

Servant Leadership as A Catalyst for Constructive Conflict Management: Evidence from A Pesantren-Based School in Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School

Shofi Ubaidilah¹, Suci Hidayati², Yuliana Nur Mustaghfiroh³, Khoirul Umam⁴, Baharuddin⁵

¹Darul Ulum University of Jombang

²Asy Syadzili Islamic Institute Malang

³Asy Syadzili Islamic Institute Malang

⁴Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang

⁵Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang

ABSTRACT: This study examines three main aspects of conflict management in a pesantren-based school at Tanjung Rejo Mangaran Islamic Boarding School, Situbondo: (1) the forms of conflict that occur, (2) the conflict resolution strategies implemented, and (3) the role of kiai leadership in resolving conflicts. This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The findings reveal that conflicts in the pesantren-based school take several forms, including social, economic, political, cultural, task, and organizational conflicts. Conflict resolution is carried out by developing awareness of conflicts and strengthening communication among members of the pesantren community through several approaches, namely tabayyun, deliberation, islah, and tarahhum. Furthermore, the kiai plays an important role in managing conflicts by taking wise and fair actions and making decisions without disadvantaging either party. The kiai's roles include serving as a mediator, collector of information, information provider, and decision maker. These findings highlight the importance of kiai leadership in facilitating constructive conflict resolution within a pesantren-based educational environment.

KEYWORDS: Kiai Leadership, Conflict Management, Conflict Resolution, Pesantren-Based School.

INTRODUCTION

An organization with diverse human resources from different backgrounds, interests, characters, experiences, and perspectives is inevitably prone to conflict. Conflict may arise from differences in interests, communication problems, interpersonal relationships, task allocation, organizational structures, authority, and decision-making processes. When poorly managed, conflict can hinder organizational goals by creating prolonged tension, mistrust, resistance, and unhealthy relationships. However, conflict does not always have negative consequences. When managed constructively, it can become a source of evaluation, learning, innovation, and organizational improvement. Therefore, the main issue is not simply how to eliminate conflict, but how to manage differences so that they contribute to constructive organizational processes.¹

Leadership plays a strategic role in determining how conflict is perceived and managed. Leaders are not merely decision-makers but also have responsibility for establishing effective communication, maintaining healthy relationships, facilitating the resolution of differences, and directing members toward shared goals. Robert R. Blake and Anne A. McCanse identify conflict resolution as an important dimension of leadership, alongside initiative, inquiry, advocacy, decision-making, and criticism. This perspective demonstrates that the ability to deal with differences and resolve conflict is an integral part of leadership practice. Thus, leadership responses can influence whether conflict becomes destructive or provides opportunities for organizational learning and improvement.²

Conflict management is closely related to the leadership character applied within an organization. Leaders who primarily emphasize formal authority may resolve conflict through unilateral decisions. Although this approach may provide immediate solutions, it does not necessarily address the needs and interests of organizational members. In contrast, leadership that provides space for members

¹ Indra et al., *Manajemen Konflik Di Era Digital: Tantangan Dan Peluang Di Dunia Kerja Hybrid*.

² Marlina, "Manajemen Konflik Dalam Organisasi Multikultural Di Indonesia."

Servant Leadership as A Catalyst for Constructive Conflict Management: Evidence from A Pesantren-Based School in Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School

to express their opinions and experiences creates opportunities for dialogue and collective problem-solving. In this context, servant leadership is relevant because it places service to organizational members at the center of leadership. Servant leadership emphasizes listening, empathy, relationship building, support, development of members' potential, and the creation of conditions that enable members to contribute to shared organizational goals.³

Servant leadership has a close relationship with constructive conflict management because its service-oriented approach places human relationships at the center of leadership. When facing conflict, servant leaders seek not only to determine who is right but also to understand the interests of the parties involved, facilitate communication, build trust, and develop solutions within the framework of organizational goals.⁴ Conflict can therefore become an opportunity to improve communication, relationships, and organizational governance. This process is understood in this study as constructive conflict management.

The relationship between leadership and conflict management becomes particularly important in the context of Islamic boarding schools, or pesantren. Pesantren are Islamic educational institutions that contribute not only to education but also to the formation of religious, social, and moral values.⁵ Within the pesantren system, the kiai or caregiver generally occupies a central position in providing direction for educational activities and institutional life. Amir Hamzah Wirosukarto and colleagues explain that pesantren are characterized by a boarding system, religious teachers as central figures, mosques as centers of activity, and Islamic religious instruction as one of their main activities.⁶

The central position of the kiai creates distinctive characteristics in pesantren leadership and management. Leadership legitimacy is not formed solely through formal organizational structures but may also be influenced by religious knowledge, exemplary behavior, social relationships, authority, and community acceptance. Consequently, leadership in pesantren is closely related to religious values, trust, role modeling, social relationships, and institutional traditions.⁷

Nevertheless, pesantren are not free from organizational conflict. Their complex management may generate conflicts related to communication, interpersonal relationships, authority, organizational structures, decision-making, division of tasks, and differences in interests. Mukhtar and Prasetyo describe pesantren management as having complex organizational dynamics, while Mujamil Qomar explains that the strong position of the kiai has consequences for decision-making patterns and institutional management. Therefore, conflict within pesantren needs to be understood as part of organizational dynamics that require management mechanisms appropriate to pesantren culture.⁸

