



Typology and Resolution of Core-Plasma Partnership Conflict in Shrimp Farming

Volume 16 Issue 1 (April ,
2025)
e-ISSN 2716-5191 doi:
10.30997/jsh.v16i1.19866

Flora Meliana Siahaan¹ Amalliah²

¹ Program Department of Communication, Universitas
Bina Sarana Informatika

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 18- 06-2025

Revised version received: 19-06-2025

Accepted: 20-06-2025

Available online: 23-06-2025

Keywords:

Partnership conflict; Core-plasma;
Dipasena; Conflict communication;
Conflict resolution; Community
empowerment .

How to Cite:

APA Style 7th

Corresponding Author:

Aisya Aqilah

aisya.23378@mhs.unesa.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The core-plasma partnership conflict between companies and shrimp farmers in Bumi Dipasena, Lampung, represents the complex socio-economic dynamics within the fisheries sector. This study aims to identify the root causes of the conflict and map out the typology of the resolution strategies that have been applied. Using a literature review approach, the analysis focuses on aspects of power relations, transparency, and government intervention. The findings indicate that the conflict was triggered by breaches of agreement, lack of corporate accountability, and unequal access to resources. The typology of resolution includes legal approaches, mediation, and community empowerment efforts through shrimp farmers' organizations. This study highlights the importance of conflict communication and multi-actor engagement in achieving fair and sustainable resolution.



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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Humans, as inherently social beings who are constantly engaged in interaction, are inseparable from the phenomenon of conflict. Conflict consistently colors human life. Indonesian society, being highly heterogeneous comprising various ethnicities, religions, languages, and traditions (Mayopu, 2012), naturally results in diverse styles and approaches to communication depending on one's context. Conflict manifests in numerous domains, from interpersonal relationships, families, neighbors, peer groups, organizations, and institutions, to broader societal, national, and even international relations. According to Oetzel & Ting-Toomey (John G. Oetzel 2013) and Littlejohn & Foss (Foss 2022), conflict can be categorized into four main contexts: interpersonal conflict, organizational conflict, community conflict, and intercultural/international conflict.

Karl Marx defined conflict as "class struggle," representing structural tensions within society (Kinseng 2007). Conflict ultimately leads to opposition between individuals or groups, where each perceives the other as a barrier to achieving their objectives. The conflict at Bumi Dipasena stands as one of Indonesia's most notable cases of core-plasma partnership disputes in shrimp aquaculture. Once hailed as a world-leading shrimp producer in 1995–1996 (gresnews.com 2014), the project has since experienced a prolonged and unresolved conflict between the core company and plasma farmers, drawing in stakeholders across multiple sectors, including government.

The core-plasma model began to disintegrate in 1997 when the core company failed to maintain financial transparency (gresnews.com 2014). This issue was exacerbated by the 1998 monetary crisis, which further harmed the financial standing of plasma farmers. Ideally, the core-plasma partnership should resemble the symbiotic relationship between a cell's nucleus and cytoplasm, where collaborative interaction fosters growth (Sukardi *et al.*, 2006). Similar partnership models have emerged across Indonesia, such as technology-based collaborations in freshwater fish farming in Takalar, South Sulawesi (Takalar dan Zamroni 2017), and diverse business-oriented partnerships in Bangka Belitung (Cafrina *et al.* 2022).

However, not all partnerships proceed smoothly. Breaches of agreement often lead to one-sided disadvantages and legal or social protest. Core-plasma conflicts have also surfaced in Sumatra's plantation sector, often rooted in unresolved historical land disputes. Land ownership rights and ineffective governmental policy implementation are among the most critical triggers (Sumardjo 2010). Communication is essential in social life, serving as the main tool for individual, group, organizational, and international interaction. Yet, ineffective communication stemming from misinterpretation or disagreement can often ignite conflict. Nevertheless, conflict is not inherently negative. While miscommunication can provoke disputes, effective communication also plays a pivotal role in conflict prevention, management, and resolution for mutual benefit..

1.2 Problem Formulation

This study seeks to identify and analyze the root causes of conflict in the shrimp farming sector at Bumi Dipasena and how such conflicts have been managed to serve the interests of both parties: the core company as the capital holder and the plasma group, composed of local shrimp farmers. Similar types of conflicts have occurred in other regions as well for instance, in Ban U-Mung Village, Thailand, where the local community protested against a mining company for lack of transparency and exclusion in the development process despite environmental approvals (Kilajian dan Chareonsudjai 2021). Additionally, in Japan, conflict arose between the government and residents over solar energy projects, with locals protesting the potential loss of agricultural land (Akita *et al.* 2020). These diverse conflicts demand different approaches. Akita *et al.* (2020) notes that local governments in Japan manage such conflicts by respecting community values and ethics. Conflict resolution should be wise,

fair, efficient, and preventative. Regulatory mechanisms include win-win solutions (collaborative-compromising), win-lose strategies (minimizing opposition), avoidance, and third-party interventions such as court litigation, administrative processes, and alternative dispute resolutions like mediation, arbitration, and ombudspersons (Anshori, 2013).

