

Pseudo-Resolution and Structural Conflict in Schools Undergoing Policy-Driven Transformation: A Work Conflict Management Model for *Sekolah Penggerak*

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ABSTRACT

This study develops a contextually grounded work conflict management model for *Sekolah Penggerak*, Indonesia's national educational transformation program (Ministerial Decree No. 371/M/2021). Using a qualitative comparative two-site case study design, the study collected data from two *Sekolah Penggerak* Cohort I senior secondary schools in Kota Ambon, Maluku, through ten semi-structured in-depth interviews, 22 structured participatory field notes, and document analysis. Findings reveal that work conflict is predominantly structural-systemic, driven by task ambiguity, disproportionate workloads, ineffective policy communication, resource constraints, generational gaps, and unclear administrative rules. The most critical original finding is pseudo-resolution: conflict appears administratively settled through formal institutional pressure, yet structural tensions remain unaddressed, perpetuating recurring conflict cycles. Conflict management is informal and person-dependent, relying entirely on principals' individual leadership capacity without standardized institutional procedures. Based on a systematic synthesis of empirical findings and theoretical frameworks, this study proposes the Reflective-Collaborative Work Conflict Management Model comprising seven cyclical stages: early detection, root-cause analysis, open dialogue, neutral leadership mediation, multi-stakeholder collaboration, formal agreement documentation, and continuous reflective evaluation. Practical implications are advanced for school principals, district education offices, and Kemendikbudristek, with particular significance given the program's national target of reaching all Indonesian schools by 2027.



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INTRODUCTION

Work conflict is an inherent feature of any organization undergoing significant structural transformation (Rahim, 2023; Pondy, 1967). Indonesia's *Sekolah Penggerak* Program, launched through Ministerial Decree No. 371/M/2021, imposes simultaneous paradigmatic changes on schools: concurrent shifts in curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, professional culture, and documentation systems within a compressed implementation timeline. This convergence of change imperatives structurally generates intensive and multi-layered conflict among school personnel, principally principals, teachers, and administrative staff who bear the direct burden of transformation on a daily basis. Empirical evidence consistently shows that reform-driven workload increases are structurally rather than personally caused, and that role ambiguity generated by educational transformation constitutes one of the most persistent challenges facing school principals globally (Stacey et al., 2023; Tamadoni et al., 2024).

International scholarship on conflict in schools has produced influential findings across national contexts. Through quantitative research across 128 secondary teachers in Greece, principal leadership style was identified as the single most determinant factor in school conflict management effectiveness (Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020). A qualitative case study across seven Turkish schools demonstrated that conflict-handling styles are substantially shaped by institutional culture and historical leadership norms rather than individual personality characteristics. A systematic literature review of school leadership in the Indonesian context identified inadequate principal conflict management capacity as a recurring structural deficit in Indonesian educational leadership (Lumban Gaol, 2023). Despite this body of knowledge, three substantive gaps prevent its direct application to Indonesian schools undergoing nationally mandated transformation. Each gap is not merely a matter of degree but of kind: the existing literature was built for different institutional types, different national contexts, and a different conceptual vocabulary; gaps this study addresses directly.

Three interrelated research gaps motivate this inquiry. The first gap is contextual: all established conflict management models, including those of Kilmann and Thomas (1977), Rahim (2023), Proksch (2016), and Agus (2022), were developed outside the context of nationally mandated educational transformation in Indonesia. None account for the unique positional complexity of school principals who simultaneously serve as conflict mediators, pedagogical leaders, and formal hierarchical superiors with disciplinary authority over the parties they are expected to mediate, and none have been empirically grounded in *Sekolah Penggerak* field data. The second gap is conceptual: the existing literature does not explicitly distinguish between administrative resolution, in which surface behavioral compliance is achieved through formal pressure without addressing root causes, and substantive resolution, in which those root causes are genuinely engaged. This study identifies and names this distinction as pseudo-resolution, a recurring pattern not previously theorized in educational conflict management scholarship. The third gap is institutional: sophisticated anticipatory conflict prevention practices already exist in schools as tacit individual knowledge but have never been externalised into documented,

replicable institutional procedures, creating critical organisational vulnerability when experienced leaders change positions (Polanyi & Sen, 2009; Nonaka, 2009).

This study addresses all three gaps through three research questions: (1) What are the conditions of work conflict in the educational transformation program at *Sekolah Penggerak* senior secondary schools in Kota Ambon? (2) How is work conflict managed in these schools? (3) What work conflict management model is appropriate for the *Sekolah Penggerak* context? The study aims to describe work conflict conditions at both research sites, analyze current conflict management practices and their structural weaknesses, and develop a contextually grounded and empirically derived work conflict management model for the program. By integrating organizational conflict theory, principal leadership theory, and tacit knowledge management theory, this study contributes to Educational Administration theory and provides practical implications for school principals, district education offices, and Kemendikbudristek, with particular significance given the program's national target of reaching all Indonesian schools by 2027.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work Conflict in Educational Organizations: Typology and Dual Impact

Work conflict arises when individuals or groups perceive incompatibility in goals, resources, or working procedures that directly affects professional task performance. In educational organizations, this incompatibility manifests across a behavioral spectrum encompassing task conflict over instructional content and assessment standards; process conflict over authority, scheduling jurisdiction, and coordination; and relational conflict arising from role ambiguity and perceived inequity in workload distribution. A systematic literature review of school leadership studies confirmed that institutional culture and historical leadership patterns substantially shape how conflict is experienced and handled within schools, establishing that conflict-handling tendencies are organizationally constructed rather than individually fixed (Listanto, 2022). Through a qualitative case study of seven schools involving forty teachers in Turkey, conflict was shown to operate simultaneously at individual, group, and organizational levels, with communication failures, role ambiguity, and resource inequality emerging as dominant structural causes (Ertürk, 2022). Critically, the same study demonstrated that interventions directed at individual behavioral styles will consistently be less effective than those that reshape the organizational norms generating conflict in the first place.

