Development of a Collaborative Leadership Model in Conflict Management in Secondary Schools: A Systematic Literature Review and Its Implications for Vocational and Senior High Schools in West Sumatra

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***Abstract**.*

Conflicts in senior high schools (SMA) and vocational high schools (SMK) in West Sumatra often arise from differences in academic policies and organizational pressures, but the lack of a specific collaborative leadership model is a major research gap. This study aims to develop a conceptual model of collaborative leadership in conflict management. Using a systematic literature review (SLR) with the PRISMA protocol, the population included publications from 2015–2025 in Scopus, Google Scholar, and national journals; the sample was purposively selected based on relevance to Indonesian secondary schools. The search protocol, using keywords such as "collaborative leadership" and "conflict management," was analyzed through thematic synthesis and content analysis. The results identified a five-dimensional model: collaborative leadership, principal competency, conflict process, supportive culture, and organizational impact. The conclusions confirm that this model fills a local gap with implications for principal training and education policy in West Sumatra.

***Keywords:** Collaborative Leadership, Conflict Management, Secondary Schools.*

I.   INTRODUCTION

Conflicts in secondary schools, particularly senior high schools (SMA) and vocational high schools (SMK) in West Sumatra, often arise from differing perceptions of academic policies, teacher task allocation, student discipline enforcement, and tensions between administrative and pedagogical demands (Ramadhan, 2023; Rsisinternational, 2025). The complexity of educational programs, student diversity, and pressures of public accountability further increase the potential for interpersonal and organizational conflict, which, if unmanaged, can undermine work culture and teacher satisfaction (Heryanto, 2023; Putra & Sari, 2025). The literature shows that democratic and participatory leadership facilitates dialogue and trust, transforming conflict into constructive opportunities for improving school quality (Cahaya, 2025; Swarnawati et al., 2024). In the Indonesian context, including West Sumatra, collaboration between stakeholders, such as partnerships between vocational schools (SMKs) and industry, strengthens schools' ability to manage conflict as a source of organizational innovation. This phenomenon is increasingly relevant amidst the revitalization of secondary education quality, where transformational leadership styles supported by emotional intelligence and open communication are positively correlated with a healthy school culture (EI Leadership, 2025; Solehah et al., 2023). Recent studies confirm that collaborative leadership encourages teacher participation in decision-making, thereby reducing stress and improving student learning outcomes (Attadrib, 2025; Tarjih Tajdid, 2024).

Although research on leadership and conflict management in schools is quite abundant, a major problem is the lack of a conceptual model of collaborative leadership specifically for conflict management in high schools and vocational schools in Indonesia, particularly in West Sumatra. Most studies are still limited to descriptions of democratic leadership styles or conflict practices without systematic integration, such as the significant relationship between democratic leadership, conflict management, and principal performance in Bekasi (Ramadhan, 2023; Jurnal Faktarbiyah, 2023). This limitation creates a research gap, where collaborative strategies have not been empirically tested in local contexts to address structural and interpersonal conflict (Dinamipub, 2024; Hidayat, 2024).The problem is further complicated by the lack of

studies integrating principal competencies, such as emotional intelligence, with collaborative conflict management processes in vocational schools. Research in Muhammadiyah schools shows that emotional intelligence and leadership style predict conflict management skills, but this has not yet been developed into a contextual model for West Sumatra (Cahaya, 2025; Djafri, 2016).

Furthermore, latent conflicts resulting from a hierarchical culture are often avoided, leading to resistance and declining performance, without formal mediation mechanisms involving external partners (RSIS Review, 2025; Wahyuni & Prabowo, 2025). This study aims to develop a conceptual model of collaborative leadership in conflict management for senior high schools (SMA) and vocational high schools (SMK) in West Sumatra, describe the concept, identify key themes, and formulate practical implications and a further research agenda. The urgency of this research lies in the urgent need to revitalize school leadership amidst regional educational challenges, where this model can improve work culture and service quality (Collaboration Review, 2021; Collaborative Leadership Synergy, 2025). The research's novelty lies in the systematic integration of collaborative dimensions, principal competencies, conflict processes, supportive culture, and organizational impact, filling the gap in local empirical research from 2015 to 2025 (Collaborative Leadership Model, 2025; Jieman, 2024).

