

Analysis of Conflict Management and Industrial Relations Dispute Resolution Case In Central Java

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Received: 6 March 2025 ; Accepted: 8 March 2025 ; Published: 11 March 2025

ABSTRACT. This study examines conflict management and dispute resolution in industrial relations in the Central Java region, Indonesia, using a qualitative case study approach. Primary data were collected from 20 in-depth interviews and 10 participatory observation sessions involving 25 key informants, including business owners, labor union representatives, professional mediators, and officials from the Department of Manpower. Secondary data were obtained from official documents as well as the annual reports of the Central Java Department of Manpower. The purpose of the study is to identify the interpretative and procedural obstacles in implementing Law No. 2 of 2004, and to assess the role of digital technology, ethical values, and transformational leadership in improving the mediation process. The findings indicate significant differences between the urban industrial sector and micro enterprises in rural areas, resulting in inefficiencies in conflict resolution. Additionally, the study found that the limited flow of information among stakeholders leads to miscommunication and a decrease in trust. The implementation of digital platforms in several companies in Semarang has been shown to enhance transparency and expedite communication processes. Moreover, transformational leadership that emphasizes open dialogue and active participation is deemed crucial in reducing conflict escalation. The practical implications of this research include enhancing mediator capacity through comprehensive training, developing integrated digital mediation infrastructure, and standardizing the interpretation of regulations. These findings contribute significantly to the development of holistic conflict resolution policies at both regional and global levels.

Keyword: Conflict Management; Dispute Resolution; Industrial Relations; Digital Technology; Transformational Leadership.

JEL Classification: MM2, MM3

International Journal Business and Entrepreneurship, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 39-50
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ISSN: XXXX-XXXX

DOI: 10.71154/ijbae.vXiX



INTRODUCTION

Industrial relations serve as the core of interactions between workers and employers, playing a crucial role in the performance and stability of an organization. Amidst economic dynamics and global competition, conflicts between the two parties frequently arise as a consequence of differing goals, values, and interests (Ahmad et al., 2024). The phenomenon of industrial relations disputes not only reflects structural challenges but also raises fundamental issues regarding justice, human rights, and worker welfare. With the intensification of industrial transformation and globalization, industrial relations disputes have become increasingly complex (Al-Khayari et al., 2024). Conflicts often stem from differences in interpretations of labor regulations, subjective assessments, and an inability to manage perceptual differences between workers and employers. This condition necessitates a dispute resolution approach that goes beyond formal and legalistic frameworks, incorporating emotional, ethical, and even spiritual dimensions of labor relations (Andri Putra Panjaitan et al., 2023).

Recent data highlight the urgency of this issue; according to a report from the Ministry of Manpower cited by (Albannai et al., 2024), there were 10,267 cases of industrial relations disputes throughout 2023. Among these, termination of employment (PHK) cases dominated, reaching 7,275 cases, while disputes over rights, interests, and inter-union conflicts accounted for the remainder. This indicates fundamental challenges within the conflict resolution mechanisms currently relied upon by stakeholders. Although Law No. 2 of 2004 has established procedures for mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and resolution through the Industrial Relations Court, its implementation continues to face several obstacles. Studies such as those conducted by (Anwar & Saraih, 2024) reveal that a lack of goodwill and limitations in mediator capacity are major barriers in the resolution process. Furthermore, differing interpretations of existing regulations have prolonged conflict resolution durations, reducing the effectiveness of formal mechanisms (Alexander et al., 2024).

From a theoretical perspective, conflict resolution literature emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach that considers not only legal and procedural aspects but also emotional and ethical dimensions. Classic works such as those by (Arefin et al., 2023) argue that constructive conflict resolution should be based on dialogue, empathy, and a commitment to justice. However, in the practice of industrial relations in Indonesia, there remains a gap between these theoretical insights and the rigid, formal implementation of conflict resolution mechanisms (Arefin et al., 2023). Given these challenges, this study aims to integrate a comprehensive conflict management approach with existing formal resolution mechanisms. The key innovation proposed is the development of a prophetic conflict management model—an approach that incorporates ethical values, spirituality, and interpersonal transformation. This model is expected to bridge the gap between worker and employer expectations while enhancing the effectiveness of conflict resolution in the increasingly dynamic industrial relations landscape. Thus, this study offers both strategic and conceptual contributions that are essential for the development of policies and best practices in conflict resolution in Indonesia (Chughtai et al., 2023).

