

## Conflict management in Indonesian football: insights from RMIFA Bandung Club

Muhammad Irsan Mubarak Ismail<sup>\*)</sup>, Dasrun Hidayat,  
Reza Rizkina Taufik

*Faculty of Communication and Design, Universitas Adhirajasa Reswara Sanjaya  
1 Terusan Sekolah Street, Cicaheum, Bandung*

Email: ismailirsan9@gmail.com, Phone: +62 22 7100124

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**Abstract** Conflicts within football teams often arise due to performance pressure, unbalanced expectations, and communication gaps between players. This study explores how these conflicts are understood and managed in the context of Indonesian national football, utilising the perspectives of professionals at clubs based in Bandung. Based on Conflict Management Theory and Organisational Communication Theory, this study focused on three main questions: how practitioners interpret tensions between local and foreign players, how they assess the fairness and clarity of PSSI player selection practices, and which approaches they believe are most effective for strengthening team cohesion and public trust. Data were collected and obtained through semi-structured interviews with coaches, former national players, and senior football figures, using a qualitative descriptive design. The research findings highlight that consistent communication, transparent evaluation criteria, and performance-based data integration are essential to prevent conflict escalation. Clear information flow and systematic use of metrics support perceptions of fairness, while structured mediation helps restore harmony when disputes arise. This study makes a theoretical contribution by demonstrating how transparency and evidence-based decision-making strengthen organisational legitimacy and help stabilise group dynamics in professional sports teams.

**Keywords:** conflict management; communication transparency; organisational legitimacy; team cohesion

### INTRODUCTION

Sports teams inevitably face conflict, especially in highly competitive environments where players have diverse cultural backgrounds, expectations, and professional experiences. When tensions between team members clash with differing interests, conflict arises. Constructive conflict can improve organisational performance effectiveness (Cader 2017). However, conflicts that are not managed properly can damage trust between individuals, disrupt team cohesion, and reduce performance. These challenges are even more acute in multicultural teams, where cultural norms and communication styles vary greatly. As mentioned by Filayly, T. N., & Ruliana (2022), trust plays a crucial role in determining how conflicts are processed, Setyaningum and Anwar (2016), highlight that higher levels of team trust support the development of more effective performance strategies. The Indonesian national team, which has recently attracted public attention regarding fairness and transparency in team management, particularly in relation to the integration of local and foreign-born players, reflects these issues.

<sup>\*)</sup>Corresponding Author

The discussion about players such as Kevin Diks is an example of how coaching staff decisions can cause widespread public dissatisfaction. Motions like #BubarkanPSSI, analysis by Sihombing (2021), show that digital public pressure plays a significant role in shaping the narrative about the legitimacy of decisions within the Indonesian Football Association (PSSI). Their Social Network Analysis findings indicate that public opinion has become a powerful force capable of influencing perceptions about the organisation's fairness and transparency.

This study did not conduct direct interviews with members of the national team to investigate the issue empirically. Instead, this focused on professionals associated with a football club based in Bandung, who were selected for their expertise, experience and direct involvement in player development, team cohesion and national football governance. The club provides an external perspective on the dynamics of conflict within the Indonesian national team, particularly in relation to how players communicate, how they build trust, and how they perceive fairness in player selection. Their professional insights provide a deep understanding of how local football stakeholders view disputes and evaluate the transparency of the Indonesian Football Association's (PSSI) decision-making procedures.

Previous studies have examined communication in sports organisations, team cohesion, and supporter movements as separate phenomena. However, empirical research linking conflict management, public communication, and perceptions of fairness within the Indonesian national football team remains limited. Existing literature rarely explores how external practitioners, such as club-level professionals, interpret national-level conflicts. This study addresses this gap by integrating organisational communication theory and conflict management theory to examine how informed stakeholders perceive conflict within Indonesian National Teams. Prior research emphasises that transparent information sharing, clear player evaluation standards, and data-driven decision-making are essential for maintaining stakeholder trust (Firsty Aufirandra, Bunga Adelya 2017). Zuhri Karimulloh, Rakel, Juliza (2024) and Valdy Alfrido Hasibuan et al. (2024) stressed that sharing information openly, having clear standards for judging players, and making decisions based on data are all important for keeping the trust of stakeholders. When selection processes are not clear, fans often think that the choices are unfair or based on personal preference. Stress that sharing information openly, having clear standards for judging players, and making decisions based on data are all important for keeping the trust of stakeholders.

