checking process is crucial to increase the trustworthiness of the qualitative study. The researchers also place a strong emphasis on ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of all data related to schools as institutions, participants, and individual members of school. To maintain the privacy of all parties, and the integrity of the research process, all identifying information was replaced with pseudonyms in the research findings and subsequent publications. The data analysis process was done by transcribing the interviews and involving several steps of manual thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Themes related to the management and leadership practices in

addressing school conflicts emerged through the analysis of data collected from these two schools. These themes will be further elaborated upon and presented as the key findings of the study. By delving into these topics, the study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of successful conflict resolution strategies used by schools, making valuable contributions to the current volume of information in this subject.

Initially, the researchers requested school documents, particularly those related to financial reports, for analysis. The researchers believed that those documents were important because school conflicts are interconnected with financial matters and other essential aspects that greatly determine how schools demonstrate good effective management to stakeholders, especially parents. School A did not raise any objections to this request. However, School B expressed hesitation because it was not certain whether the head of school and the head of the foundation would agree. As a result, the researchers solely relied on interviews as the prime source of findings for this study.

Before revealing the outcome of the study, the researchers will provide an explanation of the organizational structures in each school, ensuring that readers have a comprehensive understanding of the contextual background. School A, located in Bekasi which has kindergarten, elementary, and junior high schools. The school is under the leadership of a director and follows a hierarchical structure with two main divisions: functional and structural. The functional division includes several departments that play integral roles in the school's operations such as the human capital division, quality assurance division, treasury division, and public relations division. Each Department is in charge of a certain role and contributes to the effective leadership and operation of School A. There are principals assigned to each level including kindergarten, elementary, and middle schools. Supporting the principals are vice principals and teachers who work collaboratively to ensure the smooth functioning of their respective educational units. On the other hand, School B is located in Depok that consists of a broader range of school levels, including kindergarten, elementary, middle school, and high school. Just like School A, School B is led by a director and follows a hierarchical structure with functional and structural divisions. However, unlike School A, School B does not employ educational consultants as part of its organizational structure. With various levels of education provided in both schools, it is important to mention that this study specifically focused on exploring the school conflicts at the secondary level, specifically junior high school. This level was selected due to identification of similar conflicts found occurring within this particular educational stage. Therefore, the data collected was assumed compatible and relevant for the thematic analysis process.

Findings & Discussion

This research focuses on the analysis of conflicts, their categorization, and the identification of strategies for conflict resolution. The two schools involved in this research have been given the pseudonyms "School A" and "School B" to ensure confidentiality. This research aims to analyze the nature of conflicts in these schools, categorizing and identifying strategies used by them in conflict resolution. It examined the schools' conflict resolution approaches to the strategies demonstrated in existing literature. In addition, the schools have implemented preventive strategies in the form of policies to address the future conflicts. The following sections will offer a full overview of the particular challenges experienced by the two schools, the approaches used to resolve such conflicts, and the procedures used to resolve future ones.

Sources of Conflicts Found in Schools A and B

The first theme that emerged in this research was related to the selection of a new principal at the junior high school in both School A and School B. The conflict originated from poor communication between the principal and the foundation, resulting in the individual to adhere to the ideas that were against his/her beliefs (Rahim, 1986). In School A, the conflict arose due to the renewal of the new leadership policy made by the foundation. This policy was interpreted by the principal as diminishing his/her authority, leading to misunderstandings and an unjust decision. The principal perceived that his/her expertise and experience were not being recognized adequately or valued, which resulted in tension and conflicts within the school.

> "At that time, the principal had served for 5 years. The owner of the school (the foundation) wanted to rejuvenate the school leadership. The current principal of the school was promoted and replaced with a new principal. It was unfair actually and also the current principal felt wronged by the foundation."

