



Principal Decision Making for Organizational Conflict Management in Indonesian Islamic Secondary Schools

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Abstract: Decision-making is a fundamental leadership competency that determines the effectiveness of organizational conflict management in educational institutions. This study aims to analyze principals' decision-making processes, identify the decision-making styles employed, examine the organizational implications of these decisions, and formulate a conceptual model for conflict management in Indonesian secondary schools. A qualitative multisite phenomenological design was employed at SMP Global Islamic Boarding School Karanganyar and SMP Sunan Kalijaga Pogalan Trenggalek. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis involving principals, vice principals, foundation representatives, guidance counselors, and administrative staff. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, followed by within-site and cross-site analyses. The findings reveal that principals implement a systematic decision-making process comprising problem identification, conflict data collection and analysis, development of decision alternatives, selection of the most appropriate alternative, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up actions. Three dominant decision-making styles were identified, namely rational, cautious, and conceptual styles, which collectively support effective organizational conflict management. The decisions generated significant implications for schools, teachers, students, parents, and the wider community, encouraging principals to establish preventive programs that strengthen organizational harmony and educational quality. The study proposes the Resolutive–Harmonious Decision-Making Model Based on Dialogic Communication, integrating rational decision-making, participatory dialogue, and Islamic ethical values to create sustainable organizational harmony. This model extends existing educational leadership and conflict management theories by emphasizing that leadership effectiveness should be evaluated not only by conflict resolution but also by the principal's ability to establish a collaborative, child-friendly, and harmonious organizational environment.

Keywords: Decision-Making, School Principal, Organizational Conflict Management, Educational Leadership, Dialogic Communication, Organizational Harmony.

INTRODUCTION

Decision-making is one of the most fundamental competencies in educational leadership because every policy, strategy, and managerial action undertaken by a school principal ultimately depends on the quality of decisions made. In educational organizations, decision-making extends beyond selecting among alternatives; it involves balancing institutional objectives, educational values, stakeholder expectations, and organizational dynamics. As schools become increasingly complex organizations facing rapid technological, social, and policy changes, principals are expected to make strategic decisions that not only improve organizational performance but also



prevent and resolve conflicts that may hinder educational effectiveness. Consequently, effective decision-making has become an essential indicator of successful school leadership, particularly in managing organizational conflicts that arise from differences in interests, perceptions, communication patterns, and institutional goals (Hoy & Miskel, 2013; Yukl, 2019).

Organizational conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in educational institutions because schools consist of individuals with diverse backgrounds, professional experiences, responsibilities, and expectations. Teachers, administrative staff, students, parents, and school committees interact continuously in complex organizational structures, creating opportunities for disagreements and interpersonal tensions. While conflict is often perceived negatively, contemporary organizational theories argue that conflict can serve as a catalyst for innovation, organizational learning, and continuous improvement when managed appropriately. Conversely, unresolved conflicts may reduce teacher motivation, weaken organizational commitment, disrupt communication, and ultimately affect students' learning outcomes (Robbins & Judge, 2022). Therefore, the ability of school principals to identify, analyze, and control organizational conflict through appropriate decision-making processes is increasingly recognized as a crucial component of educational leadership.

The Indonesian educational context presents unique challenges regarding organizational conflict management. Educational decentralization, curriculum reforms, digital transformation, accountability systems, and increasing public expectations have expanded the responsibilities of school principals. Rather than functioning merely as administrative managers, principals are now expected to become instructional leaders, strategic decision-makers, mediators, and organizational change agents. This transformation requires principals to balance governmental regulations, institutional objectives, teachers' professional autonomy, and community aspirations simultaneously. Consequently, decision-making has become increasingly complex because principals must integrate rational analysis, collaborative participation, ethical considerations, and contextual sensitivity in resolving organizational issues (Bush, 2020).

Herbert Simon's theory of bounded rationality provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding educational decision-making. Simon argued that decision-makers rarely possess complete information or unlimited cognitive capacity when selecting organizational alternatives.



Instead of identifying optimal solutions, leaders often choose satisfactory alternatives that accommodate organizational constraints, available information, and practical realities (Simon, 1997). Within educational organizations, school principals frequently face uncertain situations involving conflicting interests, limited resources, and urgent institutional demands. Therefore, effective decision-making depends not only on analytical competence but also on leadership experience, organizational knowledge, communication skills, and stakeholder collaboration.

Educational leadership scholars further emphasize that participatory decision-making contributes significantly to organizational effectiveness. Distributed leadership theory suggests that educational improvement cannot rely solely on individual leadership but requires collaboration among teachers, staff, students, and external stakeholders (Spillane, 2006). Likewise, instructional leadership frameworks developed by Hallinger (2011) highlight the importance of collaborative decision-making in improving school climate and sustaining educational quality. By involving teachers and other stakeholders in decision-making processes, principals may reduce resistance, strengthen organizational commitment, and minimize potential conflicts before they escalate into larger organizational problems.