This complexity becomes more apparent in school-based Islamic boarding schools because they represent an intersection between pesantren culture and formal education. These institutions must maintain religious values and traditions while also meeting the demands of professional educational management, formal structures, curriculum implementation, administrative accountability, and community expectations. Differences in orientation, communication patterns, authority distribution, professional roles, and decision-making can become sources of organizational tension. In such circumstances, leadership is important in directing conflict so that differences do not develop into destructive relationships but can contribute to institutional improvement.⁹

Pondok Pesantren Tanjung Rejo Mangaran Situbondo provides an important context for examining the relationship between servant leadership and constructive conflict management.¹⁰ Based on the initial conditions underlying this research, the institution has an organizational structure involving a board of trustees, several positions within foundation management, recruitment mechanisms that have not been fully structured, and placement of certain positions that is not always based on competence suitability. These conditions may create differences in interests, role ambiguity, and organizational conflict.¹¹

The dynamics are also related to the relationship between the pesantren and its surrounding community. Pesantren function as both educational and social-religious institutions, making their relationship with society important. However, differences in perceptions and interests may emerge between the institution and the community. Other dynamics include the use of language in learning activities, curriculum differences compared with other educational institutions in Situbondo, and social developments surrounding

³ Mubin et al., "Fostering Islamic Moderation Among Students Through IPNU: A Study of Organizational Learning and Civic Engagement."

⁴ Wuli, "Kekuatan Kepemimpinan Yang Melayani Dalam Manajemen Konflik Pada Keuskupan Tni/Polri."

⁵ Widodo, "Manajemen Konflik Dalam Pondok Pesantren: Pendekatan Islami Untuk Penyelesaian Masalah: Penelitian."

⁶ Ramadani and Sofa, "Kejujuran Dalam Perspektif Pendidikan Islam: Nilai Fundamental, Strategi Implementasi, Dan Dampaknya Terhadap Pembentukan Karakter Santri Di Pesantren."

⁷ Ghofur et al., "Modernisasi Pesantren Dalam Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer: Manajemen, Sosiologi, Dan Aksiologi Budaya Lokal."

⁸ Mukhtar and Prasetyo, *Pesantren Efektif Model Teori Integratif Kepemimpinan-Komunikasi-Konflik Organisasi*.

⁹ Yunus and Mukhlisin, *Manajemen Konflik Pada Lembaga Pendidikan Islam*.

¹⁰ Yunus et al., *Nilai-Nilai Budaya Dalam Kehidupan Pesantren Di Daerah Situbondo Jawa Timur*.

¹¹ Zakiyah, *HUBUNGAN PENGETAHUAN DAN SIKAP PERSONAL HYGIENE DENGAN KEJADIAN KEPUTIHAN PADA REMAJA PUTRI DI PONDOK PESANTREN TANJUNG REJO*.

Servant Leadership as A Catalyst for Constructive Conflict Management: Evidence from A Pesantren-Based School in Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School

the institution. Therefore, conflict at Pondok Pesantren Tanjung Rejo should be understood not only as an internal organizational issue but also in relation to its interaction with the wider social environment.¹²

These conditions are important to examine in order to understand how leaders respond to and manage conflict. From a servant leadership perspective, conflict management can be observed through leaders' willingness to listen, understand members' needs and interests, establish open communication, involve members in problem-solving, provide support, and direct conflict toward shared organizational solutions. Through these practices, servant leadership may function as a catalyst that transforms conflict from an organizational obstacle into a dialogical, participatory, and constructive process.¹³

The study of servant leadership in the pesantren context is important because relationships among kiai, caregivers, administrators, teachers, educational staff, students, and the community are shaped not only by formal structures but also by religious values, exemplary behavior, respect, trust, and social relationships. Therefore, the implementation of servant leadership in managing organizational conflict needs to be examined empirically within the actual context of pesantren life.

Accordingly, this study examines how servant leadership is practiced in the school-based Islamic boarding school at Pondok Pesantren Tanjung Rejo, the forms and dynamics of conflict that emerge, and how leaders manage conflict so that it can develop into a constructive organizational process. The study focuses on the relationship between leaders' service orientation and their practices of listening, communicating, involving members, building trust, making decisions, and resolving differences.¹⁴

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. A qualitative approach was selected because the research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of servant leadership practices in managing constructive conflict within a pesantren-based school environment. This approach enables the researcher to comprehend the experiences, perceptions, interactions, strategies, and actions of the actors involved in navigating conflict dynamics based on natural conditions in the field. Moleong explains that qualitative research allows the researcher to engage directly with diverse realities, build relationships with research subjects, and understand the value patterns evolving within the research context.¹⁵

A case study design was utilized because the research focuses on a single case with unique characteristics: servant leadership practices acting as a catalyst for constructive conflict management at the pesantren-based school within the Islamic boarding school Tanjung Rejo complex in Mangaran District, Situbondo Regency. The case study method provides the scope to examine the phenomenon in depth within a real-world organizational context, including how leaders build relationships with members, respond to differences, facilitate communication, involve conflicting parties, and steer conflict resolution toward a more constructive outcome.¹⁶

The research was conducted at Islamic boarding school Tanjung Rejo, specifically within the pesantren-based school environment situated within that institutional ecosystem. The location was selected purposively based on the alignment of its characteristics with the research focus. Islamic boarding school Tanjung Rejo was deemed relevant due to its continuously developing formal educational institutions and the organizational dynamics present in areas such as communication, the distribution of authority, administration, and decision-making. Furthermore, there is potential for personal and interpersonal conflicts involving various organizational actors. These conditions offer an opportunity to examine how leaders listen to the parties involved, establish communication, and facilitate conflict resolution.¹⁷

