

The Effect of Interpersonal Conflict Between Coworkers on Teachers' Stress: Effective Conflict Management Strategies

*Ifna Nifriza, Indah Rahmalia, Dahayu Annora Reswary

STKIP Yayasan Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh, Indonesia

*E-mail: ifnanifriza87@gmail.com

Received: 13 May. 2024, Revised: 26 May. 2024, Accepted: 30 May. 2024

ABSTRACT

Conflict at school can be caused by conflicting demands, needs, drives, or desires. If conflicts can be resolved well, cooperative relationships will improve, and levels of trust and productivity will increase. Conflicts arise due to ineffective conflict management. Failure to manage conflict hinders the achievement of shared goals and disrupts the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. The research was carried out using a qualitative study method (Single Instrumental Case Study), which is a type of case research as an example to get an overview of problems and prevent individuals from improving their performance. By focusing on natural and naturalistic phenomena that exist in schools and carried out by observation in the field with strategies for Proper conflict management teachers' stress can be reduced and their ability to handle conflict at school can be improved. This can help create a more harmonious and productive school environment for all parties involved. Interpersonal conflicts between colleagues must be resolved quickly so as not to damage work relationships, affect mental well-being, and even hurt the quality of teaching. Conflict between coworkers in schools can hardly be avoided completely, but effective conflict management can help reduce the impact of stress arising from such conflict. Interpersonal conflict between co-workers can have a significant impact on teacher stress in the educational environment.

Keywords: Interpersonal Conflict, Conflict Management, Teacher's Stress.



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

INTRODUCTION

In the educational environment, the role of teachers is very important in shaping the future of students. However, teachers' work is also often faced with various challenges and pressures which can create high levels of stress. One factor that can contribute to teacher stress is interpersonal conflict between coworkers. These conflicts can include differences of opinion, relationship tensions, competition, or other problems that arise in daily interactions in the school environment. Conflicts often occur due to differences in views and different expectations of each teacher (Yulia, 2022). Interpersonal conflicts that occur between colleagues can have a significant impact on teacher well-being. Differences in opinion between teachers cause arguments, thereby endangering the effectiveness of educational institutions (Eriyanti et al, 2021). Conflicts that are not resolved properly can increase stress levels, disrupt productivity, and even hurt the quality of teaching (Handayani, 2023).

Teachers who experience ongoing stress can also experience reduced morale, lower job satisfaction, and even higher physical and mental health risks. In this context, it is important to understand in more depth how interpersonal conflict between colleagues can affect teacher performance. In several studies, it is known that several factors can exacerbate conflict in the educational environment, including poor communication, differences in values and expectations, and high work pressure. There are several causes of work stress in teachers at school, including the workload which takes up time and thought. (Nailah & Puspitadewi, 2022). Interpersonal conflicts can occur between school principals and teachers, teachers and other teachers, teachers, and students, between students and students, or even between school residents and the community. To overcome interpersonal conflicts in schools, conflict management, and increased resilience need to be carried out.

Routine programs such as family gatherings are carried out to maintain harmonized relationships so that they can build closeness, especially in the process of educating, providing teaching, guiding, mentoring, serving, and conducting evaluations. A teacher is responsible for his duties and obligations so that they are carried out effectively, in a balanced, efficient and positive manner, this is shown by the emergence of awareness between teachers and students, apart from that the teacher is a motivator and guide, and students must be actively involved in changing themselves through teaching. Therefore, so that teachers can carry out their duties and obligations well, efficient conflict management is needed so that it has an impact on the progress of educational institutions. From the Ministry of Education and Culture's basic data, the number of high school teachers in Payakumbuh City in 2021/2022 is 1,537 teachers, of which 75% are female teachers. This condition causes psychological imbalance, emotions, thought processes, and less harmonious relationships with colleagues. This is also reinforced by the results of the survey explaining that as many as 77% felt stressed due to a lack of harmonious relationships at school.