The aim of the foundation in School A with this leadership rejuvenation policy was well-intended. However, the execution of the new policy was made in a hurry and implemented without proper planning and effective communication among all the school members. This means of communication plays an important role in making decisions in situations like these, especially during leadership transition, as clear and effective communication helps to ensure all stakeholders are well-informed, and understand the rationale behind decisions. Without proper communication channels and transparent dialogue, even the good news can easily be misconstrued or interpreted negatively by the individuals involved.

The conflict that occurred in School B fell into the interpersonal category of conflict. According to George and Jones (2006), interpersonal conflict is not only the most common one, but also the most tangible type experienced within educational institutions. Interpersonal conflicts arise when people show disagreement with a decision or policies made by those in position of greater authority. In the context of School B, the conflict was caused by communication breakdowns and friction among the individuals involved. To be more specific, the renewal of the new policy for the junior high school leadership was not approved by a certain group of teachers within the school. The quality of the principal selected under this policy came into question, further fueling the conflict.

> "Some teachers at School B expressed their feelings of disagreement with the choice of a new principal because they felt that there was a more suitable candidate who was overlooked in the selection process."

Every member of the school foundation considers a thorough evaluation process before making a decision. Transparent communication becomes critical, particularly when it involves major changes, such as the selection of school principals. The disagreement expressed by the teachers at School B was a clear indication that the foundation needed to be more open in this matter. By providing the reasons behind the selection of a particular individual as the new principal, teachers and other members of the school community could better understand the decision. Maintaining transparency is a reasonable approach to avoid the formation of public assumptions. In School B, certain teachers had concerns that the selection of the new principal was influenced by negotiations rather than merit and qualifications. This caused friction in the new principal's position. While it may not be mandatory to be transparent about school management and leadership, it is deeded to be preferably honest and open when it involves the selection of an individual to a significant role.

The second conflict that arose in School A and School B revolves around the integrity of the school and its personnel. This conflict can be categorized as both individual and institutional conflicts, as highlighted by du Plessis and Cain (2017). In the context of School A, the conflict that emerged from the issue of overlapping power led to a sense of entitlement, with the principal acting as if he/she was a 'King' figure. This enabled the principal to take on multiple interconnected tasks, effectively handling everything within the school. This concentration of responsibilities created an environment conducive to corruption, as there were limited checks and balances in place. The central theme of this conflict is about power, as highlighted by Mullins (2010) and Bankouskaya (2012).

> "The principal acted independently and never consulted with the staff and teachers in regard to any matters. In fact, the principal immediately

informed the foundation about the new decision without consulting anyone. Even when it came to managing the Bantuan Operasional Sekolah (BOS) funds, the principal handled everything by himself. There were no transparent reports or sense of responsibility for accountability, leaving everyone in the dark about how the money was being utilized."

The introduction of the leadership rejuvenation plan was triggered by an outbreak of excessive power concentration in School A, where the principal stayed in office for an extended period of time. Assuming to be almost in a 'King' role, the principal regularly made decisions without engaging other parties. This leadership approach resulted in an interconnected network of tasks where everything fell completely under the principal's control. Therefore, the misuse of the BOS funds happened. The school principal failed to meet the expectations of the foundation's administrators when it was required to submit a report of accountability. During that period, the director and treasurer held the responsibility of approving the allocation of the annual budget for each unit. In addition to that, the school principal was also engaged in several fraudulent activities in the name of BOS, without reporting any of it to the school director.

According to Bankouskaya (2012), the conflict in School B was due to structural factors such as expectations and responsibilities. This was specifically related to the appointment of a non-permanent teacher for the Music subject.

> "We encountered disciplinary issues with our music teacher in the past. The teacher often came late or occasionally requested permission to skip classes, which had a detrimental effect on the student's progress and was heavily unsatisfactory for the school. Apart from being preoccupied with other schedules, it appeared that the teacher did not have enough enthusiasm to fulfil the role of an effective educator."

During the recruitment process, the school explicitly communicated its expectations and the responsibilities to the music teacher. However, in practice, it became evident that the music teacher was unable to fulfill school's satisfaction, consequently affecting the students' learning progress. Such conflict can also arise when there is a mismatch of goals between a teacher and a school (Msila, 2012).