The research site also possesses an institutional history and tradition spanning more than fifty years. The values, culture, and relationship patterns formed over this period serve as a crucial context for understanding leadership practices and conflict management. Additionally, the pesantren leadership figures hold a significant position in institutional life and enjoy social recognition from the surrounding community. Therefore, the practice of servant leadership is a compelling subject of study, particularly in examining how authority is exercised not merely for decision-making but also to serve, listen to, empower, and build relationships with organizational members.¹⁸

The research data sources comprise both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through direct interaction with informants possessing experience and knowledge regarding leadership practices and conflict dynamics within pesantren-based (Islamic boarding school) educational environments. Informants included pesantren leaders or caretakers, heads of educational institutions, administrators, teachers, and other relevant parties. Informant selection was conducted purposively based on their

¹² Purwatiningsih and Situmeang, *Komunikasi Manajemen Konflik, Dalam Konteks Pemecahan Masalah*.

¹³ Budi, *Manajemen Konflik, Pendekatan Kecerdasan Emosional*.

¹⁴ Mulyasa, *Manajemen Dan Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah*.

¹⁵ Abdussamad and Sik, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*.

¹⁶ Nasution, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*.

¹⁷ Roosinda et al., *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*.

¹⁸ Firmansyah et al., "ESENSI PERBEDAAN METODE KUALITATIF DAN KUANTITATIF."

Servant Leadership as A Catalyst for Constructive Conflict Management: Evidence from A Pesantren-Based School in Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School

involvement, experience, and ability to provide information aligned with the research focus. Secondary data were derived from institutional documents, organizational structures, policies, activity reports, meeting minutes, and other relevant records.

Data collection was carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observation was used to gain insight into leadership practices, interaction patterns, organizational communication, decision-making processes, and conflict-related situations. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore informants' experiences and perspectives regarding the forms and sources of conflict, leadership responses, service practices, communication, member engagement, and conflict resolution processes. Documentation served as supporting data to reinforce findings from observations and interviews.¹⁹

Data analysis was conducted interactively throughout the data collection process. Data from observations, interviews, and documents were organized, reduced, categorized, and coded according to research themes. Subsequently, the data were presented in narrative descriptions, matrices, or categories to facilitate an understanding of the relationships between findings. The analysis focused on servant leadership practices, the forms and dynamics of conflict, conflict management strategies, and the processes leading to constructive conflict. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and continuous verification by comparing data across informants, data collection techniques, and relevant documents.²⁰

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from various informants holding different positions and possessing diverse experiences.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Form and Dynamics of Conflict at School-Based Islamic Boarding Schools

Conflict is part of the dynamics of organizational life, emerging from differences in background, interests, character, perceptions, and ways of thinking among individuals and groups. In educational organizations, these differences can appear in personal relationships, task implementation, the division of authority, decision-making processes, and organizational interactions with the social environment. In the context of school-based Islamic boarding schools, this complexity becomes even stronger because educational institutions exist at the intersection of formal education systems and Islamic boarding school culture.²¹

Research results show that conflict at Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School includes social, economic, political, cultural, task, and organizational conflicts. The diversity of forms of conflict shows that conflict does not stand as a single problem but has interrelated dimensions. Social conflict can be related to interpersonal relationships, task conflict can be related to work distribution, whereas organizational conflict can be related to structure, authority, and decision-making processes.²²

This condition can be understood from the characteristics of school-based Islamic boarding schools, which have complex institutional structures and social relationships. At Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School, there is a board of trustees involved in organizational management, overlapping positions within foundation management, recruitment mechanisms that have not been fully structured, as well as the placement of individuals in certain positions that is not yet fully based on competency suitability. In addition, there are dynamics in the relationship between the institution and society, the use of language in learning, curriculum differences, as well as social and political issues in the surrounding environment.²³

These findings show that conflict in school-based Islamic boarding schools cannot be understood merely as a problem between individuals. Conflict can also arise as a consequence of the institutional development process. When an organization develops, its structures, tasks, authority, and communication patterns also experience changes. These changes can create differences in understanding and interests. Thus, the existence of conflict can become an indicator that an organization is undergoing a process of adjustment.

From an Islamic perspective, differences and disputes are conditions that require management rather than merely avoidance. Allah SWT says:

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا فَإِنْ بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَىٰ فَقاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّىٰ تَفِيءَ إِلَىٰ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ فَاءَٔتَ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

¹⁹ Adlini et al., "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka."

²⁰ Alaslan, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*.

²¹ Hasanah et al., "ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL-BASED MADRASAH CONFLICT MANAGEMENT."

²² Ngaini and Rohmat, "Conflict Mitigation and Coping Mechanism Strategy for New Students at API ASRI Tegalrejo Islamic Boarding School."

²³ Gilang et al., "Madrasah Principals Leadership in Ethnopedagogy-Based Cundlict Management for Bullying Prevention in Islamic Boarding School Madrasahs"; Gilang et al., "Madrasah Principals Leadership in Ethnopedagogy-Based Cundlict Management for Bullying Prevention in Islamic Boarding School Madrasahs."

Servant Leadership as A Catalyst for Constructive Conflict Management: Evidence from A Pesantren-Based School in Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School

“And if there are two groups of believers fighting, then make peace between them. If one of the two does injustice to another group, then fight the group that does injustice so that they return to Allah's commands. If they have returned, then make peace between the two of them fairly and act fairly. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly” (QS. Al-Hujurat: 9).²⁴

This verse provides the principle that when conflict occurs, a process of repairing relationships is needed. In the context of Islamic boarding school educational organizations, the principle of reconciliation shows that conflict should not be viewed merely as a matter of determining who is right and who is wrong, but also in terms of how relationships between the parties can be restored after conflict occurs.