II.   THEORETICAL REVIEW

The Concept of Collaborative Leadership

Collaborative leadership refers to the process by which leaders facilitate cooperation between individuals and groups through power sharing, shared decision-making, and open communication to achieve organizational goals. In the school context, collaborative leadership is characterized by principals empowering teachers, encouraging dialogue, and creating structures that allow for broad participation in planning and problem-solving. This model is closely related to the concepts of distributed leadership and participatory leadership, where leadership is not centered solely on the principal but is spread across various key actors in the school.A systematic review of collaboration identified several universal constructs inherent in collaborative practices: shared purpose, positive interdependence, intensive and open communication, trust between actors, and shared accountability mechanisms.

Within the school environment, shared purpose is reflected in the formulation of a vision and mission that is perceived as collective, while interdependence is reflected in the complementary division of roles and tasks. Trust is a key element because without it, efforts to open up dialogue and share decisions are easily hampered by fears of sanctions or negative judgment.In practice, collaborative leadership in schools can be seen in several indicators: teacher involvement in program planning, the existence of deliberation forums and cross-subject work teams, the development of school policies through consultation, and the principal's openness to input and criticism. Furthermore, collaborative leaders tend to develop professional learning communities that encourage reflection and shared learning among teachers.

Conflict Management Theory in Schools

Conflict in schools can be categorized based on its source and level, for example, interpersonal conflict between teachers, conflict between teachers and students, structural conflict related to policies and the distribution of resources, or value conflict concerning differing views on educational goals. Classic conflict management strategies refer to the typology of avoidance, accommodation, competition, compromise, and collaboration, each of which has implications for the quality of working relationships and the outcomes achieved.A recent systematic review of conflict management and teacher workplace culture indicates that collaborative strategies tend to foster a healthier workplace culture, improve communication, and reduce the negative impact of conflict on performance. Conversely, avoidance and competing strategies, while sometimes necessary in certain situations, have the potential to maintain latent conflict or trigger escalation if overused. Beyond strategies, the literature also emphasizes the importance of individual and organizational dimensions, such as emotional intelligence, communication skills, and organizational culture, in determining successful conflict management.In the context of Indonesian schools, several case studies show that principals use a combination of confrontational, compromising, and integrative approaches to manage conflicts between teachers and between teachers and students. An integrative approach, which seeks

to meet the interests of both parties, is seen as closest to the collaborative principle, emphasizing root cause analysis, open dialogue, and the search for creative solutions.

The Relationship Between Leadership and Conflict Management

Various studies have shown a consistent relationship between leadership style and the effectiveness of conflict management in schools. A study in Bekasi found that democratic leadership style and conflict management skills jointly influenced principal performance. Another study in Muhammadiyah high schools concluded that emotional intelligence and leadership style were significant predictors of principal conflict management skills.A literature review on conflict management and teacher work culture emphasizes that a leadership style that encourages open communication, models conflict resolution, and fosters a collaborative culture will foster a constructive "conflict culture." Authoritarian and closed leaders tend to foster a culture where conflict is hidden or resolved through informal, less transparent mechanisms, while collaborative leaders promote formal structures and procedures for dialogue and mediation.Research across various educational contexts also demonstrates the role of transformational leadership in inspiring organizational members to redefine conflict as an opportunity for improvement, rather than a threat. Transformational principals provide vision, individual support, and intellectual stimulation, encouraging teachers to think creatively in finding solutions to conflicts encountered in the classroom and within work teams.