The third conflict emerged in both schools when the teachers expressed their resistance to the replacement of the school principal. This type of conflict occurred at the intragroup level, where members of a group felt that the decision made did not match their expectations (George & Jones, 2006). This conflict had a significant impact on the collaborative work within the team. Both Msila and Bankouskaya (2012) identified expectations as the contributing cause. In the case of School A, the school stated that:

"Out of the 42 teachers in school, a moving number of 26 decided to leave with the departure of the principal. These departed teachers were the school's best educators and played crucial roles in our bilingual program. All because these teachers protested against the principal being replaced."

After the dismissal of the school principal, a large number of resigning teachers argued that the foundation board failed to enforce good governance practices at School A. Perhaps, from the teachers' point of view, the former principal had implemented a system that they found more favourable. However, from the foundation's standpoint, the implementation of the new policy was a significant leap forward aimed at ensuring the school's organizational structure to operate in a healthy manner. Meanwhile, School B stated that:

"While there were still teachers at School B who diligently fulfilled their daily duties and adhered to their responsibilities, a faction of teachers who disagreed with the appointment of the new principal decided to go on strike for several days."

The similarity of the conflict in both schools highlights the fact that decisions that have been agreed upon by the schools and their members may not be considered unanimous. There will always be voices with different expectations. Differences of opinion are very natural in an organizational context. Indeed, conflicts can intensify when a provocateur intervenes. In an organizational context, a provocateur is someone who incites or stimulates people to take certain actions. The conflict condition at School A was exacerbated by the presence of the principal whose leadership approach tended to be charismatic. This further worsened the conflicts within the school. Similarly, at School B, the conflict was intensified by a faction of internal teachers who exaggerated different opinions regarding the new principal as a form of protest.

School Strategy and Conflict Management

Dunham (2003) proposed a comprehensive framework consisting of several stages in conflict management. These stages include examining the nature of conflicts, responding to the conflicts in an appropriate manner, pre-negotiation (preparation before engaging in actual negotiations), negotiating, conducting thorough discussions in the process – post-negotiation stage marks the point where decisions are finally made and the conflict is considered resolved. Griffin and Moorhead (2007) added to the understanding of conflict management by introducing various stages that can be applied. These stages include accommodation, avoidance, competition, collaboration, and compromise.

Based on the conflicts that occurred in School A and School B, it is evident that there were similarities and differences in strategies applied, considering the specific conditions of each school. In the initial conflict concerning the election of a new school principal, both school A and School B applied a win-lose strategy. However, it is worth noting that his approach could also evoke anger among those affected by the strategy (Griffin and Moorhead, 2007). In this case of School B, the foundation's intention to implement job rotation periodically for a healthier and better school organization is commendable. This practice allows for adjustment based on the prevailing conditions and performance demonstrated by the principal. By periodically rotating positions, the foundation aims to promote a more dynamic and effective leadership structure within the school.

Schools have adopted various strategies to overcome the second type of conflict while maintaining the integrity of the school and its personnel. School A, for instance, adopted a win-lose approach when confronting such conflicts. In this case, if someone failed to comply with the rules or did not agree with a new policy set by the chairman of the foundation, then the win-lose strategy was swiftly implemented as it offered a quicker solution. On the other hand, School B, which had non-permanent teachers, followed a multi-step process to tackle these conflicts. Initially, they adopted a personalized approach, utilizing both written and non-written methods to address the issue. Subsequently, a semi-formal coaching process was initiated to motivate the individuals involved. Finally, the school made a decision regarding their continued presence within the institution, assessing whether they should stay or leave based on the outcomes of the previous steps. As a result, the conflicts experienced, School B learned and decided to focus on recruiting the right human resources. To achieve this, School B defined their hiring criteria by prioritizing graduates whose majors were aligned with the subjects taught at the school. In addition to that, they specifically sought help from the Faculty of Education, as it indicated a specialized background in the teaching field. In other words, candidates with an innate "educating spirit," those who were teachers at heart and dedicated to the profession.