This matter is important because unresolved conflicts can disrupt communication and working relationships. On the other hand, conflicts managed through proper communication and resolution can become a space for organizational evaluation. Thus, constructive conflict does not mean that an organization has no conflict; rather, it means that the organization has the ability to manage conflict so that differences do not develop into damaged relationships or obstacles to achieving common goals.²⁵

Servant Leadership and Its Role in Conflict Management

Leadership in school-based Islamic boarding school environments has different characteristics from leadership in formal educational organizations that are primarily bureaucratic and structure-oriented. Islamic boarding schools have strong social and religious relationships among the kiai, caretakers, administrators, teachers, educational staff, students, and the wider community.²⁶

The kiai has a central position because the legitimacy of his leadership is not only derived from his formal position but also from religious knowledge, role modeling, social relationships, trust, and acceptance by the community. Therefore, when conflict occurs, the leader is not only required to make decisions but must also be capable of maintaining the social relationships and trust that have been established within the organization. This characteristic is one of the reasons why a servant leadership approach is relevant in the context of Islamic boarding schools.²⁷

Servant leadership places service to members as an important part of leadership action. Leaders are required to listen, understand the needs of members, provide support, build trust, and help members develop. In conflict management, this orientation provides space for leaders to understand conflict from the perspectives of the parties involved before making decisions.²⁸

These service values can be related to the following hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ مَنْ نَفَسَ عَنْ مُؤْمِنٍ كُرْبَةً مِنْ دُنْيَا ، نَفَسَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرْبِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ، وَمَنْ يَسَّرَ عَلَى مُعْسِرٍ ، يَسِّرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ، وَمَنْ سَتَرَ مُسْلِمًا ، سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ، وَاللَّهُ فِي عَوْنِ الْعَبْدِ مَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ فِي عَوْنِ أَخِيهِ

“Narrated by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “Whoever relieves a believer of a worldly hardship, Allah will relieve him of a hardship on the Day of Judgment. Whoever makes things easy for someone in difficulty, Allah will make things easy for him in this world and the Hereafter. Whoever conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults in this world and the Hereafter. Allah continues to aid a servant as long as that servant aids his brother” (Reported by Muslim).” (HR. Muslim).

The hadith shows the importance of helping others as part of a Muslim's life. When applied in the context of leadership, service is not merely interpreted as helping subordinates with their work, but also as the willingness of a leader to be present when members face problems. In situations of conflict, the presence of a leader becomes important because conflicting parties often need space to convey their problems. A leader who is willing to listen can reduce the distance between conflicting parties and within the organization.²⁹

Research results show that the role of religious leaders in conflict management is carried out through several functions, namely as a mediator, collector, informational provider, and decision maker. As a mediator, the leader brings together parties who experience differences. As a collector, the leader gathers information from the parties involved to understand the conflict comprehensively.³⁰

²⁴ Irfan, “Konsep Perdamaian Dalam QS. Al-Hujurat Ayat 9-10 (Analisis Tafsir Al-Misbah Karya M. Quraish Shihab)”; Irfan, “Konsep Perdamaian Dalam QS. Al-Hujurat Ayat 9-10 (Analisis Tafsir Al-Misbah Karya M. Quraish Shihab).”

²⁵ Sholihah et al., “An Empirical Study on the Integration of Modern Educational Practices in Salaf Islamic Boarding Schools: Challenges, Resistance, and Strategies for Implementation.”

²⁶ Westerman et al., “Digital Transformation: A Roadmap for Billion-Dollar Organizations.”

²⁷ Gelan, “Servant Leadership and Its Impact on Conflict Management in Workplace: A Case of Oromia Administration Bureau.”

²⁸ Mubin et al., “Fostering Islamic Moderation Among Students Through IPNU: A Study of Organizational Learning and Civic Engagement.”

²⁹ Van Dyke and Hurt, “Servant Leadership, Affective Conflict, and Organizational Trust: A Walk-In-The-Woods Perspective.”

³⁰ Wuli et al., “Servant Leadership to Manage Conflict: Case Study of the Indonesian Military Ordinarate.”

Servant Leadership as A Catalyst for Constructive Conflict Management: Evidence from A Pesantren-Based School in Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School

As an informational provider, the leader conveys relevant information required in the conflict resolution process. Meanwhile, as a decision maker, the leader makes decisions after communication and information gathering have been carried out.³¹

These findings show that the formal authority of the leader remains necessary, but this authority is exercised after going through a process of listening, understanding, and considering various sources of information. Thus, servant leadership does not mean that a leader loses authority. Rather, authority is exercised through a more service-oriented approach, in which decisions are built upon communication, attention to members, and consideration of common interests.³²

Islamic Values in the Process of Conflict Resolution

One of the important findings of the study is that conflict management at Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School is closely connected with Islamic values, particularly *tabayyun*, deliberation, *ishlah*, and *tarahhum*. These values are not merely religious concepts but can function as principles guiding the process of conflict resolution.³³

One of the conflict resolution strategies found in the study is *tabayyun*, which holds an important position because conflict can develop as a consequence of incomplete information, misunderstandings, or different interpretations of an event. Allah SWT says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ لَدْغَمِينَ

“O you who have believed, if an evildoer comes to you with important news, verify its truth so that you do not harm a people out of ignorance only to regret your actions later.” (QS. Al-Hujurat: 6)

