

Conflict Management among Students as a Strategy to Build Child Friendly Schools

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Abstract

Conflict between students is an unavoidable dynamic in the school environment, especially at the primary and secondary education levels. If not managed properly, these conflicts can have a negative impact on students' social-emotional development and disrupt the creation of a conducive learning atmosphere. This study is motivated by the importance of conflict management as part of strategic efforts in creating child-friendly schools. The purpose of this study is to analyze the forms of conflict between students, evaluate the conflict management strategies used by the school, and assess the effectiveness of the approach in creating a safe, inclusive and comfortable educational environment for all learners. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation in one of the public elementary schools that implement a child-friendly school program. The results showed that conflicts that often occur are related to differences of opinion, academic competition, and social dynamics. The conclusion of this study states that conflict management based on a humanist and participatory approach is proven to be able to reduce the intensity of conflict and strengthen social relations between students.

Keywords: Conflict Management, Child-Friendly Schools, Strategies, Inclusive Education.



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INTRODUCTION

The younger generation plays a crucial role as future leaders and drivers of progress, greatly influencing the direction of their country's development. Just as countries invest in economic growth to ensure long-term prosperity, it is vital that children are protected, guided, and given the opportunity to develop according to their individual needs (Cadaval dkk., 2024; Ryan dkk., 2023). The future of the country depends heavily on the progress of this generation, and preparing them for leadership will directly influence the direction of the country in the future.

Children are often identified by their age because they are not yet fully mature. The Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language defines a child as someone who is still in the early stages of development (Lopp, 2022; Rao dkk., 2020). Based on the Civil Code (Article 330), individuals who are under 21 years of age and unmarried are considered children (Barbosa, 2023; Sobral dkk., 2025). Given their vulnerability and limited life experiences, children are greatly influenced by their surroundings. They need a caring environment that provides care and emotional support for their physical and mental growth (Paalo, 2021; Vlaisavljevic dkk., 2021). Unfortunately, issues related to children are often ignored by society, even though their impact is very important, even on par with political issues.

Many people define children only as those who have direct blood relations, and many are not actively concerned with children's issues (Vlaisavljevic dkk., 2021; Wong-Cabanillas dkk., 2025). This indifference has contributed to the increase in cases of kidnapping and violence against children, which often occur in environments that are familiar and close to children's daily lives. Schools, as educational institutions, have the primary responsibility to create a supportive and conducive environment in carrying out their educational role effectively (Boocock dkk., 2020; Christensen dkk., 2023). Recently, violence in schools, both at the elementary and secondary levels, has become more frequent. This violence can occur between peers, between students and teachers, and even involve parents or staff. Given the various challenges faced by students related to violence and conflict, it is imperative for schools to implement child-friendly programs. These programs emphasize children's rights, such as the right to life, the right to development, the right to protection, and the right to education, with the aim of creating a safe and secure learning environment (Yosada & Kurniati, 2019).

Conflict between students is a common phenomenon in the school environment. However, if not managed properly, conflict can develop into violence, bullying, and disrupt a healthy learning climate. In the context of child-friendly schools, conflict should not be seen as a problem alone, but as an opportunity to develop social skills, empathy, and communication (Chumo dkk., 2023; Iorbo dkk., 2024). Therefore, conflict management is an important strategy in building a safe, comfortable, and inclusive school for all children.

Addressing bullying through a child-friendly school approach is a holistic and effective strategy to create a safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment for all students. Child-friendly schools offer a holistic approach that takes into account the needs and rights of children as a whole. In the context of preventing and overcoming bullying, child-friendly schools have a crucial role (Boehne dkk., 2024; Orejudo dkk., 2020). Child-friendly schools are educational institutions, both formal, non-formal, and informal, that are designed to provide a safe, clean, and healthy environment. These institutions also care about the environment and culture, and are able to guarantee, fulfill, and respect children's rights. In addition, child-friendly schools protect children from violence, discrimination, and other forms of abuse, and

support children's participation, especially in policy planning, learning processes, supervision, and complaint mechanisms related to the fulfillment of children's rights and protection in education (Dzurec, 2020; Phattharathanasut & Brehm, 2025). This program aims to provide protection for children as children in schools by prioritizing children's rights which include the right to life, the right to grow and develop, the right to protection, and the right to education.

Child-friendly schools play a very important role in preventing and overcoming bullying in school children. With a comprehensive and inclusive approach, child-friendly schools can create a safe, supportive learning environment and promote optimal development for each child. Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in studying conflict management between students as a strategy to build child-friendly schools.

RESEARCH METHOD

Conflicts often start from small things, such as differences in attitudes, views, or lack of ability to accept others (Espinosa, 2024; Hellevik dkk., 2023). Although these problems initially seem trivial, if left without a proper solution, these small problems can develop into serious disputes over time (Artyukhov dkk., 2024; Finkelstein dkk., 2025). Therefore, it is important to identify and handle conflicts early on so that the problem does not grow and disrupt the dynamics of daily life.

As a catalyst for change and progress, conflict can open up opportunities for new ideas, creative solutions, and innovations that improve existing systems and processes (Cusick & Hamed El Sahly, 2018; Juliana dkk., 2024). If properly directed and directed, conflict can also have a major positive impact. For example, through systematic conflict resolution, collaboration between individuals or groups can increase because it allows them to share views, find common solutions, and deepen their understanding of each other. In addition, conflict that is managed properly can strengthen a sense of self, because they feel valued, heard, and involved in decision-making (Kpinpuo & Tuokuu, 2017; van de Water dkk., 2023). Not only that, conflict that is handled in a structured manner can also encourage creativity and productivity, because when faced with differences of opinion or complex challenges, individuals tend to try to find innovative and effective solutions.