Finally, in response to teachers' resistance, School A prioritized the continuity of teaching and applied an avoidance strategy without engaging in negotiation. As a result, the school immediately recruited new teachers to cover the shortage that arose due to the mass resignation of existing teachers. In contrast, School B adopted an accommodation strategy to address the concerns raised by the teachers. The foundation members arranged an open discussion, bringing all the teachers together. During this discussion, the foundation members sat down together with the teachers, provided evidence of the principal's selection process and emphasized that the decision to select a new principal was based on

considerations of quality rather than negotiations. This transparent approach helped foster understanding among teachers, and eventually, they all came to support the decision made by the foundation.

Dealing with Upcoming Conflicts

In the following paragraphs, the researchers managed to explore how the two schools see challenges and conflicts that may potentially occur in the future. Apart from that, the two schools also offered insights into strategies that might be applied to address and anticipate any potential conflicts that may arise.

School Competition

The previous sections have provided detailed accounts of the types of conflicts that School A and School B have encountered – as well as their respective strategies for effectively managing these. However, it is equally important to explore how these schools strategically approach to avoid the future conflicts. Although both schools did not prefer to dwell on the notion of conflicts, they acknowledged that it was inevitable and have demonstrated that conflicts can serve as incentive to push their boundaries and foster growth within the school community.

In today's educational landscape, schools have turned into commodities within the business realm, pushing them to strive for excellence in comparison to their competitors (Efferi, 2014). It has become imperative for schools to grasp the evolving needs of stakeholders and stay attuned to the latest developments in education. If schools lack changes and innovations, parents and students might begin to question the schools' ability to contribute effectively to the future. The conflicts that arise in this context often manifest at the inter-organization level, as they can be categorized as instances of business competition (Lumineau et. al., 2015).

Efferi (2014) in his work stated that the process of education is one of continuous mutual influence and long-term sustainability. As educational service providers, schools bear the responsibility of learning and taking the initiative to increase stakeholders' satisfaction. As a result, the implementation of educational services marketing strategy becomes more important to not only to win in the competition among educational institutions but also to enhance the development rate of acceleration in the overall quality and professionalism of educational administration (Efferi, 2014).

Inter-organizational conflict, as highlighted by Lumineau et al. (2015), is a dynamic within the modern business strategy that includes behavioral

contradictions such as cooperation and competition. It is through the lens of competition and collaboration strategy as emphasized by Griffin and Moorhead (2007), that how both schools approached to tackle conflicts. Both School A and School B implement a competitive approach that emphasizes a win-lose strategy. As private educational institutions, they must recognize the importance of attracting students and be firm in their efforts. The schools encourage their staff members to provide excellent services while maintaining their Islamic values. Parents have various concerns to consider when selecting a school for their children. At least, School A and School B always keep their efforts to ensure that parents receive excellent service and experience professionalism when addressing any concerns or complaints they may have.

The education consultant commented on the competition with other schools as follows:

"For parents this area possesses various advantages when it comes to selecting schools for their children. The options allow them to choose the right school that meets their standards and preferences. This opens an intensifying competition space among schools in this locality. To retain their status as their favorite choice for parents and students, schools must continuously strive to upgrade and innovate."

For school A, the foundation aims to maintain the quality of Islamic education while also distinguishing itself by bilingual values. Therefore, the school has implemented a unique approach where all customer service representatives are trained to communicate in English at school, particularly for hospitality purposes. School A also cooperates with a third-party organization to ensure excellence as an Islamic bilingual school. In addition, the school implements *the Ummi* method, a renowned approach in reciting the Quran, which adds a unique dimension to its curriculum. The consistency of their program makes them one of the most popular schools in the area. Based on Data Pokok Pendidikan Kemendikbud (2022), School A currently enrolls a total of 583 students across all levels of education, with 78 students at the secondary level. In close proximity to School A, there are 32 other primary schools, both public and private, as well as 15 lower secondary schools. These statistics emphasize the intense competition among schools in the area, with the tangible tension and conflicts arising within this competitive circle.