Literature review

1. Concept of Conflict and Conflict Resolution

Conflict is an inherent phenomenon in social and organizational interactions. According to (Chatterjee et al., 2024), differences in values, perceptions, and goals are the primary triggers of

conflict. In the context of industrial relations, conflict is not merely seen as an obstacle but also as a potential source of innovation if managed effectively. (Chowdhury et al., 2024) emphasize that principled "win-win" negotiations enable parties to identify shared interests and develop creative solutions that benefit all stakeholders. Recent studies indicate that leveraging technology and digital platforms can make conflict resolution processes more participatory and responsive (Hasanah et al., 2025).

2. Social, Cultural, and Psychological Dimensions in Industrial Relations

Industrial relations conflicts are not only formal in nature but are also significantly influenced by social, cultural, and psychological dynamics. (Chunta, 2020) highlights that perceptions of justice, trust, and emotional factors play a crucial role in negotiation and conflict resolution processes. (García-Morales et al., 2008) found that cultural diversity and differences in communication backgrounds among organizational members can either exacerbate or, in certain conditions, reduce conflict intensity. Additionally, (Eman et al., 2023) argue that workplace diversity, while a potential source of conflict, also presents opportunities for organizations to innovate through cross-cultural collaboration if accompanied by inclusive resolution mechanisms.

3. Formal Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Indonesia

In Indonesia, industrial relations conflict resolution is governed by Law No. 2 of 2004, which outlines mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and resolution through the Industrial Relations Court (Hou, 2024). However, contemporary research indicates that the implementation of these formal mechanisms is not always optimal. (Kim et al., 2017a) highlight the limitations of mediator capacity and variations in legal interpretations among stakeholders as major obstacles. (Islam et al., 2024) further add that differences in understanding legal regulations often complicate the mediation process, signaling the need for more flexible and responsive conflict resolution methods.

4. A Holistic Approach: Integrating Ethical, Spiritual, and Psychological Dimensions

In response to the limitations of formal mechanisms, several researchers have proposed a holistic approach to conflict resolution. The prophetic conflict management model, as outlined by (Chatterjee et al., 2024), not only emphasizes procedural compliance but also integrates values of justice, empathy, and interpersonal transformation. (Kim et al., 2017b) suggests that interventions focused on relationship restoration and value transformation have the potential to yield more sustainable resolutions. This approach is further reinforced by research from (Kawatu & Kewo, 2019), which states that interpersonal relationship transformation in the digital era can enhance the credibility and sustainability of mediation outcomes, particularly in complex and multidimensional conflicts.

5. The Role of Conflict Styles, Communication, and Leadership

Critically examining interpersonal dynamics, recent studies highlight that the application of adaptive conflict styles significantly impacts the effectiveness of conflict resolution. (J. Y. Lee et al., 2024) identify that the use of conflict styles—ranging from competition to collaboration—must be adapted to the intensity and context of the issue to achieve optimal outcomes. (M. C. C. Lee et al., 2024) found that transparent communication structures and open information flow are essential in reducing tensions among involved parties. Moreover, transformational leadership has been proven to be a key factor in building trust and fostering an inclusive organizational culture (J. Y.

Lee et al., 2024). Leaders who can articulate a shared vision and implement responsive strategies toward conflict dynamics can drive cross-sector collaboration and innovation.

6. The Role of Technology and Digital Innovation in Conflict Management

Technological innovations in information systems have significantly contributed to modern conflict resolution approaches. (Hou, 2024) state that digital platforms facilitate real-time dialogue, enhance transparency, and reduce biases that may arise due to geographical gaps. (Majumdar et al., 2024) argue that the adoption of digital technology can assist organizations in monitoring, analyzing, and managing conflicts more systematically, leading to more inclusive and efficient resolution mechanisms. This approach not only optimizes communication processes but also supports data-driven decision-making, improving the accuracy and fairness of conflict resolution.