When the selection process is unclear, fans often assume that the choices are unfair or based on personal preferences. (Abduh 2020). A team will work better together if its members can communicate with each other, resolve differences of opinion, and be honest in the player selection process. This is very important for athletes to stay focused and motivated during competition (Nurhayuni, Syaifudin, and Andriani 2023). Conflict management, then, includes the ways that people or groups talk to each other and work out their differences (Dini Vientianty, Fildza Rasiqah, and Nadiyah Mawaddah 2024). As emphasised by Fauzan Ahmad Siregar and Lailatul Usriyah (2021) effective communication is essential for attaining organisational objectives in the sports sector.

Although these topics are important, there is not much academic discussion about crisis communication and operational conflict management in Indonesian sport. Research on organisations such as FIFA is also limited, making it difficult to know how national organisations should communicate with each other when controversies or perceived injustices arise to fill this gap, this study uses Conflict Management Theory and Organisational Communication Theory as the main approaches in analysing the problem. This study focuses on the following questions: a) How do football practitioners from clubs based in Bandung view the conflict within the Indonesian national team, particularly between local players and those born overseas? b) How do they evaluate the transparency and communication practices of PSSI regarding player selection and fairness? c) What conflict management approaches are considered effective for improving team cohesion and stakeholder trust in Indonesian football?

The objective of this research corresponds with the necessity for enhanced communication strategies within sports organisations. Although, Rusandi et al. (2025) emphasised that participation in sports can develop essential leadership qualities, and this study focused on a specific aspect: the role of communication and public relations in restoring the legitimacy of organisations after conflict, particularly in relation to the Indonesian national football team. This study integrated the views of a football club based in Bandung to evaluate the effectiveness of communication strategies, transparency practices, and conflict management techniques in

resolving disputes related to player selection, public trust, and perceptions of fairness between local and foreign players. Ultimately, better communication and improved conflict management can foster better teamwork, increase fan confidence, and make national football governance more credible and effective.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. According to Haryono (2023), qualitative methods emphasise meaning, experience, and the subjective understanding of research participants in relation to a particular phenomenon. This approach was selected to explore the experiences, perspectives, and perceptions of players, coaches, and team management regarding conflict and its resolution within football teams (Sinaga and Lubis 2024). By prioritising in-depth interpretation rather than numerical measurement, this method allowed for a comprehensive understanding of interpersonal dynamics and communication practices in sports organisations.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique that deliberately identifies informants based on specific characteristics, experiences, and insights relevant to the research objectives (Abduh, 2020). Through this method, eight informants were recruited and interviewed. Semi-structured interview questions were employed to facilitate open discussion while ensuring that responses remained aligned with the research focus on conflict management within football teams.

Table 1 presents the profiles of the informants, who represent credible sources with close involvement in player development and organisational management at RMIFA. Coaches Firman, Risman, and Ronald (A1, A2, A3) are directly responsible for training and mentoring young players within the academy. Surya (A4), as chairman of the foundation, oversees the organisational and managerial operations of RMIFA.

Former Liga 1 PSSI player and match commissioner Fandi Ahmad (A5) contributes professional insights into football governance and competition management. In addition, two prominent former players, Ajat Sudrajat (A6), a former Persib and Indonesian national team player, and Deni Samsudin (A7), a former Persib player, provide historical and contemporary perspectives on team dynamics, player relations, and conflict situations within professional football environments. Although they have different roles, these seven informants have extensive knowledge, experience and involvement in Indonesian football, making them relevant sources for analysing how local football practitioners view conflict management issues relating to local and foreign players in the context of the national team.

