



Implementation of Kindergarten Teacher Ethics toward Colleagues in Building a Positive Work Environment

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan implementasi etika guru Taman Kanak-Kanak (TK) terhadap teman sejawat dalam membangun lingkungan kerja positif di TK Nurussalam, Kelurahan Tanjung Sari, Kecamatan Jambi Timur, Kota Jambi, dengan fokus pada hubungan antar guru, budaya saling mendukung, berbagi pengetahuan, dan komunikasi terbuka. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan rancangan studi kasus. Sumber data adalah teman sejawat, yakni guru kelas, guru pendamping, dan kepala sekolah. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis secara interaktif mengikuti model Miles, Huberman, dan Saldana melalui kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, serta divalidasi dengan triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa etika terhadap teman sejawat dipahami secara holistik sebagai sikap saling menghormati, menjaga nama baik, dan kerja sama profesional, serta diterapkan secara konsisten dalam keseharian. Hubungan antar guru bercirikan kekeluargaan dan saling percaya, dengan penyelesaian perbedaan pendapat melalui musyawarah dan mediasi kepala sekolah. Budaya saling mendukung tampak pada bantuan tugas, dukungan moral, serta apresiasi keberhasilan rekan. Berbagi pengetahuan berlangsung melalui rapat, diskusi informal, grup WhatsApp, dan kegiatan gugus PAUD, sedangkan komunikasi terbuka ditopang keterbukaan menyampaikan kritik secara santun. Keempat dimensi tersebut saling memperkuat membentuk iklim kerja positif yang menopang mutu layanan pendidikan anak usia dini. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa etika kolegial yang terinternalisasi merupakan modal sosial penting bagi efektivitas lembaga PAUD.

Kata Kunci: Etika Guru; Teman Sejawat; Lingkungan Kerja Positif; Berbagi Pengetahuan; Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini

ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the implementation of kindergarten teacher ethics toward colleagues in building a positive work environment at TK Nurussalam, Tanjung Sari, East Jambi, Jambi City, focusing on inter-teacher relationships, a culture of mutual support, knowledge sharing, and open communication. A qualitative case-study approach was employed. Data sources were colleagues, namely classroom teachers, assistant teachers, and the principal. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, and analyzed interactively following the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, with source and technique

triangulation. The findings show that ethics toward colleagues is understood holistically as mutual respect, safeguarding reputation, and professional cooperation, and is applied consistently in daily practice. Inter-teacher relations are characterized by kinship and mutual trust, with disagreements resolved through deliberation and principal mediation. A culture of mutual support appears in task assistance, moral support, and appreciation of colleagues' achievements. Knowledge sharing occurs through meetings, informal discussions, WhatsApp groups, and early childhood cluster activities, while open communication is supported by the willingness to deliver criticism politely. These four dimensions mutually reinforce one another to form a positive work climate that sustains the quality of early childhood education services.

Keywords: *Teacher Ethics; Colleagues; Positive Work Environment; Knowledge Sharing; Early Childhood Education*

Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) teachers belong to a profession governed by a set of ethical rules. Educating young children is professional work and therefore requires a code of ethics that answers how a teacher should interact with learners, colleagues, parents, and the community [1]. In Indonesia, the teaching profession's code of ethics is formulated by the Indonesian Teachers' Association (PGRI) in the Indonesian Teachers' Code of Ethics (KEGI), which contains nine points of conduct, one of which governs the relationship between teachers and their colleagues [2]. In this context, ethics toward colleagues demands cooperative, egalitarian, and mutually supportive behavior.

Collegial ethics is not merely an administrative formality but a moral compass that determines the quality of working relationships within a kindergarten. Teachers who adhere to the code of ethics tend to be more collaborative and to have more positive relationships with their work environment. Conversely, weak collegial ethics can trigger latent conflict, professional isolation, and declining collective efficacy. At the ECE level, the quality of inter-teacher relations becomes even more crucial because early childhood learning depends heavily on consistency of attitude, teamwork, and the example set by the adults around the child.

