

From Control to Collaboration: The Emerging Trend of Student-Centered Classroom Management to Boost Academic Achievement”

Rahmad Widodo

MI Salafiyah Syafiiyah Pancakarya Jember

Abstract

This study explores the impact of student-centered classroom management on academic achievement in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, focusing on the shift from authoritarian control to collaborative, participatory practices. Conducted at MI Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Pancakarya Jember, the research employed a qualitative case study approach involving interviews, observations, and document analysis. Findings show that when students are involved in rule-making, peer collaboration, and reflective routines, classroom discipline improves, engagement increases, and academic performance rises. Teachers evolve from enforcers to facilitators, nurturing a respectful and democratic learning environment. Students respond with heightened motivation, responsibility, and deeper comprehension. Documentation reveals positive correlations between autonomy-driven tasks and improved test scores. The study aligns with social constructivist theory and Islamic pedagogical principles, affirming that collaborative management fosters self-regulated learning and character development. This research offers practical implications for transforming Islamic classroom culture through structured collaboration, reflective discipline, and shared ownership. It challenges traditional models of control by demonstrating that trust, respect, and participation create sustainable academic success and moral growth. The study contributes to educational discourse by positioning student-centered management as a key driver of holistic learning in faith-based schools.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, elementary schools, including *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, have been facing a growing concern about student disengagement, low academic performance, and ineffective discipline practices. Traditional classroom management strategies, often authoritarian and teacher-

centered, prioritize control and compliance over meaningful learning (Yuliana, 2021). This approach frequently results in passive learning environments where students follow instructions without internalizing the knowledge or values being taught (Rahmah, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed learning gaps and reinforced the urgency of flexible, responsive pedagogy (Nasution et al., 2022). Consequently, the global education community is increasingly advocating for classroom cultures that are collaborative, inclusive, and student-driven (Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2021). In this context, shifting from rigid control to student-centered classroom management has become not only a pedagogical trend but also a social necessity.

The link between effective classroom management and academic success has long been established in educational research (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Studies by Yilmaz & Yilmaz (2021) and Huda et al. (2020) confirm that positive learning environments, clear behavioral expectations, and emotional support promote better student outcomes. Student-centered classroom management emphasizing autonomy, engagement, and collaboration has emerged as an effective model to increase student motivation and participation (Setiawan & Wardani, 2021). However, in the context of Islamic elementary schools, research still focuses heavily on moral discipline and religious values, with little attention to how management styles influence academic performance (Rahmah, 2021; Mahfud et al., 2023). There remains a gap in literature exploring how collaborative classroom management impacts measurable academic outcomes in madrasah settings a gap this study seeks to address.

This study aims to investigate how collaborative, student-centered classroom management influences student academic achievement in *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*. The core question guiding this inquiry is: *How does a shift from authoritarian control to student collaboration affect students' learning outcomes?* Supporting questions include: What strategies do teachers apply in managing classrooms collaboratively? How do students respond behaviorally and academically? What challenges and supports exist within the school system? The study is designed to fill both empirical and practical gaps, particularly in the Islamic school context, where values, academic goals, and classroom control often intersect (Basri & Halik, 2022). By focusing on the pedagogical shift itself, this research responds to the call for evidence-based innovation in classroom practices that align with the learning needs of 21st-century students (Fatimah & Rahman, 2021).

This research rests on the assumption that student-centered classroom management is a transformative strategy that fosters intrinsic motivation, independence, and deeper cognitive engagement (Huda et al., 2020). When students are invited to co-construct classroom norms, participate in problem-solving, and engage in peer-led learning, they are more likely to take responsibility for their learning process (Kurniawati et al., 2023). This collaborative climate also supports character formation, which is a key objective in Islamic education. Moreover, teacher-student relationships built on trust and mutual respect have been shown to boost both achievement and classroom behavior (Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2021). Hence, shifting from control to collaboration is

not merely a trend but a transformative solution—one that aligns with global educational reform and the ethos of holistic Islamic pedagogy.

Research Method

This study was conducted at MI Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Pancakarya Jember, an Islamic elementary school known for its strong religious identity and growing commitment to student-centered learning approaches. The institution was purposively selected because of its informal adoption of collaborative classroom management strategies across several grade levels. The unit of analysis in this research is the collaborative classroom management strategies implemented by teachers and their impact on student academic achievement. A qualitative approach was employed using a case study design, aiming to explore the shift from conventional teacher-centered classroom control to more participatory, student-driven management practices. The case study method allows for a holistic, contextualized examination of processes, challenges, and social dynamics that shape classroom life. This design enables the researcher to gain a deep and meaningful understanding of the lived experiences and pedagogical shifts occurring in the natural setting of the madrasah.