Thus, the core questions of this study are:

1. What are the root causes of the core-plasma conflict in shrimp farming at Bumi Dipasena, Lampung?
2. What types of conflict resolution typologies have been employed in addressing the core-plasma partnership dispute at Bumi Dipasena?

1.3 Research Objectives

Generally, this paper aims to identify and analyze the prolonged conflict in shrimp farming at Bumi Dipasena, Lampung. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Determine the root causes of the core-plasma conflict in shrimp farming at Bumi Dipasena; and
2. Analyze the typology of conflict resolution strategies employed in the case.

1.4 Theoretical Review

1.4.1 Conflict and Conflict Communication

Communication theorists view conflict as an inevitable and necessary social process. When managed well, conflict can foster creativity, cohesion, relationship development, and productivity. Recent studies favor the term “conflict management” over “conflict resolution,” as it emphasizes ongoing communication and interaction, rather than one-off episodes focused solely on content resolution (Foss 2022). Thomas and Pondy highlighted the centrality of communication in conflict management: “It is communication with which we are most concerned in understanding conflict management” (Putnam, L. L., & Poole 1987).

This study focuses on the role of communication in resolving conflicts within communities, drawing on both national and international research. Over the past three decades, communication scholars have studied social conflict, initially emphasizing diplomacy (Oliver, 1950, 1952), confrontational rhetoric ((John G. Oetzel 2013), and crisis discourse (Simons, 1969–1974). Hawes and Smith (1973) proposed three dimensions of conflict: goal, strategy, and time highlighting whether conflict is seen prospectively or retrospectively, destructively or constructively, and episodically or continuously.

Kevin Barge, using dialogic theory (Foss 2022), linked dialogue, conflict, and democratic practice through three core elements: 1) community mediation; 2) public participation and dialogue; and 3) appreciative inquiry rooted in social constructivism. Community conflict may also manifest in environmental disputes, racial/ethnic tensions, or negotiations requiring a critical approach.

2. Methods

This research uses a qualitative literature review approach, analyzing a range of secondary data sources to examine the core-plasma partnership conflict in Bumi Dipasena. Sources include scholarly articles, news archives, institutional reports, e-books, and government publications. The data is categorized thematically to uncover conflict triggers, resolution mechanisms, and the role of stakeholder communication.

The analysis focuses on three primary dimensions: (1) historical dynamics of the partnership model; (2) patterns of corporate behavior and governance; and (3) the state's role in conflict escalation and mediation. Comparative insights are drawn from similar conflicts in Southeast Asia, such as mining disputes in Thailand and energy development conflicts in Japan.

Although the study does not include primary fieldwork, its reliance on triangulated documentation provides a robust foundation for developing typological insights into conflict resolution strategies within aquaculture and rural economic development sectors.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

The study revealed that the conflict within the core-plasma partnership model in Bumi Dipasena was deeply rooted in systemic contractual violations and asymmetrical power relations between the corporate core and the shrimp-farming plasma communities. The breach of contractual obligations by the core company, initially PT Dipasena Citra Darmaja and later PT Central Proteina Prima, became a major source of friction. These breaches included a lack of financial transparency, unfulfilled promises regarding profit-sharing, and unilateral decisions in determining input and output prices, all of which contributed to an erosion of trust among the plasma farmers (Darussalam et al., 2022; Sumardjo *et al.* 2014). Over time, the situation was aggravated by structural imbalances in the relationship, wherein the company exercised dominant control over critical aspects of production and infrastructure, including the supply of shrimp fry, feed, electricity, and the marketing of shrimp (Kinseng 2007). The farmers found themselves bound by an agreement that increasingly disadvantaged them, as they were held responsible for debts that failed to diminish despite regular deductions from their harvests.

The 1998 Asian financial crisis further exacerbated the problem, with the company citing the crisis as justification for increased debt burdens. Meanwhile, the farmers insisted they had fulfilled their repayment obligations through consistent harvest contributions (gresnews.com 2014). Legal proceedings that followed tended to favor the company, reinforcing the perception of injustice among the farmers and intensifying the conflict. Government intervention, although present, was often delayed and insufficient. Initial inaction allowed the conflict to escalate, and when responses finally came in the form of asset takeovers, conflict evaluations, and electricity reconnections they arrived only after significant losses had been incurred by the farming community (Kilajian dan Chareonsudjai 2021).

