

Case Study of Intergroup Conflict in Student Groups at Senior High School State 1 Kakas Minahasa Regency

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Kakas, and is described as follows: (1) types of conflict between student groups, (2) school strategies for handling conflict. This study employed qualitative research. The data collection techniques used were (1) observation, (2) interviews, (3) documentation studies, (4) and a combination of the three (triangulation). The research instruments were self-research, field notes, and an interview guide. The data obtained were then analyzed using the following steps: (a) Credibility, (b) Tranferability, (c) Dependability. Based on the research results, the following findings were obtained: 1. From the research results obtained by the researcher through interviews with 26 groups of students, the conflicts that occurred between student groups at SMA Negeri 1 Kakas were caused by: (1) Conflicts between student groups arose due to mutual teasing, (2) Conflicts between student groups occurred due to misunderstandings, (3) Conflicts between student groups were caused by jealousy. 2. Based on the findings from the 26 groups, the researcher interviewed teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Kakas, and most of the teachers supported the statements from the student groups. The researcher also interviewed the principal of SMA Negeri 1 Kakas, and he supported the statements from the teachers. Next, the researcher interviewed security at SMA Negeri 1 Kakas, and he supported the statements from the students, teachers, and the principal.

Keywords: intergroup conflict, minahasa regency, senior high school, student groups, teachers

INTRODUCTION

Everyone has different opinions and feelings about one another. These differences, opinions, and feelings can be factors that contribute to conflict. Students who join educational organizations (schools) come from diverse backgrounds, including ethnicity, social status, culture, religion, and character. When students join an educational organization, they inevitably have to interact with other students in various ways. Furthermore, Kambey (2010) states: Conflict between groups within the same organization is caused by conflicting interests or perspectives within each group. One of the important challenges faced by school principals as educators is how to manage conflict within the educational organization they lead.

Conflict is a natural and inevitable part of human interaction, including within educational institutions. In schools, students from diverse ethnic, cultural, social, and economic backgrounds interact daily, which creates opportunities for collaboration but also for tension. Intergroup conflicts among students have become a global concern, as they can negatively affect students' psychological well-being, academic performance, and the overall school climate (García-Moya et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2021). In Indonesia, where schools are microcosms of multicultural society, the potential for conflict among student groups is heightened by differences in values, social identity, and peer group affiliations.

Research has shown that intergroup conflicts in schools often arise from relatively simple triggers, such as teasing, misunderstandings, or competition, but if left unmanaged, these conflicts can escalate into more serious forms of violence (Farooq et al., 2022; Sincero et al., 2023). Such situations not only threaten the safety of students but also undermine the role of schools as institutions for character building and social integration. For principals and teachers, conflict management is not merely about resolution but also about developing preventive strategies to foster a positive learning environment (Li et al., 2020).

Globally, effective conflict management has been linked to the development of students' socio-emotional skills and improved teacher-student relationships (Cai et al., 2021). In the Indonesian context, however, studies on conflict management in schools remain limited, particularly at the senior high school level in rural or semi-urban areas. Previous studies in Indonesia have primarily focused on student violence in urban schools or on general issues of school discipline (Sutarto et al., 2021; Wulandari & Fitriani, 2022). Very few have examined how conflicts emerge between student groups in local contexts and how school leaders, teachers, and communities collaborate in managing such conflicts.

Researchers also received information during a survey at SMA Negeri 1 Kakas that conflicts frequently occur between student groups. Based on this information, researchers were motivated to

delve deeper into the causes of conflict between student groups through more in-depth research. This study focuses on SMA Negeri 1 Kakas in Minahasa Regency, where intergroup conflicts among students have been reported to occur frequently. By exploring the types of conflicts that arise and the strategies employed by school leaders and stakeholders to address them, this research seeks to contribute to both the theoretical understanding of school-based conflict management and the practical efforts of educators in similar settings. The findings are expected to enrich the literature on educational leadership and provide actionable recommendations for schools in Indonesia and beyond.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding Conflict

Conflict comes from the Latin verb "configere," meaning to strike each other. Sociologically, conflict is defined as a social process between two or more individuals (or groups) in which one party attempts to eliminate the other by destroying it or rendering it powerless. Conflict is driven by differences in the characteristics of individuals in an interaction. These differences include physical characteristics, knowledge, customs, beliefs, and so on. With the inclusion of individual characteristics in social interactions, conflict is a normal situation in every society, and no society is free from conflict between its members or with other groups. Conflict will only disappear with the disappearance of the society itself.

