

# Madrasah Principal's Strategies in Managing Conflict in Islamic Educational Institutions: A Case Study of MAS Al Washliyah, Pakam Village

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the dynamics of internal conflicts and the conflict-management strategies implemented by the Principal of MAS Al Washliyah Desa Pakam, Medang Deras District, Batu Bara Regency. Internal conflicts were found to occur repeatedly within the madrasah and involved various organizational components, including subject teachers, administrative staff, homeroom teachers, and guidance and counseling (BK) teachers. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that conflicts stem from weak interdepartmental communication, imbalanced workloads, differing perceptions of roles and responsibilities, and the absence of systematic internal coordination. The principal employs dialogic, collaborative, and democratic approaches to conflict resolution through deliberative forums, direct supervision, and rapid communication via digital media. These strategies are reinforced by Islamic values such as *syura* (consultation), ethical communication, and mutual respect, which enhance the effectiveness of conflict management. The study concludes that inclusive, participatory, and communicative leadership plays a critical role in maintaining organizational stability, strengthening professional relationships, and preventing persistent conflicts. Therefore, systematic improvements in the madrasah's governance are necessary to support the creation of a harmonious and productive educational environment.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education plays a crucial role in shaping the character, behavior, and religious understanding of younger generations in Indonesia [1], [2]. As one of the main institutions responsible for this mission, madrasahs are not only mandated to transmit religious knowledge but are also expected to equip students with essential academic, social,

and moral competencies. In this regard, the quality of madrasah education is closely related to the professionalism of teachers and the effectiveness of institutional management, particularly the leadership of the madrasah head [3], [4].

In organizational settings, including educational institutions, conflict is recognized as an unavoidable phenomenon. Differences in background, values, interests, communication styles, and professional expectations often generate tensions that may develop into conflict [5]. According to Robbins, conflict emerges when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to affect negatively, something of importance. Similarly, Thomas and Kilmann classify conflict-handling styles into five approaches—competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating—each with implications for organizational effectiveness [6]. These perspectives suggest that conflict should not always be viewed as destructive; when managed appropriately, it can be functional, encouraging reflection, innovation, and improvement [7].

Within the context of madrasahs, conflicts may arise between teachers and administrative staff, among teachers themselves, between teachers and students, or even between the institution and parents [8], [9]. Such conflicts are often triggered by unclear task assignments, imbalanced workloads, poor coordination, or poorly communicated policies. As an Islamic educational institution, the madrasah is also expected to resolve conflicts in ways that reflect Islamic values such as justice (*'adl*), deliberation (*musyawarah*), mutual respect, and responsibility. Therefore, the challenge faced is not the elimination of conflict, but rather the development of effective conflict management strategies that align managerial principles with Islamic ethical values [10], [11].

In this situation, the role of the madrasah head becomes central. As both a leader and a manager, the head of the madrasah is responsible for planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating institutional activities, including managing interpersonal and structural conflicts. Leadership weaknesses, particularly in communication and coordination, may hinder the achievement of educational goals and negatively affect teacher performance. Conversely, effective leadership is expected to motivate teachers, foster professionalism, and create a conducive working environment that supports quality learning [12], [13].

Previous studies on conflict management in educational institutions have largely focused on general school settings, leadership styles, or administrative effectiveness. However, limited attention has been given to conflict management practices within madrasahs that explicitly integrate Islamic values, especially in cases of recurring structural and coordination-related conflicts among teachers and staff. This indicates a knowledge gap concerning how conflict management is practically implemented in Islamic secondary education institutions and how leadership strategies function within specific socio-cultural and organizational contexts [14].

Preliminary observations at MAS Al-Washliyah Desa Pakam indicate ongoing internal conflicts involving teachers and administrative staff, subject teachers and homeroom teachers, and teachers and guidance counsellors [15], [16], [17]. These conflicts primarily stem from delays in task completion, differing perceptions of roles and responsibilities, and insufficient coordination between divisions. Such conditions suggest that the conflict management strategies currently applied have not yet achieved optimal effectiveness,

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thereby making this madrasah a relevant and significant case for further investigation,[6], [18].