**Table 1.** Informants Backgrounds

No	Initial	Age	Gender	Informant code	Description
1	FN	31	Male	A1	Coach (R MIFA)
2	RN	30	Male	A2	Coach (R MIFA)
3	RD	29	Male	A3	Coach (R MIFA)
4	SA	46	Male	A4	Chairman of the Foundation (R MIFA)
5	FD	39	Male	A5	Former professional player and Match Commissioner for the Indonesian top-tier football league (PSSI Liga 1).
6	AS	63	Male	A6	Former player for the Indonesian National Team and Persib Bandung (a prominent professional club in the Indonesian league).
7	DS	58	Male	A7	Former Persib Player

Source: Primary data (2025)

Seven informants affiliated with RMIFA, a football academy in Bandung with connections to former professional and national-level players, participated in this study. The informants included coaches responsible for youth development, a foundation chairman overseeing organisational operations, former Liga 1 players, and individuals with experience in national team environments. Although the participants are not current members of the national team, their professional backgrounds enable them to provide credible insights into the dynamics between local and foreign players at the national team level. Their experience in coaching, player development, club-level competition, and the national football environment makes them a relevant source for understanding how conflicts arise, how they are managed, and how

communication plays a role in maintaining team cohesion. This approach aligns with Mastromartino et al. (2020), which emphasises that the perspectives of practitioners involved in a team, such as coaches, former players, and football institutions, provide valuable insights into trust, loyalty, and public interpretation of team policies.

The main focus of this study is how internal conflicts within sports teams are managed effectively, particularly through open communication, transparency in player selection, and the implementation of a fair rotation system so that every player has the same opportunity. The main data collection method used in this study is in-depth interviews. Interviews are often used in management research because of their ability to collect subjective data, including opinions, attitudes, and interpretations of behaviour related to the phenomenon being studied.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded using audio devices with the informed consent of the participants. In certain cases, interviews were conducted via online chat platforms to accommodate informant availability. The data analysis process was carried out through several stages of data processing (Walzel, Stefan, Jonathan Robertson 2018). First, data reduction was undertaken by summarising interview transcripts and organising relevant responses according to the research questions. Second, data were presented by restructuring key interview points to highlight patterns and thematic relationships. Third, conclusions were drawn by identifying keywords and recurring concepts that reflected significant findings. Finally, a conceptual flowchart was developed to visually represent the relationships between themes and support systematic discussion of the results (Kim, Byon, and Choi 2020).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Conflict management in sports teams**

Conflict management is regarded as a crucial factor influencing player maturity, interpersonal relationships, and collective motivation within sports teams (Sania et al. 2025). Team leaders often function as neutral mediators who identify sources of conflict and facilitate safe environments for open communication. Through this process, players develop a greater appreciation for differing perspectives and cultivate mutual respect, which strengthens supportive relationships among team members. Such environments enhance collaboration and sustain motivation towards shared team objectives. Moreover, healthy competition can promote constructive communication and reinforce commitment to team performance.

A1, a coach at RMIFA explained during an interview that young athletes often enrol in football or futsal programmes for various personal reasons. He claimed that many players participate because they genuinely love the sport and consider training a useful way to spend their free time. As he said:

“Many of our young athletes sign up because they enjoy the sport and want to use their free time for something worthwhile” (Informant Interview: A1, 9 January 2025)

This statement indicates that coaches view young athletes' participation as being driven more by intrinsic motivation than external pressure. The football and futsal training environment not only provides opportunities for physical development, but also for the formation of teamwork, discipline and cooperative skills. This environment serves as a social space where athletes learn interpersonal communication alongside technical skills.