Conflict management literature also demonstrates that leadership style significantly influences the effectiveness of organizational conflict resolution. Transformational leaders tend to encourage open communication, trust, collaboration, and shared organizational vision, creating positive environments for constructive conflict management (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Similarly, Yukl (2019) argues that effective leaders utilize multiple conflict management strategies depending on contextual conditions, including collaboration, accommodation, compromise, competition, and avoidance. Educational organizations require adaptive leaders capable of selecting appropriate conflict resolution approaches while maintaining institutional stability and educational quality.

Recent empirical studies consistently demonstrate a positive relationship between principal leadership, participatory decision-making, and organizational effectiveness. Research by Hallinger and Wang (2020) found that collaborative leadership practices significantly improve teachers' organizational commitment and school performance. Likewise, Leithwood et al. (2020) reported that effective school leadership contributes indirectly to student achievement through improved



organizational climate and teacher motivation. Within Indonesian educational settings, several studies have indicated that participatory leadership strengthens teacher engagement and organizational communication, thereby reducing interpersonal conflicts and enhancing institutional performance (Fitrah, 2021; Suriansyah et al., 2022). Nevertheless, many previous studies have primarily focused on leadership effectiveness or conflict management independently, with limited attention given to the decision-making processes underlying organizational conflict control.

Another limitation of previous research concerns methodological approaches. Most existing studies employ single-site case studies or quantitative survey designs that explain statistical relationships among variables but provide limited understanding of how principals actually make decisions during organizational conflicts. Educational leadership practices are highly contextual, influenced by school culture, organizational history, stakeholder characteristics, and institutional values. Consequently, qualitative multisite research offers greater opportunities to explore similarities and differences across educational settings, enabling more comprehensive explanations regarding effective decision-making practices.

The present study addresses these research gaps by examining principals' decision-making processes in controlling organizational conflict through a multisite qualitative study conducted at SMP Global Islamic Boarding School Karangan and SMP Sunan Kalijaga Pogalan Trenggalek. Both schools represent distinctive educational contexts characterized by strong institutional cultures, religious values, and diverse organizational stakeholders. Investigating these two institutions allows the study to compare leadership practices across different organizational environments while identifying common principles of effective conflict management.

The novelty of this research lies in integrating educational decision-making theory, organizational conflict management, and multisite leadership analysis within Indonesian secondary education. Rather than examining leadership effectiveness solely from organizational outcomes, this study explores how principals gather information, involve stakeholders, evaluate alternatives, negotiate organizational interests, and implement strategic decisions to manage conflicts constructively. The findings are expected to contribute to educational leadership theory by providing a contextual model of principal decision-making in organizational conflict



management and to educational practice by offering evidence-based recommendations for strengthening leadership capacity in Indonesian schools.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze principals' decision-making processes in organizational conflict management, explore the decision-making styles employed in resolving organizational conflict, examine the implications of principals' decisions for school stakeholders, and develop a conceptual model of principal decision making that supports effective organizational conflict management in Indonesian Islamic secondary schools.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a phenomenological multisite research design to investigate principals' decision-making in organizational conflict management. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to explore participants' experiences and understand social phenomena within their natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phenomenological perspective focuses on interpreting the meanings individuals attach to their lived experiences, particularly regarding leadership practices and organizational conflict (Moustakas, 1994). The multisite design was adopted to compare findings from two Islamic junior secondary schools and identify similarities and differences in principals' decision-making practices across institutional contexts.

The research followed an inductive analytical process in which empirical findings were used to construct conceptual interpretations (Patton, 2015). Data collection continued until information saturation was achieved. The study focused on three major aspects: (1) principals' decision-making processes, (2) principals' decision-making styles in organizational conflict management, and (3) the organizational impacts of those decisions.

Researcher's Role

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher functioned as the primary research instrument responsible for collecting, interpreting, and validating the research data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher was directly involved throughout the fieldwork by conducting participant observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis at both research sites. Such prolonged



engagement enabled a comprehensive understanding of organizational dynamics and strengthened the credibility of the findings.

Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the research process by obtaining formal permission from both schools and ensuring informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity of participants. Direct interaction with participants also enabled the researcher to capture implicit organizational meanings that might not be revealed through documentary evidence alone.

Research Sites

The research was conducted at two Islamic junior secondary schools in Trenggalek Regency, Indonesia, namely SMP Global Islamic Boarding School Karangan and SMP Sunan Kalijaga Pogalan. Both schools were purposively selected because they have maintained excellent institutional performance, increasing student enrolment, and effective organizational leadership despite experiencing diverse organizational conflicts. The multisite design enabled comparative analysis while preserving the uniqueness of each institutional context.