The principle of *tabayyun* provides a basis for verifying information before taking action. In the context of conflict management, this principle is important because decisions based on unverified information can escalate conflict. In the practice of servant leadership, *tabayyun* can be understood as a process of listening to various parties, seeking relevant information, conducting clarification, and understanding the problem before determining an action. The collector function performed by the leader therefore has a direct relationship with the principle of *tabayyun*.³⁴

After information has been obtained through *tabayyun*, conflict resolution can be directed through deliberation. Research results show that deliberation becomes one of the strategies used in conflict resolution at Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School. Allah SWT says:

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

“(It is also better and more lasting for) those who accept (obey) God's call and perform prayers, while their affairs are (decided) by deliberation between them. They spend part of the sustenance that We have bestowed upon them.” (QS. Ash-Shura: 38)

Deliberation provides space for parties who have differences to express their respective views. In an organizational context, deliberation can reduce the tendency toward unilateral conflict resolution because decisions are developed through communication. A servant leader does not merely speak to members but also listens to them. This willingness to listen becomes an important part of creating appreciation, participation, and recognition.³⁵

Tabayyun and deliberation essentially have one connecting element, namely communication. Communication in conflict is not merely a process of conveying information but also a process of building mutual understanding. When conflicting parties are allowed to explain their views, the leader obtains more complete information while also helping each party understand the perspective of the other party. This verse emphasizes the importance of how people communicate. In a conflict situation, the choice of words, the manner of expressing opinions, and the ability to control communication can influence the direction of the conflict. Therefore, the leader, as a catalyst, does not merely bring opposing parties together but also creates a communication pattern that allows dialogue to take place healthily.³⁶

The next stage in conflict management is *ishlah*. If *tabayyun* functions to clarify information and deliberation provides a space for dialogue, reconciliation becomes an orientation toward repairing relationships and achieving peace. The concept of *ishlah* shows that conflict resolution is not merely oriented toward reaching a final decision. The relationship between members after a conflict also needs to be considered. This is particularly important in Islamic boarding school organizations because relationships among leaders, teachers, administrators, and members extend beyond formal working relationships.

³¹ Xiu et al., “The Interplay of Servant Leadership Behaviors and Machiavellianism on Perceived Leader Effectiveness: The Role of Team Conflict Management.”

³² Fields, *How Servant Leadership Impacts Interpersonal Conflict Between Employees and Their Supervisors* (Walden University, 2018).

³³ Wani, “Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam: A Perspective Building.”

³⁴ Salmi et al., *Islam and Conflict Resolution: Theories and Practices* (Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 1998).

³⁵ Salmi et al., *Islam and Conflict Resolution: Theories and Practices* (Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 1998).

³⁶ Mubin et al., “Fostering Islamic Moderation Among Students Through IPNU: A Study of Organizational Learning and Civic Engagement.”

Servant Leadership as A Catalyst for Constructive Conflict Management: Evidence from A Pesantren-Based School in Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School

In addition to *ishlah*, the research shows the existence of *tarahhum* as part of the conflict resolution strategy. *Tarahhum* can be understood as an attitude of mutual compassion, attention, and care for human relationships. The Prophet Muhammad SAW said:

مَنْ لَا يَرْحَمُ لَا يُرْحَمُ

“Whoever does not show mercy will not be shown mercy.” (HR. Bukhari and Muslim)

The value of *tarahhum* provides a human dimension to conflict management. Parties involved in conflict are not merely viewed as individuals with different interests, but as human beings who have feelings, needs, and relationships with other members of the organization. Therefore, constructive conflict resolution requires a balance between firmness and compassion.³⁷

The findings indicate that the implementation of servant leadership in conflict management is reflected in a sequential process that combines service-oriented leadership with Islamic values. The process begins with the leader’s willingness to serve and listen to the needs of organizational members, followed by *tabayyun* as a process of clarification and verification, *musyawarah* as a means of involving relevant parties in decision-making, *ishlah* as an effort to restore disrupted relationships, and *tarahhum* as a foundation of empathy and mutual care. These processes collectively support the development of constructive conflict management within the organization. The overall process is illustrated in Figure



Figure 1. Empirical Process of Servant Leadership in Constructive Conflict Management

Figure 1 illustrates that servant leadership in conflict management is not limited to the leader’s role as a decision maker, but involves a process of service, clarification, deliberation, reconciliation, and compassion. *Tabayyun* functions as an initial basis for ensuring that decisions are grounded in accurate and clearly understood information. This process is followed by *musyawarah*, which provides opportunities for the parties involved to express their perspectives and participate in determining solutions. Subsequently, *ishlah* emphasizes the restoration of relationships, while *tarahhum* strengthens the process through empathy, concern, and mutual respect. Through this interconnected process, conflict can be directed toward constructive outcomes that contribute to stronger relationships and organizational development.

Servant Leadership as a Catalyst for Constructive Conflict Management

The main concept of this study is servant leadership as a catalyst. The term *catalyst* is used in this study as an analytical concept to describe the role of leadership in encouraging, facilitating, or accelerating the conflict management process toward a more constructive direction. Thus, the catalyst is not interpreted as a statistical cause-and-effect relationship, but as a description of the leadership process.³⁸

Based on the research findings, the catalyst function can be seen through a series of leadership actions. The leader listens to the parties involved, collects information, builds communication, brings different parties together, facilitates deliberation, provides information, and ultimately makes decisions. Thus, the catalyst works through a process rather than through a single action. The leader does not necessarily eliminate conflict. Instead, the leader helps transform the conditions of conflict into a more directed and constructive process.³⁹

³⁷ Anwar et al., “Conflict Management in Islamic Education Institutions: An Islamic Approach to Problem-Solving.”