Through quantitative research across 128 secondary teachers, principal leadership style was confirmed as the most significant predictor of school conflict management effectiveness, with collaborative and compromise styles correlating positively while avoidance consistently produced unresolved and recurring conflicts. A comprehensive review of the psychological safety literature demonstrated that environments characterized by repressive or formal-pressure responses to disagreement systematically reduce employees' willingness to engage authentically in dialogue, producing surface compliance that masks persistent underlying tension. Research at South African public schools showed that principal-teacher conflict left unaddressed directly damages school culture and reduces teacher commitment at the institutional level (Adams & Plaatjies, 2021). Unmanaged conflict has also been documented to reduce organizational productivity by up to 30% (Proksch, 2016). Conversely, conflict managed constructively generates functional benefits, including innovative ideas from productive debate, improved decision quality through deliberation, and the formation of horizontal social

capital among teachers as a by-product of successfully navigating shared professional challenges.

Policy-Driven Transformation, Workload, and Structural-Systemic Conflict

Conflict generated by large-scale policy reform differs in character and causation from conflict arising in organizationally stable conditions. A comprehensive systematic review of conflict management and teacher work culture confirmed that policy-driven workload inequity and role ambiguity constitute the primary structural drivers of teacher conflict in schools undergoing transformation, with interpersonal attribution of conflict causes consistently identified as a secondary rather than primary factor (Abdullah et al., 2025). A systematic review of principal challenges indexed in three major academic databases documented that role ambiguity, resource inadequacy, and accountability pressures generated by educational reform constitute the most persistent challenge clusters facing school principals globally. Paradigm adoption failure and excessive workloads were identified as the two dominant conflict triggers in schools undergoing curriculum transformation, with adoption failure further shown to be a structural consequence of inadequate policy socialization and professional capacity gaps rather than simply individual resistance (Thote & Gowri, 2021). These findings map directly onto the *Sekolah Penggerak* context, where the program simultaneously demands transformation across curriculum, pedagogy, professional culture, and documentation systems, not always accompanied by proportional resource readiness at the school level. This structural account of conflict causation stands in corrective tension with the dominant framing in practitioner-oriented educational conflict literature, which attributes conflict primarily to individual attitudes and communication deficits, thereby misdirecting intervention toward persons when the sources are systemic.

Existing Conflict Management Models and Their Limitations

Four models constitute the principal reference points in the educational conflict management literature. Kilmann and Thomas (1977) identified five conflict-handling styles based on assertiveness and cooperativeness dimensions: competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. The primary limitation of this model for institutional application is its descriptive-diagnostic orientation: it explains how individuals tend to respond to conflict but provides no prescriptive framework for how organizations should build sustainable, institutionalized conflict management systems (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). Rahim (2023) developed a more comprehensive meta-model incorporating diagnostic and intervention phases and recommending the integrating style as most effective for complex organizational conflicts; however, it was designed for business organizations and does not account for the positional complexity of school principals who simultaneously mediate and exercise formal hierarchical authority over conflicting parties. Proksch (2016) produced the most procedurally developed framework, encompassing mediation, moderation, supervision, coaching, and team development, but this was built in a European corporate context without consideration of policy-driven educational transformation dynamics. Crucially, Proksch's model assumes the existence of a designated, role-separated mediator, an assumption that collapses in the school context where the principal simultaneously holds mediatory and hierarchical authority over the same parties, a structural ambiguity none of the four reviewed models address (Omodan, 2023). Agus (2022) produced the only Indonesian educational conflict model found in the reviewed literature, a prophetic-based model for private Islamic schools in Kota Metro, Lampung, whose normative foundation restricts its transferability to public schools and institutions with different religious identities. Across all four models, three critical

absences are shared: none incorporate a formalized early conflict detection mechanism embedded in existing institutional forums; none mandate post-conflict agreement documentation as an institutional memory mechanism; and none evaluate resolution quality through indicators of substantive relationship quality rather than surface behavioral compliance. These three shared absences directly define the three differentiating features of the model proposed in this study.

Tacit Knowledge and Institutional Resilience in Conflict Prevention

Polanyi & Sen (2009) defined tacit knowledge as knowledge that practitioners enact fluently but cannot easily articulate or transfer to others. Nonaka (2009) extended this framework through the SECI model, demonstrating that tacit knowledge can be converted into shareable, organizationally replicable explicit knowledge through a process of externalization, which involves the systematic articulation of implicit practices into documented procedures that institutions can retain independent of the individuals who originally held the knowledge. An empirical comparative study of Polish and US organizations confirmed that collectively shared tacit knowledge constitutes a foundational enabling condition for organizational innovation and institutional continuity, and that its successful externalization substantially protects organizations from performance vulnerabilities created by personnel change, with institutional resilience benefits that extend to other dimensions of organizational knowledge continuity (Kucharska & Erickson, 2023). In the school leadership context, experienced principals characteristically develop sophisticated anticipatory conflict prevention capacities through years of contextual practice. Yet these capacities almost invariably remain tacit, enacted informally and individually and never externalized into standard operating procedures that could be accessed and enacted by successor leaders. The proposed model directly addresses this vulnerability through Stage 1, which embeds anticipatory conflict scanning into existing institutional forums, and Stage 6, which mandates post-conflict agreement documentation as replicable institutional memory.

Pseudo-Resolution: The Conceptual Gap in Conflict Aftermath Theory

Pondy's (1967) foundational conflict episode model, published in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, identifies five sequential stages, namely latent conflict, perceived conflict, felt conflict, manifest conflict, and conflict aftermath, with each episode shaping subsequent ones through the accumulated aftermath of prior interactions. The model has served as a canonical reference in organizational conflict scholarship for nearly six decades (Pondy, 1967). However, Pondy does not distinguish between two qualitatively different forms of conflict aftermath that carry profoundly different institutional consequences: substantive resolution, in which structural sources of tension are genuinely engaged and measurable relational repair occurs; and pseudo-resolution, in which surface behavioral compliance is achieved through formal institutional pressure without any substantive engagement with the conflict's root causes. Ross (1993) provides three evaluative criteria that operationalize this distinction: acceptance, defined as genuine agreement rather than coerced compliance; duration, defined as sustainability of the resolution beyond the period of formal institutional pressure; and changed relationships, defined as measurable and lasting improvement in the quality of working relationships between formerly conflicting parties. Pseudo-resolution fails all three criteria simultaneously and persistently (Ross, 1993).