Nevertheless, interpersonal issues occasionally arise within the team and may hinder performance. One form of conflict reported by informants involves indirect communication and passive-aggressive behaviour. As noted by one coach:

“There are teammates who, when someone makes a mistake during training, discuss it indirectly rather than addressing the issue openly.” (Informant interview: A2, 9 January 2025)

This pattern reflects ineffective communication practices, where criticism is conveyed indirectly rather than through transparent and constructive dialogue. Such communication styles contribute to misunderstanding and may escalate interpersonal tension within the team. Coaches at RMIFA further reported that perceived unfairness in playing-time allocation often generates internal tension. Ronald explained that athletes who consistently attend training sessions may experience frustration when they are not given sufficient opportunities to participate in matches. As he stated:

"Despite training regularly, some players feel they are not given adequate opportunities to play." (Informant interview: Ronald, 9 January 2025)

The foundation's chairman, Surya, noted that players' discipline can be affected by this sense of injustice. According to him, a decline in motivation can sometimes be seen in behaviour changes, such as tardiness or reduced attendance at training sessions:

"As a result, they occasionally start arriving late or even skip practice." (Informant interview: Surya, 9 January 2025)

These internal tensions also influence overall team interaction. According to former professional player Fandi Ahmad, strained relationships reduce communication and create an uncomfortable training atmosphere:

"During training sessions, players may withdraw from communication, resulting in a tense environment." (Informant Interview: Fandi Ahmad, 9 January 2025)

Young athletes generally enrol in football or futsal programmes because they enjoy the sport and want to use their free time for meaningful activities, according to observations made by coaches and foundation leaders at RMIFA. According to the sources, player involvement is driven more by internal factors than external pressure. They stated that during training, futsal provides a platform for players to express themselves and develop social and teamwork skills.

Findings from the interviews indicate that young athletes generally participate in football programmes due to personal interest and intrinsic motivation. However, conflicts emerge when communication is indirect, playing opportunities are perceived as unfair, and transparency is lacking. Passive-aggressive communication and unresolved dissatisfaction negatively affect team atmosphere, discipline, and performance.

These findings suggest that ineffective communication and perceived inequity contribute to decreased morale and reduced team performance. When internal conflicts are not addressed openly, trust deteriorates, and cooperation among players weakens, ultimately undermining collective objectives. (Purwaningtyas, Berto, and Murwani 2023).

This situation indicates that within a group, differences in perceptions and expectations can be a source of tension if not managed properly. An approach that emphasises honest communication and finding solutions together has been proven to help reduce differences and strengthen teamwork. From this, it can be seen that conflict within sports teams is something that commonly occurs. The most important thing is how the conflict is managed properly, so that it not only helps resolve problems, but also develops the emotional maturity and interpersonal skills of the players. So, conflict between members of school futsal teams is not only a problem, but also a chance for them to work on their capacity to control their emotions, talk effectively, and settle differences in a good way.

### **Openness in player selection: building team harmony and trust**

Transparency in player selection is a fundamental component in maintaining the integrity of national sports teams (Da'i et al. 2024). When selection processes are conducted openly, objectively, and based on reliable performance data, public trust and institutional credibility are strengthened. Conversely, opaque or subjective selection practices may undermine team performance and erode public confidence (Andika Sanjaya 2018).

Research conducted by Costa et al. (2025) demonstrates that organisational trust in sports institutions is closely associated with governance quality, accountability mechanisms, and transparency in information dissemination. Their review highlights that open communication practices are essential for fostering legitimacy and sustaining stakeholder confidence in sports organisations. In addition, Dochevska (2022) further explains that transparency within sports organisations may be enhanced through public financial reporting, clearly articulated leadership structures, and consistent communication strategies. These practices enable stakeholders to monitor organisational activities and ensure accountability in player selection and decision-making processes.

