

Conflict Management Strategies of Islamic Boarding Schools in Building Social Relations with Communities: A Study at Al-Istiqomah Tanjungsari Kebumen

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ABSTRACT

This study is motivated by the efforts of Al-Istiqomah Islamic Boarding School in Tanjungsari, Petanahan, Kebumen to build and maintain harmonious relationships with the surrounding community amid the dynamics of Islamic education management. In practice, the pesantren faces various conflicts, including issues related to the establishment of the Al-Istiqomah Karya Guna Education Foundation (YAPIKA), the development of facilities and infrastructure, and students' activities that affect community life. These conditions require effective conflict management to ensure that educational processes continue optimally. This study aims to identify the forms of conflict between the pesantren and the community, analyze the conflict management strategies applied, and examine the outcomes of their implementation at Al-Istiqomah Islamic Boarding School. The research employed a qualitative approach with a field research design. The research subjects included the pesantren leader, foundation administrators, pesantren managers, and members of the surrounding community. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and analyzed using an interactive model involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that conflicts included communication misunderstandings, issues related to facility development, and students' activities in the community. Conflict management was carried out through stages of problem identification, conflict analysis, approach determination, strategy implementation, and continuous evaluation. The implementation of conflict management had positive impacts on the smooth development of facilities and infrastructure, strengthened partnerships between the pesantren and the community, adjustments to internal regulations, and improvements in the management of students' activities. These findings highlight the importance of conflict management in sustaining pesantren-based education grounded in social harmony.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren) are among the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, rooted in traditional pedagogical methods that have evolved within local communities. (Fahmi & Untung, 2025) Beyond transmitting Islamic religious knowledge and teaching classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning), pesantren play a vital role in preserving cultural values, shaping students' character through honesty, moral integrity, and responsibility, and responding to broader social dynamics.

The existence of pesantren is inseparable from the surrounding community, as they emerge from and serve society. Their sustainability and effectiveness are largely determined by the quality of social, cultural, and economic relationships they maintain with local communities. Harmonious relations between pesantren and society are therefore essential for successful educational implementation. Communities function not merely as the external environment of

pesantren but also as strategic partners in supporting educational processes, infrastructure development, and the empowerment of graduates after completing their studies.

According to Mujamil Qomar, the primary objective of pesantren education is to form Muslim individuals who possess a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings and are able to implement them in everyday life, thereby contributing positively to society, religion, and the nation. (Qomar, 2005) Accordingly, pesantren education is fundamentally oriented toward public benefit and social welfare.

In the era of Society 5.0, pesantren face increasingly complex challenges. They are required not only to preserve traditional values but also to adapt to global developments, technological advancements, and changing societal needs. Conflict has thus become a critical issue for pesantren, making effective conflict management with communities increasingly important.

Pesantren can no longer rely solely on traditional approaches to resolve conflicts but must adopt structured, participatory, and collaborative managerial strategies oriented toward long-term partnerships. Prolonged conflicts not only disrupt pesantren operations but also damage relationships with surrounding communities.

Relations between pesantren and society are cultivated through sustained communication processes aimed at fostering public concern for pesantren educational needs and encouraging participation and cooperation in improving institutional quality. These relationships encompass multiple dimensions, including communication intensity, collaborative patterns, transparency in resource management, and community involvement in program planning and implementation.

Education is understood as a lifelong learning process that occurs across diverse contexts and environments and positively influences individual development. In line with Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, education is defined as a deliberate and systematic effort to create learning environments and processes that enable learners to actively develop their potential, including spiritual and religious strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills necessary for both personal and social life. (Republic of Indonesia, 2003)

Accordingly, the implementation of education in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) requires close cooperation with surrounding communities. Community involvement becomes a crucial element in supporting the sustainability of educational provision. Based on Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 13 of 2020, Article 1 Paragraph 4, the provision of education is defined as the implementation of various components of the education system within educational units or programs across different pathways, levels, and types of education, so that the educational process aligns with the objectives of national education. (Government of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020)

To ensure the optimal implementation of education at Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah Tanjungsari Petanahan Kebumen, synergistic cooperation with the surrounding community is essential. Educational activities at this pesantren are not limited to formal learning within the institutional setting but are closely connected to various dimensions of community life, including social, cultural, and economic aspects that mutually influence one another.

Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah Tanjungsari Petanahan Kebumen is an educational institution oriented toward nurturing and developing Islamic generations who are faithful and devoted to Allah SWT, possess adequate knowledge, resilience, skills, independence, and noble character. Furthermore, the pesantren is committed to empowering and enhancing the quality of human resources in religious, educational, cultural, scientific, and technological fields, as well as

disseminating and upholding Islamic teachings based on the Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah tradition. These objectives constitute the primary focus of the institution's development efforts.. (Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah, 2019)

Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah inevitably faces conflicts with the surrounding community in the implementation of its educational activities. These conflicts include disputes related to the establishment of the Al-Istiqomah Karya Guna Educational Foundation (YAPIKA), challenges in the expansion of educational facilities and infrastructure, and conflicts arising from students' activities. Such issues pose significant challenges for Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah in ensuring that educational implementation proceeds effectively in accordance with its predetermined objectives.

Therefore, Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah implements conflict management strategies in its relationship with the community. The management of conflicts between the pesantren and society encompasses various dimensions, including community participation in pesantren activities, effective and continuous communication, institutional contributions to the surrounding community, and systematic handling of potential conflicts or emerging problems.

Effective conflict management can generate financial and moral support, as well as active community participation in the development of the pesantren. Conversely, poorly managed relationships may lead to misunderstandings, resistance, and even obstacles to the educational process. For this reason, Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah adopts structured and strategic conflict management with the community to ensure that educational activities are carried out effectively and efficiently in line with institutional goals.

This study aims to examine and gain an in-depth understanding of conflict management between Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and surrounding communities in the implementation of education. The findings are expected to contribute academically as a reference for future research, as well as to serve as a basis for consideration in the development and innovation of educational marketing at Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah in accordance with the recommendations proposed by the author.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a field research design. Data were collected from various informants, including the pesantren leader, the head of the YAPIKA foundation, administrators, and members of the surrounding community. The research site was Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah Tanjungsari Petanahan Kebumen. Data collection techniques included interviews, observations, and documentation, while data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflict is a social phenomenon that cannot be avoided in organizational life, including in educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools (pesantren). Conflict arises from differences in interests, values, perceptions, as well as limitations in the resources possessed by individuals or groups. (Robbins, 2013) Conflict does not always have negative consequences; when managed appropriately, it can instead serve as a means to improve social relationships, enhance organizational quality, and strengthen institutional performance. Therefore, conflict should not merely be avoided but managed through systematic and constructive approaches.

Conflict management can be understood as a process of planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating conflicts in order to achieve resolutions that are acceptable to all parties involved. Robbins explains that conflict management aims to minimize the negative impacts of conflict while maximizing its positive potential in enhancing organizational effectiveness. (Robbins, 2013) Meanwhile, Bercovitch and Diehl emphasize that successful conflict management is characterized by the creation of sustainable solutions and improved quality of relationships among the parties involved. (Bercovitch & Diehl, 2003) Thus, conflict management is oriented not only toward terminating conflict but also toward transforming social relationships in constructive ways.

In the context of Islamic educational institutions, particularly Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), conflicts often arise from intensive interactions between pesantren and surrounding communities. As community-based institutions, pesantren maintain complex social relationships, especially regarding the use of space, students' activities, facility development, and institutional policy changes. (Dhofier, 2011) Poorly managed relationships have the potential to generate misunderstandings and social resistance that may disrupt the sustainability of educational activities. Therefore, conflict management becomes a crucial instrument in maintaining social harmony and institutional stability in pesantren education.

Conflict management strategies vary and must be adapted to the nature of the conflicts encountered. Thomas and Kilmann identify five basic conflict-handling styles: avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising, and collaborating. Avoiding is applied when conflict is considered unimportant or likely to worsen the situation, while accommodating involves yielding to preserve social relationships. Competing positions one party as the winner, whereas compromising seeks common ground through mutual concessions. Collaboration is regarded as the most constructive strategy, as it integrates the interests of all parties to achieve sustainable shared solutions. (Thomas & Kilmann, 2008)

In addition, Robbins proposes other approaches to conflict resolution, including persuasion, negotiation, integrative problem solving, and the use of third parties. (Robbins, 2013) Pendekatan persuasi dilakukan dengan memengaruhi sikap pihak lain melalui Negotiation enables agreement through mutually beneficial bargaining processes. Integrative problem solving emphasizes open dialogue, information exchange, and creative solution-seeking that accommodates the needs of all parties, making it the most effective approach for fostering long-term harmonious relationships.

In complex conflict situations, third-party involvement often becomes a strategic alternative. Moore explains that third-party intervention may take the form of arbitration, mediation, or consultation. (Moore, 2003) Arbitration involves a third party with the authority to issue binding decisions, while mediation functions to facilitate communication and negotiation so that the parties can reach voluntary agreements. Consultation aims to help conflicting parties understand the dynamics of the conflict and enhance their capacity to resolve problems independently. In the pesantren context, religious leaders, village officials, or community leaders can serve as mediators with social and moral legitimacy to resolve conflicts peacefully.