In a structural equation modeling study of 633 employees across a global organization, organizational trust and psychological safety were shown to together account for 68% of variance in group conflict levels, establishing that when formal reprimand is the primary conflict resolution mechanism, it simultaneously undermines the

psychological safety necessary for authentic disagreement expression (Joo, Yoon, & Galbraith, 2023). A comprehensive review of the psychological safety literature further confirmed that environments responding to conflict through repression rather than structured dialogue systematically foreclose the authentic engagement necessary for constructive resolution, producing exactly the surface compliance that characterizes pseudo-resolution. Related constructs in the general organizational behavior literature, including surface compliance, conflict suppression, and false consensus, address analogous phenomena of apparent agreement without genuine resolution (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). However, none have been theorized within the educational conflict management literature as a specific institutional pattern generated by hierarchical authority structures, where the mediating party simultaneously holds positional power over the conflicting parties. This gap, specifically the absence of a theorized distinction between administrative and substantive resolution within the educational context, constitutes the primary theoretical motivation for this study.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative approach with a comparative two-site case study design. The qualitative approach was selected because the research questions require in-depth exploration of meaning, process, and lived experience within naturally occurring institutional contexts, which are conditions that measurement instruments cannot adequately capture (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The comparative two-site case study design was chosen for two specific methodological reasons: it enables analytical generalisation to theory rather than statistical generalisation to populations, and it ensures that systematic comparison of two sites with deliberately contrasting institutional characteristics produces findings more analytically robust than those from a single site (Yin, 2018).

Time and Place of Research

Data collection was conducted from May to July 2023 at two *Sekolah Penggerak* Cohort I senior secondary schools in Kota Ambon, Maluku Province, Indonesia: SMAS Kristen YPKPM Ambon (Site 1, May to June 2023) and SMA Negeri 2 Ambon (Site 2, July 2023). Three criteria guided site selection. First, a preliminary study confirmed that both schools were actively implementing the program with observable and researchable conflict dynamics. Second, the two sites represent systematically contrasting institutional profiles: Site 1 is a private faith-based school with a communal-pastoral organizational culture and a principal with over eight years of tenure, while Site 2 is a large public school with over one thousand students, a multigenerational history as a model and reference school, and an established professional norm of argumentative debate across successive leadership generations. Third, full researcher access was confirmed prior to site selection, enabling sustained daily participatory observation throughout the field period, which is a methodological prerequisite for qualitative conflict research.

Research Target/Subject

Ten key informants were selected through purposive sampling, which is the deliberate selection of participants on the basis of direct involvement in and contextual knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation (Tisdell et al., 2025). Six informants were drawn from Site 1 and four from Site 2. The asymmetry reflects the range of relevant roles at each site and is not a methodological limitation, since qualitative adequacy is determined by informational richness rather than numerical symmetry.

Thematic saturation was confirmed following completion of all ten interviews, operationalized as the point at which new interviews yielded no additional categories, themes, or dimensions of understanding that would substantively alter the analytical picture (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). This empirical threshold is consistent with a systematic review of 23 empirical saturation studies that established that qualitative research with relatively focused objectives and a homogeneous study population reliably reaches saturation within nine to seventeen interviews (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

Table 1. Profile of Research Informants

Code	Site	Role and Position in the <i>Sekolah Penggerak</i> Program	Data Source
W-KS.1	Site 1	Principal: primary decision-maker for conflict management; 8+ years tenure	Interview + Obs.
W-WKS1.1	Site 1	Vice-Principal (Student Affairs) and Learning Committee Council Chair	Interview + Obs.
W-KP5.1	Site 1	P5 Team Coordinator	Interview + Obs.
W-GP.1	Site 1	Guru Penggerak Cohort I, Curriculum Staff	Interview + Obs.
W-PESKUL-1	Site 1	Guru Penggerak, DKP Member, Extracurricular Coordinator	Interview + Obs.
W-KTU.1	Site 1	Head of Administration	Interview
W-KS.2	Site 2	Principal: extensive experience as model and reference school leader	Interview + Obs.
W-WKS.2	Site 2	Vice-Principal (Curriculum) and Merdeka Curriculum Facilitator	Interview + Obs.
W-KP5.2	Site 2	DKP Member and P5 Coordinator	Interview + Obs.
W-GP.2	Site 2	Guru Penggerak Cohort I, DKP Member, Extracurricular Coordinator	Interview + Obs.

Note. Tenure information for non-principal informants was not systematically collected as a formal research variable, as the protocol prioritized role-based knowledge of conflict dynamics over length of service. All non-principal informants had served in their current roles for a minimum of one full academic year at the time of data collection, ensuring

direct experiential familiarity with the Sekolah Penggerak program implementation dynamics reported in their interviews.

Research Procedure

The research was conducted in four sequential phases. Phase 1 (January to March 2023) encompassed the preliminary study at both sites, research ethics review conducted and approved by the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Doctoral Programme in Educational Administration, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, in accordance with standard academic ethics protocols governing human participant research (informed consent, voluntary participation, right to withdraw, and data confidentiality). Informant anonymity was protected through the use of role codes (W-KS.1, W-WKS.2, etc.) rather than names or personal identifiers. The contextual detail included in direct quotations was calibrated to ensure that no individual could be re-identified from role description and institutional affiliation alone, given the small size of both research sites, instrument development validated through expert review by two educational administration scholars external to the research team followed by a pilot interview, and formal access permissions obtained from both school principals. Phase 2 (May to June 2023) involved daily participatory observation at Site 1, six in-depth interviews (W-KS.1 through W-KTU.1), ten structured field notes (CL-1-1 through CL-1-10), and document collection alongside preliminary coding. Phase 3 (July 2023) involved daily participatory observation at Site 2, four in-depth interviews (W-KS.2 through W-GP.2), twelve structured field notes (CL-2-1 through CL-2-12), and confirmation of thematic saturation. Phase 4 (August to September 2023) comprised within-site analysis, cross-site comparative analysis using a structured matrix, model construction from the synthesis of empirical gaps and theoretical frameworks, member checking with key informants, and peer debriefing with external educational administration scholars. Figure 1 presents the research procedure.