Regarding the competition, representatives from School B expressed their perspective as follows:

"This school has been around for a long time and built a solid reputation within the community. However, we acknowledge the emergence of numerous new schools that are rapidly gaining recognition for their high-quality education. Despite this, one aspect that sets our school apart is the

unwavering trust placed in us by parents and students alike. We are committed to consistently provide the best services and remain open to criticism and suggestions. We are honored to have students enrolled with us, ranging from kindergarten to high school."

As one of the prominent schools in the Depok area, School B is committed to uphold its exceptional quality through the tireless efforts of its dedicated staff and facility. Since its establishment in 1985, the school's unwavering dedication has yielded remarkable results, making it parents' preferred choice around the area. School B has earned a good reputation and is regarded as one of the favorite schools in the area. Even though established and maintained for more than 30 years, the presence of competition surrounding the school in the area, cannot be disregarded. The school consistently develops programs to ensure preparedness for each new academic year, especially in their core subjects such as English and Islamic values. School B's competitors can be said to be countless. However, the number of students in School B is still higher than other competitors, a total of 289 students at the secondary level according to Data Pokok Pendidikan Kemendikbud (2022). The key to School B's success lies in the trust they have earned from their stakeholders. They prioritize effective communication by conducting periodic surveys to gauge the needs of both parents and students, and make efforts to fulfill those needs accordingly. Similarly, they actively seek out and address any criticism or complaints from stakeholders, demonstrating their commitment to continuous improvement.

Inter-organizational conflicts are not solely defined by competition; rather, collaboration also plays an important role in resolving issues. While it may seem challenging, it is important to recognize that competitors can also become partners (Lumineau et al, 2015). These paradoxical dynamics can be seen at various levels. For instance, School A promotes one of its competitors as the recommended school for senior high school, given that School A currently lacks the specific level of education. Of course, such external collaboration is based on certain agreements to avoid misunderstandings. Another example can be seen during School A's open house events, where they frequently organize sports or academic competitions and invite other schools within the area to join the event.

School B, having well-established itself more than three decades, has gained high recognition for its high quality, which is acknowledged by parents who entrust their children's education to the school. As a result, School B places a strong emphasis on students' retention, ensuring that students' progress to the next educational stages within their institution. This emphasizes on retaining students fosters robust internal collaboration across different education levels within School B, creating an inclusive educational environment.

Fair Policies

In nature, future conflicts in schools will not only rise from external sources but also within the school environment itself. To avoid that, the board of the foundation is committed to implement fair policies for all members of the school community. School A and School B are actively trying to implement an atmosphere that embraces inclusiveness and collaboration by engaging with individuals and groups who are willing to contribute more to the overall development of the schools. Fair policies can be different between school A and School B, it depends on the context.

In order to retain its best teachers, school A has applied fair policies in terms of raising the yearly salary with the increase rate of up to 3-5%. The school's motto is to ensure that its staff feel comfortable and secure in terms of their financial well-being. This approach is well in line with the school's accommodation strategy which emphasizes more on positive human relationships within the institution. The school's efforts extend beyond just education. It embraces a leadership renewal program which aims to provide opportunities for potential leaders within the school to develop their careers yet further while simultaneously contributing to the overall development of the institutions. These initiatives are essential in keeping up with the changing times ensuring that the school adapts to the demands of a rapidly evolving world. In order to avoid any instances of corruption from reoccurring, School A has also implemented a transparency policy. This policy ensures that the cash flow is well-managed by the treasury with a clear and open record of all transactions. Particularly at the secondary level where each unit is required to maintain transparency and be prepared for audits conducted by the auditory team. This approach proves to be beneficial in understanding how the allocated budget is being utilized and it impacts on the school's development.

