# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES OF WOMAN SCHOOL PRINCIPAL: A STUDY IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL OF PALEMBANG

Ahmad Zainudin[1], Monalisa Monalisa[2]

*SMP Fitra Abdi Palembang*

Ahmadzain04@gmail.com[1] five.monalisa@gmail.com[2]

**Abstract**

This study investigated the most dominant conflict management style applied by woman school principal in one private high school in Palembang. The mixed-method research was applied, 18 teachers and one woman principal in this school were selected as the participants of this study. A 28-itemquestionnairewas distributed in order to measure the teachers' opinions towards their principal conflict management style with teacher-relationship and interviewschedule-face to face was constructed to the principal to get deeper information. Results reveal that this woman school principal demonstrates integrating style which is considerate enough to high concern both for self and for others teachers.

**Keywords***:* conflict, conflict management style, woman school principal

## INTRODUCTION

Conflict management is a concept which is separated by two main ideas, namely, conflict and management. According to Hodgetts (1993), conflict can be defined as opposition or antagonism towards other individuals or things. Corvette (2007) defines that conflict exists wherever, and whenever there is an incompatibility of cognitions or emotions within individuals or between individuals. In short, when the situation of individual needs is not running well, conflict can occur. While, management is the process to address a good organizing in order to provide improvement, as Stevenson (1995) states thatgood management is able to provide the communities with services and products which they have paid for.

In other words, conflict management is where a communicative process plays a decisive role to attempt the understanding sources of conflict and the impacts upon the work environment, in this case, the manager or the leader is the model. As a result, management of conflict is absolutely essential to the effectiveness and competitiveness of organization because "the lack of proficient conflict management has a pervasive detrimental impact on productivity and career fulfillment" (Mayer, 1995).

In dealing with how to reduce conflict in an organization, the leader or manager plays its role, in this case, the woman leader. The American Association of University Woman has reflected that women deserve better opportunities in education and the workplace and promote woman leadershippositions on beyond (AAUW, 2016). It represents that women are no longer discriminated against due to their sexual orientation. There is a new breed of women manager and or principal throughout the country.

In line with the demand of national gender equality, the government, in the *Peraturan Menteri Negara Pemberdayaan Perempuan*, Kemeneg PP(2009) has clearly stated that women and men have the right to achieve gender equality in development sector and levels of government. Moreover, in terms of school management, gender equality in occupying structural or functional function in school, have a well controlling in the program and have the same beneficial aspect(Meneg PP & PA, 2010). Thus, either men or women have right to lead and involve in organizations working to advance gender equality.

Despite being a manager, women principals are faced challenges that require them to be innovative, passionate and knowledgeable in general school management. Women principals are expectedto build partnerships and have conflict management skills in maintaining good working relationships within the school environment. It is line with research on women's management styles suggest that woman principals are more caring, collaborative, communicative, consensus-oriented and student curriculum focused than man principals

(Reynolds, 2002). In addition, a study by Eagly et al (2003) female leaders were more transformational than male leaders and also engaged in more of the contingent reward behaviors. Numerous studies have demonstrated positive relationships between transformational leadership and various school and teacher organizational conditions (Anderson, 2008).

In addition, lack of well conflict management can cause the bad effect in the growing relationship within organizations. Therefore, well-managed conflict is a key to creativity, communication and goal achievement (Dipaola & Hoy, 2001). In other words, good leaders know how to manage types of conflict with strategies for eliminating conflict at theworkplace, this is the challenges of women leaders.There are five conflict management styles proposed by Rahim (1983), as follow: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising. Researchers have noted that men are somewhat more competitive in conflict management, while women, on the other hand, prefer to avoid conflict (Kruger,1996). According to Shautz (1995:213), female principals are sensitive to personality clashes, intuitive about possible problems and work hard at maintaining relationships within the organizations.Based on Nurohim (2017) conducted a study in women's principal leadership more emphasis on the problems to be faced, weakness and strength although it should be improved in giving guidance to the teacher.

Knowing some challenges founded by woman principle to overcome conflict in their management. It is also founded that the obstacles faced by female leaders, as follows: The performance of principals that have not been optimal, lack understanding of teachers duties and responsibilities, lack of conflict management abilities (Pratiwi, 2012). It can be interpreted that the female principals' efforts to overcome obstacles his leadership is still less like doing an intensive briefing to teachers and staff related to the importance of a program. In addition, the site of this study is one private school in Palembang in sub-districts Plaju namely, SMA Fitra Abdi Palembang which led by woman school principal.