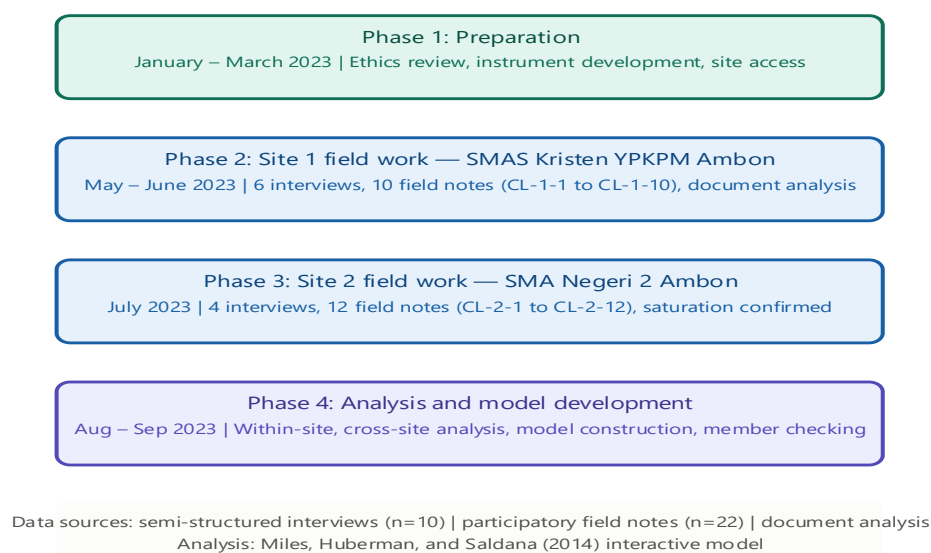


Figure 1. Research Procedure: Four-Phase Sequential Flowchart

Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

Three complementary data collection techniques were employed across approximately one month of daily field presence at each site. Semi-structured in-depth

interviews were conducted using an interview guide developed from the research questions and validated through expert review by two scholars and a pilot interview. The semi-structured format was selected as optimal for conflict research because it provides sufficient structure for systematic cross-informant comparability while preserving the flexibility essential for following unanticipated disclosures on a professionally sensitive topic. All interviews were conducted in Indonesian, audio-recorded with informed consent, and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Participatory observation was conducted daily throughout the field period, generating 22 structured field notes (CL-1-1 through CL-1-10 at Site 1; CL-2-1 through CL-2-12 at Site 2), each structured into four standardized analytical columns: activity description, detailed observational narrative, analytical memo, and linkage to specific research questions. Participatory observation is indispensable for conflict research because significant conflict behaviors such as strategic silence, avoidance manoeuvres, non-verbal tension, and informal complaint networks are not accessible through interview data alone and emerge only through sustained daily presence in the natural institutional setting. Document analysis examined meeting minutes, teacher supervision logs, organizational charts, and official *Sekolah Penggerak* policy materials, serving dual functions as independent data sources and as triangulation instruments verifying consistency between interview statements and official institutional records.

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed following the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2013) interactive model comprising three simultaneous and iterative components: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction involved open coding of verbatim transcripts and field notes from the earliest stages of data collection, enabling preliminary categories to continuously inform subsequent interview questions through axial and selective coding. Data display was achieved through narrative summaries, structured cross-site matrices, and thematic maps for each site independently. Conclusion drawing was iterative, with each emerging conclusion tested against incoming data until no internal contradictions remained. Cross-site analysis compared thematic patterns using a structured cross-site matrix, distinguishing cross-contextual patterns from context-specific findings. The proposed model was constructed through the synthesis of three convergent data sources: empirical gaps identified consistently across both sites; ideal conflict management elements explicitly proposed by informants; and relevant theoretical frameworks from the literature. Trustworthiness was established through Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria: credibility through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and site triangulation; transferability through thick description; dependability through complete audit trail documentation; and confirmability through reflexive memos and systematic separation of researcher interpretation from participant data.

With respect to analytical transparency: coding was conducted manually by the first author as the primary researcher throughout fieldwork and analysis. As a doctoral study with a single primary researcher, the risk of single-interpreter bias on inherently interpretive data is explicitly acknowledged. This limitation was mitigated through three mechanisms: member checking, in which preliminary interpretations were returned to key informants at both sites for correction and confirmation; peer debriefing, in which emerging analyses were reviewed by two educational administration scholars external to the research team; and a complete audit trail of dated field notes, verbatim transcripts, and a reflexive research journal maintained throughout the study. Reflexivity is addressed here rather than merely folded into the confirmability criterion: the first author's position as a doctoral researcher from Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, with prior professional familiarity with the *Sekolah Penggerak* program, carries both the advantage of contextual

access and the risk of a priori interpretive framing. The systematic use of negative case analysis and member checking was designed specifically to surface and correct such framings.

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FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Conditions of Work Conflict: Behavioral Spectrum and Structural Causation

Work conflict at both research sites presents across a wide behavioral spectrum rather than in a single form. At Site 1 (SMAS Kristen YPKPM), the principal described this range explicitly:

"Open debate, there is defiance, staying silent and refusing to speak, complaining behind others' backs, and refusing to work as well." (W-KS.1)

The vice-principal at Site 1, who simultaneously serves as Learning Committee Council chair, identified four structurally distinct conflict categories from direct professional experience: task conflict over curricular content and assessment standards; process conflict over scheduling authority and P5 coordination jurisdiction; relational conflict arising from senior teacher resistance to new pedagogical approaches; and role conflict arising from the intermediary position between principal and teaching staff. At Site 2 (SMA Negeri 2 Ambon), argumentative debate is the dominant and normalized conflict form, explicitly framed by the vice-principal as a multigenerational professional culture:

"Our culture here is really fond of debating. Everything, even small matters, quite often becomes a debate" (W-WKS.2)

Field note CL-2-5 recorded three structurally distinct conflict threads unfolding simultaneously within a single faculty meeting: collective rejection of additional task assignments; disputes over the legal basis of education contribution policies; and contradictory biometric attendance information circulating across administrative units. A systematic contrast in dominant conflict behavior is evident across sites: Site 1 exhibits a combination of situational confrontation and strategic avoidance shaped by a faith-based communal culture that institutionally prioritizes relational harmony, while Site 2 normalizes open argumentative debate as a professional norm that has persisted across multiple successive principal generations. Six structural-systemic conflict cause categories were identified consistently across both sites, none of which are primarily attributable to

personal incompatibility between individuals. Table 2 presents the taxonomy with cross-site empirical manifestations.

