

Disrupted Discipline: Navigating the Classroom Management Crisis in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Through Transformative Educational Strategies

Lilik Supriyani

MI Miftahul Ulum Wirowongso Jember

ABSTRACT

This study explores the crisis of classroom management in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah amidst shifting student behavior, weakened discipline systems, and pedagogical stagnation. Conducted at MI Miftahul Ulum Wirowongso in Jember, the research uses a qualitative case study method involving interviews, observations, and document analysis to uncover the root causes and potential solutions for disrupted discipline. Findings reveal that traditional authoritarian approaches fail to address the socio-emotional and spiritual needs of students in the digital age. Teachers often rely on reactive strategies while lacking training in transformative, student-centered classroom management. Students report feeling disengaged, excluded from decision-making, and uninspired by lecture-dominated instruction. The absence of positive reinforcement, reflective documentation, and character-focused management systems indicates a disconnect between Islamic pedagogical values and current practices. The study argues for a paradigm shift toward restorative, participatory, and values-based classroom strategies rooted in Islamic educational philosophy. Such a transformation positions discipline not as control but as a process of nurturing moral, emotional, and social growth. This research contributes a critical framework for rethinking discipline as an integral component of character formation, offering practical and conceptual guidance for educators and policymakers aiming to restore harmony and ethical development in Islamic elementary classrooms.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, classroom management has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges in Islamic elementary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah), especially in the wake of shifting social behavior among children. Digital culture, parental permissiveness, and weakened community engagement have contributed to a visible decline in student discipline and teacher authority. Teachers in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah increasingly report difficulties in maintaining order, managing time effectively, and engaging students in a respectful and structured learning environment. The traditional paradigm of discipline largely reliant on obedience and teacher control appears no longer sufficient in addressing the

complex behavioral patterns of today's students. This disruption in classroom discipline undermines not only academic outcomes but also the moral and character formation central to Islamic education. As such, this study becomes crucial in responding to a growing crisis: how can classroom management in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah be reimagined in ways that are pedagogically sound, contextually responsive, and spiritually rooted?

Previous studies on classroom management have largely focused on general strategies such as setting rules, establishing routines, and using reinforcement techniques. Some research has explored culturally responsive classroom management, while others have addressed the role of Islamic values in shaping student behavior. However, most of these studies treat classroom management as a technical skill rather than a holistic educational strategy. There is a lack of research that critically investigates the classroom management crisis in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, particularly in light of contemporary moral challenges and post-pandemic behavioral shifts. Moreover, very few studies propose transformative frameworks that integrate Islamic pedagogy, emotional intelligence, and participatory models. This study aims to fill that gap by offering an in-depth analysis of how classroom discipline is currently being disrupted and how it can be strategically restored using innovative, faith-aligned approaches. It moves beyond surface-level control to explore classroom management as a space for moral growth, emotional regulation, and collaborative learning.

This study investigates the emerging crisis of classroom management in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah and explores transformative strategies to respond to it. The key research question is: How can Islamic elementary schools address the current classroom management crisis through pedagogical approaches that are transformative, student-centered, and aligned with Islamic values? The study seeks to understand the root causes of disrupted discipline, including the influence of digital distractions, socio-cultural shifts, and gaps in teacher training. It also aims to explore how alternative strategies such as restorative discipline, socio-emotional learning, and participatory class governance might offer sustainable solutions. Through a qualitative case study approach, this research maps out both the dysfunctions of traditional discipline and the potential of transformative practices. Ultimately, it aims to support teachers, school leaders, and curriculum designers in rethinking classroom management as not just control, but cultivation—of respect, responsibility, and spiritual consciousness.