Data and Data Sources

Primary data consisted of participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and field notes, whereas secondary data included institutional documents, school policies, meeting reports, school profiles, photographs, and organizational archives. Informants were selected using purposive sampling followed by snowball sampling to identify individuals possessing extensive knowledge of principals' leadership and conflict management practices. Participants included foundation chairpersons, school principals, vice principals, guidance and counseling teachers, and administrative staff from both schools. The combination of multiple data sources enhanced data triangulation and increased research credibility (Patton, 2015).

Data Collection Techniques

Three complementary techniques were employed, namely participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Participant observation enabled the researcher to observe leadership behavior and conflict management practices within their natural organizational settings. Semi-structured interviews explored participants' experiences and perceptions regarding principals' decision-making. Documentary analysis was conducted to examine institutional



policies, meeting reports, annual programs, and official archives that supported the interview findings.

Code	Description
O.1	Observation at Site I
D.1	Documentation at Site I
W.1.1	Principal Interview (Site I)
W.1.2	Vice Principal Interview (Site I)
W.1.3	Public Relations Vice Principal Interview (Site I)
W.1.4	Guidance Counselor Interview (Site I)
W.1.5	Foundation Chairperson Interview (Site I)
O.2	Observation at Site II
D.2	Documentation at Site II
W.2.1	Principal Interview (Site II)
W.2.2	Vice Principal Interview (Site II)
W.2.3	Public Relations Vice Principal Interview (Site II)
W.2.4	Guidance Counselor Interview (Site II)
W.2.5	Foundation Chairperson Interview (Site II)

Table 1. Data Coding Scheme

Source: Adapted from the research coding system.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the interactive qualitative analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of three continuous stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. These stages were conducted simultaneously throughout the research process, allowing preliminary findings to guide subsequent observations and interviews. Initially, raw data were coded, categorized, and organized into themes representing principals' decision-making processes, leadership styles, and conflict management strategies.

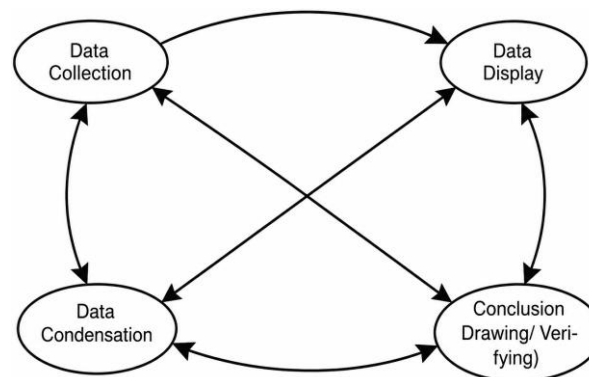


Figure 1. Interactive Data Analysis Model

Source: Adapted from Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014).



Considering the multisite research design, data analysis was conducted in two sequential stages. First, within-site analysis was performed independently at each school to identify unique organizational characteristics. Second, cross-site analysis compared themes emerging from both schools to identify similarities, differences, and broader conceptual patterns regarding principals' decision-making in organizational conflict management.

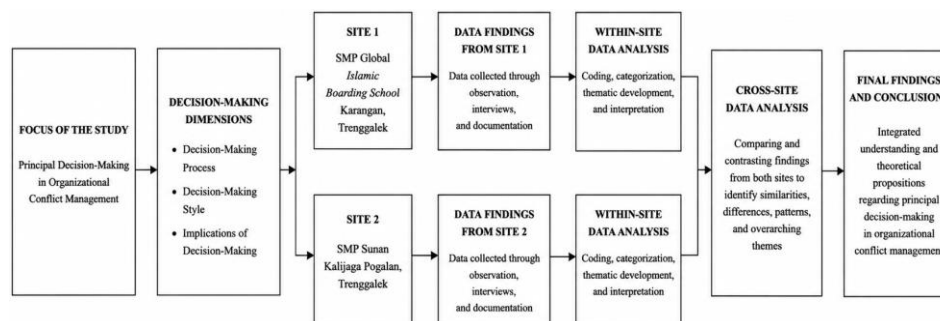


Figure 2. Cross-Site Analysis Process

Source: Adapted from the multisite qualitative analysis procedure.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness of the study was ensured using the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), encompassing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement in the research settings, triangulation of data sources, methods, and documents, as well as member checking to verify the accuracy of participants' perspectives. Transferability was supported by providing rich descriptions of the research context and participants to enable readers to assess the applicability of the findings to similar settings. Dependability was maintained through a systematic documentation of the research procedures and data analysis process, ensuring consistency throughout the study. Confirmability was established by grounding all interpretations in empirical evidence obtained from interviews, observations, and documentary data while minimizing researcher bias through continuous reflection and cross-validation. These strategies ensured the rigor, credibility, and trustworthiness of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Principal Decision-Making Process in Organizational Conflict Management

The findings revealed that principals implemented a systematic and comprehensive decision-making process to manage organizational conflicts in both research sites. Rather than responding



impulsively to emerging disputes, principals followed a sequence of interconnected stages consisting of problem identification, conflict data collection and analysis, development of alternative decisions, selection of the most appropriate alternative, implementation of the decision, monitoring and evaluation, and follow-up actions. This sequence demonstrates that conflict management was regarded as a strategic leadership responsibility requiring careful judgment, analytical thinking, and organizational consideration rather than an immediate reaction to interpersonal disagreements. Such findings indicate that effective conflict management is fundamentally a structured decision-making process that integrates managerial competence with interpersonal sensitivity.