Studies examining coaching decision-making processes indicate that player selection is influenced not only by technical performance metrics but also by psychological considerations, tactical requirements, and team cohesion (Fiander et al. 2023). Consequently, transparency in evaluation criteria and decision-making rationales is essential to ensure fairness and reduce perceptions of bias. The results show that when making decisions, people look at more than just numbers or how well something works technically. They also think about how people feel, the strategies used, and how well team members get along. As a result, it's critical to be transparent about the decision-making process and the evaluation of individuals. This ensures that the procedure is equitable and that everyone is aware of the rationale behind decisions. Emphasise that intuitive judgement, coaching philosophy, and contextual factors may significantly influence selection outcomes. In addition to physical performance indicators, external pressures and situational constraints often shape final decisions. Transparent communication regarding selection criteria, therefore plays a critical role in ensuring accountability and public understanding.

A study on the selection of players was also published in *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* by Cheng, K. H., Li, H. J., & Zhou (2024). Findings from the interviews reveal that practitioners strongly support the use of performance data to enhance objectivity in player selection. Informants acknowledged, however, that statistical data must be interpreted within tactical contexts and aligned with team strategies. Without adequate explanation, data-driven decisions may be misinterpreted by the public and perceived as unfair. Also, this group made better decisions on the field, stayed more alert, and had less of a habit of putting things off or passing blame to others.

Furthermore, Cheng, K. H., Li, H. J., & Zhou (2024) suggest that using a systematic approach that encompasses tactical and mental aspects can help simplify the decision-making process. By establishing clear criteria, such as evaluating a player's technical abilities and mental strength, coaches can make more informed, fair, and judicious decisions when selecting players. To gain a clearer understanding of how players are selected and how data is applied in football, researchers interviewed several individuals actively involved in the sports industry. Their insights provided a deeper understanding of how decisions are made on the pitch, as well as the challenges of maintaining public trust and ensuring unity within the team.

"In my opinion, technology in football is now very important because it can provide accurate data, such as how far a player runs. This is incredibly helpful for figuring out how well someone is doing. But it's usual for coaches and fans to disagree. A player who is popular with the public may not necessarily suit the coach's needs." (Firman, Interview, 9 January 2025)

Firman emphasised that technology could provide real data that is very useful for coaches in assessing players' abilities. However, he also acknowledged that differences of opinion between the public and coaches are normal. Therefore, according to him, transparency of information can serve as a bridge to reduce misunderstandings.

"Statistics are important, but the data must also be viewed in context. A player may have good numbers, but they may not fit with the team's strategy. If it is not explained to the public, misunderstandings may arise." (Risfan, Interview, 9 January 2025)

For Risfan, data is important, but it should not be the only reference. He emphasises that the figures must be understood in the context of the team's overall needs. Without adequate explanation, the public may perceive the selection process as unfair.

"If we use data, it will be fairer. Unclear assumptions can be avoided, and the selection process will be more objective." (Ronald, Interview, 9 January 2025)

Ronald believes that the use of data can reduce bias and false assumptions. In addition, everyone will feel that the selection process is more open and acceptable. Player selection should not only depend on their technical abilities.

"Additionally, you should see if they can lead and work well with others. In actuality, some players may not be a suitable fit for the team's needs, despite the belief that they are selected out of favouritism." (Surya, Interview, 9 January 2025)

Surya clarified that in addition to evaluating players abilities, it's critical to take into account their leadership potential and compatibility with the team's culture.

"Although statistics are useful, they shouldn't be the exclusive source of information. How important it is to consider the attitude of the players personalities, as well as how prepared they are." (Fandi Ahmad, Interview, 9 January 2025)

Fandi stressed the need for a more detailed and careful method when choosing players. A player's mental attitude and character, in addition to their physical abilities, determine whether they are worthy of joining the team. Transparency in the player selection process is very important to maintain trust and harmony within the team, according to two senior figures: former Persib player Deni Samsudin and Persib legend Ajat Sudrajat. Fairness in the selection process is directly related to public trust, according to Ajat Sudrajat.