Table 2. Structural-Systemic Categories of Work Conflict Causes Across Both Sites

Category	Site 1 Manifestation	Site 2 Manifestation
1. Resistance and adaptation to transformational change	Rejection of new instructional modules; senior teachers maintaining established pedagogical methods	Resistance to paradigm shift; teachers approaching retirement declining supervisory obligations
2. Task ambiguity and disproportionate workloads	Perceived inequity in P5 theme allocation; contentious four-session exam supervision assignments	Collective rejection of additional task assignments; simultaneous administrative burden accumulation
3. Ineffective policy communication	Unannounced classroom supervision; uneven PMM platform socialization across staff	Contradictory biometric attendance information between personnel unit and BKD
4. Resource and facility constraints	Insufficient Chromebook devices; inadequate room configuration for moving-class system	Uneven Smart TV distribution; insufficient WiFi capacity relative to student enrollment
5. Generational and mindset gaps	Senior teachers perceiving professional expertise as devalued by new paradigm demands	Teachers approaching retirement perceiving mandatory supervision requirements as personally irrelevant
6. Unclear administrative rules and operational SOPs	Absence of agreed-upon SOP for teacher honorarium payment procedures	Unresolved ambiguity over lesson end-time in the moving-class schedule; see CL-2-6

Dual Impact of Conflict: Functional and Dysfunctional Dimensions

Work conflict at both sites produces functional and dysfunctional impacts that cannot be cleanly separated. The most significant functional impact is the spontaneous formation of horizontal social capital: following a principal challenge over low Platform Merdeka Mengajar completion rates, four teachers at Site 1 voluntarily organized a peer learning group in which one teacher assumed a tutoring role for three colleagues (CL-1-7). This self-organized collegial response demonstrates that conflict, when constructively channelled, can catalyse the Community of Learning formation that constitutes a core *Sekolah Penggerak* objective. Additional functional impacts include deepened principal self-knowledge of staff capacities and characteristics (W-KS.1) and policy innovation emerging from productive deliberative debate (CL-2-5). Dysfunctional impacts include teacher cognitive and emotional fatigue, uneven program implementation quality across staff cohorts, and the consumption of principal leadership capacity by conflict management activities, documented vividly when a two-person duty dispute absorbed the institutional attention of three hierarchical levels (CL-2-20).

The Pseudo-Resolution Pattern

The most analytically significant finding concerns the conflict aftermath stage. Across both sites, the dominant pattern of conflict resolution is pseudo-resolution: conflict appears administratively settled following formal institutional intervention, yet the

structural sources of underlying tension remain entirely unaddressed. The conflict between two duty teachers at Site 2 provides the clearest empirical illustration (CL-2-20). Following a workplace dispute, neither party engaged in direct dialogue with the other; the conflict was instead escalated through the institutional hierarchy from the duty coordinator to the principal, who issued a formal reprimand. The reprimanded teacher subsequently arrived earlier for duty, which all parties interpreted as resolution. However, follow-up observation documented that the two teachers maintained casual and apparently collegial interaction on topics unrelated to the conflict, confirming that the conflict was situationally specific rather than globally interpersonal, while simultaneously revealing that the operational source of the duty dispute, namely the absence of a clearly agreed-upon duty protocol, had remained entirely unaddressed throughout the resolution process (CL-2-22).

At Site 1, a dispute between two teachers over P5 theme allocation concluded without resolution when one party withdrew from the interaction (CL-1-2). The remaining teacher noted that the identical dispute had occurred in each preceding academic year, which is a direct and powerful empirical marker of the pseudo-resolution cycle. Across both sites, the same structural sequence recurs: conflict triggers formal institutional intervention; formal intervention produces behavioral change; the behavioral change is interpreted as resolution; no documentation of agreements is produced; the structural source remains entirely unaddressed; and the identical conflict re-emerges with the same triggers in the next relevant institutional period.

Conflict Management Planning

Neither research site possesses written SOPs, policy documents, or formalized procedures specifically designed to anticipate or prevent work conflict. All ten informants independently characterized conflict management planning at their respective sites as reactive and situational. However, field observation reveals a critical epistemological gap between this self-report and actual practice. Field note CL-1-1 documents the curriculum coordinator at Site 1 proactively restructuring exam supervisor assignments by session before dissatisfaction could escalate into open conflict, an action that constitutes sophisticated anticipatory conflict management yet was not identified as such by the coordinator. This individual possessed and exercised tacit knowledge of conflict prevention, yet this knowledge had never been named, documented, or made accessible to other staff or to successor leaders.

Implementation

Both principals demonstrate strong mediatory capacity, but in distinctly context-shaped styles. At Site 1, the principal employs a personal-pastoral approach, framing mediation explicitly within a spiritual commitment to impartiality and mutual satisfaction:

"In my experience, the role of mediating conflict requires divine wisdom. There must be no residual dissatisfaction remaining." (W-KS.1)

At Site 2, the principal employs a rational-collegial approach, orienting mediation toward problem substance rather than the identities of the parties involved:

"My position is clear: I look not at the person but at the essence of the problem, so that taking sides can be avoided." (W-KS.2)

Both approaches are contextually effective in managing visible conflict interactions. However, both create an identical institutional vulnerability: the conflict management capacity that has developed at each site resides entirely within the current principal's

personal leadership repertoire and style, with no component having been converted into standardized procedures, documented guidelines, or training materials that successor leaders or vice-principals could access and enact independently.