The first stage involved identifying the root causes of organizational conflict. The principals consistently emphasized early detection by observing changes in teachers' and students' attitudes, communication patterns, and interpersonal interactions before conflicts escalated into larger organizational problems. Formal meetings and informal conversations became important mechanisms for gathering initial information regarding emerging tensions within the school community. Dedicated communication forums, including student discussion forums, teacher round-table meetings, and institutional dialogue sessions, created opportunities for stakeholders to express concerns openly. These findings demonstrate that early diagnosis allows school leaders to distinguish between surface-level disagreements and the underlying issues requiring organizational intervention. The ability to recognize conflict triggers before they become destructive reflects proactive educational leadership that prioritizes organizational stability and collaborative relationships.

The findings also indicated that ineffective communication represented one of the primary sources of organizational conflict. Participants explained that misunderstandings frequently emerged because information was interpreted differently among teachers, students, parents, and administrators. Communication barriers prevented individuals from understanding one another's expectations and intentions, resulting in interpersonal tension and organizational misunderstanding. This finding supports Kreitner and Kinicki (2021), who argued that inadequate communication serves as one of the principal antecedents of organizational conflict because unclear messages increase ambiguity, misinterpretation, and emotional reactions. The present



findings also correspond with Pruitt and Rubin's (1986) conflict theory, which explains that conflict develops when individuals perceive incompatible interests and believe that their aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously. Communication therefore functions not merely as a mechanism for information exchange but also as a strategic instrument for preventing unnecessary organizational disputes.

The study further revealed that unmet expectations, excessive workloads, organizational complexity, and institutional change frequently triggered conflict within the school environment. Teachers and educational staff often experienced frustration when individual expectations differed from organizational priorities or when institutional responsibilities exceeded available resources. These findings are consistent with organizational behavior literature emphasizing that complex work environments, changing organizational structures, and ambiguous responsibilities substantially increase workplace stress and interpersonal disagreement (Robbins & Judge, 2022). School principals therefore demonstrated awareness that conflict prevention requires continuous attention to employee welfare, organizational climate, and equitable workload distribution rather than focusing exclusively on disciplinary actions.

After identifying the conflict, principals proceeded by collecting and analyzing comprehensive information before determining possible solutions. Data were obtained through direct observation, interviews with conflicting parties, examination of institutional documents, and comparison of information from multiple sources. This analytical process enabled principals to distinguish factual evidence from personal assumptions and emotional reactions. The findings illustrate that decisions were consistently supported by empirical information instead of subjective impressions. Such practices reflect the rational decision-making model proposed by Simon (1997), which emphasizes systematic information gathering and evaluation before selecting an appropriate course of action. The process also demonstrates that evidence-based leadership contributes to more objective and accountable organizational decision-making.

The subsequent stage involved developing several alternative solutions before selecting the most appropriate decision. Principals avoided relying on a single solution and instead considered various alternatives by evaluating potential benefits, risks, and organizational consequences. Decisions were expected to minimize institutional disruption while maximizing collective benefit



for teachers, students, and other stakeholders. The study also revealed that decisions involving broader organizational implications were rarely made individually. Vice principals, guidance and counseling teachers, homeroom teachers, foundation representatives, and other stakeholders actively participated in deliberative discussions before final decisions were reached. This collaborative approach strengthened decision legitimacy because participants perceived the outcomes as collective agreements rather than unilateral administrative authority. Such findings support Coser's (1956) perspective that conflict may strengthen organizational solidarity when managed constructively through dialogue and cooperation.

Following decision implementation, principals conducted systematic monitoring and evaluation to determine the effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies. Observation of daily interactions, periodic meetings, feedback sessions, and continuous communication enabled school leaders to assess whether interpersonal relationships had improved or whether additional intervention remained necessary. An interesting finding of this study concerns the emphasis placed on follow-up activities designed to restore social cohesion rather than merely terminate conflict. Informal gatherings, shared meals, and reflective discussions were frequently organized to rebuild trust and reinforce positive working relationships among school members. These activities indicate that successful conflict management extends beyond solving immediate problems toward restoring organizational harmony and strengthening institutional culture. This finding confirms that educational leadership requires the integration of managerial competence, emotional intelligence, and relational leadership in sustaining a healthy organizational environment. Overall, the decision-making process identified in this study reflects a balanced combination of rational analysis, collaborative participation, and humanistic leadership, enabling principals to manage organizational conflict while maintaining institutional effectiveness and positive interpersonal relationships.