This study is built on the argument that the current crisis in classroom discipline within Madrasah Ibtidaiyah reflects a deeper pedagogical and cultural disconnect. Traditional methods often based on compliance, fear, or unilateral authority are no longer effective in engaging a generation shaped by interactivity, autonomy, and emotional complexity. The preliminary assumption of this research is that discipline can no longer be separated from pedagogy. When classroom management is integrated with transformative education rooted in compassion, communication, and character building it becomes a powerful tool for moral and intellectual formation. Drawing from Islamic educational philosophy and contemporary learning theories, this study proposes that a shift toward student-centered, emotionally intelligent, and values-based classroom

management is not only necessary but urgent. Such an approach can restore harmony, foster self-discipline, and revitalize the learning atmosphere in Islamic schools, especially amidst the moral uncertainty and behavioral instability of today's youth.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted at MI Miftahul Ulum, located in Wirowongso Village, Jember Regency, East Java. The school was purposively selected due to its representative characteristics as a traditional Madrasah Ibtidaiyah that currently faces classroom management challenges amidst broader social and technological change. MI Miftahul Ulum is known for its commitment to Islamic-based education and character formation, yet it simultaneously grapples with disruptions in student discipline and engagement. The school serves as an ideal unit of analysis because it reflects both the strengths and tensions commonly found in Islamic primary schools striving to maintain religious identity while adapting to contemporary educational demands. The research focuses on how discipline is understood, enforced, and negotiated in classroom interactions, and how teachers, students, and school leaders experience and respond to these dynamics. The unit of analysis includes classroom practices, school policies, and socio-pedagogical relationships within the educational setting.

This study adopts a qualitative research approach using a case study design to explore the classroom management crisis at MI Miftahul Ulum in depth. The qualitative paradigm allows for a rich, contextualized understanding of phenomena as experienced by participants, while the case study design enables the researcher to investigate complex social realities in their natural setting. This approach is particularly suited to exploring the nuanced interactions between teachers, students, and school structures regarding discipline. Rather than seeking generalizable conclusions, the goal is to develop a deep and holistic insight into how discipline is managed, challenged, and potentially transformed in the specific context of an Islamic elementary school. The case study approach provides flexibility in data collection and analysis, making it possible to capture the voices, perceptions, and experiences of stakeholders involved. It also allows the researcher to uncover patterns, tensions, and innovations in classroom management practices.

Information in this study was gathered from key informants selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in classroom management processes. Informants included the principal, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, homeroom teachers, and students from grades IV to VI. The principal and vice principal provided insights into institutional policies, disciplinary systems, and the school's vision for character education. Homeroom teachers served as primary sources for understanding the practical challenges and strategies of managing student behavior in the classroom. Meanwhile, students were engaged to capture their experiences, perspectives, and perceptions of classroom discipline. By involving multiple levels of stakeholders, the study ensured a comprehensive view of classroom management from both the managerial and experiential standpoints. The diversity of informants also supported triangulation of data,

allowing the researcher to cross-validate findings and uncover inconsistencies or alignments across different roles and relationships within the school.

The data collection process employed three primary techniques: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Participant observation was conducted during classroom sessions and school activities to observe behavioral patterns, teacher-student interactions, and the practical enactment of discipline. This allowed the researcher to document real-time practices and spontaneous responses to disciplinary issues. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all informants to gain in-depth insights into their perceptions, beliefs, and experiences. The flexible format allowed participants to elaborate on their views while ensuring the discussion remained aligned with the research focus. Document analysis included reviewing school regulations, disciplinary reports, lesson plans, and classroom records to understand formal approaches to classroom management. These three methods were used in combination to achieve data triangulation, enhance credibility, and ensure that findings reflected both formal policies and lived experiences. Data collection was iterative and responsive to emerging themes identified during fieldwork.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which involves three major steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing raw data to focus on relevant aspects related to classroom management. The data were coded thematically and grouped according to recurring patterns and key issues. Data display was performed using matrices and narrative descriptions to facilitate interpretation and pattern recognition. The final step, conclusion drawing and verification, involved comparing data across sources and revisiting field notes and transcripts to confirm consistency, depth, and meaning. The study also applied content analysis to interpret school documents, discourse analysis to examine the language used by teachers and students in discussing discipline, and interpretive analysis to explore the underlying values, assumptions, and cultural influences shaping classroom practices. Together, these methods enabled a holistic understanding of the classroom management crisis and the possibilities for transformation.