Conflicts between teachers at school are commonplace. This phenomenon is normal in an organization, even in educational institutions, so that conflict does not have a bad influence, skills are needed in solving problems in schools, both between teachers and principals and between teachers and teachers. Many factors cause stress among teachers, such as a discrepancy between the main task and what is being done and the salary as a teacher given to other jobs, which often leads to conflict, even the smallest one, which can cause stress that will affect performance.

Referring to the theory of human needs, conflict in basic human needs (physical, mental, and social) if not resolved can cause chaos, lack of recognition, lack of participation, autonomy, and threatened security. Therefore, conflict is a phenomenon that often occurs in the social life of society which is caused by the occurrence, controversy, and conflict between two parties (Dahari et al., 2022) on an ongoing basis. If each individual involved in the conflict realizes that there is a conflict occurring, the conflict will spread and endanger the atmosphere that has been well developed so far, but if the

conflicting individuals feel that there is no conflict between them then this will be easier to resolve by rebuilding a good relationship. harmonious. Therefore, conflict management is very helpful in resolving disputes that arise in educational institutions. Conflict management in schools is the ability to manage conflicts in schools well and carefully so that they brings positive benefits (Nurainiah, 2020), differences in traits, values, and perceptions, interdependence of tasks, and salary systems. The principal as a leader in the school must be able to find the factors that cause conflict and manage conflict well.

In the world of education, conflict cannot be avoided, but if the conflict is managed well, the school atmosphere will be safe, conducive, and enjoyable and will raise moral values. Conflict occurs due to many factors such as needs, intentions/drives, unfulfilled desires, or work demands. Leaders must be able to resolve conflicts appropriately and not harm anyone. If disputes or conflicts can be managed well, it will certainly strengthen cooperation between teachers and increase productivity. The result of a lack of conflict management will give rise to new conflicts. Failure to resolve conflicts will hinder goals and can damage the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. Therefore, conflict must be managed with effective strategies to improve teacher performance. This case study research aims to understand in depth how interpersonal conflict occurs at the high school level in the city of Payakumbuh. Samples were taken randomly from Senior High School (SHS) teachers in the city of Payakumbuh. Apart from that, this research also wants to see how teacher stress influences effective conflict management so that it can create a healthier educational environment, which will have a positive impact on teacher welfare and the quality of education provided to students.

METHODS

This research is descriptive qualitative research using the Single Instrumental Case Study research form (Moore, 2015). Case study research is carried out on cases related to issues and phenomena. Qualitative research itself is a research approach that focuses on natural and naturalistic phenomena that exist in nature and must be carried out by observing in the field.

In this research, the researcher also used library research (Library Research), meaning that this research does not only search or dig up information to then become data that only comes from the field (Putra et al., 2021). But it also uses data or information from library sources such as books, previous research, and the internet. The results of field observations and literature findings are then explained clearly so that information will be obtained regarding the causes of teacher stress and Conflict Management in resolving interpersonal problems at school.

RESULT

3.1 Interpersonal conflict

In our daily lives, we sometimes never escape conflict, both with those closest to us and our environment. Conflict comes from the word *conflictus*, which means colliding with each other. Clashes occur with each other, there are incompatibilities, oppositions, and fights (Cartono, 2020). Conflict is a dispute resulting from the failure to fulfill someone's expectations for themselves and it turns out that this is not the case. Kriether also said that conflict can occur if one party views another party negatively, causing conflict. Conflict is a dispute between parties characterized by open hostility towards the other party. According to some of these opinions, conflict will occur between two groups that are at odds with each other. Conflicts can also occur due to incompatibilities caused by a lack of human resources, financial problems, interpretation of ideas, prestige, incompatibility of vision and mission, and even support for those in power (Donohue, 1992).

In the traditional view, conflict is connoted as a negative thing for the individual in conflict, even though conflict is a normal thing in organizations. This is because conflict is inevitable, so each individual in the group is encouraged to accept conflict. Conflict cannot be eliminated, and can sometimes help the performance of a group or organization. According to the interactionist view, conflict is very important to exist. This view argues that conflict must be eliminated because organizations consisting of members who always collaborate, are calm, and are peaceful will only lead to apathy, anti-change, and far from innovation. There must be conflict that occurs, but it cannot create a creative, critical, and dynamic group (Dwita et al., 2023).