Principals' Decision-Making Styles in Organizational Conflict Management

The findings revealed that principals adopted multiple decision-making styles in managing organizational conflict rather than relying on a single leadership approach. Their decision-making behavior reflected flexibility, contextual judgment, and sensitivity toward interpersonal relationships within the school community. Before making important decisions, principals



consistently prioritized *tabayyun* (clarification) by meeting conflicting parties individually before facilitating joint discussions. This approach enabled the principals to understand each party's perspective objectively while minimizing emotional confrontation. The study identified three dominant decision-making styles rational, cautious, and conceptual which collectively formed a new conflict management approach described as the resolute-harmonious decision-making model. Unlike authoritarian leadership that emphasizes unilateral instructions, this model promotes collaborative dialogue, mutual understanding, and sustainable conflict resolution. Participants perceived this approach as more acceptable because it respected individual dignity while maintaining organizational order. As a result, conflict management extended beyond resolving immediate disputes toward fostering a harmonious and supportive organizational climate.

The rational decision-making style emerged as the most dominant leadership approach adopted by principals in both research sites. This style was characterized by systematic information gathering, logical reasoning, careful evaluation of available alternatives, and objective assessment of possible consequences before selecting a final decision. Principals avoided making emotional judgments or relying solely on intuition. Instead, they examined evidence obtained through observations, interviews, institutional documents, and consultation with relevant stakeholders. Decisions were therefore based on factual information rather than personal preferences or assumptions. Such findings support Kahneman's (2011) explanation that decision-making styles are dynamic cognitive characteristics through which individuals process information and respond to organizational situations. The principals demonstrated analytical thinking by carefully weighing every available option before determining the most beneficial course of action for the institution. Their willingness to examine competing alternatives also reflects responsible educational leadership capable of balancing organizational interests with individual welfare.

The study further demonstrated that rational decision-making contributed significantly to effective conflict management because it encouraged transparency, open communication, and objective discussion among organizational members. Conflicting parties were given opportunities to explain their perspectives, evaluate evidence collectively, and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each proposed solution before decisions were finalized. Such procedures



generated innovative and creative solutions that addressed the underlying causes of conflict instead of merely suppressing visible disagreements. These findings are consistent with Epstein's (1994) cognitive-experiential self-theory, which explains that rational thinking relies on analytical and emotionally controlled information processing. Kuzgun (2012) similarly argued that rational decision makers employ systematic planning, future-oriented thinking, and logical evaluation while accepting responsibility for their decisions. The present findings indicate that rational leadership not only increases decision quality but also strengthens organizational commitment because participants perceive decisions as fair, transparent, and evidence-based. Trust in leadership consequently becomes stronger, reducing the likelihood of recurring conflict.

Although the rational style demonstrated considerable effectiveness, the findings indicated several contextual limitations. Rational decision-making requires sufficient time for comprehensive information collection and careful analysis before action can be taken. Such a process may not always be appropriate during organizational crises requiring immediate responses. Participants also emphasized that rational leadership demands emotional maturity and openness among all parties. Decisions become less effective when individuals intentionally conceal important information or remain unwilling to communicate honestly. These findings suggest that rationality alone cannot guarantee successful conflict management unless supported by organizational trust, effective communication, and psychological readiness among organizational members. Consequently, principals continuously balanced analytical thinking with interpersonal sensitivity to maintain decision effectiveness under varying organizational circumstances.

The cautious decision-making style also emerged as a significant characteristic of principals' leadership behavior. This style emphasized prudence, risk awareness, and comprehensive evaluation before implementing conflict resolution strategies. Principals carefully examined possible consequences to ensure that decisions complied with institutional regulations, ethical standards, and organizational values. Conflict situations were approached calmly without unnecessary delay, while maintaining sufficient caution to prevent unintended organizational consequences. Deniz (2004) described cautious decision makers as individuals who systematically evaluate risks before acting, thereby reducing the probability of inappropriate decisions. The present findings confirm that cautious leadership contributes to organizational stability because



Carefully considered decisions are less likely to generate resistance or additional conflict after implementation. Participants also recognized that cautious leaders demonstrate responsibility by protecting both institutional interests and interpersonal relationships throughout the decision-making process.

A third leadership characteristic identified in this study was the conceptual decision-making style. Principals demonstrated high concern for human relationships while integrating information from multiple sources before determining organizational actions. Decisions consistently reflected ethical considerations, institutional values, and long-term organizational welfare rather than immediate administrative convenience. Rowe and Boulgarides (1992) argued that conceptual decision makers possess high cognitive complexity and strong human orientation, enabling them to evaluate multiple alternatives from diverse perspectives. This description closely corresponds with the leadership practices observed in both schools. Principals combined analytical reasoning with empathy, collaboration, and moral responsibility to formulate decisions acceptable to diverse stakeholders. Such leadership behavior illustrates that effective educational leadership requires intellectual competence together with ethical sensitivity and emotional intelligence.