Based on the discussion above, effective conflict management style needs the well-maintaining of the school. Therefore, this study proposed the paper aims at analyzing the most dominant conflict management styleapplied by women school principal in subordinate relationships, in this case, the teachers-relationship in the school :

The researcher formulates the research problem as follows:

1. What is conflict management style most dominantly applied by woman school principal with teachers relationship?
2. What conflict management style is most dominantly applied by woman school principal with teachers relationship?

## *Concept of Conflict*

Conflict is generally defined as disagreement opinions or ideas one towards other individuals. According to Kuye, et al. (2002), conflict is a situation where there is a disharmony between the parties who share a common organization, for example, workers and employers. Conflict occurs when ideas differ dramatically amongst people. Achinstein (2002) says that conflict occurs in situations where individuals and or groups experience each others' views and behaviours as different; conflict can occur when divergent beliefs and actions are exposed; and that conflict is also a process whereby individuals or groups come to sense that there is a difference and or dilemma and thus begin to identify the nature oftheir difference of beliefs and action. Thus, conflict can occur when two parties interact and are found to have different interest or perceptions and how that perceptions influence how conflict is viewed in different situations.

Conflict is not always bad, otherwise, conflict can be good things. Conflict can be positive impacts for the change of organization. There are two types of conflict. Functional conflict canbe positive conflict because it is associated with progress and achievement. Otherwise, dysfunctional conflict is unhealthy disagreement that occurs between groups or individuals. Whitfield (1994) states that dysfunctional conflict is a term which is applied to a type of conflict which prevents progress, avers achievement and suspends success.

Above all, conflicts, whether positive or negative must be managed as soon as they develop. Whitfield (1994) advised that we must manage every conflict, whether it turns out to be functional or dysfunctional from the outset. Conflict management is determined by the conflict management style which is designed to address it. Therefore, conflict management styles used by some leader or manager get to reduce conflict, others get to eliminate it and yet others get to increase it.

### *The concept of Conflict Management Style*

A leader is supposed to have the ways how to manage conflict in the organization. The styles of managing conflict are based on a two-dimensional factor (Rahim and Bonoma, 1979). The first dimension is the degree to which a person satisfies his own concern in a conflict situation. The second dimension is the degree to which a person satisfies the concerns of the other. As result, the combination of these two dimensions bringing in five styles of handling conflict, as follows (Rahim and Bonoma, 1979):

*Integrating Style*
Integrating style involves high levels of concern for both the self-interest and that of the other party. This style is linked to problem-solving and involves openness, sharing information, searching for alternatives and examination of differences to reach an effective solution acceptable to both parties (Rahim, 2001). This style needs a leader to find out the problem with the subordinates then drawing solution that satisfies both parties. As Rahim (1983) asserts that a leader who has this integrating style is the one who investigates a problem then find out the solution the concerns of both.

*Obliging Style*
This style refers high other-party concern and low self-concern. An obliging person neglects his or her own concern to satisfy the concern of the party. According to Stark (2006), this conflict management style is defined as a situation in which one group regulates their interest to satisfy or accommodate other groups. In addition, this conflict style shows low-self awareness and caring for others that lead to a "lose-win" situation (Rahim, 2004).

*Dominating Style*
Dominating style refers to high self-interest and low other-party concern. This style has been described as "win-lose" situation. In other words, dominating style as a competing style (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). Therefore, sometimes people who dominate want to always win in any way. A dominating leader will use the power of his position to influence his subordinate's desires and instruct his subordinates to obey his wishes.

*Avoiding Style*
People avoiding conflict neither care for their own interest nor for the other party's interests. It tends to "lose-lose" situation (Rahim, 2004). This conflict management style is associated with withdrawal, irresponsibility, and avoidance of problems. Moreover, it is often characterized as a behavior that does not care about issues and conflicts that occur within an organization.

*Compromising Style*
Compromising is a middle way that reflects an intermediate level of concern for both sides. In addition, compromising style involves "give and take" or sharing where both parties provide something to make mutually acceptable decisions (Rahim, 2001). This may mean splitting the difference, swapping concessions, or finding a middle ground quickly.