In a case study of conflict in an SHS level education unit in the city of Payakumbuh, it is known that many interpersonal conflicts are caused by psychological elements. related to a psychological syndrome shown by symptoms of fatigue, cynicism, stress, and feelings of ineffectiveness as a result of a large number of responsibilities or workload as a teacher. by high school teachers in Payakumbuh, therefore it needs to be managed properly and correctly by the school principal by guiding by paying attention to teacher psychology. Many things trigger the emergence of interpersonal conflict at school, including emotional factors caused by anger, displeasure, fear, and dissatisfaction, oppositional attitudes, as well as interpersonal personality clashes that cause interpersonal conflict at school. Examples include teachers who often arrive late, are absent for various reasons, are indifferent to the work environment like to cause trouble, think aggressively, strike, and are disruptive (Liliweri 2018). Several forms of interpersonal conflict occur at school, including:

- **Conflict within the individual:** This conflict originates from within a person and arises due to indecision in deciding something. Another cause of work that exceeds one's

abilities. Internal conflict among teachers usually occurs because the workload exceeds their ability to carry out many responsibilities. If the teacher is unable to complete it, it will cause stress which will impact performance in carrying out teaching duties.

- **Conflict between individuals:** This conflict is substantive and emotional. This usually occurs due to differences of opinion and disputes over personal issues, for example, conflicts between teachers in determining lesson hours, imbalance in the distribution of the workload given by the school principal, and differences in views regarding the preparation of school programs.
- **Conflict between groups:** Group conflicts also often occur in schools, where groups come from the same field of study, grade level, or compatibility between teachers. However, conflicts often occur between groups, for example, conflicts between mathematics teachers and art teachers. Mathematics teachers feel disturbed because their students are not concentrating on studying. On the other hand, groups of art teachers believe that loud sounds are necessary to teach certain songs and breathing techniques.
- **Conflict between units:** This conflict usually occurs because they represent work units, for example, the administration work unit and the library work unit. According to Mulyaasa, conflicts that occur in the educational environment between work units are 1) vertical conflicts such as teachers who are not happy with the principal's policies; 2) horizontal conflicts, namely conflicts between teachers in fields of study; 3) staff line conflicts, the emergence of differences in interests between work units; and 4) role conflict, the existence of a person's multiple roles which causes overlapping of the policies they issue (Pakpahan & Saragih, 2022).

Many factors cause interpersonal conflict in schools, Davis and Newstrom argue that organizational changes, personal disputes, different sets of values, status threats, cost-sharing views, and attention points are the causes of conflict. This means that in the educational environment, there are always changes, whether due to policy changes or adapting to developments in science and technology. The parties involved in the stakeholder will try to improve educational services which are sometimes rejected by other parties. External factors can cause conflict. Wahyudi mentioned five sources of organizational conflict: 1) lack of organizational resources; 2) communication failure; 3) differences in traits, values, and perceptions; 4) dependency of tasks on each other; and 5) payroll system. The source of conflict in the educational environment is caused by institutional expectations and cultural values, the role of educational institutions depends on personality, and the role of individuals, and conflict that originates from personalities will shape behavior, creativity, and adaptation. However, it is not uncommon for conflicts in schools to also create high levels of teacher stress, school principals who do not quickly resolve interpersonal conflicts with their teachers will find it difficult to implement the policies that have been made. Because conflict is difficult to avoid, the right strategy is needed to resolve it.

3.2 Stress on teachers

Stress among teachers in schools is a condition where teachers experience excessive physical, emotional, and mental pressure as a result of their duties and job demands in the educational environment. Teacher stress can have a serious impact on their physical and mental well-being, and can also impact the quality of education they provide to students. According to Fitchett et al (2018), stress experienced by teachers can have an impact on their personalities, including experiencing boredom and the teacher's inability to manage the class well. In the field of education, stress experienced by teachers is considered a factor that causes them to experience stress (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978). According to Kyriacou (2001), "as the experienced teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, as a result of some aspects of their work as teachers. Experiences experienced by teachers that include unpleasant and negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, pressure, frustration, or depression. This stress is viewed from the influence of the surrounding environment and is related to the teacher's work because excessive job demands cause physiological and psychosocial disorders.