"It might become an issue if the general public starts to believe that player selection is unfair. Their confidence may decline, which would have an effect on the team environment." (Ajat Sudrajat, Interview, 10 January 2025)

Ajat went on to say that team stability and performance are impacted by supporter trust, which is not just emotional. Both players and supporters demonstrate greater dedication when selection is perceived as equitable. In a similar vein, Deni Samsudin emphasised that players' confidence and motivation are frequently impacted by fans' reactions. Deni went on to say that unfair or unclear decisions can make players who feel left out and fans who expect merit-based selection angry.

"Support from fans is very important. Players are more likely to be motivated if they know they're being chosen for their skills and not for other reasons." (Deni Samsudin, Interview, 10 January 2025)

"Choosing a player just because they are popular can make things seem unfair. Supporters can become unhappy and stop supporting you." (Deni Samsudin, Interview, 10 January 2025)

As mentioned in the interview, data is crucial in decision-making in football, for example, in determining which players to include in the team. Firman and Ronald, both of whom are sources, said that data provides an objective view and helps coaches see how well players are performing. However, they also emphasised that numbers alone may not tell the whole story, especially if they do not take into account how a player feels or how they perform during a match. Risfan and Surya emphasised the importance of communication between coaches and the general public. If coaches do not provide clear explanations for their decisions, fans may assume that certain players are receiving special treatment. To ensure that supporters understand the reasons behind these decisions, it is essential to be honest and transparent.

Ajat Sudrajat and Deni Samsudin believe that a player's confidence can also be affected by external pressure, especially from fans and the media. Players and supporters may lose confidence in the national team if they feel that the selection process is unfair. Ajat emphasises that although performance data is very important, it should not be the only consideration when evaluating players. Deni, on the other hand, emphasises the importance of a more comprehensive strategy that takes into account discipline, mindset, and the player's contribution to team cohesion.

Overall, transparency in player selection extends beyond data disclosure. It requires clear, consistent, and accessible communication that enables stakeholders to understand the rationale behind decisions. Such practices contribute to team stability, enhance public confidence, and support the long-term legitimacy of national football governance.

### **Cultural values: key approaches to conflict resolution in football teams**

Conflicts within sports teams are inevitable and play a significant role in shaping team dynamics and performance (Faqih, M. F., Firmansyah, M. A., Sari, E. V., Interpersonal, K., & Pemain 2025). Effective conflict management promotes role clarity, trust, and cooperation, particularly in culturally diverse teams where communication styles and expectations may differ (Fauzan Ahmad Siregar and Lailatul Usriyah 2021).

If conflicts are not managed properly, it can damage team spirit, impact how effectively the team works together, and lead to issues between team members (Sukmana, Teja I. W., Putra, P. S. E., Mertayasa, I. G. A., & Edy 2025). Cultural values also influence perceptions of fairness and approaches to conflict resolution. Costa et al. (2025) demonstrate that values such as benevolence and universalism positively contribute to transformational leadership behaviour in sports teams. These values foster inclusivity, mutual respect, and collective responsibility. Because communication is so important for a football team to work together and deal with disagreements, it's essential for us to improve our communication skills and understand the key principles that make communication effective (Fauzan Ahmad Siregar and Lailatul Usriyah 2021).

Besides having open communication, cultural values are also important in building a fair and honest environment for selecting players. Research by Castillo, Adell, and Alvarez (2018) shows that values such as benevolence (kindness) and universalism (concern for the welfare of all people) contribute positively to transformational leadership behaviour in sports team. These values promote mutual respect, strengthen a sense of togetherness, and create an inclusive environment, especially in multicultural groups or those from different regional backgrounds. Therefore, the application of strong cultural values is an important foundation in the player selection process, which can strengthen a sense of integrity and togetherness within the team.

Furthermore, Gunkel, M., Schlaegel, C., & Taras (2016), explained that in cross-cultural studies, it is emphasised that in societies with collectivist characteristics, conflict resolution mechanisms tend to be more oriented towards compromise and integration. This differs from individualistic cultures, which prioritise confrontational conflict resolution. This culture differs from individualistic cultures, which tend to prioritise confrontational problem-solving. In addition, cultural values such as power distance and long-term time orientation also influence how individuals or groups understand fairness in the selection process, whether they prioritise hierarchy or equal accountability.