Evaluation

Evaluation of conflict management effectiveness at both sites relies entirely on surface behavioral indicators, specifically whether conflicting parties resume formal co-working without visible confrontation. No instrument, structured protocol, or systematic process exists at either site for assessing the substantive quality of post-conflict working relationships, including the degree of trust restoration, voluntary readiness to collaborate, or openness of communication between formerly conflicting parties. This evaluative blind spot is the proximate institutional cause of the pseudo-resolution cycle: when the only available evaluation signal is the absence of visible confrontation, administrative resolution and genuine substantive resolution are institutionally indistinguishable. Both principals independently acknowledged having received no targeted conflict management training during professional development and consistently expressed the need for external capacity support from the Education Office (W-KS.1; W-KS.2).

The Reflective-Collaborative Work Conflict Management Model

Based on systematic synthesis of empirical gaps identified consistently across both research sites, ideal model elements explicitly proposed by informants, and relevant theoretical frameworks from the literature, this study proposes the Reflective-Collaborative Work Conflict Management Model as a conceptual model for *Sekolah Penggerak*. The model requires expert validation and field trials before implementation claims can be responsibly advanced. It comprises seven cyclical stages and one external reinforcement layer, with each stage directly addressing a specific and documented empirical gap. Table 3 presents the model, and Figure 2 provides a visual representation.

Table 3. The Reflective-Collaborative Work Conflict Management Model

Stage	Empirical Gap Addressed	Key Operational Actions	Evidence
1. Early Detection and Identification	No formalized early warning mechanism; conflict identified only after open manifestation	Integrate conflict signal scanning into existing monthly evaluation forums and Community of Learning gatherings, converting tacit anticipatory knowledge into institutional routine	W-KS.1; W-KP5.2; CL-1-3
2. Root-Cause Analysis	Interventions address symptoms rather than structural sources; recurrence results	Conduct structured root-cause mapping distinguishing personal, process, and structural conflict sources before selecting any intervention	W-WKS1.1; W-WKS.2; CL-2-5
3. Open Dialogic Communication	No psychologically safe institutional channel for constructive professional	Establish protected communication forums with principal-guaranteed no-reprisal	W-GP.1; W-KP5.2; CL-1-2

Stage	Empirical Gap Addressed	Key Operational Actions	Evidence
	disagreement	conditions for all parties	
4. Neutral Leadership Mediation	Mediation entirely dependent on individual principal capacity without guiding procedure	Implement structured mediation protocol focusing on problem substance; document neutrality commitment and all process steps	W-KS.1; W-KS.2; CL-2-20
5. Multi-Stakeholder Collaborative Involvement	Resolution never systematically involves vice-principals, DKP, or supervisors	Define institutional involvement thresholds: routine conflicts at teacher-vice-principal level; complex conflicts at principal-DKP-supervisor level	W-KP5.2; W-WKS1.1; CL-2-1
6. Formal Agreement and Follow-Up Documentation	No documentation of post-conflict agreements; identical conflicts recur annually; the pseudo-resolution cycle	Mandate written documentation of all agreements, monitoring commitments, and follow-up schedules in institutionally accessible records	W-GP.1; CL-1-2; CL-2-20
7. Continuous Reflective Evaluation	Evaluation relies exclusively on surface behavioral indicators; substantive relationship quality unmeasured	Apply multidimensional evaluation encompassing interpersonal trust restoration, voluntary collaboration readiness, and communication openness; conduct structured follow-up two to four weeks post-resolution	CL-2-20; CL-2-22; W-KS.1; W-KS.2
External Reinforcement Layer	No conflict management training or mentoring provided by Education Office to either school	Education Office provides school-specific conflict management coaching, SOP templates, and professional development module integration	W-KS.1; W-KS.2; W-WKS.2