A number of studies confirm that collaboration and collegiality among teachers play an important role in professional development, school quality,

and student performance [3]. A collaborative culture practiced continuously can build values of trust and positive interdependence among teachers, increase self-efficacy, reduce a culture of isolation, and create a social support system that sustains learning [4], [5]. Such practice is embodied in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) lived by the entire school community.

A positive work environment is therefore not merely the absence of conflict, but an active condition marked by open communication, mutual support, and cooperation toward shared goals. In ECE institutions, such an environment has a direct impact on the consistency of care and stimulation a child receives, so that healthy collegial relations have pedagogical value, not merely administrative value. Young children are highly sensitive to the emotional atmosphere around them, so tension among teachers can quickly be perceived and affect a child's sense of security.

From a knowledge standpoint, interaction among teachers is also a space for organizational knowledge creation. Nonaka and Takeuchi's theory of knowledge creation, through the SECI model, explains how tacit and explicit knowledge are mutually converted within an organization through four modes: socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization [6]. Knowledge-sharing activities among teachers—whether through formal meetings or informal conversations in the staff room—are a concrete

manifestation of the SECI spiral that produces sustained innovation and performance [7].

Nevertheless, studies that specifically examine the implementation of teacher ethics toward colleagues in kindergarten/ECE institutions—with the four integrated foci of inter-teacher relations, a culture of mutual support, knowledge sharing, and open communication—remain relatively limited. Most prior research highlights the teacher–student relationship or compliance with the code of ethics in general, and rarely places colleagues as the primary data source. Herein lies the novelty of this study.

The urgency of this study is also rooted in the characteristics of ECE, which demand close teamwork. Within a single kindergarten class group, the classroom teacher and the assistant teacher work side by side intensively throughout the day, so that small frictions in their relationship can quickly affect the classroom atmosphere and the child's comfort. Collegial ethics in this context functions as the glue that maintains consistency in adult behavior in front of the child. Thus, examining ethics toward colleagues in kindergarten is not merely a matter of professional administration, but concerns the quality of pedagogical interaction experienced directly by the child.

Theoretically, this study integrates three frameworks that have tended to be discussed separately: (1) teaching professional ethics as formulated in KEGI; (2) the concept of the professional learning community and collegiality from the educational management literature; and (3) the SECI theory of knowledge creation from the knowledge management literature. This integration enables a more complete reading of how ethical norms are translated into productive relational practice within an ECE unit. This is the conceptual contribution offered.

TK Nurussalam, Tanjung Sari Village, East Jambi Subdistrict, Jambi City, was chosen as the research site because it

displays the collegial dynamics typical of community-based ECE institutions. The institution has a relatively small number of teachers, so that inter-teacher relations are intensive and can be observed in depth—a condition that suits the logic of a case study.

Based on this background, this study aims to describe and analyze: (1) the understanding and application of teacher ethics toward colleagues; (2) the quality of inter-teacher relations; (3) the culture of mutual support and moral support; (4) knowledge-sharing practices; and (5) open communication in building a positive work environment. The research questions are formulated as follows:

- How do teachers interpret and apply ethics toward colleagues in daily practice at TK Nurussalam?
- What is the quality of relationships, the culture of mutual support, knowledge-sharing practices, and open communication among teachers?
- How do these four dimensions interact to form a positive work environment in an ECE unit?

Literature Review

2.1 Teacher Ethics toward Colleagues

The teachers' code of ethics is a guideline regulating the relationship of teachers with their colleagues, learners, leaders, and the community [10]. In collegial relations, ethics demands cooperative, equalizing, and mutually supportive behavior. The ethics of inter-collegial relations also demands the maintenance of confidentiality and respect for the dignity of the profession. ECE teachers are expected to safeguard a colleague's sensitive information, not to demean a colleague's competence in front of others, and to place the interest of the child's development above personal rivalry. Thus, collegial ethics has two faces at once: a protective dimension (safeguarding reputation and trust) and a generative

dimension (encouraging cooperation and mutual learning) [2].