Stress is understood as a condition in which a person experiences psychological, physical, and mental disorders. "Teacher stress comes in two forms: 1) causes of stress (stress causes); and 2) responses to stress (stress responses)," said Harmsen et al (2018). The causes of stress consist of various things, such as job demands and time for tasks, work, and the work environment, which can affect teachers' emotional, psychological, and motivation. Meanwhile, the stress response is the teacher's mental interpretation of the effects of stress. There are seven sources of stress for teachers in schools, 1) negative student behavior; 2) inappropriate leadership style of the principal; 3) conflicts with colleagues; 4) administrative demands; 5) insufficient salary; 6) environmental work; and 7) changing policies found an effective way to reduce the level of negative feelings and teacher dissatisfaction.

3.3 Conflict management

Conflict management in schools is closely related to actions to resolve conflicts. Conflicts in the school environment occur among all teachers, even school principals, between groups, intra-organizational and intra-school. Limited knowledge of conflict management causes communication failures and perceptions, and the salary system also triggers conflict in schools. Every conflict must be managed systematically so that cooperation improves, strengthens trust and self-esteem, and can increase productivity and creativity (Mahardika et al. 2022). Conflict can also have a positive impact by increasing motivation, integration between groups, adapting to circumstances, increasing skills, increasing creativity, contributing to goal achievement, and incentives for growth. However, if conflict is ignored or even not resolved, it can disrupt learning activities at school. Conflict can cause a decrease in productivity, a crisis of confidence, and paralysis in decision-making. Thus, school principals must have the ability to handle disputes and utilize these disputes to improve school performance and productivity.

The goal of conflict management is to achieve optimal performance by maintaining conflict and minimizing the effects of conflict. Conflict management is also useful for maintaining good relations between parties in conflict (Suncaka, 2023). Several conflict control techniques in schools can be carried out in various approaches. This approach has advantages and disadvantages. Conflicts must be resolved fairly and reasonably according to the context in which they arise.

The causes of conflict are not only internal to the organization but also outside the organization. Principals are managers (principals) and educational leaders can consider different strategies to manage existing conflicts. One thing that is recommended is to start with a passive attitude towards a positive orientation and rely heavily on the maturity level of the parties facing the conflict. Understanding how to change the attitudes and behavior of those being led and so on. When it comes to power or authority, gaining greater control is essential to conflict management.

In handling conflicts among teachers in Payakumbuh City, it is important to pay attention to how the conflict does not cause new problems among teachers. The principal must be able to use the power that is within him and be able to use the power that is within us to guide the attitudes and behavior of our lower classes. The leader's ability to regulate power and authority at a reasonable level will help resolve conflicts according to plan. Then an atmosphere arises. Directing conflict in a direction that is beneficial for the organization. (Nasrudin, et, al, 2021). Thomas (2008) developed a conflict management strategy using two forms, namely: cooperation (Cooperativeness) and the horizontal axis and assertiveness (Assertiveness) on the vertical axis. Based on these two aspects, Thomas (2008) proposed 5 types of conflict management styles, namely:

- Competition: The competitive style has a high level of assertiveness and low levels of cooperation, this style has a power-based work style. In practice, the principal allows conflicting parties to compete fairly.
- Collaboration: A collaborative style is a style that is very assertive and cooperative. The aim is to provide alternative solutions and meet the expectations of all parties entangled in a conflict. The collaborative style is a negotiation effort to create a solution that reconciles all parties involved in the conflict. This effort includes understanding each other's problems and understanding each other's differences of opinion. Apart from that, innovation and creativity are also used as alternatives. The reality of cooperation achieved by the principal is by letting his subordinates do the work involved in conflict to work together.
- Compromise: The style can increase the assertiveness of cooperative relationships with a take-and-give strategy. The parties in conflict try to find alternative solutions on their own. In practice, the Principal often asks conflicting parties to compromise and resolve conflicts through negotiation and discussion to find out what each other wants.
- Accommodation: In this style, the party in conflict tries to accept all the wishes of the other party so that both parties can find a way out. The method is as if the two people in

conflict don't care about the problems they are facing and end the argument without realizing it.