In the absence of sustainable solutions from the core company, the plasma farmers took collective action by forming the Association of Shrimp Farmers of Lampung (P3UWL). This grassroots organization played a crucial role in initiating independent shrimp farming, coordinating cooperative efforts in procurement and marketing, and revitalizing shrimp ponds using community-driven resources and support from local governments (Gyan dan Ampomah 2016). The findings also underscore the multifaceted nature of the conflict, which extended beyond a simple dyadic tension between company and farmers. It encompassed legal institutions, government agencies, human rights bodies, financial institutions, and even state-owned utility companies. As such, the conflict at Bumi Dipasena illustrates the importance of a multi-actor, collaborative approach in resolving agribusiness disputes.

3.2 Discussion

This study has examined the typology and resolution of the protracted core-plasma conflict in the shrimp farming sector of Bumi Dipasena, Lampung. The findings demonstrate that the conflict emerged primarily due to breaches of partnership agreements, power asymmetries between corporate actors and smallholder farmers, lack of transparency, and weak institutional safeguards (Sumardjo *et al.* 2014; Kinseng 2007). What began as an economically promising aquaculture venture devolved into a long-standing crisis marked by legal disputes, unmet obligations, and social unrest (Darussalam *et al.*, 2022).

The complexity of the conflict was intensified by overlapping layers of stakeholder involvement including private corporations, national and local governments, financial institutions, state-owned enterprises, and civil society actors each with varying interests, capacities, and degrees of accountability (Kilajian dan Chareonsudjai 2021; Gyan dan Ampomah 2016). While early governmental intervention was inadequate, subsequent efforts such as asset restructuring and human rights investigations—highlight the potential for more robust, state-facilitated conflict resolution mechanisms.

Importantly, this case illustrates that in the absence of equitable structural arrangements and reliable legal protections, grassroots community empowerment becomes not only a survival strategy but also a transformative force. The formation of the Shrimp Farmers Association of Lampung (P3UWL) reflects a collective response to institutional failure, enabling the reorganization of production systems, access to financing, and reintegration into value chains on more autonomous terms (Cheney et al., 2013). The case aligns with conflict communication theory, which views conflict not merely as episodic but as a continuous and socially constructed process (Foss 2022; Putnam & Poole 1987). Communication failures in the Bumi Dipasena case were not neutral; they shaped perceptions, reinforced power imbalances, and influenced outcomes over time. This is consistent with Oetzel and Ting-Toomey's (Oetzel 2013) assertion that cultural, structural, and discursive dynamics interact to sustain prolonged community-based conflict.

In sum, the Bumi Dipasena case underscores the need for sustained multi-actor engagement, inclusive policy frameworks, and participatory conflict communication to restore justice, rebuild trust, and ensure sustainable aquaculture governance (Sumardjo *et al.* 2014). Future partnerships in the agri-aquaculture sector must prioritize transparency, shared decision-making, and long-term socio-economic resilience to prevent similar failures from recurring.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the prolonged conflict between core corporations and shrimp farmers in Bumi Dipasena stemmed from systemic violations of partnership principles, power imbalances, and the failure of institutional accountability. Legal and policy mechanisms were either absent or reactive, allowing the conflict to escalate and become deeply entrenched (Kilajian dan Chareonsudjai 2021; Darussalam et al., 2022). The findings support the view that community-led responses, such as the formation of P3UWL, can serve as viable pathways for recovering agency, rebuilding production, and restoring local economies (Gyan dan Ampomah 2016). This reinforces the perspective of conflict transformation theory, which emphasizes the importance of moving beyond surface-level dispute resolution to address deeper structural injustices and promote sustainable, just systems (Foss 2022).

Thus, the Bumi Dipasena case not only offers a vivid example of agribusiness conflict, but also a critical lesson on the role of participatory communication, equitable governance, and multisectoral collaboration in conflict prevention and long-term resilience (Oetzel 2013; Sumardjo *et al.* 2014)

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express their sincere appreciation to the shrimp-farming communities of Bumi Dipasena for their invaluable contributions, resilience, and insights that greatly informed the development of this study. Special thanks are extended to the members of the Association of Shrimp Farmers of Lampung (P3UWL) for their cooperation and willingness to share their lived experiences regarding the ongoing partnership challenges.

The authors are also grateful to the researchers, practitioners, and civil society actors who have contributed knowledge, dialogue, and critical perspectives on community-based conflict resolution. Their work has significantly enriched the conceptual and analytical foundations of this paper.

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