A number of previous studies have highlighted these aspects, but with differing emphases. Table 1 maps the position of this study relative to prior work in order to clarify the gap it fills.

Table 1. Mapping of Prior Studies

Study	Focus	Gap
Indriawati et al. [2]	General teaching professional code of ethics	Not yet ECE-specific
Harjaya & Idawati [8]	PLC & collaboration in kindergarten	Does not address collegial ethics
Widuri [11]	Knowledge sharing	Non-school context
This study	Collegial ethics + 4 dimensions in kindergarten	Integrative, colleagues as source

Source: compiled by the authors.

2.2 Positive Work Environment and Collegiality

A positive work environment in ECE institutions is characterized by open communication, mutual support, and cooperation. Teacher collegiality—conceptually aligned with collaboration—plays an important role in professional development and the improvement of school quality [3]. The professional learning community (PLC) becomes a strategy for cultivating a collaborative culture through dialogic communication: evaluation, reflection, discussion, planning, and joint decision-making [8].

2.3 Knowledge Sharing and the SECI Model

Knowledge sharing is the process by which individuals contribute their expertise and experience and are willing to receive knowledge from others through particular communication media [11], [13]. Knowledge sharing is not a momentary event but a continuous process that depends on communication media and the willingness of both parties. The SECI model explains four modes of knowledge conversion—socialization (tacit to tacit), externalization (tacit to explicit), combination (explicit to explicit), and internalization (explicit to tacit)—which move in a spiral across the individual, group, and organizational levels [6]. Nonaka, Toyama, and Konno added the concept of *ba*, namely a shared space (physical, virtual, or mental) where knowledge is created and exchanged [9].

In educational organizations, knowledge sharing has been shown to drive improvements in teacher performance and competence [7]. The staff room, meetings, ECE cluster forums, and even online chat groups function as *ba* where the SECI spiral takes place. With this framework, knowledge-sharing activities among teachers can be read not merely as technical assistance, but as a mechanism for collective knowledge creation that strengthens institutional capacity.

2.4 Open Communication and School Climate

Open communication is a precondition for the growth of trust within an organization. Openness in expressing opinions, willingness to listen, and the polite delivery of criticism form a psychologically safe climate (psychological safety), which in turn encourages participation and innovation [4]. A positive school climate does not form automatically, but is maintained through formal communication channels—regular minuted meetings, circulars, leadership directives—and informal channels that run alongside them.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Based on the review above, this study views collegial ethics as the normative foundation that drives four dimensions of practice—inter-teacher relations, a culture of mutual support, knowledge sharing, and open communication—which culminate in the formation of a positive work environment. The relationship among these dimensions is reciprocal: the positive environment that forms provides feedback that, in turn, reinforces ethical practice. This conceptual framework serves as the analytical lens and is summarized in the conceptual model in Figure 1.

Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with a single-institution case-study design, namely TK Nurussalam, Tanjung Sari Village, East Jambi Subdistrict, Jambi City. This approach was chosen because the research objective is descriptive-exploratory toward the meanings, practices, and dynamics of collegial relations within the natural context of an ECE unit.

3.1 Data Sources and Informants

The main data source consists of colleagues at TK Nurussalam, determined purposively based on direct involvement in daily interaction, namely classroom teachers, assistant teachers, and the principal. The selection of these three roles enables triangulation of perspectives across positions. A brief profile of the informants is presented in Table 2 (identities anonymized for research ethics).

Table 2. Informant Profiles

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Code	Position	Sex
I-1	Classroom Teacher	F
I-2	Assistant Teacher	F
I-3	Principal	F

Source: instrument data. Sex: F = female.