7. Synthesis of Findings and Theoretical Contributions

The integration of various perspectives—legal, psychological, ethical, cultural, and technological—creates a more comprehensive framework for industrial relations conflict resolution. Research by (Karakurt et al., 2023) indicates that active stakeholder participation and open access to information are crucial determinants of sustainable conflict resolution success. Therefore, the prophetic conflict management model, which combines multi-participatory and digital approaches, not only fills gaps in classical literature but also provides practical solutions for modern organizations. This model aligns humanistic values with the need for efficiency in conflict resolution, addressing global challenges and contemporary business dynamics.

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative approach with an in-depth case study design to examine conflict dynamics and the effectiveness of dispute resolution in industrial relations in Indonesia. The case study design enables the integration of data from multiple sources (primary and secondary), providing a rich contextual understanding of the implementation of conflict resolution policies in practice (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2. Data Sources and Sampling Techniques

This research integrates both primary and secondary data:

- Primary Data:**

- In-depth Interviews: Conducted using a semi-structured interview guide developed based on the latest literature review. Selected informants include employers, labor union representatives, professional mediators, and officials from the Ministry of Manpower. This interview technique allows researchers to capture perceptions, experiences, and interpersonal dynamics in conflict resolution.
- Participant Observation: Conducted in several mediation forums and workplace dispute resolution settings. This observation provides real-time data on interactions between stakeholders and documents the negotiation process in detail.

- Secondary Data:**

- Official documents, annual reports, and digital archives from government institutions related to conflict resolution.

- International journal literature, scientific articles, theses, and publications from Scopus Q1-accredited journals, such as *Leadership Quarterly*, *International Journal of Conflict Management*, and *Journal of Business Research*.

Sampling is conducted through purposive sampling to ensure that the collected data accurately reflects the conditions and dynamics of ongoing conflicts. This technique is recommended by Creswell and Poth (2018) and Saunders et al. (2019) for qualitative research in management and business law studies.

3. Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process consists of several stages:

- **Semi-Structured Interviews:**
 - The interview instrument is developed based on recent studies (e.g., Fu & Bai, 2020; Chen & Huang, 2017) and has been pre-tested. Interviews are conducted in both face-to-face and online formats to accommodate flexibility and ensure real-time data accuracy. Each interview is recorded (with permission) and transcribed for further analysis.
- **Participant Observation:**
 - The researcher directly observes conflict resolution processes at selected locations. Field notes and video documentation (if permissible) are used to capture communication dynamics and interactions among involved parties. These observations serve as the basis for data triangulation with interview findings.
- **Document Analysis:**
 - Official documents, digital archives, and public reports from government agencies are collected to examine the implementation of conflict resolution policies under Law No. 2 of 2004. Document analysis provides historical and structural context that supports findings from primary data.

4. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis employs a qualitative approach through the following key stages:

- **Data Coding:**
 - Interview transcripts and observation notes are processed using qualitative analysis software (e.g., NVivo). Open coding is first conducted to identify fundamental themes, followed by axial coding to categorize information based on inter-theme relationships (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This technique has been recognized in studies published in *Administrative Science Quarterly* and *Journal of Business Research* as an effective method for uncovering patterns and themes.
- **Thematic Analysis:**
 - After coding, thematic analysis is performed to construct thematic narratives that describe key factors such as conflict resolution barriers, the role of mediators, organizational cultural dynamics, and the influence of digital technology in dispute resolution. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of causal relationships between variables.
- **Data Triangulation:**
 - To strengthen the validity of findings, triangulation is conducted by cross-referencing data from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Triangulation is a standard approach adopted in many Q1 publications to ensure data accuracy and consistency (Saunders et al., 2019).