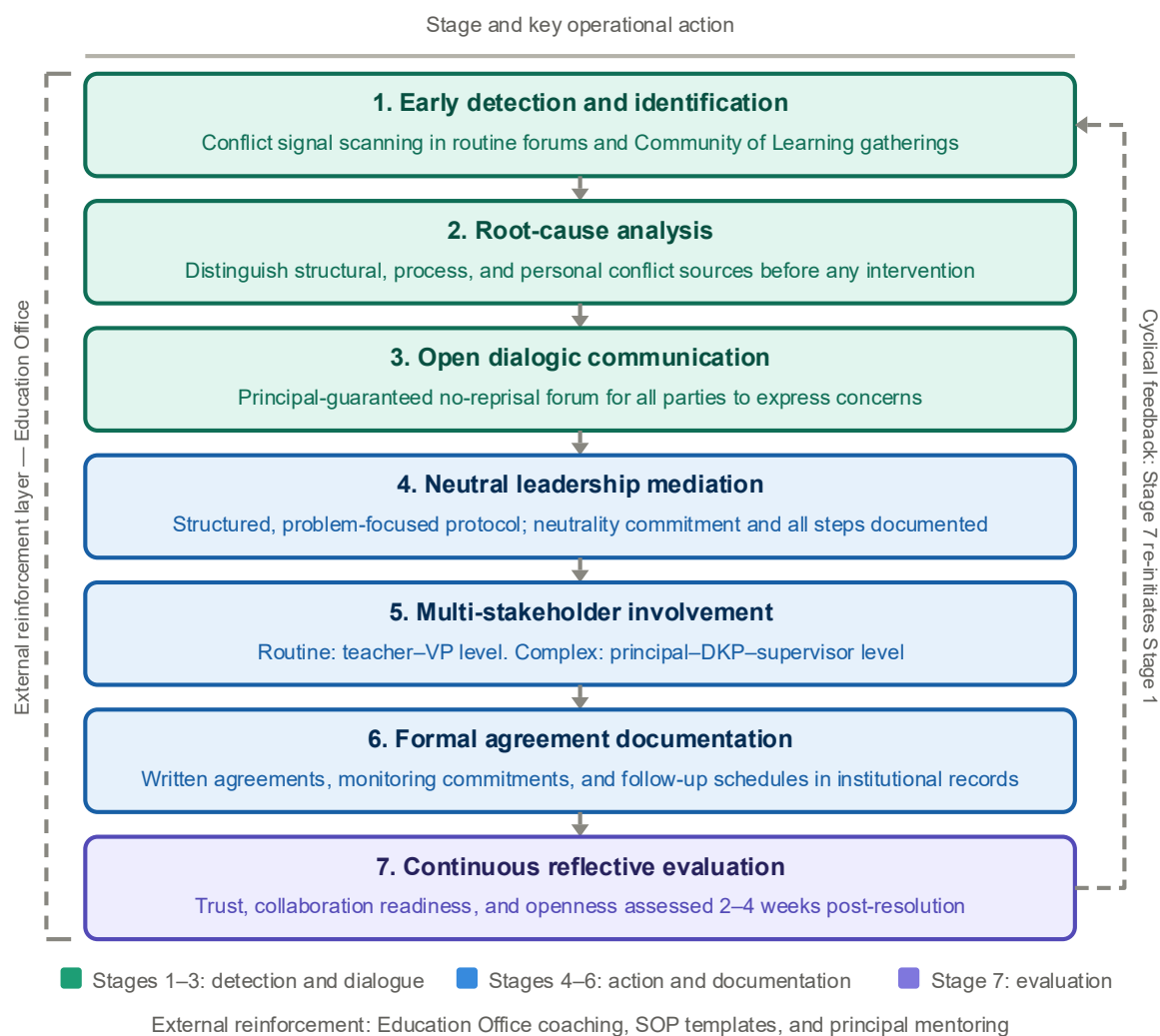


Figure 2. Reflective-Collaborative Work Conflict Management Model: Seven-Stage Cyclical Diagram. The arrow on the right side of the diagram connects Stage 7 (Continuous Reflective Evaluation) to Stage 1 (Early Detection), representing the cyclical character of the model: completed evaluation of one conflict episode generates the enhanced detection capacity that initiates the next cycle.

Discussion

Pseudo-Resolution: Theoretical Contribution and Extension of Conflict Episode Theory

The pseudo-resolution pattern identified consistently across both research sites constitutes this study's most significant theoretical contribution, extending Pondy's (1967) foundational conflict episode model in a direction the original theory does not accommodate. Pondy posits that each conflict episode generates an aftermath shaping subsequent episodes but does not distinguish between two qualitatively different forms of aftermath. This study specifies that distinction empirically: administrative resolution achieves surface behavioral compliance through formal institutional pressure without engaging structural root causes, while substantive resolution engages those root causes and produces genuine relational repair. Ross (1993) provides the evaluative framework for operationalizing this distinction through three criteria, namely acceptance as genuine agreement rather than coerced compliance, duration as sustainability beyond the period of formal pressure, and changed relationships as measurable improvement in working

relationship quality. The pseudo-resolution cases documented across both research sites fail all three criteria simultaneously and persistently.

In a structural equation modeling study of 633 employees, organizational trust and psychological safety were shown to jointly account for 68% of variance in group conflict levels, with formal reprimand identified as simultaneously undermining the psychological safety necessary for authentic disagreement expression and creating a self-reinforcing cycle in which pseudo-resolution reproduces itself by eliminating the conditions genuine resolution requires. A comprehensive review of the psychological safety literature reinforced this mechanism: environments characterized by responses to conflict through formal pressure rather than structured dialogue systematically foreclose the authentic engagement that constructive resolution demands. Studies on school conflict confirm that a medium level of constructively managed conflict yields positive individual and organizational outcomes, while repressively handled conflict produces negative spirals of rivalry, diminished cooperation, and organizational instability- the pattern documented consistently across both research sites in this study. The methodological implication is significant: research programs evaluating conflict management effectiveness exclusively through surface behavioral indicators will systematically overestimate success rates and fail to detect the pseudo-resolution cycle. Future research measuring conflict management effectiveness must operationalize Ross's (1993) three-criteria framework through instruments sensitive to substantive relationship quality rather than surface behavioral compliance.

Structural-Systemic Conflict: Correcting the Individualist Bias

The identification of six predominantly structural-systemic conflict cause categories represents this study's second theoretical contribution, shifting the field's analytical orientation from individual-interpersonal to institutional-systemic and carrying direct implications for how conflict management should be designed and resourced at the policy level. The prevailing framing in practitioner-oriented educational conflict literature attributes conflict primarily to individual attitudes, communication deficits, and personality incompatibilities, a framing that is not only analytically inadequate for the *Sekolah Penggerak* context but practically counterproductive: directing intervention toward individual attitudes when the sources of conflict are structural produces temporary relief at best, until the next structural trigger reasserts itself, reproducing the pseudo-resolution cycle at the level of policy design. Survey research across 414 Greek primary school educators confirmed that school conflict sources are both interpersonal and organizational in nature, and that principal leadership style functions as a joint determinant of conflict management effectiveness at the institutional level (Saiti, 2015). Building on this evidence, this study extends the structural argument from the style dimension to the causation dimension: not only how people respond to conflict but why conflict arises in the first place is fundamentally institutional in the *Sekolah Penggerak* context. Analysis of large-scale survey data from 18,234 teachers provided external validation from a different national context: teachers consistently attribute workload increases to policy initiatives rather than personal circumstances, confirming the structural character of reform-generated conflict (Stacey, McGrath-Champ, & Wilson, 2023). A systematic review of principal challenges across three major academic databases further documented that role ambiguity and resource inadequacy from educational reform are among the most persistent challenges facing school principals globally, affirming the structural argument as generalisable beyond the specific Indonesian setting.

These convergent findings carry a direct policy implication for *Sekolah Penggerak* implementation: task clarity, adequate resource provision, effective and equitable policy

socialization, and unambiguous operational rules are structural prerequisites for reducing the conflict load that principals currently absorb individually through personal leadership capacity, which is a capacity that no institutional system can systematically replace or guarantee through principal succession. Through quantitative research, principal leadership style was confirmed as the single most determinant factor in school conflict management effectiveness; however, a systematic literature review of Indonesian school leadership established that principals systematically lack adequate preparation in conflict management, a finding this study replicates and specifies: the deficit is not only one of individual skill but of institutional systems that would distribute conflict management capacity beyond any single person. Research at South African public schools similarly documented that principals receive inadequate professional preparation for conflict management, establishing the structural dependency problem as cross-national.