3.2 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through three complementary techniques: (1) in-depth interviews using a 25-item guide covering five aspects—understanding and application of ethics, inter-teacher relations, a culture of mutual support, knowledge sharing, and open communication; (2) participatory observation using a 10-aspect observation sheet with a 1–4 scale (Not Visible–Always); and (3) documentation study of the code of ethics/rules of conduct, teacher meeting minutes, the teacher development program (PKG/PKB), and supervision documents.

Table 3 summarizes the alignment among the research foci, indicators, and data collection techniques as the basis for instrument development.

Table 3. Grid of Foci, Indicators, and Techniques

Focus	Main Indicators	Technique
Inter-teacher relations	Harmony; conflict resolution via deliberation	I, O, D
Culture of mutual support	Task help; moral support; appreciation	I, O
Knowledge sharing	Forums, ECE cluster, informal discussion, WA	I, O, D
Open communication	Openness; polite criticism; listening	I, O

Note: I = Interview; O = Observation; D = Documentation.

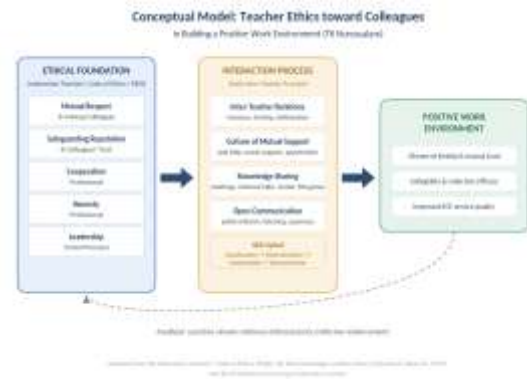
3.3 Analysis Technique and Data Validity

Data analysis was carried out interactively following the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model through three simultaneous flows: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification [12]. In the condensation stage, interview transcripts and field notes were reduced, coded, and grouped according to the five instrument aspects. In the display stage, data were arranged in thematic matrices and tables to facilitate the reading of patterns. In the conclusion-drawing stage, meanings were inferred and repeatedly verified against the source data.

Data validity was maintained through source triangulation (comparing the accounts of the classroom teacher, assistant teacher, and principal) and technique triangulation (comparing the results of interviews, observation, and documentation), as well as member checking with informants to ensure the appropriateness of interpretation. To enhance trustworthiness, the researchers also kept an audit trail in the form of documentation of the coding process.

Research ethics procedures were observed by seeking informants' consent, guaranteeing identity confidentiality through coded anonymization, and using the data solely for scientific purposes. The research stages briefly comprised: (1) instrument development and validation; (2) permits and field reconnaissance; (3) data collection through interviews, observation, and documentation; (4) interactive analysis; and (5) conclusion drawing and reporting.

The overall research workflow—from the ethical foundation, through the interaction process, to the formation of a positive work environment—is visualized in Figure 1.



Findings and Discussion

4.1 Understanding and Application of Collegial Ethics

The interview results show that the three informants interpret ethics toward colleagues holistically, encompassing an attitude of mutual respect, the obligation to safeguard a colleague's reputation and trust, and a commitment to cooperate professionally. This holistic understanding aligns with the formulation of KEGI [2] and confirms that collegial ethics has been internalized, not merely known. Its application is said to take place consistently in every daily interaction, especially in the form of greeting one another, helping with a colleague's work, and sharing information.

One informant described this understanding representatively as follows:

“Ethics with colleagues is not just about being polite, but about keeping trust—not exposing a friend's faults, and being ready to help when someone is in difficulty.” (I-3)

The ethical reference in this institution is partly written (rules of conduct) and partly lives as oral custom. This finding indicates the need to strengthen documentation and socialization of the code of ethics comprehensively so that behavioral references become more explicit. Within the SECI framework [6], strengthening this documentation is equivalent to externalization—turning tacit norms that have so far lived in custom into explicit

references that can be socialized and passed on to new teachers.

4.2 Inter-Teacher Relations

The quality of inter-teacher relations is judged to be harmonious and close, with an atmosphere described as familial and trusting. Differences of opinion are relatively rare and, when they arise, are resolved through deliberation/open discussion and the mediation of the principal. This manner of resolution reflects a healthy conflict-resolution mechanism and is a precondition for the formation of collegiality.