## METHOD

## Participants

The participants of this study were 18 teachers and one woman principal at SMA Fitra Abdi Palembang in the 2017/2018 academic year. The participants were chosen by using a total sampling. It is a sampling technique where the number of samples equals the population, the reason for taking the total sampling because of the population of less than 100 whole population used as samples of all research (Sugiyono, 2007).

## Data Collection

In this study, a questionnaire and semi-structured interview are used to collect the data. The questionnaire will be distributed to the 18 teachersin order to get the information about their woman school principal style in managing the conflict. The questionnaire is adapted from*ROCI (Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II)* consisted of 28 items in the form A for teachers how to handle conflict with their principals, measuring the five components of conflict management style; Integrating, Obliging, Dominating, Avoiding, and Compromising.

Responses were made on a 5-point Likert Scale with the options of "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", Neutral", "Agree", and "Strongly Agree".

In addition, interview schedule - face to face is constructed to theprincipal. In this case, the woman school principal is expected to respond to questions and then asked to specify information. This interview is given to principal because it will look at principal's perspective of conflict management styles. The interviews were both recorded and noted with her permission and took approximately 15 minutes.

## Data Analysis

This study will use a mixed-method research that involves collecting, analyzing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative research. This approach to research is used when this integration provides a better understanding of the research problem than either of each alone. In analyzing the questionnaire of the study, the researcher analyzed it into Likert Scale and got the frequency of each categorization. The distribution of all items on the questionnaire was calculated into average. In addition, for the interview, the researchers analyzed with the transcription of interviews, codifications of the transcription which data could connect to answer the research problem. The researcher displayed the data from the woman school principal to get deeper information. Therefore, the researcher could describe what conflict management style is most dominantlyapplied by woman school principal with teacher relationship at SMA Fitra Abdi Palembang

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

## Findings

The finding showed a total of18 responses given the 28 items that how subordinates, in this case, teachers handle conflict with their principal. The total of the frequency of each type of questions as illustrated in Table 1. From the table 1, the writer concluded that all types of conflict management style: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding and compromising styles based on *ROCI (Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II* that have been proposed by Rahim (1983). And the data showed that majority of the respondent (3.89) used integrating style, in the second rank (3.47) used compromising style, (2.74) used avoiding style, for dominating style (2.60), and only (2.59) used obliging style.

**Table 1: Distribution of Conflict Management Styles based on Rahim**

| No | Participants | Integrating | Obliging | Dominating | Avoiding | Compromising |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | A | 4.57 | 2.66 | 3 | 2.6 | 5 |
| 2 | B | 4.71 | 2.6 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 5 |
| 3 | C | 4.28 | 3.16 | 2.6 | 2.66 | 4.25 |
| 4 | D | 4 | 3.66 | 2.8 | 2.33 | 4 |
| 5 | E | 2.42 | 1.5 | 1.8 | 2.16 | 2.25 |
| 6 | F | 3.85 | 3 | 2.4 | 3.66 | 3 |
| 7 | G | 5 | 2.6 | 2.2 | 2.6 | 3.25 |
| 8 | H | 1.71 | 1.3 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 2.5 |
| 9 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2.83 | 2 |
| 10 | J | 4 | 3.6 | 4 | 2.33 | 3.75 |
| 11 | K | 4 | 3.16 | 2.5 | 3.16 | 3 |
| 12 | L | 4.57 | 2.66 | 3 | 1.83 | 4 |
| 13 | M | 3 | 2.6 | 3 | 3.8 | 3.25 |
| 14 | N | 4.8 | 2.16 | 2 | 2.5 | 3 |
| 15 | O | 3.14 | 1.83 | 3.2 | 3.5 | 3.5 |
| 16 | P | 4.42 | 3.66 | 2.8 | 2.8 | 3.5 |
| 17 | Q | 5 | 2.16 | 2 | 2.83 | 3.5 |
| 18 | R | 4.71 | 2.33 | 2.8 | 3 | 3.75 |
| **Total** | | 70.18 | 46.64 | 46.7 | 49.39 | 62.5 |
| **Average** | | 3.89 | 2.59 | 2.60 | 2.74 | 3.47 |

In addition, the researcher analyzed the transcriptions of the interview that connect to the answer of research questions. The interview questions are adapted from Kgomo (2006) for the women school principal. The research instruments were concentrated around only six (6)themes which concerned the participant's definitions of theconcepts conflict and conflict management, the occurrence ofconflict in the school environment, the participants's feeling about conflict, the conflict management styles which is used in the school environment, the woman principal as school manager conflict management approaches and the effect of conflictmanagement style on principal's relationship with her subordinates.