Based on the above considerations, this study examines in depth the conflict management practices implemented by the head of MAS Al-Washliyah Desa Pakam. By focusing on leadership strategies, coordination mechanisms, and the integration of Islamic values in conflict resolution, this research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of conflict management models in Islamic educational institutions.

**The research questions guiding this study are as follows:**

1. How does the head of MAS Al-Washliyah Desa Pakam manage internal conflicts within the madrasah?
2. What conflict management strategies and coordination mechanisms are implemented to resolve and prevent conflicts in the institution?

## **2. METHODS**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This design was selected to obtain an in-depth, contextually grounded understanding of how the head of a madrasah implements conflict management strategies in a real institutional setting. Qualitative descriptive research allows social phenomena to be explored holistically and naturally, emphasizing meanings, processes, and interactions rather than numerical measurement. In line with the views of Bogdan and Biklen, Arikunto, Nasution, and Jane Richie, this approach facilitates the exploration of participants' perspectives and experiences regarding leadership and conflict management practices in Islamic educational institutions. In this study, the researcher functioned as the primary research instrument, responsible for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data [19], [20].

### **Setting and Participants**

The research was conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta (MAS) Al-Washliyah Desa Pakam, located in Kecamatan Medang Deras, Kabupaten Batu Bara, under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. This site was chosen purposively due to recurring internal conflicts, as identified in preliminary observations and described in the study's background.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their roles, involvement in institutional management, and relevance to the research focus. To deepen and validate the data, snowball sampling was also used, particularly when initial informants recommended other individuals directly involved in conflict situations. The total number of informants consisted of:

- 1 headmaster (principal)
  - 2 vice principals
  - 1 head of administration (TU staff)
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- 6 subject teachers
- 2 guidance and counseling (BK) teachers
- 3 homeroom teachers

These participants were considered capable of providing rich and diverse information on the forms of conflict, leadership practices, coordination patterns, and conflict-resolution strategies within the madrasah.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation, carried out in two main stages. The first stage involved preliminary observations conducted during the student admission period to gain an initial understanding of institutional dynamics and interaction patterns. The second stage consisted of intensive fieldwork focusing on interviews, repeated observations, and document collection.

Observations were conducted through non-participant observation, with the researcher visiting the madrasah on approximately eight occasions over 2 months. Activities observed included staff meetings, daily teacher interactions, administrative coordination, and learning-related activities. These observations aimed to capture real practices of leadership, communication, and conflict management.

In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow flexibility and depth. Interview questions focused on several key areas, including:

- Types and sources of conflicts experienced within the madrasah
- Personal experiences in dealing with conflicts
- The headmaster's role and leadership style in conflict resolution
- Coordination mechanisms among teachers and administrative staff
- Perceptions of fairness, communication, and Islamic values in resolving conflicts

Documentation was used as supporting data and included school regulations, meeting minutes, organizational structures, task distribution records, photographs, and other archival materials relevant to leadership and conflict management practices.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Analysis was conducted continuously, beginning prior to fieldwork, continuing during data collection, and extending through the final reporting stage. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were systematically coded, categorized, and interpreted to identify patterns and themes related to conflict management strategies and leadership practices.

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### Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To ensure the data's trustworthiness, this study applied the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

- Credibility was achieved through prolonged field engagement and triangulation of data sources and techniques, including comparing interview statements across different roles (e.g., headmaster, teachers, administrative staff) and cross-checking interview data with observation notes and institutional documents.
- Transferability was supported by providing detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and procedures, allowing readers to assess the applicability of findings to similar settings.
- Dependability was ensured by maintaining consistency in data collection and analysis procedures, which were carefully documented.
- Confirmability was achieved through systematic documentation of research processes and findings, enabling external review and verification.

Ethical procedures were also carefully observed. Institutional permission was obtained prior to data collection, and informed consent was secured from all participants. To protect confidentiality, participants' identities were anonymized using coded names or role-based labels. All data were used solely for academic purposes.

Through these methodological procedures, this study aims to provide a comprehensive, credible, and ethically accountable description of the headmaster's strategies in managing conflicts at MAS Al-Washliyah Desa Pakam.