- Avoidance: Avoidance style conflict management depicts conflicting parties remaining silent, even acting normally as if there is no conflict between them, and will usually postpone resolving their problems.

Lipsky & Seeber (2006) explain that conflict management styles in schools can take the form of school principal policies. According to Shih & Susanto (2010), school principals should have a conflict management style which is a pattern of behavior that will be understood by every individual in the school.

Conflict management can involve all stockholders in the school working together to solve problems. Teacher stress caused by interpersonal conflict greatly influences the implementation of conflict management in schools. Disharmonious relationships, heavy workloads, and many assignments can cause stress for teachers, which in turn can affect their ability to handle conflict at school. Conflict management in schools can help reduce teachers' stress and improve their ability to handle conflict. Several conflict management strategies can be used, such as:

- Using the right conflict management style: As previously explained, five types of conflict management styles can be used, namely accommodation, avoidance, compromise, competition, and collaboration. Choosing the right style depends on the situation and individual needs.
- Use effective communication techniques: Effective communication can help avoid conflict or resolve conflict in a way that is satisfactory to both parties. Effective communication techniques include listening well, expressing feelings clearly, and avoiding the use of offensive language.
- Using negotiation techniques: Negotiation techniques can help resolve conflicts in a way that satisfies both parties. Negotiation techniques include finding common ground, offering alternative solutions, and seeking mutual agreement.
- Using mediation techniques: Mediation techniques involve a neutral third party to help resolve the conflict between two parties. Mediators can help identify problems, find alternative solutions, and seek mutual agreement.

By using appropriate conflict management strategies, teacher stress can be reduced and their ability to handle conflict at school can be improved. This can help create a more harmonious and productive school environment for all parties involved. Interpersonal conflicts between colleagues must be resolved quickly so as not to damage work relationships, affect mental well-being, and even hurt the quality of teaching.

CONCLUSIONS

Conflict between colleagues among high school teachers in Payakumbuh City can hardly be completely avoided, but effective conflict management can help reduce the impact of stress arising from these conflicts. Interpersonal conflict between colleagues can have a significant impact on teacher stress in the educational environment. Therefore, an effective conflict management strategy is needed to overcome this problem, such as: 1) Teachers should feel comfortable expressing their feelings and views honestly. That way, problems can be identified early before they become major conflicts; 2) Periodic Team Meetings, Holding regular team meetings among colleagues can help in building better relationships. This is an opportunity to clarify expectations, share ideas, and address concerns before they become serious conflicts; 3) Conflict Management Training, Schools can provide conflict management training to teaching staff. Such training helps teachers understand conflicts, deal with emotions, and find effective solutions; 4) Mediation, if the conflict has reached a level that is difficult to resolve, mediation can be a good choice. A trained mediator can help coworkers resolve their differences in a way that is fair and beneficial to both parties; 5) Schools must have clear policies regarding harassment, intimidation, and conflict between colleagues. Teachers should know that violations will be taken seriously; 6) Psychological Support, Providing access to psychological support to teachers who experience stress due to conflict is important. Counseling or emotional support can help teachers deal with the effects of stress; 7) Collaboration, Encouraging collaboration between colleagues can reduce tension. Collaboration on educational projects or extracurricular activities can strengthen relationships and defuse conflict; and 8) Self-Assessment, Teachers can also carry out self-assessments to understand their role in the conflict. Reflecting on their actions and behavior can help identify areas that need improvement.

