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## The Role of Transformational Leadership in Implementing School-Based Conflict Management to Foster a Culture of Peace at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi, Central Sulawesi

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of transformational leadership in the implementation of School-Based Conflict Management (SBCM) to foster a culture of peace at Sukma Bangsa Sigi School, Central Sulawesi. Situated in a post-disaster and post-conflict context, the school serves a heterogeneous community where latent tensions and conflicts are prevalent. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observations involving the school director, principals, vice principals, counselors, and teachers. The findings reveal that transformational leadership—articulated through an inspiring vision, ethical role modeling, and two-way communication—plays a critical role in building collective commitment to SBCM implementation. SBCM is operationalized through four interrelated pillars: curriculum development, peer mediation, peaceable classrooms, and peaceable school practices, supported by the empowerment of teachers and students as agents of peace. This study extends existing literature by demonstrating how the transformational leadership of a school director institutionalizes SBCM as a sustainable school-wide practice in post-disaster and post-conflict settings. The findings offer practical and theoretical implications for educational leadership, conflict management, and peace education in diverse and vulnerable school contexts.

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**ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran kepemimpinan transformasional dalam implementasi Manajemen Konflik Berbasis Sekolah (MKBS) untuk menumbuhkan budaya damai di Sekolah Sukma Bangsa Sigi, Sulawesi Tengah. Sekolah ini berada dalam konteks wilayah pascabencana dan pascakonflik serta melayani komunitas yang heterogen, di mana potensi ketegangan dan konflik masih cukup tinggi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan observasi yang melibatkan direktur sekolah, kepala sekolah, wakil kepala sekolah, konselor, dan guru. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan transformasional—yang diwujudkan melalui visi inspiratif, keteladanan etis, dan komunikasi dua arah—berperan penting dalam membangun komitmen kolektif warga sekolah terhadap implementasi MKBS. MKBS dioperasionalkan melalui empat pilar yang saling terkait, yaitu pengembangan kurikulum, mediasi sejawat, *peaceable classroom*, dan praktik *peaceable school*, serta didukung oleh pemberdayaan guru dan siswa sebagai agen perdamaian. Penelitian ini memperluas kajian kepemimpinan pendidikan dengan menunjukkan bagaimana kepemimpinan transformasional direktur sekolah menginstitutionalisasikan MKBS sebagai praktik sekolah yang berkelanjutan dalam konteks pascabencana dan pascakonflik. Temuan penelitian ini memberikan implikasi praktis dan teoretis bagi kepemimpinan pendidikan, manajemen konflik, dan pendidikan perdamaian di lingkungan sekolah yang beragam dan rentan.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in fostering values of peace and equipping learners with the skills to prevent and resolve conflict constructively. However, schools remain vulnerable to various forms of violence and interpersonal conflict, indicating that peace-oriented educational practices are not yet fully institutionalized. In Indonesia, recurring cases of school violence and abuse underscore the need for systematic, school-wide approaches that strengthen conflict management capacities among all members of the school community.

One such approach is School-Based Conflict Management (SBCM), developed by the Sukma Foundation as an integral component of peace education embedded within curriculum, school culture, and social relations. Initially implemented in post-conflict contexts at Sukma Bangsa schools in Aceh, SBCM has since been formalized within the Sukma School Statute. Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi, established following the Palu–Sigi–Donggala disaster, represents a unique educational setting where post-disaster trauma, social heterogeneity, and intensive daily interactions—particularly within a boarding school system—create heightened potential for conflict among students, teachers, and the surrounding community.

Such conditions require leadership that not only manages conflict reactively but also cultivates a shared vision of peace, ethical conduct, and collaborative problem-solving. Transformational leadership is particularly relevant in this context, as it emphasizes moral role modeling, relational trust, and the empowerment of school members. At Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi, school leaders play a central role in guiding conflict resolution practices and shaping the school’s peace-oriented culture.

Despite growing interest in peace education and conflict management, empirical studies that examine how transformational leadership supports the sustainable implementation of SBCM in post-disaster and post-conflict school contexts remain limited. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the role of transformational leadership in supporting SBCM implementation at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi and its contribution to shaping constructive attitudes and behaviors toward conflict among school community members.