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1. RESULTS**

The findings of this study indicate that internal conflict is a recurring phenomenon within the daily organizational life of MAS Al-Washliyah Desa Pakam. These conflicts are not incidental but repeatedly emerge in both technical-administrative matters and interpersonal and interdepartmental interactions. Based on interviews, observations, and documentation, conflicts were found to involve several key groups within the madrasah structure, particularly subject teachers, administrative staff (TU), homeroom teachers, and guidance and counseling (BK) teachers. Most informants acknowledged that similar tensions had occurred more than once and had become "routine problems" rather than isolated incidents.

Overall, the recurring nature of these conflicts suggests structural and managerial weaknesses that have not yet been systematically addressed.

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Table 1. Main Conflict Types

Type of Conflict	Parties Involved	Main Issues	Key Causes
Administrative coordination conflict	Subject teachers – TU staff	Delays in documents, correspondence, and grade processing	Weak communication, unclear procedures
Academic coordination conflict	Subject teachers – Homeroom teachers	Late grades, weak follow-up on discipline	Imbalanced workload, unclear expectations
Role perception conflict	Subject teachers – BK teachers	Perceived unequal workload	Lack of understanding of BK roles
Structural coordination conflict	Across departments	Recurrent misunderstandings	Absence of systematic coordination mechanisms

This table highlights that conflicts tend to follow repetitive patterns, involving similar actors and causes.

### **Conflict Between Teachers and Administrative Staff (TU)**

One of the most frequently mentioned conflicts—reported by almost all teachers interviewed—concerns the relationship between teachers and administrative staff. Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with delays in administrative services, particularly regarding correspondence, grade compilation, and preparation of teaching-related documents. These delays were perceived as disrupting lesson preparation and reducing teaching effectiveness.

One subject teacher stated:

“Sometimes we need documents urgently for teaching administration, but the process takes too long. This makes our work delayed, even though our teaching schedule cannot wait.” (Teacher T3)

In contrast, the administrative staff provided a different explanation. They emphasized that delays often occur because teachers' submitted documents are incomplete, incorrectly formatted, or submitted too close to deadlines.

A TU staff member explained:

“Many teachers submit files at the last minute, and some of them are incomplete. We have to revise or return them, and this takes time. Then we are blamed for being slow.” (TU Staff A1)

These opposing perspectives illustrate a communication gap and a lack of shared understanding regarding workflow standards and timelines. This issue consistently appeared across interviews and was also observed during administrative activities, indicating it is a typical and recurring conflict.

### **Conflict Between Subject Teachers and Homeroom Teachers**

Another prominent conflict involves subject teachers and homeroom teachers. Most homeroom teachers and several subject teachers mentioned this issue. Subject teachers

complained about delays in follow-up on grade submissions, weak responses to student discipline reports, and slow coordination on student behavior issues.

Conversely, homeroom teachers reported feeling overburdened by multiple responsibilities. In addition to teaching, they are required to manage student administration, attendance, parent communication, and student character development.

One homeroom teacher noted:

“We are expected to handle everything—attendance, discipline, parents, reports—while still teaching. Sometimes it feels like the workload is not balanced.” (Homeroom Teacher W2)

This conflict reflects imbalanced workloads and unclear role boundaries, intensifying daily tensions and reducing effective collaboration.

### **Conflict Between Subject Teachers and BK Teachers**

Conflicts were also identified between subject teachers and BK teachers, particularly regarding perceptions of workload. Several subject teachers perceived BK teachers as having fewer teaching hours and lighter responsibilities.

However, BK teachers emphasized that their work involves complex non-academic responsibilities, including individual counseling, handling problematic students, character development programs, and investigating family-related issues.

One BK teacher explained:

“Our work is not always visible in the classroom, but we deal with students’ personal problems, discipline cases, and family issues. It is mentally demanding, not light at all.” (BK Teacher B1)

This misunderstanding indicates a difference in perception and limited cross-role awareness, which repeatedly surfaced in interviews and observations.

### **Underlying Factors of Conflict**

From the data analysis, four main factors were identified as the root causes of recurring conflicts:

- a. Weak interdepartmental communication leads to misinformation and misunderstanding.
- b. Imbalanced workloads are creating perceptions of unfairness among staff.
- c. Differences in perceptions and expectations regarding roles, responsibilities, and procedures.
- d. Lack of systematic internal coordination, resulting in fragmented task execution.