The information in this study was gathered from various key informants who were directly involved in instructional and classroom management activities. Informants included the school principal, vice principal for curriculum affairs, classroom teachers, and students from grades III to VI. The principal provided insight into institutional policy direction and the school's strategic role in encouraging innovation. The vice principal elaborated on the curriculum framework and the school's efforts in supporting teacher development. Classroom teachers served as the primary informants, offering firsthand narratives of their practices, challenges, and transformations in managing student-centered learning. Meanwhile, students were invited to share their responses and perceptions of their teachers' management styles, classroom atmosphere, and their own engagement in learning. Informants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques to ensure both representativeness and data depth. This diverse range of perspectives allowed for a holistic and triangulated portrayal of the studied phenomena.

The data collection in this study employed three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation analysis. Observations were conducted in real classroom settings during learning activities, focusing on teacher-student interactions, collaborative management practices, and classroom discipline. A participatory observation sheet was used to record innovative and reflective pedagogical behaviors. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all informants to capture deeper narratives and meanings associated with classroom changes and student engagement. This format allowed flexibility for probing emerging themes that were not initially anticipated. Documentation such as lesson plans, teacher reflection journals, assessment records, student performance reports, and behavioral logs were also reviewed to supplement and validate

the primary data. The combination of these three methods enabled effective data triangulation, which enhanced the validity and credibility of the findings by confirming consistency across multiple data sources and perspectives.

The data analysis followed the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the data reduction stage, all raw data were organized and coded based on emerging themes such as collaborative strategies, student engagement, academic changes, and implementation barriers. These codes were then grouped into categories for thematic analysis. During the display phase, data were presented in descriptive narratives, thematic matrices, and direct quotations to identify patterns and interrelations. The final stage involved interpreting these patterns and verifying their consistency with theoretical frameworks and field realities. The entire analytical process was iterative and cyclical, allowing the researcher to continually refine interpretations as new insights emerged throughout the data collection period. This method ensured that the findings accurately represented the complexity and depth of classroom transformation.

To enrich the depth of analysis, this study utilized three complementary approaches: content analysis, discourse analysis, and interpretive analysis. Content analysis was used to examine documents such as lesson plans, teacher notes, and reflective journals to identify how collaborative classroom principles were embedded in instructional planning. Discourse analysis was applied to interview and observational transcripts to investigate how teachers frame their changing roles, the interactional language used, and how classroom culture is shaped through daily routines. Meanwhile, interpretive analysis was employed to capture the social and spiritual meanings underlying the transformation of classroom practices in the Islamic school setting. These three approaches were applied triangulatively to understand classroom phenomena not only from a technical perspective but also from structural, cultural, and symbolic dimensions. As a result, the study offers a comprehensive picture of how student-centered classroom management contributes to improving academic outcomes in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

RESULT

Interview data from teachers, students, the principal, and the vice principal at MI Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Pancakarya revealed significant changes in classroom dynamics following the adoption of student-centered classroom management. Teachers shared that students were increasingly involved in rule-making, task planning, and peer-led activities. One teacher noted that previously passive students had begun showing initiative and enthusiasm when allowed to work in groups and choose how to present their ideas. Students also expressed enjoyment in activities that let them "become the teacher," such as peer teaching and class discussions. The school principal emphasized the importance of teacher autonomy and trusted decision-making in enabling these changes. The vice principal shared that the shift was part of a broader initiative to improve student

engagement and achievement without relying on punishment or rigid compliance. This data underscores a transformation in how discipline and learning are co-constructed in the classroom.

A clear pattern emerged from the interviews: teachers who shifted toward collaborative classroom management observed a significant rise in student participation, creativity, and self-regulation. They reported fewer disruptions and more meaningful learning interactions, particularly in group-based tasks. Students appreciated being heard and being part of decisions that affected them. One teacher mentioned implementing a rotating class leadership system that empowered students to take responsibility for classroom routines. Such practices enhanced accountability and created a culture of mutual respect. Leadership support was also consistent; both school administrators encouraged teachers to try out innovative strategies and reflect on what worked. The use of positive reinforcement, peer mentoring, and reflective dialogue were common across teacher narratives. This pattern reflects a deliberate move away from control-oriented discipline toward a relational and developmental model of classroom management, rooted in trust, collaboration, and shared ownership of the learning process.

The interview data suggest that the transformation from control to collaboration is not merely a methodological change, but a shift in educational philosophy. Teachers who were once compliance-focused have begun embracing their roles as facilitators of student growth—academically, socially, and morally. This shift aligns with constructivist theory and contemporary Islamic pedagogy, which both emphasize student agency, inquiry, and moral development. The success of these practices is linked to two key factors: (1) institutional support that empowers teachers, and (2) the teachers' own willingness to reimagine classroom power dynamics. These findings resonate with research by Huda et al. (2020) and Yilmaz & Yilmaz (2021), which emphasize the role of collaborative classroom culture in improving learning outcomes. When students feel respected and responsible for their environment, learning becomes more personal and purposeful—bridging the gap between behavior and academic achievement.