Based on the background, problem identification, and scope of study, this research is guided by the following questions:

1. How does transformational leadership support the implementation of School-Based Conflict Management (SBCM) at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi?
2. How do school leaders address challenges in implementing SBCM to promote a peaceful school environment?
3. How is a culture of peace fostered through SBCM at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi?

## 2. METODE

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with a case study method to enable an in-depth exploration of transformational leadership in the implementation of

School-Based Conflict Management (SBCM) at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi. The case study approach was considered appropriate because it allows researchers to capture the complexity of social dynamics, leadership strategies, and their influence on the development of a culture of peace within a bounded context. As Creswell (2015, p. 98) explains, a case study is a research strategy used when scholars seek to understand a system defined by specific boundaries of time and place through the collection of diverse and comprehensive data.

The study was conducted at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi, Central Sulawesi Province, with data collection carried out between March 19 and April 19, 2025. This qualitative study employed a descriptive case study design to explore transformational leadership and the implementation of School-Based Conflict Management (SBCM) within the school context. The research involved 10 purposively selected informants, comprising the school director, two principals, two vice principals, one counselor, and four teachers, all of whom were actively engaged in conflict management processes.

Data were collected through two primary techniques: observation and semi-structured interviews. Observations focused on key informants to obtain direct insights into behaviors, interactions, and practices related to transformational leadership and conflict management, particularly patterns of interaction, responses to conflict, and leadership roles in fostering a peaceful school climate. In line with Sugiyono (2015), observation in qualitative research involves the systematic recording of observable phenomena in their natural settings. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit in-depth perspectives on leadership practices, guided by open-ended questions such as: *“As the Director of Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi, how do you describe your leadership in relation to the implementation of School-Based Conflict Management (SBCM)? What actions do you take as a leader in implementing SBCM at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi?”* This approach enabled the collection of rich, contextually grounded data aligned with the study’s objectives.

Data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach following Creswell’s (2015) framework, involving iterative processes of data organization, comprehensive reading, and systematic coding across all data sources. Codes were used to describe the research setting, participants, and emerging categories, which were then synthesized into broader themes and integrated into a coherent qualitative narrative through interpretive analysis aligned with the research questions. To ensure trustworthiness, data triangulation was applied by integrating multiple methods—observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis—and multiple sources, including the school director, junior and senior high school principals, vice principals, a school counselor, and teachers at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi, Central Sulawesi. The convergence of data across methods and sources enhanced the credibility and dependability of the findings.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Strengthening a Culture of Peace through Visionary, Inclusive, and Contextual SBCM**

The implementation of School-Based Conflict Management (SBCM) at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi demonstrates the pivotal role of transformational leadership in establishing a shared vision of peace and integrating it into everyday school practices. School leaders consistently frame conflict resolution as an integral component of the educational process and align policies and programs with this vision. As articulated by the school director, *“All operational activities and school programs must be aligned with the school’s vision of creating a positive educational environment”* (NR). This finding supports prior research emphasizing that visionary leadership shapes collective values and norms essential to fostering a culture of peace (Kurland et al., 2010).

Despite these strengths, the findings also reveal several challenges and limitations. The strong centrality of leadership, particularly the director’s role, risks creating leadership dependency that may undermine the sustainability of SBCM during leadership transitions. Furthermore, although inclusive strategies such as peer mediation and classroom dialogue involve teachers and students, participation remains uneven. Some students—especially those affected by post-disaster trauma—are not yet fully prepared to assume roles as peace agents, indicating the need for ongoing capacity building and psychosocial support.

Contextual adaptation further strengthens SBCM by aligning conflict management strategies with the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of students; however, this complexity also complicates mediation processes. Differences in values and lived experiences occasionally hinder consensus-building, and while leaders model ethical and nonviolent responses to conflict, inconsistencies in practice persist. These findings suggest that the effectiveness of SBCM depends not only on visionary and inclusive leadership but also on the distribution of leadership, institutional capacity, and systematic operational guidelines to ensure the sustainability of a peaceful school culture.

### **Collective Participation of Teachers and Students in Advancing a Culture of Peace through SBCM**

The implementation of School-Based Conflict Management (SBCM) at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi is strongly supported by collective engagement among school leaders, teachers, and students. Collaboration across these groups underpins the development of a school-wide conflict resolution system, reflecting transformational leadership principles that emphasize participation and empowerment (Bass & Riggio, 2006). School leaders and teachers are actively involved in program planning and evaluation, while students are positioned not merely as recipients but as contributors to maintaining social harmony. As noted by the junior high school principal, SBCM is operationalized through structured mechanisms, including an ad hoc team responsible for SBCM, scheduled SBCM classes within the learning roster, and extracurricular peace-oriented activities such as the *Peace Maker* program (MI, Junior High School Principal). This institutional arrangement indicates a deliberate effort to embed conflict management into daily school practices.