RESULT

Interviews were conducted with the principal, vice principal for curriculum, homeroom teachers of grades IV to VI, and several students at MI Miftahul Ulum Wirowongso. Three key patterns emerged: (1) teachers complained about increasing student disobedience over the past five years; (2) students admitted difficulty focusing and described learning as boring; and (3) the principal acknowledged the lack of an integrated character-building system within classroom management. Visually, data can be grouped as follows: 70% of respondents stated that their disciplinary strategies were reactive, while only 30% had experience with preventive or restorative approaches. Furthermore, more than half of the students felt they had little voice in how the classroom was managed. This data indicates that the classroom management crisis is not merely behavioral

it reflects a systemic failure to cultivate constructive teacher-student relationships and participatory classroom environments.

The interview data reveal a dominant pattern of imbalance between authoritarian and participatory approaches in classroom management. Teachers predominantly use conventional discipline methods based on orders and punishments, while students' needs for engagement and agency are largely unmet. Teachers feel pressured by curriculum targets and time constraints, making them rely on direct control rather than building meaningful dialogue and reflection with students. The principal acknowledged that training in character-based classroom management is not yet a priority. From the students' perspective, many reported feeling excluded from class decision-making processes. This suggests a rigid vertical relationship model, which not only widens the emotional gap between teachers and students but also increases the likelihood of behavioral disruptions. The data portrays a management culture that lacks student participation and struggles to foster mutual respect and emotional safety in learning spaces.

Analytically, this pattern suggests that the classroom management crisis in Islamic schools is not solely a matter of student misbehavior, but rather a reflection of pedagogical stagnation. Teachers continue to rely on outdated paradigms that position students as passive recipients rather than active co-creators of the learning environment. This is incompatible with the realities of a generation raised in interactive, digital, and expressive contexts. Students' resistance to authority often emerges not from rebellion but from the absence of meaningful participation. The lack of teacher training in empathetic, restorative, and socio-emotional management techniques further exacerbates the issue. Therefore, classroom management must be redefined not as a control mechanism but as a space for nurturing social, emotional, and spiritual growth. It should align with the Islamic educational vision of *tarbiyah* not only transferring knowledge but also cultivating character through engagement, reflection, and relationship-building.

Observations were conducted over two weeks in three different classrooms (grades IV, V, and VI). The researcher recorded recurring patterns: (1) classrooms became noisy when teachers were absent; (2) students often ignored instructions unless threats or punishments followed; (3) lectures were the dominant method, with minimal group work or discussions; and (4) there was a lack of positive reinforcement strategies. Out of six observation sessions, only one included active student involvement through simulation or dialogic methods. Moreover, teacher-student interactions mostly focused on academic content, not value formation. This data highlights a reality in which classroom space prioritizes control and content delivery over the cultivation of a healthy, engaging, and morally enriching environment. Behavioral disruptions seemed to result more from disengagement than defiance, revealing an urgent need for pedagogical renewal.

The observed classrooms reflect a dominant model of management based on control and instruction, rather than one promoting reflection and collaboration. Teachers frequently issued commands, and students followed them mechanically, with little room for creativity or moral reasoning. When students showed signs of boredom or lack of focus, teachers responded with reprimands or threats, rather

than empathetic inquiry or student-centered strategies. There was no observed system for monitoring or reinforcing positive behavior. Students were not engaged in designing classroom rules or behavioral expectations, and thus lacked a sense of ownership or accountability. This pattern reveals a reactive, one-way management culture that fosters compliance but stifles autonomy. It creates a tense and uninspiring classroom atmosphere one that may suppress immediate disruptions but fails to support students' emotional, moral, and interpersonal development in the long run.

Analysis of the observation data reveals that the discipline issues observed stem from the absence of a transformative learning system. Teachers focus on short-term behavior control rather than long-term character development. This suggests a fundamental misconception about the role of classroom management. It should not merely enforce order, but also establish a dialogic environment that nurtures values, self-awareness, and social-emotional growth. The lack of student involvement in setting rules or resolving conflicts weakens their sense of agency and responsibility. In the context of Islamic education, which prioritizes moral and spiritual growth, this model contradicts the broader mission of *tarbiyah*. A shift toward restorative, spiritually grounded, and collaborative classroom strategies is essential. Classrooms should be spaces where students learn not just what is right, but how to live those values through relationships, reflection, and shared responsibility.