The conflict management process proceeds systematically through several stages. Robbins outlines these stages as conflict identification, diagnosis of underlying causes, selection of appropriate management strategies, implementation of solutions, and evaluation of outcomes. (Robbins, 2013) The identification stage aims to recognize differences in interests or perceptions

that have the potential to generate conflict. Diagnosis is conducted to comprehensively understand the root causes of conflict, whether structural, communicative, or cultural in nature. Subsequently, strategy selection is tailored to the characteristics of the conflict and the social relationships among the parties. The implementation of solutions is carried out through open communication, dialogue, negotiation, or mediation, while evaluation seeks to assess the effectiveness of the strategies employed and prevent the recurrence of similar conflicts in the future.

In the context of pesantren education, conflict management plays a strategic role in maintaining a balance between institutional interests and external community demands. Pesantren function not only as centers of religious education but also as social institutions that interact directly with their surrounding environments. (Azra, 2012) Therefore, conflicts between Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and communities need to be managed through dialogical, participatory approaches grounded in Islamic values such as musyawarah (deliberation), ukhuwah (brotherhood), and ishlah (reconciliation). (Nata, 2016) This approach enables the creation of harmonious social relationships while supporting the sustainability of educational provision.

Numerous studies indicate that effective conflict management in educational institutions contributes to increased public trust, institutional stability, and improved quality of educational services. (Raines, 2004) In the pesantren context, effective conflict management can strengthen partnerships with the community, facilitate the development of facilities and infrastructure, and create a conducive social climate for the formation of students' character and competencies. (Qomar, 2005) Therefore, studies on conflict management between pesantren and communities are essential as a theoretical foundation for understanding the dynamics of social and institutional relations in pesantren amid increasingly complex social change.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Forms of Conflict between the Pesantren and the Community

The findings indicate that Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah Tanjungsari Petanahan Kebumen has experienced several forms of conflict with the surrounding community in the implementation of education. The first conflict occurred in 1999 during the establishment of the Al-Istiqomah Karya Guna Educational Foundation (YAPIKA). This conflict stemmed from miscommunication between pesantren leaders and community members regarding fundraising for the foundation, which some residents perceived as compulsory donations. This misunderstanding led to public distrust toward the pesantren.

The second conflict was related to the expansion of facilities and infrastructure. As student enrollment increased, the pesantren required additional facilities such as dormitories, classrooms, and sports facilities. However, land acquisition efforts encountered resistance from several landowners, including Mbah Yasin, Mbah Solah, Mr. Tanwir, and Mr. Mufid, due to differences in religious affiliation, personal interests, and economic considerations. Negotiations were prolonged, and some land areas have yet to be fully acquired.

The third conflict concerned students' activities in the surrounding community. Certain activities, such as the use of loudspeakers, nighttime gatherings, and social interactions in residential areas, were perceived as disruptive to local residents. In addition, incidents of student misconduct in some cases intensified tensions between the pesantren and the community.

Factors Contributing to Conflict

Based on field findings, conflicts between the pesantren and the community were influenced by several key factors, including public distrust toward the pesantren, weak initial communication, differences in religious orientations, competition among pesantren, individual interests, disruptive student activities, and student misconduct. These factors were interrelated and mutually reinforcing, particularly when conflicts were not managed effectively.

Impacts of Conflict

The conflicts had significant impacts on both the pesantren and the surrounding community. For the pesantren, conflicts resulted in delays in facility and infrastructure development from 2013 to 2022, changes in internal regulations, adjustments to students' activity schedules, and restrictions on students' mobility. Meanwhile, community members involved in the conflicts particularly those operating businesses near the pesantren experienced decreased income due to reduced economic interactions with students.

Conflict Management Implemented by the Pesantren

Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah implemented conflict management systematically through several stages. First, conflict identification was conducted by pesantren leaders, administrators, and students engaging directly with community members to detect emerging issues early. Second, conflict analysis involved filtering and interpreting information to identify root causes and potential impacts. Third, appropriate approaches were selected based on the nature of the conflict and the prevailing social context.

Fourth, strategy implementation involved several key approaches, including compromise, collaboration, negotiation, and third-party intervention. Compromise was pursued through deliberation (*musyawarah*) to reach mutually acceptable agreements. Collaboration was realized through community involvement in pesantren activities, such as economic empowerment and social participation. Negotiation was particularly applied in land acquisition through land-swapping arrangements. Third-party intervention was employed in specific cases, such as student misconduct or legal matters, by involving community leaders or village officials.