“If there is a difference of opinion, we usually talk it over calmly during the break or in meetings. The principal also mediates if needed.” (I-1)

This pattern of relations resting on deliberation is consistent with the value of dialogic communication in a professional learning community [8], in which evaluation, reflection, and decision-making are carried out together. The trust that is built functions as social capital that lowers coordination costs and increases willingness to help one another.

4.3 Culture of Mutual Support

A culture of mutual support is clearly evident in the form of hands-on help with tasks, moral support and encouragement, assistance with ideas/solutions, and appreciation of a colleague's success. Colleagues' responses when needed generally show a readiness to help. Support for professional development is also available, although not yet fully routine and documented. This pattern aligns with the finding that collaboration cultivates a social support system and collective efficacy [3], [5].

“If someone is overwhelmed preparing materials for the children, the others pitch in to help. It has become a habit; there's no need to ask.” (I-2)

Appreciation of a colleague's success—although mostly informal—plays an important role in maintaining motivation. In the ECE context, which demands high emotional energy, moral support among teachers becomes a buffer against work fatigue and helps maintain the quality of interaction with children.

4.4 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge-sharing activities take place through various channels: teacher meetings and discussions, informal conversations in the staff room, WhatsApp groups, ECE cluster activities, and the sharing of teaching materials and documents. The initiative to share comes from various parties, both among fellow teachers and as encouraged by the principal. The benefits felt include improved teaching quality, closer relationships among teachers, and broadened insight. The main obstacle that emerges is limited time.

Viewed through the SECI model [6], informal conversation represents socialization (tacit→tacit), the drafting of minutes and teaching materials constitutes externalization (tacit→explicit), the combining of documents in meetings reflects combination, and the application of discussion results in the classroom is internalization. Thus, collegial interaction at TK Nurussalam runs the full knowledge-creation spiral. A detailed mapping of the four modes to actual practice is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Mapping of Practices to SECI Modes

Mode	Practice at TK Nurussalam
Socialization	Informal conversations in the staff room, observing a colleague's teaching
Externalization	Meeting minutes, joint drafting of teaching materials & documents
Combination	Combining documents/ideas in

	meetings & ECE cluster
Internalization	Applying discussion results to classroom practice

Source: compiled by the authors based on the SECI model [6].

4.5 Open Communication and a Positive Climate

Communication among teachers is judged to be fairly to very open. Criticism and suggestions are generally delivered directly, politely, and openly, or through meeting forums, and colleagues' opinions are listened to well. Official communication takes place through regular meetings, the principal's directives, and the official WhatsApp group. According to the informants, the factors most conducive to a positive work environment are the principal's leadership, an ethic of mutual respect, open communication, a culture of mutual support, and collaborative knowledge sharing.

“We are used to giving feedback directly but in a gentle way, so as not to offend. What matters is that the intention is for the common good.” (I-1)

This openness accompanied by politeness shows a balance between professional honesty and the maintenance of relationships—two things that in practice are often in tension. The ability to balance the two is an indicator of the maturity of the organization's communication climate [4].

The results of participatory observation reinforce the interview findings. Table 5 presents a summary of observation scores across ten aspects of inter-teacher interaction.

Table 5. Summary of Observation Results (Scale 1–4)

Aspect Observed	Score	Category
Formal communication during meetings	4	Always
Daily informal	4	Always

Aspect Observed	Score	Category
communication		
Mutual respect	4	Always
Helping one another with tasks	3	Often
Sharing knowledge/information	3	Often
Openness in expressing opinions	3	Often
Participation in meetings/discussions	3	Often
Problem-solving (deliberation)	4	Always
Appreciation & moral support	3	Often
General climate (kinship)	4	Always

Source: field observation data (24 June 2026).