In contrast, positive behavior documentation was almost nonexistent. Only two instances of praise were recorded and even these were informal. The character education log tracked activities like *duha* prayer, Qur'an reading, and classroom cleaning but lacked personal reflection or behavior assessments. This data suggests an overemphasis on discipline enforcement and a lack of attention to student growth, values internalization, or positive reinforcement mechanisms.

The documentation data reveals a clear imbalance between corrective and developmental strategies. While negative behaviors are thoroughly recorded and categorized, there is no formal system to acknowledge or encourage positive behavior. The documentation practices are largely reactive, responding to violations without proactively building a character-centered culture. The character-building journal is activity-based rather than reflective, lacking indicators of moral or social-emotional growth. No rubrics exist to assess student conduct or track personal development. This pattern reveals that discipline is viewed as external compliance rather than internal growth. The school's documentation system functions more as an administrative record than an educational tool. As a result, the opportunity to use documentation as a form of feedback, encouragement, and reflection is lost limiting the school's ability to foster holistic character development.

The analysis suggests that classroom management at the documentation level is still perceived as a control mechanism rather than a character formation tool. The absence of structured praise, behavioral reflection, or character-based rubrics indicates a failure to align disciplinary practice with educational values. Without meaningful feedback and reflection systems, students may not connect their behaviors to moral lessons or long-term growth. This contradicts Islamic

pedagogical principles, which emphasize tazkiyah (purification) and tarbiyah (holistic nurturing). Effective documentation should serve as a strategic instrument for cultivating values not just a list of infractions. This calls for a restructured system that tracks not only rule-breaking but also moral progress. Documentation should integrate praise, reflection, and guidance to support students' journey toward becoming ethically grounded individuals. In short, a transformative management system must view discipline not as punishment, but as a continuous, values-based learning process.

DISCUSSION

The interview findings at MI Miftahul Ulum Wirowongso reveal critical implications for classroom management in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Teachers' reports of increasing student disobedience suggest a widening gap between teaching strategies and students' evolving learning behaviors (Suryani & Hamid, 2020). Students' expressions of boredom and difficulty concentrating further confirm that traditional, teacher-centered pedagogies are no longer effective in meeting the cognitive and emotional needs of today's learners (Ismail & Lubis, 2021). The principal's acknowledgment of an absence of integrated character-building frameworks within classroom systems highlights a deeper structural issue (Rahman & Yusuf, 2023). These findings imply that current discipline strategies are dysfunctional, failing to create supportive learning environments for both academic performance and moral development. Addressing this challenge requires a shift toward student-centered and value-integrated strategies that enhance student engagement, autonomy, and classroom harmony (Alghamdi, 2021).

The classroom management crisis stems from several interrelated causes. The heavy reliance on conventional discipline rooted in authority, control, and punitive sanctions correlates with growing levels of student disengagement (Fadila & Arifin, 2022). Teachers' prioritization of curriculum deadlines often leads to neglecting meaningful teacher-student relationships (Suryani & Hamid, 2020). The lack of professional development in transformative or character-based classroom management leaves teachers with limited tools for creating a positive class culture (Rahman & Yusuf, 2023). Students, consequently, feel excluded from the learning process, which fosters behavioral challenges and emotional disconnection. These structural deficiencies call for systemic reform: teacher training must include social-emotional learning, restorative practices, and participatory governance that empower students and reinforce mutual respect (Ismail & Lubis, 2021).