An important theoretical contribution of this study is the identification of a resolute-harmonious decision-making model, which integrates rational analysis, cautious evaluation, conceptual thinking, and Islamic ethical values into a unified conflict management framework. This model emphasizes justice, dialogue, collective welfare, and peaceful organizational relationships while encouraging leaders to make decisions through careful reflection and shared responsibility. Islamic principles such as fairness (*'adl*), consultation (*shūrā*), and public benefit (*maṣlahah*) became practical foundations guiding principals' leadership behavior during conflict resolution. These findings support Badruzzaman's view that justice constitutes the essential characteristic of effective leadership because equitable decisions prevent organizational disorder and strengthen social cohesion. Overall, the decision-making styles identified in this study demonstrate that successful organizational conflict management depends not only on technical managerial competence but also on leaders' capacity to integrate rational judgment, ethical responsibility, collaborative communication, and humanistic values into every stage of the decision-making process.



Implications of Principals' Decision-Making in Organizational Conflict Management

The findings demonstrated that principals' decision-making in organizational conflict management generated substantial implications for various stakeholders, including the school institution, teachers, students, parents, and the wider community. These implications were not exclusively positive or negative but reflected the quality, fairness, and effectiveness of the decisions implemented by school leaders. Effective decisions contributed to organizational stability, harmonious interpersonal relationships, and educational improvement, whereas ineffective decisions occasionally produced dissatisfaction, reduced trust, and prolonged organizational tension. The findings indicate that conflict management should not be understood merely as an administrative effort to resolve disagreements but as a strategic leadership process capable of shaping institutional culture and educational quality over the long term.

At the institutional level, effective conflict management positively influenced the overall school climate. Participants reported that the learning environment became safer, more conducive, and increasingly supportive of academic activities after conflicts were managed through systematic and participatory decision-making. Improved organizational harmony strengthened discipline, reinforced moral values, enhanced institutional reputation, and increased public confidence, which ultimately contributed to higher student enrolment. These findings suggest that principals' decisions extend beyond solving interpersonal disputes because they directly influence organizational performance and public perception. Educational institutions characterized by harmonious relationships provide an environment in which teachers and students can perform their responsibilities more effectively. The findings also revealed potential negative consequences when decisions were perceived as unfair, including declining trust among school members and student transfers to other schools. Such outcomes demonstrate that educational leadership requires accountability and continuous evaluation of every organizational decision to maintain institutional credibility.

The study also identified significant implications for teachers. Appropriate conflict management decisions strengthened professional relationships, increased teachers' sense of security, and promoted collaboration among educational staff. Teachers expressed greater motivation to perform their instructional responsibilities when organizational conflicts were



addressed fairly and transparently. Professional commitment was reinforced because teachers believed that school leaders considered evidence objectively before making decisions. The findings indicate that neutrality and fairness constitute essential characteristics of effective educational leadership. Decisions perceived as biased generated dissatisfaction, emotional discomfort, and formal protests from teachers, eventually reducing work motivation and weakening collective commitment toward school programs. These findings correspond with leadership studies emphasizing that organizational justice and transparent decision-making positively influence teacher performance, organizational commitment, and institutional effectiveness. School principals therefore carry substantial responsibility for ensuring that conflict management strengthens rather than weakens professional relationships among educational personnel.

Students also experienced direct consequences resulting from principals' conflict management decisions. Effective conflict resolution restored positive peer relationships, created psychologically safe learning environments, and strengthened students' character through constructive communication and collaborative problem-solving. Participants explained that students involved in bullying or interpersonal disputes experienced increased feelings of security, fairness, and emotional comfort when conflicts were resolved appropriately. Such conditions enabled students to participate actively in learning without fear or psychological pressure. In contrast, ineffective decisions occasionally encouraged students to transfer to other schools because they no longer felt protected within the educational environment. Inadequate responses to bullying also affected students' mental and emotional well-being. These findings highlight that principals' decisions influence not only administrative outcomes but also students' social development, emotional resilience, and overall educational experiences. Educational leadership therefore requires the integration of managerial competence with child-centered approaches that prioritize students' welfare and psychological safety.

The implications of principals' decision-making extended beyond the school community to include parents and society. Parents expressed stronger trust in educational institutions when school leaders demonstrated fairness, transparency, and consistency in managing organizational conflict. Increased parental confidence strengthened collaboration between families and schools,



creating positive partnerships that supported students' educational development. Agus Zaenul Fitri emphasized that families constitute children's first educational environment, making collaboration between schools and parents essential for achieving educational objectives. The present findings indicate that appropriate conflict management strengthens institutional legitimacy because parents perceive schools as trustworthy organizations committed to justice and student welfare. Decisions considered unfair, on the other hand, generated parental protests, reduced public confidence, and occasionally triggered additional organizational conflict. These outcomes illustrate that principals' leadership decisions directly influence institutional reputation and stakeholder relationships beyond the internal school environment.