These factors demonstrate that conflicts are structural rather than purely personal, indicating shortcomings in management systems and coordination mechanisms.

### **Existing Positive Practices**

Despite these challenges, the findings also reveal positive aspects within the madrasah. Informal cooperation among teachers during major school events, mutual assistance during examination periods, and a shared commitment to maintaining the school’s

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Islamic identity were frequently observed. Some teachers noted that conflicts rarely escalate into open confrontation, as most staff still prioritize harmony and respect.

As one teacher remarked:

“Even though conflicts exist, we usually try to keep things calm because this is an Islamic school. We do not want problems to grow bigger.” (Teacher T1)

This suggests that Islamic values of harmony and restraint already function as informal conflict buffers, although they have not yet been translated into systematic managerial strategies.

The conflicts at MAS Al-Washliyah Desa Pakam function as indicators of the need for more decisive, more systematic leadership intervention. Without effective conflict management strategies, these recurring disputes risk disrupting organizational stability, reducing teacher productivity, and ultimately affecting educational quality. At the same time, the presence of positive collaborative practices indicates that the institution has social capital that can be strengthened through constructive managerial reform.

### **3.2. DISCUSSION**

This discussion interprets the empirical findings by linking them with theories of conflict management, educational leadership, and Islamic organizational governance. The analysis focuses on the nature of conflict at MAS Al-Washliyah Desa Pakam, the principal's leadership role, the integration of Islamic values into conflict resolution, and the implications for madrasah governance and teacher performance.

#### **1. Nature and Types of Conflict in Madrasah**

The findings reveal that conflicts at MAS Al-Washliyah Desa Pakam are systematic and recurring, rather than incidental. Most conflicts are interpersonal and interdepartmental, arising from differences in perceptions, expectations, workload distribution, and communication practices. Conflicts between teachers and administrative staff, between subject teachers and homeroom teachers, and between subject teachers and BK teachers demonstrate that role ambiguity and weak coordination are key triggers.

These findings support Thomas and Kilmann's conflict framework, which emphasizes that interpersonal conflict often emerges from competing interests and differing interpretations of responsibilities. Similar patterns have been reported by Fathorrahman and Bashori, who found that unclear task division and weak internal communication are dominant sources of conflict in educational institutions. However, this study extends previous research by highlighting recurring structural conflicts within a madrasah context, rather than focusing solely on individual behavior.

Moreover, the conflicts exhibit both dysfunctional and functional dimensions. Dysfunctional conflict is reflected in delayed administrative processes, reduced coordination, and emotional tension among staff, as also noted by Mulyati and Suherman. At the same time, the findings confirm Robbins' view that conflict can be functional when

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it stimulates reflection, system evaluation, and organizational learning. In this case, conflicts have prompted discussions on workload balance, communication improvement, and procedural clarity.

## **2. Principal's Leadership and Conflict Management**

The principal's leadership plays a decisive role in managing conflict and maintaining organizational stability. The findings indicate that the principal adopts dialogic, participatory, and communicative strategies, including routine meetings, informal discussions, and open complaint channels. These approaches reduce misinterpretation and foster mutual understanding among staff.

A distinctive contribution of this study is the identification of systematic digital communication practices, particularly the use of WhatsApp groups for coordination and rapid information dissemination. This strategy minimizes delays and prevents misunderstandings, reflecting contemporary leadership practices that emphasize responsiveness and transparency. Compared with earlier studies that focus mainly on face-to-face mediation, this case demonstrates how digital tools can serve as practical mechanisms for conflict prevention in madrasahs.

The principal's active presence in daily school activities also aligns with transformational leadership theory, which stresses personal engagement, trust-building, and motivation. This finding is consistent with Bashori's research on school leadership but adds a new dimension by showing how continuous informal supervision can reduce conflict escalation in Islamic schools.