³⁸ Tsarkos, “Empowering Organizational Harmony: The Integral Role of Servant Leadership in Conflict Management and Inclusivity.”

³⁹ Jit et al., “Servant Leadership and Conflict Resolution: A Qualitative Study.”

Servant Leadership as A Catalyst for Constructive Conflict Management: Evidence from A Pesantren-Based School in Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School

Within this framework, bridging is one of the concrete forms of the catalyst function. The leader bridges differences in information through *tabayyun*, bridges differences in interests through deliberation, bridges relationships experiencing tension through *ishlah*, and bridges social relationships through *tarahhum*. This sequence demonstrates that servant leadership functions not only as a leadership style but also as a process that connects organizational members with conflict resolution mechanisms.⁴⁰

Constructive conflict in this study does not mean that all differences must be eliminated. Differences in interests, perceptions, and views can still emerge within an organization. What distinguishes constructive conflict from destructive conflict is how the organization responds to these differences. In the context of Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School, conflict can be directed through *tabayyun*, deliberation, *ishlah*, and *tarahhum* toward clarification of information, expression of different views, understanding of interests, finding common ground, repairing relationships, rebuilding trust, and maintaining organizational sustainability.

Thus, conflict can produce learning if the organization is capable of reflecting on the causes of conflict and its resolution process. Conflict is not merely an issue that must be quickly closed, but can also become a source of information about aspects of the organization that need improvement.⁴¹

The research findings further show that servant leadership in the context of Islamic boarding schools cannot be separated from Islamic values embedded in organizational life. *Tabayyun*, deliberation, *ishlah*, and *tarahhum* form an interconnected sequence. *Tabayyun* provides a basis for caution in understanding information, deliberation provides space for participation, *ishlah* provides an orientation toward improvement and peace, while *tarahhum* provides a dimension of compassion and care in human relationships.⁴²



Figure 2. The Form and Dynamics of Conflict, Conflict Management, and Servant Leadership as a Catalyst for Constructive Conflict

Based on the overall results and discussion, an empirical pattern can therefore be formulated in which servant leadership works as a catalyst through service, communication, involvement, and fair decision-making. The leader functions as a connector between conflict dynamics and the resolution process. The leader does not become the only party who resolves the conflict but creates conditions that allow conflicting parties to communicate, understand the problem, participate in the resolution process, and accept the resulting decision.

Thus, the main contribution of servant leadership as a catalyst lies in its ability to change the direction of the conflict process. Conflict that initially has the potential to hinder the organization can be directed through service, communication, *tabayyun*, deliberation, *ishlah*, and *tarahhum* toward more constructive management. In this sense, successful conflict management depends

⁴⁰ Zada et al., "How Servant Leadership Influences the Effectiveness of Project Management: Antecedents and Consequences."

⁴¹ Fields, *How Servant Leadership Impacts Interpersonal Conflict Between Employees and Their Supervisors* (Walden University, 2018).

⁴² Kyambade et al., "Servant Leadership and Healthy Work Relationships in University Context: A Moderated Mediation Analysis of Psychological Safety and Socially Responsible Leadership."

Servant Leadership as A Catalyst for Constructive Conflict Management: Evidence from A Pesantren-Based School in Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School

not only on the final decision but also on how the process toward that decision takes place and how relationships among members are restored after conflict.⁴³

This finding further indicates that constructive conflict can generate an organizational learning process when members are willing to reflect on experiences, exchange perspectives, translate insights into action, and develop greater concern for others. The learning process therefore extends beyond resolving the immediate conflict and contributes to continuous organizational improvement. The orientation of this learning process is illustrated in Figure 3.