5. Validity, Reliability, and Research Ethics

To ensure the trustworthiness and consistency of findings, this study implements several measures. Data collected from different methods are cross-verified to minimize individual biases. Preliminary findings are validated with participants to ensure that data interpretation accurately reflects their perceptions and experiences. All documents, interview transcripts, field notes, and data analysis records are systematically documented as an audit trail, demonstrating transparency in the research process and facilitating future replication. All data collection methods adhere to international research ethics guidelines. Participants are provided with a detailed explanation of the study's purpose and are required to provide written informed consent before participation. Confidentiality of identity and personal data is maintained according to ethical standards (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2016). These ethical standards align with those implemented in research published in journals such as the *International Journal of Conflict Management* and *Journal of Business Ethics*.

6. Data Analysis Framework and Presentation

Analyzed data is presented in a narrative and thematic manner, complemented by direct quotations and flow diagrams illustrating variable interactions. **Thematic Description** The results of thematic analysis are structured into an in-depth narrative outlining conflict dynamics, structural barriers, and transformation potential through mediator interventions. **Data Visualization** Flow diagrams and conceptual models are developed to illustrate the relationships between themes. This visualization technique supports holistic data interpretation, as seen in studies published in *Organization Studies*. **Critical Discussion** The analysis results are presented with a critical discussion that integrates field findings with theoretical frameworks from the literature review, offering both theoretical contributions and practical implications for industrial relations conflict resolution policies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Findings in Central Java

1.1 Respondent Profile and Local Context

This study was specifically conducted in Central Java, a region known for its intense industrial relations dynamics, particularly in industrial cities such as Semarang, Surakarta, and Magelang. A total of 25 key informants—comprising employers, labor union representatives, professional mediators, and officials from the Central Java Department of Manpower—were selected using purposive sampling methodology. Primary data were obtained through 20 in-depth interviews and 10 participatory observation sessions at various dispute resolution locations within industrial zones and government offices. Secondary data were collected from regional documents and annual reports published by the Central Java Department of Manpower and related institutions.

1.2 Key Findings from Interviews and Observations

Qualitative data analysis from interviews and observations revealed three main themes:

- **Procedural and Interpretative Barriers at the Local Level:**

Respondents indicated that diverse interpretations of Law No. 2 of 2004 led to inconsistencies in the implementation of mediation and arbitration mechanisms. A mediator in Semarang stated,

"The lack of clarity in operational guidelines and differing perceptions of regulations are major obstacles in the field." (Informant 5, 2022)

- **Communication Gaps and Inadequate Transparency:**

Observations documented that information flow among stakeholders was highly limited, leading to miscommunication and distrust. This finding aligns with Wall, Stark, and Cain (2016), who argue that effective communication is crucial for reducing conflicts.

- **Transformational Potential Through a Holistic Approach:**

Most respondents acknowledged that adopting a prophetic-based conflict management model—integrating ethical values, spirituality, and digital technology—had enhanced mediation effectiveness, particularly by facilitating interpersonal relationship recovery and increasing trust. A business owner in Surakarta stated,

"A mediation approach that prioritizes humanistic values makes the conflict resolution process much more constructive." (Informant 12, 2022)

1.3 Findings from Regional Document Analysis

An analysis of official documents sourced from the annual reports of the Central Java Department of Manpower revealed that the formal conflict resolution rate in the region averaged 80.2%. The data also indicated significant disparities between major cities and rural areas.

Table 1. Conflict Resolution Statistics in Various Cities in Central Java

City	Number of Cases	Resolved (%)	Unresolved (%)
Semarang	500	80	20
Surakarta	300	78	22
Magelang	150	82	18
Others	50	76	24
Total	1000	80.2	19.8

Source: Annual Report of the Central Java Department of Manpower (2021)

2. Specific Discussion on Central Java

2.1 Aligning Local Findings with Theoretical Frameworks

Findings in Central Java reinforce Rahim's (2016) theoretical framework, particularly regarding the role of justice perception and trust in conflict resolution. In this region, differences in regulatory interpretation between large corporations and SMEs add complexity to conflict resolution, which cannot be fully addressed through formal mechanisms. The *win-win* negotiation approach proposed by Fisher, Ury, and Patton (2011) is relevant. However, in practice, emotional factors and local context require adjustments to make resolution methods more inclusive and contextual.