How players are chosen depends on the structure of the organisation and how information is handled and used to make decisions. Fiander et al. (2023) in a preliminary review of how athletes are selected shows that coaches make decisions based on more than just numbers. They also consider mental aspects, team game strategy, and how well players can work together. It is important to be clear about the selection rules and how players are assessed so that the selection process is fair, balanced, and supported by strong evidence.

Identity-based leadership approaches highlight the importance of cultivating a shared team identity to enhance both social and task cohesion (Stephen, S. A., Reicher, S., & Haslam 2023), while subgroup formation may occasionally generate internal tensions, inclusive leadership practices can mitigate divisions and strengthen collective commitment. However, this situation can occasionally cause disagreements within the team, such as between local and international players or even among the international players themselves.

Although cliques may form within teams, leaders need to be able to build a solid foundation like a family. Internal conflicts often arise from this situation, for example, between foreign players or between local and foreign players. There are usually senior individuals in each group who have a major influence on team dynamics. Leaders must therefore be able to build a family-based foundation.

Furthermore, psychological mechanisms such as identity fusion further reinforce commitment and solidarity within teams. When individual and group identities align, members demonstrate greater loyalty and willingness. The function of identity in sports teams allows people to work together without being forced to do so, because they all consider the team's success to be their own. This makes cooperation more rewarding and satisfying.

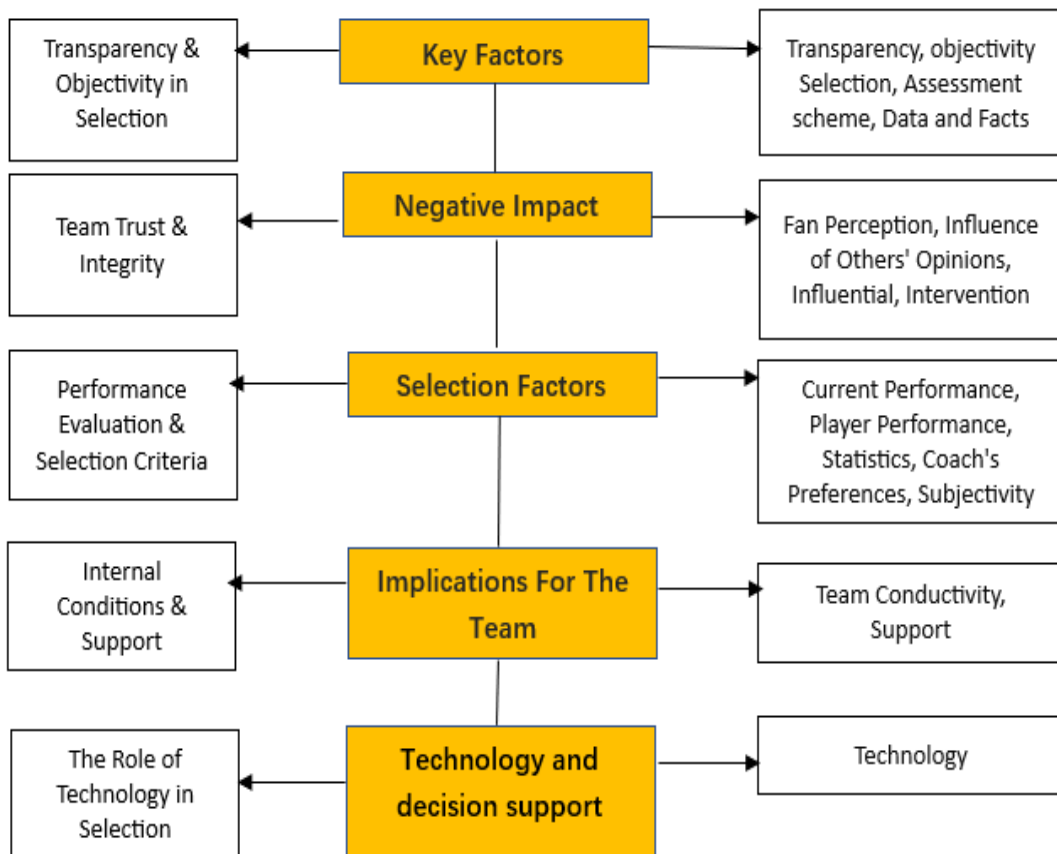
To support the creation of the above conditions, the development of interpersonal skills must be part of a structured training system. Stevens et al.'s (2024) research shows that team training sessions designed with a collaborative approach can strengthen communication, empathy, and conflict management skills in dynamic situations. These findings are based on social learning theory and group identification, which state that individuals learn from social interactions and the behavioural models of their teammates. In the long term, this approach not only shapes technical performance, but also strengthens healthy emotional relationships within the team.