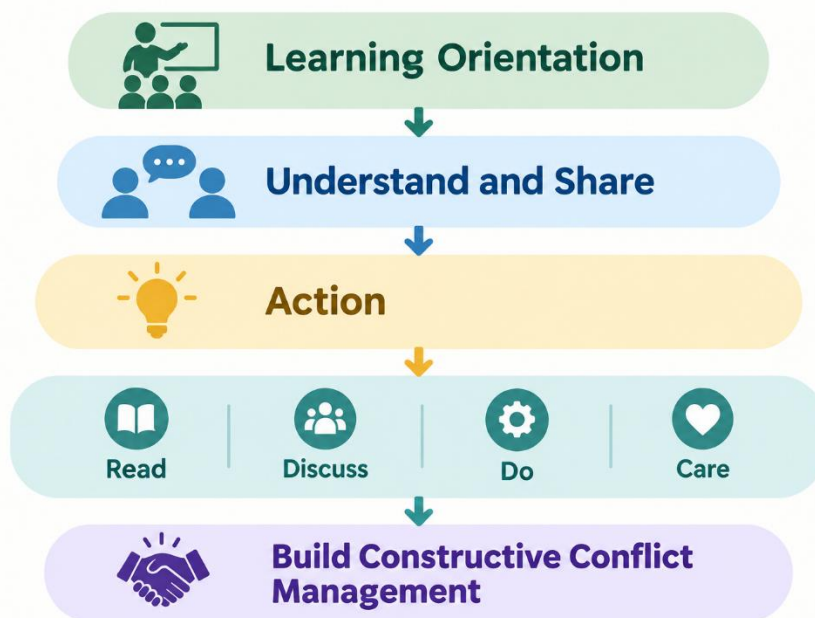


Figure 3. Learning Orientation in Constructive Conflict Management

Figure 3 illustrates that organizational learning develops through a process of understanding and sharing, followed by action, reading, discussion, practice, and care. These elements indicate that conflict can become a learning opportunity when organizational members do not stop at identifying the problem but continue to exchange knowledge, discuss alternative perspectives, implement solutions, and reflect on their effects. The process ultimately strengthens the organization's capacity to manage conflict constructively.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that conflict in the pesantren-based school at Tanjung Rejo Mangaran, Situbondo, occurs in various forms, including social, economic, political, cultural, task, and organizational conflicts. Conflict resolution is carried out through strengthening communication and conflict awareness using the principles of tabayyun, deliberation (musyawarah), ishlah, and tarahhum. The kiai plays an important role in managing conflict as a mediator, information collector, information provider, and decision-maker. Through wise and fair leadership, the kiai facilitates communication and resolution without disadvantaging either party. Thus, kiai leadership plays an important role in directing conflict toward a constructive resolution within the pesantren-based educational environment.

REFERENCESk

- 1) Abdussamad, H. Zuchri, and M. Si Sik. *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. CV. Syakir Media Press, 2021.
- 2) Adlini, Miza Nina, Anisya Hanifa Dinda, Sarah Yulinda, Octavia Chotimah, and Sauda Julia Merliyana. "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka." *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 6, no. 1 (2022): 974–80. <https://doi.org/10.33487/edumaspul.v6i1.3394>.
- 3) Alaslan, Amtai. *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Center For Open Science, 2023.
- 4) Anwar, Khoirul, Widyatmike Gede Mulawarman, Khalid Rahman, Sitti Anggraini, and Hajer Abdallah Albshkar. "Conflict Management in Islamic Education Institutions: An Islamic Approach to Problem-Solving." *Nidhomul Haq: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2025): 207–17.

⁴³ Zada et al., "How Servant Leadership Influences the Effectiveness of Project Management: Antecedents and Consequences."

Servant Leadership as A Catalyst for Constructive Conflict Management: Evidence from A Pesantren-Based School in Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School

- 5) Budi, Hengki Irawan Setia. *Manajemen Konflik, Pendekatan Kecerdasan Emosional*. Selat Media, 2026.
- 6) Fields, Thomas B. *How Servant Leadership Impacts Interpersonal Conflict Between Employees and Their Supervisors*. Walden University, 2018.
- 7) Fields, Thomas B. *How Servant Leadership Impacts Interpersonal Conflict Between Employees and Their Supervisors*. Walden University, 2018.
- 8) Firmansyah, Muhammad, Masrun Masrun, and I. Dewa Ketut Yudha S. "Esensi Perbedaan Metode Kualitatif Dan Kuantitatif." *Elastisitas - Jurnal Ekonomi Pembangunan* 3, no. 2 (2021): 156–59. <https://doi.org/10.29303/e-jep.v3i2.46>.
- 9) Gelan, Daniel Temesgen. "Servant Leadership and Its Impact on Conflict Management in Workplace: A Case of Oromia Administration Bureau." *Available at SSRN 4865285*, 2024.
- 10) Ghofur, Abdul, Moch Sahril Sobirin, Uswatun Hasanah, and Zakiyah Alfaizah. "Modernisasi Pesantren Dalam Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer: Manajemen, Sosiologi, Dan Aksiologi Budaya Lokal." *EDUSHOPIA: Journal of Progressive Pedagogy* 3, no. 1 (2026): 011–020.
- 11) Gilang, Muhammad Ilham, Mus Mulyadi, Nurniswah Nurniswah, Riska Nadia, and Intan Permata Sari. "Madrasah Principals Leadership in Ethnopedagogy-Based Cundlict Management for Bullying Prevention in Islamic Boarding School Madrasahs." *The Innovation of Social Studies Journal* 8, no. 1 (2026): 117–25.
- 12) Hasanah, Maulidatul, Nur Aisyah, Abdullah Abdullah, and Abdurrahman Abdurrahman. "ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL-BASED MADRASAH CONFLICT MANAGEMENT." 2, no. 1 (2024): 110–19.
- 13) Indra, Prasetyo, Rusdiyanto Rusdiyanto, Aliyyah Nabilah, and Luthfi Haidar Rahmat. *Manajemen Konflik Di Era Digital: Tantangan Dan Peluang Di Dunia Kerja Hybrid*. 2026.
- 14) Irfan, Rengga. "Konsep Perdamaian Dalam QS. Al-Hujurat Ayat 9-10 (Analisis Tafsir Al-Misbah Karya M. Quraish Shihab)." *Al-Kauniyah: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 4, no. 2 (2023): 40–51.
- 15) Jit, Ravinder, Chandra Shekhar Sharma, and Mona Kawatra. "Servant Leadership and Conflict Resolution: A Qualitative Study." *International Journal of Conflict Management* 27, no. 4 (2016): 591–612.
- 16) Kyambade, Mahadih, Gideon Nkurunziza, Luke Sewante, Afulah Namatovu, and Monica Tushabe. "Servant Leadership and Healthy Work Relationships in University Context: A Moderated Mediation Analysis of Psychological Safety and Socially Responsible Leadership." *Cogent Education* 11, no. 1 (2024): 2418802.
- 17) Marlina, Sari. "Manajemen Konflik Dalam Organisasi Multikultural Di Indonesia." *Jurnal Manajemen Indonesia* 1, no. 1 (2025): 15–22.
- 18) Mubin, Muhammad Nurul, Ahmad Syaffi, Maemonah, and Muhammad Novan Leany. "Fostering Islamic Moderation Among Students Through IPNU: A Study of Organizational Learning and Civic Engagement." *Child & Youth Services*, 2025, 1–21.
- 19) Mukhtar, H., and Muhammad Anggung Manumanoso Prasetyo. *Pesantren Efektif Model Teori Integratif Kepemimpinan–Komunikasi-Konflik Organisasi*. Deepublish, 2020.
- 20) Mulyasa, H. Enco. *Manajemen Dan Kepemimpinan Kepala Sekolah*. Bumi aksara, 2022.
- 21) Nasution, Abdul Fattah. *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. 2023.
- 22) Ngaini, Sovi Ul, and Ali Rohmat. "Conflict Mitigation and Coping Mechanism Strategy for New Students at API ASRI Tegalorejo Islamic Boarding School." *El-Idare: Journal of Islamic Education Management* 12, no. 1 (2026): 229–38.
- 23) Purwatiningsih, Sri Desti, and Ilona Vicensie Oisina Situmeang. *Komunikasi Manajemen Konflik, Dalam Konteks Pemecahan Masalah*. PT. Green Pustaka Indonesia, 2025.
- 24) Ramadani, Suci, and Ainur Rofiq Sofa. "Kejujuran Dalam Perspektif Pendidikan Islam: Nilai Fundamental, Strategi Implementasi, Dan Dampaknya Terhadap Pembentukan Karakter Santri Di Pesantren." *Jurnal Manajemen Dan Pendidikan Agama Islam* 3, no. 1 (2025): 193–210.
- 25) Roosinda, Fitria Widiyani, Ninik Sri Lestari, AA Gde Satia Utama, et al. *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*. Zahir Publishing, 2021.
- 26) Salmi, Ralph H., Cesar Adib Majul, and George K. Tanham. *Islam and Conflict Resolution: Theories and Practices*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 1998.
- 27) Salmi, Ralph H., Cesar Adib Majul, and George K. Tanham. *Islam and Conflict Resolution: Theories and Practices*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 1998.
- 28) Sholihah, Nikmatus, Mas Ayu Ainun Nisa, Muhammad Adib Nuruzzaman, and Achmad Zaini. "An Empirical Study on the Integration of Modern Educational Practices in Salaf Islamic Boarding Schools: Challenges, Resistance, and Strategies for Implementation." *At-Turas: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 12, no. 2 (2025): 272–93.