2.2 Digital Technology and Holistic Approaches in Central Java

The integration of digital technology in Central Java, though still in its early stages, has demonstrated positive impacts. The findings of Fu and Bai (2020) and Chen and Huang (2017) suggest that digital platforms enhance transparency and information access, which also applies to many companies in Semarang's industrial zones. However, this study critiques that technology adoption remains uneven, especially in rural areas. Therefore, policies supporting comprehensive digital transformation integrated with local humanistic approaches are necessary.

2.3 Transformational Leadership and Communication Innovation

Leadership in large companies in Central Java, as examined by Anderson & Sun (2017) and Yukl (2018), plays a strategic role in fostering a collaborative conflict resolution culture. In practice,

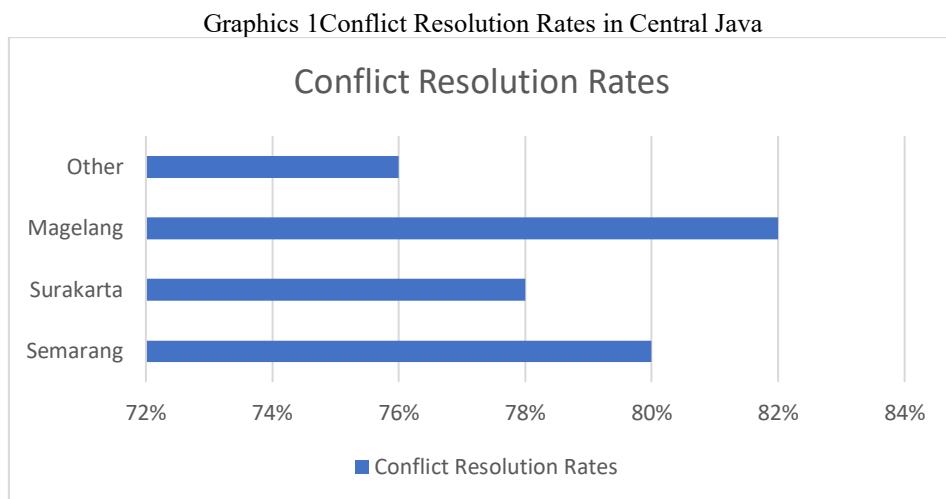
mediators and organizational leaders who apply transformational leadership styles are more successful in mitigating conflict accumulation through open dialogue and active participation. This has been evident in the increased resolution rate in companies implementing such approaches, although consistency across the region remains a challenge.

2.4 Practical Implications for Regional Policy

Based on findings in Central Java, several practical recommendations are relevant for conflict resolution policy:

- **Strengthening Local Mediator Capacity:**
Intensive training programs covering digital techniques and humanistic approaches should be conducted to improve mediation quality at all levels, particularly in rural areas.
- **Implementation of Regional Digital Platforms:**
The use of technology to facilitate transparent and participatory communication should be encouraged through government investment, given the advantages of digital technology in overcoming geographical barriers.
- **Reformulation and Standardization of Regional Regulations:**
There is a need to adjust conflict resolution regulations to accommodate the specific dynamics of Central Java, ensuring a more consistent interpretation across all areas.

2.1 Histogram of Conflict Resolution Rates



Source: Data from the Annual Report of the Central Java Department of Manpower, 2021

2.2 Flowchart of Regional Conflict Resolution Process

The following diagram illustrates the conflict resolution process in Central Java, from case submission to final resolution:

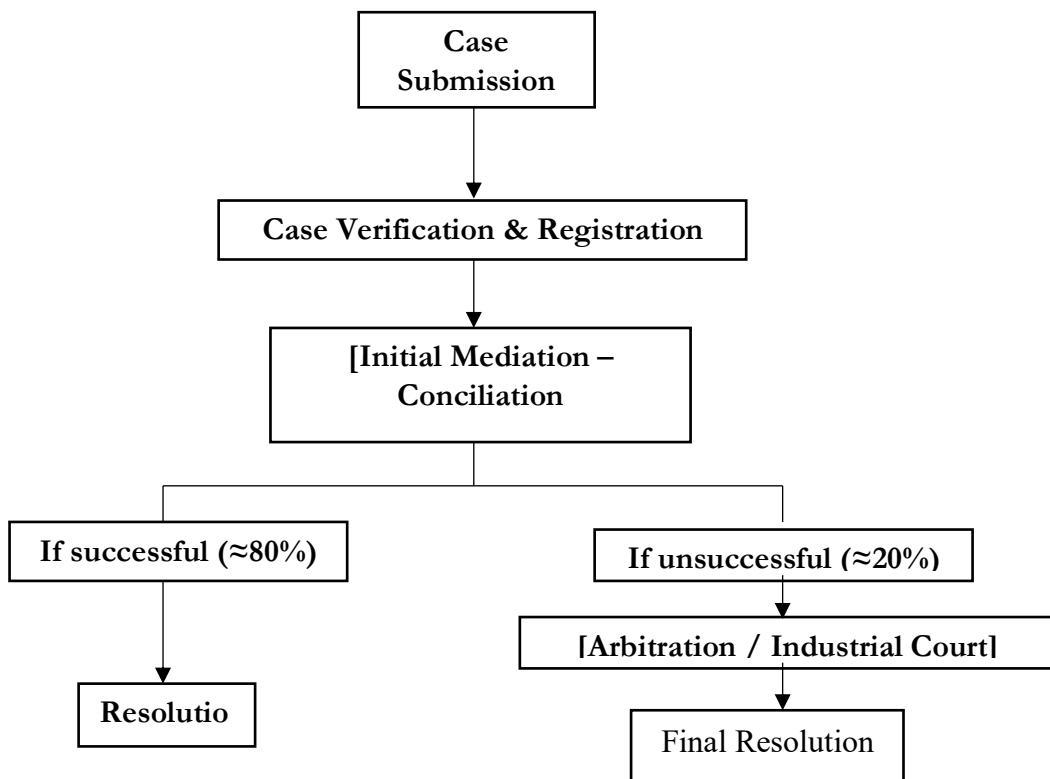


Figure 2 Conflict resolution process

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that conflict resolution in industrial relations in Central Java faces several structural and interpretative challenges, particularly influenced by contextual differences between urban and rural areas. The findings indicate that:

- Procedural and Interpretative Barriers:
Variations in the interpretation of Law No. 2 of 2004 have led to inconsistencies in the implementation of mediation and arbitration mechanisms. The differences between the modern industrial sector in Semarang and micro-enterprises in rural areas pose significant obstacles to conflict resolution.
- Communication Gaps and Lack of Transparency:
There is a disintegration of information flow among stakeholders, resulting in miscommunication and declining trust between disputing parties. Empirical data and field findings support the view that open communication is a key element in achieving fair and efficient conflict resolution.
- Transformational Potential Through a Holistic Approach:
The integration of ethical values, spirituality, and digital technology—referred to as the prophetic-based conflict management model—has shown potential in enhancing mediation effectiveness. Although the adoption of digital technology remains uneven, it has proven to support transparency and accelerate communication, facilitating more constructive dialogue.
- The Role of Transformational Leadership:

Leadership that articulates a shared vision and applies an inclusive leadership style plays a crucial role in reducing tensions and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. Leaders who implement a transformational approach act as catalysts in optimizing conflict resolution through active participation and open dialogue.

- Regional Implications and Policy Recommendations:

The study offers strategic recommendations for stakeholders in Central Java, including:

- (a) Enhancing the capacity of local mediators through intensive training covering digital and humanistic aspects,
- (b) Developing an integrated digital mediation platform, and
- (c) Reforming conflict resolution regulations to ensure consistent implementation across the region.

Overall, this study emphasizes that industrial relations conflict resolution cannot rely solely on formal approaches. An integrative approach—combining legal, psychological, ethical, and digital aspects—has been shown to provide a more holistic and adaptive solution to current conflict dynamics. While geographical and methodological limitations necessitate further research using a mixed-method approach or longitudinal analysis, the theoretical and practical contributions of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for improving conflict resolution policies at both regional and global levels.

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