Fifth, evaluation and assessment were conducted to measure the effectiveness of the strategies implemented and their impact on pesantren–community relations. These evaluations served as the basis for continuous improvement in conflict management practices.

Outcomes of Conflict Management

The implementation of conflict management at Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah produced several important outcomes. First, the expansion of pesantren facilities and infrastructure was able to proceed with relatively minimal obstacles following the gradual resolution of conflicts. Second, stronger partnerships were established between the pesantren and the community in the areas of security, economic development, education, and social affairs. Third, changes were made to pesantren regulations, such as limiting female students' activities to no later than 10:00 p.m. and installing exit boundaries for students. Fourth, adjustments were made to students' activity schedules, particularly artistic programs and *madrasah diniyah* activities, to avoid disrupting the comfort of the surrounding community.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that conflicts between Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) and surrounding communities are unavoidable social phenomena within the dynamics of community-based educational provision. The conflict surrounding the establishment of YAPIKA, which was triggered by miscommunication, reinforces the view that ineffective communication is a primary source of institutional conflict. In this context, conflict arises not only from differences in interests but also from divergent perceptions and interpretations of messages conveyed by pesantren authorities.

Conflicts related to the expansion of facilities and infrastructure reveal that pesantren modernization processes often encounter individual and collective community interests. Prolonged land negotiations reflect the tension between institutional needs and the economic as well as cultural considerations of landowners. Nevertheless, the pesantren's success in resolving most land-related conflicts through negotiation and compromise demonstrates the effectiveness of dialogical and participatory approaches in community-based conflict management.

Conflicts associated with students' activities highlight the importance of pesantren social sensitivity toward their surrounding environments. Educational activities that are not adaptively regulated may generate social disturbances and community resistance. Accordingly, adjustments to students' schedules and restrictions on mobility represent institutional adaptations that reflect pesantren responsiveness to community needs while sustaining educational continuity.

The conflict management practices implemented by Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah align with theoretical models emphasizing stages of conflict identification, analysis, strategy selection, implementation, and continuous evaluation. The dominant use of compromise and collaboration strategies reflects an orientation toward long-term relationships and social harmony rather than short-term conflict resolution. These approaches have proven effective in reducing social tensions while strengthening pesantren–community partnerships.

The use of negotiation strategies in land acquisition through land-swapping arrangements demonstrates pesantren flexibility in adapting to local contexts. This finding suggests that conflict resolution cannot be standardized but must be contextual and grounded in the values and needs of local communities. Meanwhile, third-party involvement in certain cases underscores the importance of mediators with social legitimacy in addressing sensitive or complex conflicts.

The outcomes of conflict management—such as smoother facility expansion, strengthened social partnerships, and revised institutional regulations and student activity schedules—indicate that effectively managed conflicts not only remove obstacles but also generate more adaptive and responsive institutional transformations. These findings reinforce the view that conflict can serve as an opportunity for organizational learning and improvement when addressed through appropriate management approaches.

Thus, this study affirms that the success of pesantren education is determined not only by the quality of curriculum and instruction but also by institutional capacity to manage social relations with surrounding communities. Systematic, dialogical, and collaborative conflict management is therefore essential for building public trust, maintaining social stability, and ensuring the sustainability of pesantren as community-based Islamic educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that conflicts between Pondok Pesantren Al-Istiqomah Tanjungsari Petanahan Kebumen and the surrounding community constitute an inherent social dynamic in the implementation of community-based education. These conflicts include miscommunication during the establishment of the foundation, obstacles to the development of facilities and infrastructure, and social disturbances resulting from students' activities. The main contributing factors include differences in perceptions, individual interests, religious differences, weak initial communication, and students' behavior in the community.

The conflict management practices implemented by the pesantren were conducted systematically through stages of conflict identification, analysis, strategy selection, implementation, and continuous evaluation. The dominant strategies employed were compromise, collaboration, negotiation, and third-party mediation. These approaches proved effective in mitigating conflicts while fostering more harmonious relationships between the pesantren and the community.

The outcomes of conflict management included smoother development of facilities and infrastructure, strengthened social partnerships, changes in internal institutional policies, and adjustments to students' activity schedules that were more responsive to community needs. Thus, this study affirms that the success of pesantren education is determined not only by academic and religious dimensions but also by institutional capacity to manage social conflicts constructively, dialogically, and sustainably.

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