Conflict According to Robbin

Robbin (1996) describes conflict in organizations as the Conflict Paradox, which is the view that while conflict is perceived as improving group performance, most groups and organizations strive to minimize it. This view is divided into three parts, including:

1. The Traditional View. This view holds that conflict is bad, negative, detrimental, and should be avoided. Conflict is synonymous with violence, destruction, and irrationality. This conflict is a dysfunctional result of poor communication, a lack of trust and openness between people, and the failure of managers to respond to employee needs and aspirations.
2. The Human Relations View. This view holds that conflict is considered a natural occurrence within groups or organizations. Conflict is considered inevitable because within a group or organization, differences of opinion and perspective inevitably arise among members. Therefore, conflict should be used as motivation for innovation or change within the group or organization.
3. The Interactionist View. This view tends to encourage conflict within a group or organization. This is because a cooperative, calm, peaceful, and harmonious organization tends to become static, apathetic, unmotivated, and uninnovative. Therefore, according to this view, conflict needs to be maintained at a minimum level on an ongoing basis so that each member of the group remains enthusiastic, self-critical, and creative.

Conflict According to Stoner and Freeman

Stoner and Freeman (1989) divide conflict into two parts: the traditional view (Old View) and the modern view (Current View):

1. Traditional View.

The traditional view assumes that conflict is avoidable. This is because conflict can disrupt an organization and prevent optimal goal achievement; conflict must be eliminated. Conflict is usually caused by managerial errors in designing and leading the organization. Because of these errors, managers, as members of management, are tasked with minimizing conflict.

2. Modern View.

Conflict is unavoidable. It is caused by many factors, including organizational structure, differences in goals, perceptions, values, and so on. Conflict can reduce organizational performance at various levels. If conflict occurs, managers, as members of management, are tasked with managing the conflict to create optimal performance to achieve common goals.

Conflict According to Myers

In addition to the views of Robbins, Stoner, and Freeman, conflict is understood from two perspectives: traditional and contemporary (Myers, 1993).

In the traditional view, conflict is considered a bad thing that must be avoided. This view strongly discourages conflict because it is considered a factor causing the breakdown of a group or organization. In fact, conflict is often associated with anger, aggression, and conflict, both physical and verbal. When conflict occurs, it inevitably evokes emotional reactions from everyone in the group or organization, leading to greater conflict. Therefore, according to the traditional view, conflict must be avoided.

The contemporary view of conflict is based on the assumption that conflict is inevitable as a logical consequence of human interaction. However, the issue is not how to mitigate conflict, but how to handle it appropriately so that it does not damage interpersonal relationships or even undermine organizational goals. Conflict is considered a normal part of organizations. Conflict is not seen as a constructive tool for building the organization, for example, how to improve organizational performance.

Understanding Conflict Management

Conflict management is a situation that occurs when there are differences of opinion or perspective between several people in a group or organization. Mutual defense is at least one aspect of maintaining the relationship between two groups with different goals and perspectives. According to Ross (1993), conflict management is the steps taken by actors or third parties to direct a dispute toward a specific outcome that may or may not result in a resolution of the conflict and may or may not result in a peaceful, positive, creative, consensual, or aggressive outcome. Conflict management can involve self-help, collaborative problem-solving (with or without the assistance of a third party), or decision-

making by a third party. A process-oriented approach to conflict management examines the communication patterns (including behaviors) of actors and how they influence their interests and interpretations of the conflict.

Meanwhile, Minnery (1980) stated that the process of managing urban planning conflicts is a rational and interactive part, meaning that the approach to the urban planning conflict management model is continuously refined until it reaches a representative and ideal model. Similarly, the conflict management process explained above, that urban planning conflict management includes several steps, namely: acceptance of the existence of conflict (avoided or suppressed/silent), clarification of the characteristics and structure of the conflict, evaluation of the conflict (if beneficial then continued with the next process), determining the actions required to manage the conflict, and determining the role of the planner as a participant or third party in managing the conflict. The entire process takes place in the context of urban planning and involves the planner as an actor who manages the conflict either as a participant or third party.