An important contribution of this study concerns the identification of several institutional programs designed to minimize future organizational conflict while strengthening positive school culture. Both schools developed preventive initiatives, including structured counseling services, anti-bullying programs, communication forums involving teachers and homeroom teachers, student round-table discussions, child-friendly school initiatives, character education programs, extracurricular collaboration activities, and conflict resolution frameworks integrating dialogue, mediation, and collective problem-solving. One school introduced the KEBALI model (*Recognize, Express, Understand, Dialogue, Involve Third Parties, and Integrate Solutions*), whereas another established specialized round-table facilities to facilitate peaceful communication among students, teachers, and school stakeholders. These initiatives demonstrate that organizational conflict management should extend beyond reactive intervention toward preventive educational programs capable of strengthening institutional resilience and collaborative culture.

The findings also demonstrate that ethical leadership constitutes the foundation of sustainable conflict management. Educational institutions implementing honesty, responsibility, mutual respect, justice, and transparency created healthier organizational climates characterized by trust, collaboration, and collective responsibility. Fuadi and Masrokan argued that ethical values significantly improve organizational effectiveness because they strengthen communication and reduce internal conflict. Similar conclusions were presented by Oktaviani and Rustandi, who emphasized that ethical organizational cultures reduce workplace stress while enhancing cooperation and productivity. The present findings extend these perspectives by demonstrating



that Islamic values derived from the Qur'an provide moral guidance for principals' decision-making, encouraging justice, compassion, consultation, and social harmony throughout the conflict resolution process. Such integration of professional leadership with ethical and religious values contributes to educational institutions that are not only academically successful but also socially inclusive, morally responsible, and organizationally resilient.

Conceptual Model of the Research Findings (Existing Role Model)

The findings and discussion of this study reinforce existing theories concerning principals' decision-making behavior in organizational conflict management, particularly regarding the decision-making process, decision-making styles, and the implications of leadership decisions in improving conflict management within educational institutions. These empirical findings were synthesized into a conceptual framework that explains the mechanism and dynamics of principals' decision-making in managing organizational conflict.

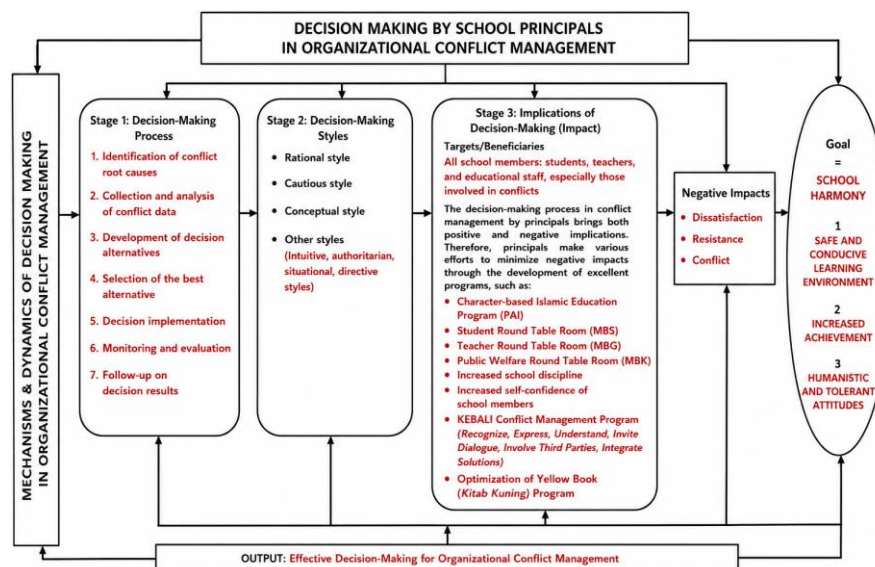


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Principals' Decision-Making in Organizational Conflict Management (Existing Role Model)

Figure 2 illustrates that principals' decision-making in organizational conflict management is implemented through a systematic sequence of interconnected stages. The process begins with identifying the causes of organizational conflict, followed by collecting and analyzing conflict-related information obtained from relevant stakeholders. Based on the available evidence, principals formulate several decision alternatives before selecting the most appropriate solution. The selected decision is subsequently implemented, continuously monitored, evaluated, and



followed up to ensure that the conflict has been effectively managed. This systematic decision-making process enables principals to formulate objective, accountable, and effective decisions that contribute to sustainable conflict management within educational organizations.

The findings further indicate that principals do not rely on a single decision-making style. Instead, they employ multiple leadership approaches according to the characteristics of each conflict. Three dominant decision-making styles emerged from the study, namely rational, cautious, and conceptual decision-making. The rational style emphasizes logical analysis and evidence-based evaluation before decisions are made. The cautious style prioritizes prudence, careful consideration, and risk anticipation in every leadership action. The conceptual style reflects principals' ability to integrate ethical values, organizational objectives, human relationships, and long-term institutional development into the decision-making process. The combination of these complementary styles enables principals to produce decisions that are both effective and broadly accepted by school stakeholders.