## **3. Integration of Islamic Values in Conflict Resolution**

Another important contribution of this study lies in its emphasis on integrating Islamic values into conflict management. Conflict resolution at MAS Al-Washliyah Desa Pakam is not approached merely as a managerial task but is framed within values such as *syura* (deliberation), mutual respect, ethical communication (*adab*), and peaceful settlement of disputes.

This approach strengthens internal cohesion and reinforces the madrasah's identity as an Islamic institution. While previous studies acknowledge the moral role of Islamic leadership, this research demonstrates how Islamic values are operationalized in daily conflict-management practices, particularly through deliberative forums and collective decision-making. This finding extends Fathorrahman's work by showing that Islamic ethics can serve not only as normative ideals but also as practical governance tools.

## **4. Implications for School Governance and Teacher Performance**

The findings confirm that the effectiveness of conflict management directly affects teacher performance, workplace climate, and institutional stability. Poorly managed conflict leads to reduced motivation, weak coordination, and inefficiency, which ultimately impacts students' learning experiences. Conversely, inclusive and communicative conflict management fosters collaboration, accountability, and professional growth.

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From a governance perspective, this study suggests that madrasahs require systematic conflict-management mechanisms, such as:

- a. clear standard operating procedures (SOPs) for administrative workflows,
- b. structured coordination forums between teachers, TU staff, homeroom teachers, and BK teachers,
- c. a simple conflict-resolution flow model (identification → dialogue → mediation → evaluation),
- d. Furthermore, continuous professional development focused on communication and teamwork.

These practical models represent a concrete contribution of this study to improving madrasah management practices.

This case study contributes to existing literature in several ways. First, it highlights recurring structural conflict as a key issue in madrasah management, rather than viewing conflict as sporadic or purely interpersonal. Second, it documents the systematic use of digital communication as a conflict-prevention and coordination strategy in an Islamic educational setting. Third, it demonstrates the practical integration of Islamic values into everyday conflict management, bridging managerial theory and religious ethics.

This study has several limitations. It is based on a single-site case study, which limits broad generalization. The perspectives of students and parents were not included, even though they may also be affected by internal conflicts. Additionally, the findings are not statistically generalizable, but they are analytically transferable to similar Islamic educational institutions with comparable contexts.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the internal conflicts at MAS Al-Washliyah Desa Pakam are recurrent and primarily take the form of interpersonal and interdepartmental conflicts involving subject teachers, administrative staff, homeroom teachers, and guidance and counseling teachers. These conflicts are generally triggered by weak communication, differences in perceptions of roles and workloads, and insufficient coordination among work units. Thus, the conflicts do not originate solely from individual factors but also reflect structural issues in the madrasah's organizational management.

In responding to these conditions, the principal applies a participatory and systematic conflict-management strategy. The approach emphasizes open dialogue, deliberative decision-making (*syura*), intensive coordination, and fair, mediative leadership. Conflicts are not resolved through unilateral decisions, but through a process of identifying root causes, listening to multiple perspectives, and seeking mutually acceptable solutions. This strategy demonstrates the integration of modern management principles with Islamic values, particularly in upholding ethical communication, justice, and collective responsibility.

Overall, the principal's conflict-management strategies have proven effective in maintaining organizational stability and fostering a relatively harmonious working

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environment. Conflicts are prevented from escalating into destructive disputes and are instead directed toward evaluation and system improvement. The positive impact is reflected in sustained professional relationships among teachers and staff, improved coordination, and a more conducive learning environment for students. Consequently, the conflict-management practices contribute positively to the quality of madrasah governance and the continuity of educational processes.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the madrasah develop written standard operating procedures related to conflict management and coordination workflows to clarify roles and responsibilities. In addition, leadership capacity among middle-level managers, such as vice principals and the head of administration, should be strengthened through structured training in conflict management and organizational communication. Regular reflection and evaluation sessions focusing on communication patterns and workload distribution should also be institutionalized to prevent the recurrence of similar conflicts.

This study has limitations: it was conducted at a single madrasah and did not include the perspectives of students or parents. Future research may adopt a comparative approach across multiple madrasahs or employ mixed-method designs to measure the impact of conflict management on teacher performance and student learning outcomes. The inclusion of external stakeholders' perspectives is also expected to enrich understanding of conflict dynamics and management in Islamic educational contexts.

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