METHOD

Senior High School State 1 Kakas has 438 students, 25 teachers, 4 administrative staff, and 1 security guard. The students come from villages around the Kakas sub-district and come from diverse family backgrounds. Data obtained through interviews with 26 groups revealed that the cause of conflict was teasing each other in 14 groups, misunderstandings in 11 groups, and jealousy in q groups.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design, which is appropriate for exploring complex social phenomena in real-life contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study approach was selected because it allows an in-depth investigation of the types of conflicts occurring among student groups and the strategies adopted by school leaders to manage them.

Participants and Setting

The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Kakas, located in Minahasa Regency, Indonesia. The school has 438 students, 25 teachers, 4 administrative staff, and 1 security officer. Students come from diverse family and cultural backgrounds, primarily from villages in the Kakas sub-district. Participants in this study included:

- 26 student groups (interviewed to identify the types and causes of conflicts),
- teachers (interviewed for validation and triangulation),
- the school principal, and
- a security officer (providing contextual information).

Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who had direct experiences with intergroup conflicts in the school (Etikan et al., 2016).

Data Collection

Data were collected through multiple techniques to ensure credibility and richness of information:

- Observation – conducted during school hours to capture interactions among student groups.
- Semi-structured interviews – carried out with students, teachers, the principal, and the security officer. Interviews were guided by open-ended questions to encourage detailed responses.
- Document analysis – including school disciplinary records, meeting minutes, and reports related to student conflicts.
- Triangulation – combining the above methods to cross-validate data and strengthen findings (Fusch et al., 2018).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The process involved six steps: (1) familiarization with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the final report. To ensure research trustworthiness, the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were applied (Nowell et al., 2017).

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical research principles. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, including parental consent for students under 18. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained by using pseudonyms and removing identifying information. The research received approval from the Graduate School of Universitas Negeri Manado ethics committee.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of interviews with 26 student groups revealed three main causes of intergroup conflicts at SMA Negeri 1 Kakas:

- Teasing among peers (14 groups) – Students reported that verbal teasing or ridicule often escalated into arguments and physical altercations.
- Misunderstandings (11 groups) – Simple communication errors or rumors frequently caused tensions between groups.

- Jealousy (1 group) – Competition related to academic achievement, friendships, and relationships occasionally triggered conflicts.

Validation interviews with teachers, the principal, and the school's security officer confirmed these findings. Teachers emphasized that conflicts typically stemmed from student immaturity and peer dynamics. The principal highlighted that student groups often mirrored village-based affiliations, reinforcing rivalries inside the school. The security officer added that monitoring student gatherings was crucial to preventing escalations.

This section describes the results of the requirements test, the results of the descriptive To obtain accurate data, researchers interviewed teachers at Kakas 1 State Senior High School, and it turned out that most of them supported the statements of the conflicting student groups. Next, the researchers interviewed the principal of Kakas 1 State Senior High School, who supported the teachers' statements. The principal also stated that the brawl that occurred at Kakas 1 State Senior High School in early 2015 was caused by groups that had formed in the village, continuing into the school, and from these groups, they formed even more hostile groups.

The researchers further interviewed security at Kakas 1 State Senior High School, and he supported the statements of the students, teachers, and the principal. He also told researchers that his negative experiences at Kakas 1 State Senior High School had motivated him to work harder during breaks, and that if any suspicious student groups were found, the security immediately reported them to the principal.

The Principal's Strategy for Managing Conflict at SMA Negeri 1 Kakas

The principal's strategy for resolving conflicts between student groups is as follows: the principal trusts the Student Council (OSIS) and if the conflict between student groups cannot be resolved by the OSIS, the problem is handled by the class teacher. The principal then immediately calls the Kakas District Police and the local Military Command (Koramil). The principal then summons the parents of the conflicting students and provides guidance. Furthermore, to prevent a recurrence of the brawl that occurred in early 2015, the principal records all motorcycle taxi drivers in and around Kakas Village. The principal urges parents to report any conflicts in the village to the principal. The principal collaborates with community leaders to inform the principal of any student groups in conflict within the village. In May 2015, the principal, in collaboration with the Minahasa Regency government, facilitated by the administration and community division, invited a psychologist to provide character development to the students of SMA Negeri 1 Kakas.