Tacit Knowledge Externalization as an Institutional Imperative

This study's third theoretical contribution bridges knowledge management theory and educational conflict management, two domains that have rarely been integrated in Indonesian educational administration scholarship. Polanyi & Sen (2009) and Nonaka (2009) provide the theoretical mechanism: the SECI model's externalization phase converts tacit individual knowledge into explicit, organizationally transferable knowledge through systematic articulation and documentation of implicit practices. An empirical comparative study confirmed that organizations successfully managing this conversion achieve superior institutional continuity across personnel changes and greater innovation capacity, with institutional resilience benefits that extend to other dimensions of organizational knowledge continuity. The institutional risk at both research sites is therefore not a deficit of conflict management capacity but a failure of externalization: the capacity exists and is practiced effectively in individual cases, but its survival depends entirely on the continued presence of specific individuals rather than on institutional memory. The proposed model directly operationalizes the externalization imperative through Stage 1, which embeds anticipatory conflict scanning into existing forums thereby converting tacit anticipatory knowledge into institutional routine, and Stage 6, which mandates post-conflict agreement documentation as replicable institutional memory that survives and outlasts any particular leadership tenure.

Practical and Policy Implications

For school principals, the evidence warrants a fundamental reorientation from reactive and personal-dependent conflict management toward anticipatory and institutionally embedded practice. Three concrete changes are required that can be implemented within existing institutional rhythms and resource constraints: integrating conflict signal detection into the agenda of existing monthly evaluation meetings; developing structured post-conflict evaluation protocols that probe substantive relationship quality through follow-up conversations two to four weeks after formal resolution; and systematically documenting significant conflict handling episodes as transferable institutional knowledge accessible to vice-principals and successor leaders. All seven stages of the proposed model are explicitly designed to operate within existing institutional forums and processes, requiring no additional resource burdens beyond time reallocation within routine institutional rhythms.

For the Education Office (*Dinas Pendidikan*) at district and provincial levels, field observation and consistent informant testimony establish that the current absence of targeted conflict management support for *Sekolah Penggerak* principals constitutes a structural policy gap with direct consequences for program quality and sustainability. School-specific coaching and mentoring grounded in actual conflict cases from the schools

being served is the appropriate form of support, rather than generic lecture-format training that does not engage the contextual realities principals face (Msila, 2012). For Kemendikbudristek, every nationally mandated educational transformation program that demands simultaneous paradigmatic change across multiple institutional domains will structurally generate work conflict in implementation schools. Evidence from this two-school study tentatively suggests that embedding conflict management preparation, including SOP templates, conflict detection instruments, and principal training modules, in future program launch packages may reduce the institutional costs of reform-generated conflict, a proposition warranting verification through larger-scale research.

Limitations

Four limitations circumscribe the generalisability claims this study can responsibly make. First, the two-school, single-city sample restricts statistical generalisation to populations; all generalisations are analytical, to theory rather than to population, following Yin (2018). Second, the professionally sensitive nature of workplace conflict interviews carries inherent social desirability bias risk that multi-source triangulation mitigates but cannot fully eliminate, following standard qualitative research practice. Third, one-month observation periods at each site cannot capture the seasonal and calendar-linked conflict patterns that may arise at specific points in the academic year. Fourth, the proposed Reflective-Collaborative Work Conflict Management Model retains the status of a proposed conceptual model, not a validated implementation framework, as it has not yet been subjected to expert Focus Group Discussion validation or limited field trials.

CONCLUSION

This study establishes what was previously untheorised in the educational conflict management literature: that work conflict in *Sekolah Penggerak* schools is predominantly structural-systemic in character, managed informally through personal-dependent principal leadership without institutionalized systems, and recurrently resolved only through pseudo-resolution, which is administrative settlement that suppresses surface conflict without addressing the structural root causes that generate it. These three interconnected findings describe conditions that previous scholarship has observed in practice but lacked the conceptual vocabulary to name, theorize, or address operationally. The Reflective-Collaborative Work Conflict Management Model, comprising seven empirically grounded cyclical stages and one external reinforcement layer, provides a conceptually grounded and empirically derived framework to address that gap.

Three original theoretical contributions advance the educational conflict management field. First, the pseudo-resolution concept extends Pondy's conflict episode model by specifying two qualitatively different forms of conflict aftermath, namely administrative resolution and substantive resolution, and identifying the institutional mechanism through which pseudo-resolution is perpetuated and made invisible: evaluative systems that rely exclusively on surface behavioral indicators. This contribution has direct methodological implications for the field: all future research measuring conflict management effectiveness must operationalize the three substantive resolution criteria through instruments capable of distinguishing administrative from substantive resolution with precision and replicability. Second, the structural-systemic causation finding shifts the field's analytical and prescriptive orientation from individual-interpersonal to institutional-systemic, with direct implications for how conflict management training, support, and policy should be designed at every level of the educational governance system. Third, the

integration of tacit knowledge management theory with school conflict management opens a new research and practice domain, specifically how anticipatory conflict prevention knowledge in schools can be externalized, documented, and institutionalized to ensure resilience across leadership successions.

The study answers all three research questions: work conflict in *Sekolah Penggerak* is predominantly structural-systemic with pseudo-resolution as its characteristic aftermath pattern; conflict management is informal, personal-dependent, and characterized by a critical tacit knowledge externalization gap; and the Reflective-Collaborative Model provides a seven-stage empirically grounded framework addressing each documented deficiency. Four research priorities follow from the study's limitations: expert validation of the proposed model through multi-stakeholder Focus Group Discussion; development of psychometrically validated instruments operationalizing the three substantive resolution criteria; longitudinal research tracking conflict cycles across complete academic years at multiple *Sekolah Penggerak* schools; and comparative studies between *Sekolah Penggerak* and non-*Sekolah Penggerak* schools to isolate the contribution of transformation-specific structural conditions to conflict character and intensity.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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