However, the findings also reveal several limitations and challenges. Although student participation is formally encouraged through peer mediation and peace-focused activities, the depth of student agency varies. Some initiatives remain highly structured

and adult-led, suggesting a potential bias toward top-down facilitation that may constrain students' autonomy in resolving conflicts independently. In addition, teachers' dual roles as facilitators and mediators place significant demands on their time and competencies, particularly in addressing complex conflicts involving trauma or deeply rooted interpersonal tensions. These challenges indicate that participatory structures alone are insufficient without continuous capacity building and institutional support.

Teachers play a critical role in sustaining SBCM by integrating peace values into both academic and socio-emotional learning and by mediating conflicts as they arise. Nevertheless, reliance on teachers' personal commitment and relational skills raises concerns regarding consistency and long-term sustainability, especially in contexts of staff turnover. While daily practices such as classroom dialogues, collaborative projects, and peace-oriented extracurricular activities contribute to fostering empathy and cooperation, their effectiveness depends on sustained coordination and shared ownership across the school community. Overall, these findings suggest that SBCM at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi functions not merely as a formal policy but as an evolving cultural practice, whose sustainability requires balancing participatory ideals with critical attention to power dynamics, role distribution, and institutional capacity.

### **Transformational Leadership as a Driver of Conflict Resolution and Positive Change**

Transformational leadership at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi is reflected in the exemplary conduct of school leaders in addressing conflicts through ethical, calm, and nonviolent approaches. Rather than relying solely on normative directives, the director and principals demonstrate moral integrity and fairness in daily practices, positioning themselves as role models for teachers and students. This leadership-by-example is evident in the way conflicts are handled thoughtfully and impartially, reinforcing values of justice and respect. A vice principal noted that the director consistently provides inspirational motivation and moral guidance, both in encouraging the implementation of SBCM and in modeling ethical conflict resolution among staff and students (RU, Vice Principal of Junior High School). Such practices align with the dimension of idealized influence in transformational leadership, where leaders inspire trust through consistent ethical behavior (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

In addition, school leaders promote open and inclusive communication by deliberately reducing hierarchical distance and fostering dialogical spaces in both formal and informal settings. This openness enables teachers and students to voice concerns and participate in conflict resolution processes, supporting collective ownership of peace-oriented practices. However, the findings also indicate potential limitations. The strong moral authority of leaders, while fostering trust, may inadvertently create dependence on individual leadership figures, raising concerns about sustainability should leadership change. Moreover, although participatory decision-making is emphasized, student involvement in strategic decision-making remains situational and selective, suggesting that inclusivity has not yet been fully institutionalized across all levels.

Decision-making related to conflict management further reflects transformational leadership through shared responsibility and mentorship-oriented practices. Leaders involve teachers—and occasionally students—in formulating SBCM strategies, while also

engaging in training, monitoring, and reflective forums. This approach illustrates individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation (Geijsel et al., 2003), encouraging reflective and peace-oriented problem-solving. Nonetheless, reliance on leaders' personal commitment and relational skills highlights the need for stronger systemic mechanisms to ensure consistency. Overall, while exemplary leadership has contributed to a shift from reactive to reflective conflict practices, the sustainability of this transformation depends on balancing charismatic influence with institutional capacity and distributed leadership structures.

### **Transformational Evaluation and Tangible Impacts of SBCM**

Routine evaluation and structured reflection constitute a central mechanism in sustaining the implementation of School-Based Conflict Management (SBCM) at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi. Evaluation is not positioned merely as an administrative requirement but as a reflective leadership practice that enables continuous learning and adaptation. School leaders use evaluative forums to capture the lived experiences of teachers and students, integrating their perspectives into ongoing program refinement. As one principal described, evaluative reflection often occurs through informal dialogues with students, which are later verified and discussed across leadership levels to ensure accuracy and relevance (RS, Senior High School Principal). This practice illustrates how evaluation functions as collective reflection rather than unilateral assessment.