The findings highlight that intergroup conflict in schools often originates from seemingly minor issues but can escalate if not managed effectively. This aligns with García-Moya et al. (2020), who found that teasing and peer victimization are significant predictors of negative school climate and student disengagement. Similarly, Yang et al. (2021) noted that misunderstandings among adolescents are often intensified by poor communication and lack of conflict-resolution skills.

The study underscores the importance of school leadership in conflict management. The principal's strategies—delegating initial resolution to the student council (OSIS), involving teachers, and escalating serious cases to external authorities—reflect a multi-level approach. Comparable strategies have been shown to reduce the likelihood of school violence in various contexts (Cai et al., 2021; Sutarto et al., 2021). However, while involving external actors such as police and military can deter conflict in the short term, over-reliance on such measures may undermine students' ability to develop internal conflict-resolution skills (Li et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the collaboration between the school, parents, and community leaders is consistent with whole-school approaches to conflict prevention, which emphasize shared responsibility among stakeholders (Wulandari & Fitriani, 2022). Research in Southeast Asia has shown that community engagement contributes to stronger student character education and reduces the likelihood of intergroup violence (Farooq et al., 2022; Sincero et al., 2023).

The study also demonstrates that cultural and social backgrounds influence the dynamics of school conflicts. In the Minahasa context, student group rivalries often reflect village affiliations, highlighting the need for culturally responsive leadership in conflict management. This is consistent with findings from García-Moya et al. (2020), who emphasize the significance of contextual and cultural factors in shaping conflict patterns in schools.

The results have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study reinforces interactionist perspectives of conflict, which view conflict as inevitable but manageable within organizations (Robbins, 1996). Practically, the findings suggest that principals should not only focus on resolving conflicts but also on preventive strategies, such as regular character education, peer mediation programs, and teacher professional development in conflict resolution. Integrating socio-emotional learning into the curriculum may also equip students with the skills to manage disagreements constructively (Yang et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, the researcher concluded the following: The causes of conflict between student groups were: teasing each other in 14 groups, misunderstandings in 11 groups, and conflict stemming from jealousy in 1 group. This study investigated the causes of intergroup conflicts and the strategies employed by school leaders to manage them at SMA Negeri 1 Kakas, Minahasa Regency. The findings revealed that most conflicts among student groups were triggered by teasing, misunderstandings, and jealousy, with these seemingly minor issues escalating into more serious disputes if left unmanaged. Validation from teachers, the principal, and the security officer confirmed that conflicts often mirrored village-based affiliations, underscoring the role of social and cultural backgrounds in shaping school dynamics. From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the literature on conflict management in schools by reinforcing the interactionist view of conflict, which frames conflict as inevitable but manageable. The findings also highlight the importance of culturally

responsive leadership in addressing school conflicts, particularly in contexts where community affiliations strongly influence student interactions. Practically, the study underscores the need for principals and teachers to implement preventive strategies rather than relying solely on reactive measures. Schools should prioritize character education, socio-emotional learning, and peer mediation programs to strengthen students' conflict-resolution skills. Moreover, stronger collaboration with parents and community leaders is critical to addressing the broader social roots of intergroup conflicts. Future research could expand this study by adopting a comparative design across multiple schools in different regions to better understand cultural variations in conflict dynamics. Quantitative approaches may also complement qualitative findings by measuring the impact of specific conflict-management strategies on student outcomes. In conclusion, conflict in schools is unavoidable, but with effective leadership, community collaboration, and preventive educational programs, schools can transform conflict into opportunities for growth, resilience, and character development among students.

Suggestions

1. The principal, as the leader of the educational organization, should increase cooperation with the school committee and parents.
2. The principal should invite psychologists more frequently to provide character development to students to prevent brawls between student groups.

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