In the context of School B, the key to maintaining the school's quality lies in the collaboration between teachers and the principal in creating programs. This policy has been implemented by School B since its establishment and has been maintained well for the past 30 years. The head of the foundation pays regular visits to the school to collaborate closely with the director of education and the principal ensuring that any issues are addressed promptly or at least checked thoroughly. The presence and active involvement of the head of the foundation brings a sense of warmth and comfort among the staff as the leaders always provide clear guidance in tackling challenges that arise within the school.

Collaboration plays a significant role in both schools. It is evident in their approach to determine new programs that guide them better through the entire

academic year. They hold annual meetings where marketing strategies are formulated, values are reinforced, the needs of each department are addressed, and the academic quality is maintained. These meetings involve both teachers and school leaders, allowing them to gain a comprehensive understanding of the school's vision and work together towards its fulfillment. By capturing the bigger picture, they ensure that all stakeholders are in line and actively contribute to the school's overall progress.

Maintaining Stakeholders' Trust

Last but certainly not least, maintaining the trust of stakeholders is of utmost importance in ensuring the quality of education at schools. If they fail to cultivate the strong seeds of relationships with any of its stakeholders, conflicts may arise. According to Edwards Sallis (2002), the circle of education or school involves four key stakeholders. The primary stakeholder refers to those who enjoy the service, which in this case are students. The secondary stakeholder includes parents and education authorities. The third-party stakeholders contribute to the growth and development of the school. The last crucial stakeholder group that forms a school is the society. When a conflict arises, it typically indicates an intra-organizational conflict, as defined by Molla (2020), which occurs within the school system and involves conflicts between the organization and its stakeholders.

School A and School B both acknowledge the importance of maintaining the stakeholders' trust, and it's reasonable to assume that this understanding extends to all schools. Collaboration and accommodation are effective strategies in addressing this concern. However, if any of the stakeholders are not well-maintained, conflicts are likely to arise. It is crucial for both Schools A and B to address this matter seriously and with great care. In both schools, parents are the most important stakeholders within the education system. An organization known as *Persatuan Orang Tua Murid dan Guru* (POMG) exists in every school, led by the chosen parents. This organization or group can also influence the policy determination of the school. Schools need to accommodate the desires and expectations of parents in order to create a well-performed institution. School leaders must actively seek input from parents and consider their perspectives in order to gain their trust and create a sense of belonging.

Limitation & Future Research

Certain limitations have been encountered during the data collection process which is the primary constraint. Originally, there was an expectation where various individuals within the schools, including principals and teachers, would

consistently participate in the interviews. However, instead of directly involving these stakeholders, both schools chose to send their spokespersons as their representatives for the most interview segments. Despite this challenge, there is significant potential to expand this study by including public schools, delving into the intricacies of conflict, and exploring more specific approaches to management and leadership strategies.

Conclusion

Conflict is an unavoidable aspect of human interaction, and it occurs in various settings. In the context of education, particularly in private schools in Indonesia, where the bureaucratic structure is often simpler compared to public schools, decision-making processes in regard to conflict resolution can be executed more swiftly. This efficiency is primarily facilitated by the proactive involvement of schools' foundation and principle in assuming leadership roles and formulating effective strategies to address conflicts. This is because conflict can yield positive implications for schools when management is able to analgise the root causes of the issues and effectively address them together.

This study found that the conflicts occurring in Schools A and B were related to the selection process of a new principal, concerns about the schools' integrity, conduct of their personnel, and as well as resistance from teachers. The strategy applied to address these conflicts involved adopting a win-lose position approach because this method allowed a swift resolution of the issues at hand. Looking ahead, both schools anticipate future conflicts in the context of school competition, the implementation of equitable policies, and the preservation of stakeholders' trust.

These conflicts of this nature are recurrent occurrences in private schools – either primary or secondary. This research has the potential to serve as a valuable reference for other private primary or secondary schools encountering similar types of conflicts. In addition, it provides valuable guidance in addressing such conflicts effectively. Aspiring school leaders, especially teachers will find this research particularly beneficial, as it offers valuable insights into conflict management for the purpose of school improvement.

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