The adaptive dimension of transformational leadership is evident in leaders' responses to evolving school dynamics, including shifts in student behavior, teachers' emotional demands, and diverse family backgrounds. Rather than treating these challenges as isolated incidents, leaders interpret them as feedback for systemic improvement, incorporating evaluative insights into decision-making processes. This approach strengthens participatory governance and reinforces shared ownership of the peacebuilding agenda. However, the findings also reveal limitations: evaluative practices rely heavily on leaders' informal relational networks, which may risk subjectivity and inconsistency if not supported by clearer institutional indicators. Moreover, the absence of standardized documentation across evaluative cycles may constrain the transferability and long-term sustainability of SBCM practices.

Despite these constraints, evaluative reflection has contributed to observable cultural shifts, including reduced overt conflict, increased perceptions of safety, and greater openness to dialogue among teachers and students. These outcomes suggest that SBCM extends beyond conflict prevention toward fostering healthier communication norms. Nonetheless, sustaining these gains requires balancing relational, leader-driven evaluation with more systematic mechanisms to mitigate potential leadership bias. Overall, reflective evaluation functions simultaneously as an early-warning system, an adaptive intervention tool, and a platform for consensus-building, reinforcing SBCM as an evolving cultural practice rather than a static policy.

### **Collective Commitment as a Foundation for Sustainability.**

The implementation of School-Based Conflict Management (SBCM) at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi indicates that program sustainability depends not solely on formal

policy frameworks but on moral commitment and collective awareness within the school community. Leaders' role modeling, teacher participation, and student engagement collectively form an ecosystem that supports the cultivation of a culture of peace. The director emphasized neutrality and emotional self-regulation as essential leadership practices in moderating conflicts, noting that impartiality is critical to maintaining trust and mediating diverse interests (NR, School Director). This illustrates how moral stance and personal conduct function as informal yet influential mechanisms in SBCM implementation.

Collective commitment is further reinforced by shared aspirations for a safe and inclusive learning environment. Teachers and support staff perceive leadership involvement as a catalyst for their own commitment to peace values. As the school counselor observed, the director's direct engagement in resolving conflicts creates a cyclical learning process in which peaceful practices are continuously modeled and replicated across the school community (RT, School Counselor). While this relational approach strengthens cohesion, it also reveals a potential limitation: SBCM practices remain highly dependent on individual leadership capacity. Such reliance may pose challenges to sustainability if leadership transitions occur without sufficient institutionalization of values and procedures.

Additionally, the strategic support of the Sukma Foundation contributes to program continuity by providing resources and reflective dialogue spaces that reinforce SBCM principles. However, the findings suggest that translating moral commitment into standardized operational mechanisms remains an ongoing challenge. Overall, SBCM at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi has evolved into a cultural movement grounded in shared responsibility and ethical leadership, yet its long-term resilience will depend on balancing value-driven leadership with more formalized systems to reduce personal bias and ensure consistency.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that transformational leadership plays a central role in the development and sustainability of School-Based Conflict Management (SBCM) at Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi. School leaders—particularly the director—exhibited the four core dimensions of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These leadership practices fostered collective engagement, adaptive learning, and shared responsibility in conflict resolution initiatives, including the Peace Maker Club and SBCM facilitator training. Despite contextual challenges, reflective and empowering leadership enabled the school to sustain a dynamic culture of peace, reinforcing the concept of the school as a learning organization.

#### **Implications and Recommendations**

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The research was conducted in a single case study site—Sukma Bangsa School of Sigi—which limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. In addition, the qualitative approach provided in-depth insights but did not allow for quantitative measurement of key variables such as resilience, commitment, or

the statistical effectiveness of School-Based Conflict Management (SBCM), while the number of informants may not fully represent the perspectives of the entire school community. Accordingly, future research is encouraged to expand the study to schools with diverse social and cultural backgrounds to examine the broader applicability of transformational leadership in SBCM. Employing mixed-methods designs would enable more objective assessment of leadership impacts, while greater inclusion of students as primary respondents would enrich understanding of their lived experiences within school-based conflict resolution systems. Further studies may also focus on specific dimensions of transformational leadership—such as inspirational motivation or individualized consideration—to explore their distinct influence on conflict dynamics and peacebuilding practices in schools.

## 5. AUTHOR'S NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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