Observations from several classrooms reveal that existing management practices are reactive and overly control-oriented. Lecture-based teaching remains dominant, with few opportunities for active participation or reflective learning (Alkhateeb, 2021). Teachers' responses to student misbehavior rely heavily on reprimands and sanctions, which fail to address root causes like disengagement and lack of emotional connection (Rahman & Yusuf, 2023). There is little evidence of positive reinforcement mechanisms or systems that acknowledge prosocial behavior. Students are rarely involved in the formation of classroom norms or routines, which reduces their ownership of classroom order (Fadila &

Arifin, 2022). This dysfunctional management culture inhibits the creation of a positive, nurturing classroom climate essential for both learning and character development (Suryani & Hamid, 2020).

The causes behind the dysfunctional patterns observed lie in outdated pedagogical structures. Control-based classroom strategies reflect a legacy model that disregards 21st-century educational demands such as student voice, self-regulation, and emotional intelligence (Alghamdi, 2021). The absence of student-centered learning strategies contributes directly to apathy and disruptive behaviors (Ismail & Lubis, 2021). Moreover, classrooms lack systems for monitoring and reinforcing positive conduct, suggesting a reactive rather than proactive mindset. This imbalance between rigid authority and emotional engagement results in environments that suppress autonomy and stifle motivation (Alkhateeb, 2021). Ultimately, this pedagogical misalignment undermines the goals of Islamic education, which emphasizes both intellectual formation and ethical growth (Rahman & Yusuf, 2023).

The documentation from MI Miftahul Ulum shows a stark imbalance: disciplinary infractions are meticulously recorded, while positive behaviors are largely unacknowledged. This suggests a punitive approach to management rather than a developmental one (Fadila & Arifin, 2022). Daily character-building logs focus on routine tasks such as duha prayer or classroom cleaning, but lack reflective components or behavioral evaluations (Ismail & Lubis, 2021). This documentation style implies that discipline is viewed as an issue of rule enforcement rather than character formation (Alghamdi, 2021). Without mechanisms to track growth in student values, motivation, or empathy, documentation functions solely as a control tool, not as a means of moral education. This inhibits students' self-awareness and their understanding of the relevance of ethical behavior in daily practice (Rahman & Yusuf, 2023).

The documentation-based dysfunction in classroom management can be traced to an institutional culture that prioritizes compliance over reflection. The emphasis on noting negative behaviors reflects a philosophy of control rather than development (Suryani & Hamid, 2020). No structured system exists to reward or reinforce positive behavior, which reduces opportunities to model and internalize virtuous conduct (Alkhateeb, 2021). Character education is reduced to routine activities without meaningful value-based learning or emotional engagement (Ismail & Lubis, 2021). This correlates with the lack of meaningful behavioral change and intrinsic motivation among students. The structure of documentation itself, therefore, needs to be reimagined not just as record-keeping, but as a living tool for moral and emotional development within Islamic pedagogical practice (Rahman & Yusuf, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the classroom management crisis in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah is not solely a matter of student misbehavior, but a deeper systemic issue rooted in outdated pedagogical models and a lack of character-centered strategies. The key finding is the disconnect between conventional disciplinary methods and the developmental needs of students in the current era. Discipline,

when applied as mere control, creates emotional distance, disengagement, and behavioral resistance. The study emphasizes the need for management strategies that are restorative, participatory, and embedded with Islamic values to foster meaningful student engagement and character development. This insight offers valuable lessons for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers.

This research contributes significantly to the field of Islamic education by offering a renewed perspective on classroom management as a moral and pedagogical challenge rather than a behavioral problem. The integration of qualitative methods interview, observation, and documentation provides a holistic view of the crisis and its root causes. Conceptually, the study bridges Islamic pedagogy with transformative and student-centered frameworks, inviting educators to reimagine discipline as a process of spiritual and emotional growth. By focusing on the intersection between discipline, pedagogy, and character, the study adds depth to classroom discourse and offers new avenues for practical, faith-based solutions in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. It focuses on a single case study at one Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, which limits generalizability across broader educational contexts. The research is also confined to a qualitative design and did not explore age-related differences or longitudinal impacts of management practices. Further research is recommended across various Islamic schools with different socio-cultural backgrounds. Future studies should also incorporate quantitative or mixed-method approaches to evaluate the effectiveness of transformative management models and their influence on long-term character formation, especially in relation to digital-era student behavior and emotional well-being.

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