4.6 Integrative Discussion

The four research foci do not stand alone but are interconnected. Collegial ethics becomes the foundation that drives harmonious relations; harmonious relations facilitate a culture of mutual support; that support smooths knowledge sharing; and open communication becomes the medium that unites the three. The accumulation of all four forms a positive work climate that, through reflective feedback, in turn reinforces ethical practice (see Figure 1). This pattern supports the thesis that internalized collegial ethics is an important form of social capital for the effectiveness of ECE institutions.

It is interesting to note that the three informants—from different positions—show a convergence of views on the importance of collegial ethics, yet with distinctive emphases. The classroom teacher emphasizes day-to-day operational cooperation, the assistant teacher highlights willingness to help one another unprompted, while the principal places ethics as the basis of trust and the safeguarding of reputation. This convergence amid differing emphases actually strengthens the validity of the findings through source triangulation, while

also showing that ethical norms are understood functionally according to each role.

The role of the principal's leadership emerges as a central factor. The principal is not only a conflict mediator but also a model of ethics and a driver of sharing forums. This finding aligns with the PLC literature, which places dialogic leadership as the engine of a collaborative culture [8]. Thus, the sustainability of a positive climate depends heavily on the consistency of the leader's example and the institutionalization of good practice so that it does not rely on a single figure alone.

Table 6 links each finding to its theoretical basis to demonstrate the empirical-theoretical coherence of the study.

Table 6. Linking Findings and Theory

Finding	Theoretical Basis
Holistic understanding of ethics	KEGI / PGRI [2]
Familial relations	Collegiality; PLC [3], [8]
Mutual support	Collective efficacy; PLC [5]
Knowledge sharing	SECI model [6]
Open communication	School climate; psychological safety [4]

Source: compiled by the authors.

These findings both reinforce and extend the literature. They reinforce the thesis that collegiality and collaboration sustain school quality [3], and extend it by showing that the normative foundation of that collegiality is ethics toward colleagues as formulated in KEGI [2]. In other words, healthy collaboration is not born of procedure alone, but of internalized ethical norms.

4.7 Implications

Theoretically, this study contributes a conceptual model that links professional ethics, collegiality, and knowledge creation within a single framework for the ECE context. Practically, the findings direct

institution managers to treat collegial ethics as a strategic asset that needs to be cultivated through documentation, leadership example, and scheduled sharing forums. From a policy standpoint, these results support strengthening the socialization of KEGI down to the ECE level as well as its integration into ECE pre-service teacher preparation programs.

4.8 Limitations

This study is limited to a single institution with a small number of informants, so its findings are not intended to be statistically generalized, but rather to provide an in-depth understanding (transferability) that can be retested in similar contexts. The observation data are a snapshot of a particular period; longitudinal research would enrich understanding of the dynamics of collegial relations over time.

Conclusion

The implementation of kindergarten teacher ethics toward colleagues at TK Nurussalam is carried out consistently and is internalized. Collegial ethics is understood holistically as mutual respect, safeguarding reputation, and professional cooperation. Inter-teacher relations are characterized by kinship and mutual trust with conflict resolution through deliberation; a culture of mutual support is evident in task help, moral support, and appreciation; knowledge sharing takes place through both formal and informal forums that represent the SECI spiral; and open communication becomes the glue of all interaction. The four dimensions mutually reinforce one another to form a positive work environment that sustains the quality of ECE services.

The novelty of the study lies in integrating three frameworks—professional ethics (KEGI), collegiality/PLC, and knowledge creation (SECI)—to read collegial relations in an ECE institution with colleagues as the primary data source. The study concludes that healthy collaboration is

rooted in internalized ethical norms, not merely in work procedures.

Practically, the institution is advised to document and socialize the code of ethics comprehensively, to schedule knowledge-sharing forums regularly and with minutes, and to strengthen a programmed and documented professional development program. The principal's leadership needs to continue placing ethical example and dialogic communication as priorities. Further research is advised to increase the number of informants and sites, and to use a longitudinal or multi-case design to broaden the transferability of the findings.

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