III.   METHODS

Types and Methods of Research

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) design, adapting general steps such as formulating research questions, determining inclusion-exclusion criteria, searching for literature, selecting and assessing study quality, and thematic synthesis, as recommended for comprehensive studies in education (Sugiyono, 2021; Sanjaya & Sutrisno, 2021). This approach was chosen because it effectively synthesizes empirical and theoretical findings related to collaborative leadership and conflict management in secondary schools, following the PRISMA protocol for transparency and replicability (Creswell & Poth, 2022; Ramadhan, 2023). The SLR method ensures a rigorous selection of literature from indexed databases, resulting in a contextual conceptual model for senior high schools (SMA) and vocational high schools (SMK) in West Sumatra (Heryanto, 2023; Rsisinternational, 2025).

Data Analysis Instruments and Techniques

The primary research instrument was a literature search protocol using keywords such as "collaborative leadership," "conflict management," "school leadership," "secondary school," and Indonesian variants, applied to Scopus, Google Scholar, SAGE, ERIC databases, and accredited national journals (Cahaya, 2025; Sudaryono, 2021). Data analysis techniques included initial selection based on titles and abstracts, full-text quality assessment, and thematic synthesis through coding (content analysis) to identify patterns of leadership styles, conflict strategies, and research gaps, in accordance with qualitative analysis guidelines (Emzir, 2021; Miles et al., 2021). Data were presented in study summary tables and PRISMA flowcharts to visualize the process and ensure the validity of the findings (Collaboration Review, 2021; Jurnal Faktarbiyah, 2023).

Population and Sample

The study population included all scientific publications indexed in Scopus, Google Scholar, and accredited national journals on school leadership, collaboration, and conflict management in secondary education from 2015 to 2025 (Sugiyono, 2021; Cahaya, 2025). The sample was determined through purposive sampling with the following inclusion criteria: empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods) or literature reviews focused on secondary schools, full-text available online, prioritizing the Indonesian context; and exclusion criteria: opinion, non-scientific, or descriptive articles without relevance to the leadership-conflict relationship (Creswell & Poth, 2022; Sanjaya & Sutrisno, 2021).

Research Procedures

The procedure began with the formulation of a primary question about the characteristics of collaborative leadership, its role in high school conflict management, and implications for West Sumatra, followed by a parallel literature search in databases using Boolean operators (Sudaryono, 2021; Heryanto,

2023). Subsequent stages included duplicate screening, title-abstract relevance selection (initial 80-90% exclusion), full-text quality assessment, and data extraction into thematic tables (Emzir, 2021; Collaboration Review, 2021). Narrative-thematic synthesis generated a conceptual model, culminating in cross-validation with primary studies such as Ramadhan (2023) and Cahaya (2025) for consistency (Sugiyono, 2021; Creswell & Poth, 2022).

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Summary of Previous Studies Related to Leadership and Conflict Management

Table 1. Summary of Studies Related to Leadership and Conflict Management in Schools

Researcher & Year	Context & Sample	Main Focus	Key Findings
Ramadan (2023)	Principal of a public elementary school in Bekasi	Democratic leadership style and conflict management	Democratic style and conflict management skills are significantly related to principal performance.
Heryanto (2023)	Secondary schools in Indonesia	Democratic leadership of the principal	Democratic principals involve teachers in discussions and are able to reduce conflict through communication and cooperation.
RSIS Review (2025)	Various educational settings	Conflict management and teacher work culture	Collaborative conflict strategies are related to a positive teacher work culture; leadership and organizational culture are key factors.
EI & Leadership (2025)	Muhammadiyah Middle School	Emotional intelligence, leadership style, and conflict management	Emotional intelligence and leadership style predict the principal's ability to manage conflict.
Collaboration Review (2021)	Various organizations including schools	Collaboration and conceptual models	Identify the constructs of collaboration: shared goals, interdependence, trust, communication, and shared accountability.
Interpersonal Conflict (2022)	Schools (various levels)	Interpersonal and organizational conflict management	A collaborative approach, transformational leadership, and organizational culture are the foundations of conflict management.
Case Study of SMKN 1 (2023)	SMKN 1 (Indonesia)	Internal conflict management at vocational schools	Conflict is triggered by internal and external factors; effective communication and teamwork can mitigate its impact.
West Sumatra E-leadership (2024)	Schools in West Sumatra	E-leadership and change readiness	The principal's e-leadership capacity is related to readiness for change, relevant for conflict management in the digital era.