The conceptual model also demonstrates that every leadership decision generates organizational implications. Effective decisions produce positive impacts such as improved school climate, stronger collaboration among teachers, enhanced student discipline, increased public trust, and improved educational quality. At the same time, inappropriate decisions may create negative consequences, including dissatisfaction, declining organizational trust, and prolonged conflict. To minimize these undesirable effects, principals implement several preventive and developmental programs designed to strengthen organizational resilience and maintain harmonious relationships among school members.

These preventive initiatives include the PAI Berkarakter program, which promotes noble character, Qur'anic literacy, congregational prayer, moderation, creativity, innovation, and continuous achievement. The schools also established Student Round Table (MBS), Teacher Round Table (MBG), and Public Welfare Round Table (MBK) as collaborative spaces for dialogue and conflict resolution. Additional initiatives include strengthening school discipline, increasing school members' self-confidence, implementing the KEBALI conflict management program (*Recognize, Express, Understand, Invite Dialogue, Involve Third Parties, and Integrate Solutions*), and optimizing the Kitab Kuning learning program to reinforce students' moral and spiritual



development. These programs demonstrate that conflict management extends beyond resolving disputes and becomes a preventive organizational strategy aimed at sustaining harmonious institutional relationships.

The ultimate objective of this conceptual model is to cultivate tolerance, humanistic attitudes, and constructive relationships among all members of the school community, including students, teachers, educational staff, and school leaders. Through systematic decision-making, adaptive leadership styles, and preventive organizational programs, principals create child-friendly schools characterized by safe and conducive learning environments, harmonious organizational cultures, and continuous improvement in educational performance. This existing conceptual model serves as the theoretical foundation for the development of the study's proposed Resolute–Harmonious Decision-Making Model Based on Dialogic Communication, which represents the principal novelty of this research.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that principals' decision-making in organizational conflict management is a systematic and dynamic leadership process that extends beyond selecting among available alternatives. The findings reveal that effective conflict management is achieved through a sequence of interconnected stages consisting of problem identification, conflict data collection and analysis, development of decision alternatives, selection of the most appropriate solution, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up actions. This structured process enables principals to make objective, evidence-based, and accountable decisions while maintaining organizational stability and positive interpersonal relationships. The multisite analysis further confirms that systematic decision-making contributes significantly to preventing conflict escalation and strengthening collaboration among school stakeholders.

The study also identifies three dominant decision-making styles employed by principals, namely rational, cautious, and conceptual decision-making. Rather than applying a single leadership approach, principals combine these complementary styles according to the characteristics of each conflict situation. Rational decision-making emphasizes evidence-based analysis and logical reasoning, cautious decision-making prioritizes careful consideration of



organizational risks, and conceptual decision-making integrates ethical values, long-term organizational goals, and human relationships into leadership practice. These findings extend existing educational leadership literature by demonstrating that effective conflict management depends on leaders' ability to integrate analytical competence, collaborative communication, emotional intelligence, and moral responsibility throughout the decision-making process. The study further develops the Resolute–Harmonious Decision-Making Model Based on Dialogic Communication, which synthesizes Herbert Simon's administrative decision-making theory with Habermas' communicative action theory to explain how rational analysis and dialogic communication jointly create sustainable organizational harmony.

From a practical perspective, the findings indicate that principals should position conflict management as a continuous organizational development strategy rather than merely a reactive administrative response. Preventive initiatives, including the PAI Berkarakter program, Student Round Table (MBS), Teacher Round Table (MBG), Public Welfare Round Table (MBK), the KEBALI conflict management framework, anti-bullying initiatives, character education, and child-friendly school programs, demonstrate how organizational conflicts can be transformed into opportunities for institutional learning and improvement. These programs strengthen trust, collaboration, organizational resilience, and stakeholder participation while promoting safe, inclusive, and harmonious educational environments. Consequently, the study provides practical guidance for school leaders seeking to enhance conflict management capacity and improve educational quality through participatory, ethical, and evidence-based leadership practices.

This study is limited to two Islamic junior secondary schools in Trenggalek Regency using a qualitative multisite approach, which may restrict the transferability of the findings to different educational contexts. Future studies are encouraged to validate the proposed conceptual model through quantitative, mixed-method, or longitudinal research involving broader educational settings, including public schools, senior secondary schools, and higher education institutions. Comparative cross-cultural investigations may also provide deeper understanding of how contextual, organizational, and cultural factors influence principals' decision-making in organizational conflict management. Such research would contribute to refining the proposed



model while strengthening its applicability as an evidence-based framework for educational leadership and organizational conflict management across diverse educational environments.

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