## *Participant's definition of conflict management*

The principal was requested to define the concepts of conflict and conflict management in her own words. Her responses are as follows:

> *"Conflict management is the problems that appear in the scope of work. Generally, it happens with subordinates and it needs the ability to manage it in daily workingactivities. That conflicts or problems must be solved by the leader with openness".*

## *The occurrence of conflict in the school environment*

The principal was requested to report the recent conflicts occur in the school and the impacts of conflicts to working operation. Her responses were as follows:

> *"The ordinary conflicts between students and the cause is in teachers itself. We know that from government regulation issued by national or local asserts that smoking is not allowed in the institution's area. Moreover in schools cases, no smoking for teachers. If she or he is too addicted, the smoking should be in hidden place".*

## *Feelings about conflicts*

The researcher requested the principal to inform thisstudy on how she views it, her responses were as follows:

> *"It is bear in the heart but it must be solved and socialized completely to the teacher about the factual rules. Like smoking is prohibited in institution because smoke is not good as a teacher it is an example. In conclusion, the conflict must be faced and resolved well to satisfy both parties."*

## *Solution to conflict management in the school environment*

The principal is requested to share information related to strategies she implements when she prevent conflictsin schools. These what she said:

> *"I give a good approach to identify the problem and then tells them with kindness. In general, I will have the discussion to lead to the solving of problems with my teachers. As result, to give description what should be between us to have possible solutions".*

## *Opinions of woman principal as school managers*

The woman school principal is requested to share her opinions about being woman principal as school managers, her responses were as follows:

> *"Emancipation of women should be parallel to the man, if a man can do it, surely a woman can so. Women are often considered one-sided, sometimes women more assertive than men. Women are more concerned with feelings, she knows what is needed by her subordinates and teachers. Therefore, investigating is the first act, what is the reason it is happening, what beyond that. Pro and cons are common, but at the end drawing solution to concern both parties"*

## *The effect of conflict management style on principal's relationship with her subordinates.*

The woman school principal is requested to report of the effect conflict management style used in the principal with teachers. These are the responses:

> *"Our relationship remained good, firstly we should start the discussions and finally found out together, having an argument each is common but how that argument can make it accepted the solution. As a result, it all comes to know how it should be, it all takes a process"*

## Discussions

Above all, conflict management style which is most dominantly applied by woman school principal with her teacher-relationship were evaluated in this study and the results were obtained. Asthe principal concerned integrating style, the principal is believed to be considerate enough to high concern both for self and for others. It can be seen here, the woman principal firstly has to identify the problems then have discussions to solve problems with her teachers as results to have possible solutions. It is in relation that females leadership use a collaborative or integrating style more frequently compared to males (Kaimenyi, 2014). It can also be inferred from the teachers' questionnaire that they are likely to work with her principals to find solutions to an issue acceptable to them. The principal also stated the conflicts or problems must be solved by the leader in openness and discussions.

Eventually, it can be inferred that the principal performs integrating style highly at school. It can be seen from her ways in preventing conflict with teachers about smoking is not allowed in the institutions' area. She told those teachers with kindness, exchange the information openly what should be to examine differences and reach accepted solutions both parties. For example, in cases, smoking is not allowed in the school areas. If a teacher is too addicted, he or she can smoke in the hidden area, therefore, it would not be seen by the others, especially for students. Moreover, the principal states that women are more concerned with feelings, she knows what is needed by her subordinates or students. It is supported by research on women's management styles suggest that woman principals are more caring, collaborative and communicative (Reynolds, 2002).

## CONCLUSIONS

Many researchers have implied that conflict management styles, for example integrating style, obligating style, dominating style, avoiding style and compromising style are part of strategies used by leaders in handling conflict of their organizations. The data from this study demonstrate that an integrating style is most dominantly applied by woman school principal in this school. It also can be concluded from this study that teachers' opinions concerning their principals' conflict management style are positive in integrating style. However, the data also shows that compromising style may be perceived and used as moderately appropriate in some situations. In conclusions, this study provides data about woman style as in this school principal of managing conflict with teachers' relationship. The result of this study will be able to become valuable information for woman principal in preventing conflictsin schools

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