The table above shows the consistency of the findings that democratic, collaborative, and transformational leadership styles and a strong organizational culture are prerequisites for effective conflict management.

Main Themes: Leadership Style, Competence, and Culture

The literature synthesis revealed three main themes:

Leadership style. Democratic and transformational styles contribute to increased teacher participation and principals' ability to manage conflict. Studies show that democratic principals generally make decisions through deliberation, manage resources collegially, and resolve conflicts until they resolve. Principals who adopt a transformational style are able to inspire teachers to view conflict not as a threat but as an opportunity for organizational learning and improving the quality of education.

Personal and interpersonal competencies. Emotional intelligence, communication skills, and mediation skills are key determinants of successful conflict management. Principals who can control their emotions, demonstrate empathy, and actively listen are considered more successful at defusing tensions and facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties. Negotiation and mediation skills, combined with a deep understanding of the root causes and the interests of the parties involved, enhance the effectiveness of conflict resolution.

School culture and climate. A culture that emphasizes family, cooperation, and open communication supports the implementation of collaborative conflict management strategies. Conversely, a hierarchical culture that emphasizes obedience and closes off opportunities for criticism tends to encourage avoidance strategies and shallow compromise, making conflict recurrent. A positive school climate, characterized by trust, mutual respect, and interpersonal support, provides the foundation for constructive

conflict management.In the context of vocational schools (SMK), collaboration with the business and industrial world adds a layer of complexity to conflicts, such as those related to competency standards, evaluation of industrial work practices, and expectations for graduates. This requires vocational school principals to not only lead internally but also to negotiate and collaborate intensively with external partners, making the collaborative leadership dimension even more crucial.

Research Gap

Some of the research gaps identified are:

- There has not been much research that explicitly formulates a collaborative leadership model in the context of conflict management in Indonesian secondary schools.

- Studies that specifically place high schools/vocational schools in West Sumatra as research locations are still limited, although there have been studies related to e-leadership and readiness for change in the region.

- Research on conflict management in vocational schools is generally descriptive in nature and has not integrated findings into a comprehensive conceptual framework that includes the role of industry partners.

- There is still a lack of longitudinal studies examining the long-term impact of collaborative leadership implementation on conflict culture, school climate, and student learning outcomes.

These gaps provide room for further research aimed at testing the conceptual model proposed in this article, particularly through mixed research designs that can capture the dynamics of processes and outcomes.

Conceptual Model of Collaborative Leadership in Conflict Management in Senior High Schools/Vocational High Schools in West Sumatra

Based on a synthesis of theory and empirical findings, the proposed conceptual model includes five interrelated main components: dimensions of collaborative leadership, principal competencies, collaborative conflict management processes, supportive school culture and climate, and organizational impact.

1. Dimensions of Collaborative Leadership

Collaborative leadership in the context of conflict management in high schools and vocational schools includes:

- **Sharing power and responsibility**with teachers and education staff through team structures and joint decision-making forums. This means that the principal is no longer the sole decision-maker, but rather forms an inclusive management team and provides space for teachers to contribute to policy planning, implementation, and evaluation.

- **Developing cross-role collaboration**For example, between productive, normative, and adaptive teachers in vocational schools, and between subject areas in high schools. This cross-role collaboration facilitates the exchange of experiences, program coordination, and problem-solving involving more than one discipline.