According to Lambert et al., in an opinion quoted by Wartini, conflict is a situation that arises due to different opinions or perspectives between groups, individuals, and even between organizations (Calvard dkk., 2020; Schrage & Giacomini, 2023). Meanwhile, Alo Liliweri defines conflict as a natural tension that arises between individuals or groups due to differences in beliefs, habits, needs, and values (Hurenko dkk., 2024; Motaref & Hain, 2024). De Moor added that conflict can occur in a social system when people in the system are faced with conflicting goals or values, occurring over a long period of time and widely.

Conflict is a clash of interests or differences of opinion between individuals. In the context of students, conflict can occur due to differences in background, perception, or communication problems. Schools must be able to control this to prevent a decline in grades and achievement (Knopes & Guidry-Grimes, 2024; Schrage & Giacomini, 2023). Managing conflict in a school environment requires special skills called conflict management.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Forms of Conflict between Students

Based on the results of observations and interviews with six class teachers at SD IT Alam Garut, it was found that the forms of conflict between students that occur in schools generally come from differences in interests, disruptive behavior, and lack of communication and empathy skills among students. The forms of conflict can be classified as follows:

1. **Verbal Conflict**, Often occurs due to teasing each other, comparing learning outcomes, or fighting over turns to speak. This verbal conflict often occurs during breaks and during group activities.
2. **Minor Physical Conflict**, Although serious violence is rare, some students engage in minor physical conflicts such as pushing, pulling clothes, or physical fights while playing. This usually arises from misunderstandings in the game or competition between groups.
3. **Social-Emotional Conflict**, Some students show a tendency to isolate friends, refuse to work in groups, or show a reluctance to interact. This type of conflict is passive and sometimes goes undetected except through close observation.
4. **Conflict due to Academic Competition**, In the context of learning, conflict also arises due to unhealthy competitive attitudes, for example envy of friends who are smarter or excel at certain tasks.

B. Conflict Management Strategies Applied

In dealing with the conflict, the school through the teachers has implemented a number of adaptive conflict management strategies that support the values of child-friendly schools. The strategies found in this study include:

1. **Implementation of Positive Discipline**, Teachers do not immediately punish students who are in conflict, but instead approach them persuasively, talk to them, and guide them to understand the consequences of their actions.
2. **Mediation by Teacher**, The teacher acts as a neutral mediator in resolving conflicts. Students involved in the conflict are invited to dialogue and share their feelings with each other, with the teacher's direction to find a solution together.
3. **Reflective Activities and Sharing Emotions**, Teachers provide special time in class for venting sessions, "morning talks" or daily reflections. This gives students space to express their feelings and reduce stored tension.
4. **Empowering the Role of Peers**, in some classes, teachers designate students with high social skills to be "peace buddies" or companions during minor disputes. This helps create a culture of mutual assistance and understanding.
5. **Peace and Character Based Value Learning**, Teachers integrate the values of empathy, tolerance, and cooperation into the subject matter, especially in Islamic Religious Education, Indonesian Language, and Pancasila Education. This is intended to form a habit of peaceful thinking from an early age.
6. **Implementation of Restorative Techniques**, When serious conflicts occur, teachers ask the guilty students to write letters of apology, or present a plan to improve relationships with their friends. This technique is used to encourage social responsibility.

C. Contribution to Child Friendly Schools

Conflict management implemented in SD IT Alam Garut has made a real contribution in realizing a child-friendly school environment. The following are the findings of its contribution:

1. **Creating a Safe and Violence-Free Environment**, with a non-violent and dialogical approach, students feel safer at school. They are not afraid of being physically punished or shouted at, so they can learn more comfortably.
2. **Improving Students' Social and Emotional Skills**, Conflict management that emphasizes empathy, communication, and problem solving shapes students into individuals who are more socially aware, able to control emotions, and accustomed to solving problems peacefully.
3. **Increasing Student Involvement in School Activities**, A harmonious classroom atmosphere encourages students to be more active in learning and extracurricular activities. There is no fear of being ostracized or hated because of differences.
4. **Reducing Cases of Bullying and Prolonged Conflict**, Teacher data shows that with this strategy, the number of cases of prolonged conflict or bullying tends to decrease. Teachers are also quicker to detect and handle cases early on.
5. **Strengthening the Role of Schools as Second Homes**, Humanistic conflict management makes students feel that school is a safe place and supports their growth, not only as a place for academic learning but also character formation.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that conflict between students is an inseparable part of the dynamics of school life. At SD IT Alam Garut, the forms of conflict that occur are quite diverse, ranging from verbal conflicts such as teasing and fighting over turns, light physical conflicts while playing, to social-emotional conflicts in the form of exclusion and tension between students in group work. Conflicts also often arise due to unhealthy competition in academic achievement. To deal with this reality, the school has implemented various conflict management strategies that reflect the principles of child-friendly schools. These strategies include a positive discipline approach that emphasizes dialogue and empathy, mediation carried out by teachers as facilitators, emotional reflection activities, peer empowerment through the role of "peace friends", and integration of character and peace values in the learning process. This approach has been proven to not only resolve conflicts constructively, but also shape students' social and emotional skills. Conflict management that is carried out in a structured and sustainable manner makes a real contribution to creating a safe, comfortable, and inclusive learning environment. This strengthens the function of the school as a second home for children, a place where their rights are respected and their potential is optimally developed. Thus, conflict management between students has proven to be an effective strategy in building and strengthening the character of child-friendly schools.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Look this example below:

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.
Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.
Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.
Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

Author 5: Supervision; Validation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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