REFERENCES

- Cartono, C. (2020). Penerapan model pembelajaran kooperatif tipe tgt (teams-games tournament) untuk meningkatkan kemampuan teknik dasar bermain kasti di kelas v sd negeri 179/ix tanjung harapan semester i tahun ajaran 2019/2020. *Jurnal Literasiologi*, 3(3).
- Dahari, Rivana, A., Utama, M. M. A., & Guci, A. (2022). Manajemen Konflik (Studi Kasus SMP Asy-Syukriyyah Tangerang) *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 11(2), 62–69.
- Donohue, W. A. (1992). *Managing interpersonal conflict*. Sage Publications.
- Dwita, D. D. S., Al-Fahmi, S. N., Karisma, D. Y., & Lestaringrum, A. (2023). Integrasi Nilai Kebhinekaan Pada Anak Usia Dini Melalui Proyek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila Di TK Dharma Wanita Wanengpaten. *Efektor*, 10(2), 306-316.
- Eriyanti, E., Arafat, Y., & Eddy, S. (2021). Pengaruh komunikasi interpersonal dan manajemen konflik terhadap kinerja guru. *Jurnal Tambusai*, 5(2), 2998-3004.'

- Fitchett, P. G., McCarthy, C. J., Lambert, R. G., & Boyle, L. (2018). An examination of US first-year teachers' risk for occupational stress: Associations with professional preparation and occupational health. *Teachers and Teaching*, 24(2), 99-118.
- Handayani, F. (2023). Studi Manajemen Konflik Menuju Madrasah Efektif. 1(5), 5–10.
- Harmsen, R., Helms-Lorenz, M., Maulana, R., & Van Veen, K. (2018). The relationship between beginning teachers' stress causes, stress responses, teaching behaviour and attrition. *Teachers and Teaching*, 24(6), 626-643.
- Kyriacou, C., & Sutcliffe, J. (1978). Teacher stress: Prevalence, sources, and symptoms. *British journal of educational psychology*, 48(2), 159-167.
- Kyriacou, C. (2001). Teacher stress: Directions for future research. *Educational review*, 53(1), 27-35.
- Liliweri, A. (2018). Prasangka, konflik, dan komunikasi antarbudaya. Prenada Media.
- Lipsky, D.B., & Seeber, R.L. (2006). Managing organizational conflicts. *The Sage Handbook of Conflict Communication*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 359-90.
- Mahardika, I.M.O. (2022). The perspectives of Vocational Students on Online Learning in Covid-19 Pandemic. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*, 6(1), 49-58.
- Moore, D. R. (2015). Master teachers as instructional leaders: An instrumental case study. Liberty University.
- Nailah, Y. F., & Puspitadewi, N. W. S. (2022). Hubungan Konflik Peran Ganda Dengan Stres Kerja Pada Guru di Kabupaten X. *Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi*, 9(2), 66–76.
- Nasrudin, D., Rochman, C., Kuntadi, D., & Jamaluddin, D. (2021). Research Trends of Quality Assurance in Islamic Education: A Bibliometric Analysis. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Islamic Education*, 1(1), 22-32.
- Nurainiah, N. (2020). Manajemen Konflik dalam Pendidikan Islam. *Serambi Tarbawi*, 8(2), 131–146.
- Pakpahan, F. H., & Saragih, M. (2022). Theory of cognitive development by jean Piaget. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2(1), 55-60.
- Putra, A., Dewata, I., & Gusman, M. (2021). Literature Reviews: Hydrometeorological Disasters and Climate Change Adaptation Efforts. *Sumatra Journal of Disaster, Geography and Geography Education*, 5(1), 7-12.
- Shih, H.A., & Susanto, E. (2010). Conflict management styles, emotional intelligence, and job performance in public organizations. *International journal of conflict management*, 21(2), 147-168.
- Suncaka, E. (2023). Leadership and Management of the Multicultural Education Curriculum at Senior High School. *Scaffolding*, 5(1), 192-205.
- Thomas, K. W. (2008). Thomas-kilmann conflict mode. *TKI Profile and Interpretive Report*, 1(11).
- Yulia, F. (2022). Upaya Kepala Sekolah dalam Penyelesaian Konflik Kinerja Tenaga Pendidik Melalui Manajemen Konflik Interpersonal di MTs Al Wasliyah Tanjung Pasir Kecamatan Kualuh Selatan Kabupaten Labuhanbatu Utara. 2(2), 659–664.