- **Building strategic partnerships**with parents, school committees, the business and industrial world (especially in vocational schools), and local governments. These external partnerships enrich schools' perspectives on challenges and expand resources for problem-solving.

2. Principal Competence

The success of collaborative leadership in conflict management is highly dependent on the principal's competencies, which include:

- **Emotional intelligence**which includes self-awareness, emotional management, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Principals with high emotional intelligence are able to remain calm in stressful situations, understand the feelings and perspectives of others, and take wise action to defuse conflict.

- **Dialogic communication skills**such as active listening, reflection, paraphrasing, and providing constructive feedback. These skills enable principals to create a safe space for all parties to express their opinions, feel heard, and be open to different perspectives.

- **Democratic and transformational orientation**This is reflected in the courage to open up space for criticism, inspire change, and provide individual support to teachers. Principals with this orientation view conflict as an opportunity for growth and learning, not a threat to their authority.

3. **Collaborative Conflict Management Process**

Implementing collaborative conflict management involves a series of systematic processes:

- **Participatory conflict identification**by mapping the problem, the parties involved, and the underlying interests. This phase is crucial to ensure all perspectives are considered and the root of the problem is truly understood.
- **Facilitating structured dialogue and deliberation**, with a focus on finding creative solutions that benefit all parties (win-win solutions). This dialogue takes place in an open, safe, and respectful atmosphere, with neutral moderation by the principal or an internal mediator.
- **Implementation of follow-up and collective reflection**to evaluate the effectiveness of the resolution and prevent the recurrence of similar conflicts. This phase ensures that the agreed-upon solutions are actually implemented and continuously monitored until proven effective.

4. **Supportive School Culture and Climate**

To ensure the sustainability of collaborative leadership in conflict management, schools need to develop:

- **A school culture that emphasizes trust, openness, shared responsibility, and respect for different views.**This culture is built through collective learning, appreciation for contributions, and the creation of positive norms towards dialogue and difference.
- **Organizational structure that supports collaboration**, such as teacher learning communities, internal quality assurance teams, and school mediation mechanisms. These structures formalize collaborative spaces and allocate time and resources for collaborative functions.
- **Leveraging technology to support e-leadership and multi-directional communication**, for example, through internal online platforms for coordination, documentation, and problem-solving. This e-leadership is becoming increasingly important in the digital age and can expand the reach of collaboration across all school stakeholders.

5. **Organizational Impact**

The application of a collaborative leadership model in conflict management is expected to have a positive impact on the organization:

- **Decrease in destructive conflict and increase in functional conflict**which encourages innovation in learning and school management. Well-managed conflict becomes a catalyst for positive change and quality improvement.
- **Increased teacher satisfaction and work culture**, which contributes to the stability of the teaching staff and improved learning outcomes. Teachers who are satisfied and feel appreciated will be more motivated to give their best in teaching.
- **Strengthening the quality of educational services and the relevance of graduates**, especially in vocational schools (SMKs), which are closely connected to the workforce. Solid partnerships and collaborations ensure graduates possess the competencies needed by industry.

V. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review found that collaborative leadership, which integrates democratic and transformational styles with emotional intelligence and open communication, significantly improves the effectiveness of conflict management in secondary schools, primarily through stakeholder collaboration and a constructive organizational culture. The developed conceptual model encompasses five key dimensions—leadership, principal competency, collaborative conflict processes, supportive culture, and organizational impact—that fills a research gap in the context of senior high schools (SMA) and vocational high schools (SMK) in West Sumatra by emphasizing industry partnerships in vocational schools.However, the study's limitations lie in its narrative synthesis, relying on available literature, without primary empirical data or longitudinal studies to causally test the model. Suggestions for further research include empirical testing

using mixed methods in West Sumatran schools, including comparisons between senior high schools (SMA) and vocational high schools (SMK) and the influence of local Minangkabau culture. Practically, this model is recommended for principal training, the formation of mediation teams, and regional education office policies to create a harmonious school climate and superior educational quality.

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