Servant Leadership as A Catalyst for Constructive Conflict Management: Evidence from A Pesantren-Based School in Tanjung Rejo Islamic Boarding School

- 29) Tsarkos, Athanasios. "Empowering Organizational Harmony: The Integral Role of Servant Leadership in Conflict Management and Inclusivity." In *Comprehensive Approaches to Conflict Resolution*. IGI Global Scientific Publishing, 2024.
- 30) Van Dyke, Tucker, and Kevin J. Hurt. "Servant Leadership, Affective Conflict, and Organizational Trust: A Walk-In-The-Woods Perspective." *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (2024): 93.
- 31) Wani, Nazar Ul Islam. "Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam: A Perspective Building." *Indonesian Journal of Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies (IJIIS)*, 2023.
- 32) Westerman, George, Claire Calm  jane, Didier Bonnet, Patrick Ferraris, and Andrew McAfee. "Digital Transformation: A Roadmap for Billion-Dollar Organizations." *MIT Center for Digital Business and Capgemini Consulting* 1, nos. 1–68 (2011).
- 33) Widodo, Wahyudi. "Manajemen Konflik Dalam Pondok Pesantren: Pendekatan Islami Untuk Penyelesaian Masalah: Penelitian." *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Dan Riset Pendidikan* 4, no. 1 (2025): 138–51.
- 34) Wuli, Rofinus, Muchlis Rantoni Luddin, and Thomas Suyatno. "Servant Leadership to Manage Conflict: Case Study of the Indonesian Military Ordinate." *Organizational Cultures: An International Journal* 20, no. 1 (2020): 13.
- 35) Wuli, Rofinus Neto. "Kekuatan Kepemimpinan Yang Melayani Dalam Manajemen Konflik Pada Keuskupan Tni/Polri." *Atma Reksa*, 2021.
- 36) Xiu, Lin, Feng Lv, and Dirk van Dierendonck. "The Interplay of Servant Leadership Behaviors and Machiavellianism on Perceived Leader Effectiveness: The Role of Team Conflict Management." *European Journal of Management and Business Economics* 33, no. 3 (2024): 289–305.
- 37) Yunus, Ahmad, Tatik Kartika Sari, Rosyadi Rosyadi, and Sri Guritno. *Nilai-Nilai Budaya Dalam Kehidupan Pesantren Di Daerah Situbondo, Jawa Timur*. 1994.
- 38) Yunus, S. Pd I., and S. Mukhlisin. *Manajemen Konflik Pada Lembaga Pendidikan Islam*. Wawasan Ilmu, 2025.
- 39) Zada, Muhammad, Jawad Khan, Imran Saeed, and Shagufta Zada. "How Servant Leadership Influences the Effectiveness of Project Management: Antecedents and Consequences." *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance* 11, no. 2 (2024): 307–24.
- 40) Zakiyah, Asmara. *Hubungan Pengetahuan Dan Sikap Personal Hygiene Dengan Kejadian Keputihan Pada Remaja Putri Di Pondok Pesantren Tanjung Rejo*. 2024.