When creating a training programme, you need to consider not only space but also other aspects such as age and physical condition. Older players and those with special training needs, both domestic and foreign, should be offered a programme. Performance Data as a Solution: Using objective player performance data is a strategic step to improve this situation. Having accurate data makes player selection fairer and clearer, which helps fans trust the national team more.

Trust between players is a key factor in avoiding long-term conflicts (Gandariani 2023). A loss of trust can cause conflict within a team. Therefore, the role of the coach in establishing good communication between players is very important. An effective way to improve communication is to play fun games during your training sessions. Positive interactions and good communication build trust between players and contribute to the natural resolution of conflicts (Hia, Niscaya Sihombing and & Simamora 2020).

Trust within a team is not formed quickly but must be built through establishing good relationships and maintaining open communication. When one team member disagrees with something, it can affect other team members. This shows how important it is to have open communication and to ensure that problems in the field are immediately addressed and resolved together. (Susilawati et al. 2022).

Maturity and effective team relationships also contribute to players' emotional maturity. Players learn to appreciate differences and respect each other, ensuring that relationships between team members are harmonious and that this respectful environment fosters collective motivation to achieve team goals (Mia 2023). Commitment to team integrity is essential for improving transparency, which can be interpreted as a lack of accountability in team management (Salsabila et al. 2024).



**Figure 1.** Conflict management model  
 Source: Interview results (2025)

On the other hand, if conflicts lack a clear direction or are poorly managed, they can cause mistrust among players and damage team cohesion. This condition could make the team less competitive as a whole (Muhammadiyah Jakarta Volume, U., Ichsan Cevy, A., & Noorzaman 2020). Therefore, coaches and team managers need to handle conflicts wisely in order to turn them into motivation for players, create a healthy competitive environment, and strengthen team strategy and cohesion. Based on findings from research discussions examining how conflict affects team performance and the strategies used to overcome it, data were collected through interviews and observations, as shown in the flow chart presented in Figure 1.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that effective conflict management, transparent player selection, and the strategic use of performance data are essential for maintaining trust, cohesion, and professionalism within football teams. Transparent and equitable selection processes enhance confidence among players and supporters, while opaque decision-making practices risk undermining motivation and organisational legitimacy.

Performance data and technology contribute to objectivity; however, such tools must be interpreted within tactical contexts and complemented by professional judgement. When conflicts arise, open communication and structured internal mediation play a vital role in restoring stability and reinforcing team cohesion. In theory, this study supports the idea that openness in the decision-making process can increase the legitimacy of an organisation, which is in line with the framework of sports communication and public trust. The results of this study are also consistent with theories about group dynamics and conflict resolution. The results show that clear communication between individuals can help reduce stress and strengthen relationships between members.

The findings support theoretical perspectives emphasising the relationship between transparency, communication, and organisational legitimacy in sports governance. By integrating evidence-based decision-making with inclusive communication strategies, sports organisations may strengthen public trust and improve conflict resolution outcomes. Ultimately, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how communication, fairness, and data-driven practices interact to shape organisational integrity in professional football contexts.

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