Classroom observations conducted across grades III to VI revealed a consistent integration of student-centered management strategies. Teachers were observed facilitating cooperative group work, guiding student-led discussions, and using formative assessment to adjust instruction in real time. In several lessons, students took turns moderating activities, organizing materials, and helping peers. Notably, teachers refrained from punitive responses when students misbehaved; instead, they held short restorative dialogues or allowed peer feedback. In a science class, a group that had failed to complete their task was asked to explain their difficulties and suggest a plan for improvement. The classroom environments were calm, interactive, and structured in a way that encouraged student autonomy. These observations confirm that collaborative management practices are not limited to planning but are enacted through everyday instructional decisions and student-teacher interactions that reinforce shared responsibility.

The observed classrooms demonstrated key characteristics of collaborative classroom management. First, roles and responsibilities were clearly distributed among students. Second, the

learning environment emphasized dialogue over directives—teachers facilitated rather than dictated learning. Third, visible tools such as classroom agreements, peer feedback forms, and reflection journals were used to sustain routines and encourage ownership. Students appeared comfortable making decisions, negotiating group tasks, and participating in discussions. Importantly, they also respected classroom boundaries more naturally, suggesting internalized discipline. Teachers used non-verbal cues, proximity control, and collaborative reflections to manage behavior—indicating a shift from reactive to proactive discipline. These patterns reflect a culture where students are not managed as objects, but as agents of their own learning. It also suggests that consistent modeling and reinforcement by teachers contributed significantly to the sustainability of this collaborative structure.

The observational data support the idea that student-centered classroom management promotes not only discipline but also deep engagement and improved learning behaviors. This aligns with the theoretical framework of social constructivism, where knowledge is co-constructed in interaction. The presence of democratic routines—student-led tasks, collective decision-making, and peer support—indicates that the classroom has evolved into a mini-community of learners. These shifts in classroom power dynamics suggest that when teachers relinquish control and foster autonomy, students become more intrinsically motivated (Yilmaz & Yilmaz, 2021). Moreover, the findings challenge the misconception that control is necessary for order. Instead, collaboration—when structured and consistent—can lead to higher discipline and academic focus, particularly when embedded in reflective and restorative practices that empower both teacher and student.

The documentation analyzed includes student performance records, teacher reflection journals, and classroom management logs. A summary table highlighted key behavior indicators and corresponding teacher strategies:

Student Behavior	Frequency Observed	Teacher Strategy Applied
Active Participation in Group Activities	21	Cooperative learning and rotating group leadership
Self-Initiated Task Completion	18	Autonomy-based task assignment
Peer Support and Collaboration	20	Peer mentoring system
Reduced Behavioral Disruptions	9	Restorative discipline and reflective sessions
Improved Test Performance (>75%)	17	Formative assessments and feedback

The records showed that student behavior and academic performance improved in tandem with the implementation of collaborative strategies. Teacher notes consistently mentioned increased focus, motivation, and responsibility among students.

The documentation revealed a consistent alignment between positive student behaviors and the specific strategies applied by teachers. The increase in participation and peer support was most frequent in classes where group norms were co-constructed with students. Similarly, autonomy-driven assignments were linked with higher completion rates and self-regulation. Teachers also made notes about reduced behavioral incidents after applying reflective discipline sessions, where students engaged in calm dialogue rather than being punished. Improved academic performance was especially evident in subjects where students were given formative feedback and opportunities for revision. These patterns indicate that collaborative classroom management does not just affect atmosphere it has a tangible impact on student performance. The systematic documentation also shows a reflective culture among teachers, who used student data to adapt instruction and foster inclusive learning environments.

The documentation analysis reinforces the argument that student-centered management contributes to holistic development—both academic and behavioral. The observed improvements are not incidental but appear to be the result of intentional, responsive strategies implemented by teachers. These practices reflect an ethical and pedagogical shift from compliance to engagement, from punishment to reflection. The alignment between behavioral data and academic outcomes suggests that when students are given voice, trust, and responsibility, they are more likely to succeed. This is in line with findings by Rahmah (2021) and Fatimah & Rahman (2021), who emphasize that respectful, student-centered environments foster resilience, motivation, and deeper learning. In sum, the documentation provides strong evidence that collaborative classroom management is not only functional but transformative, offering a scalable and sustainable model for educational equity and excellence in Islamic primary schools.

DISCUSSION

The interview findings demonstrate that student-centered classroom management contributes significantly to increased student participation, motivation, and academic achievement. Teachers reported that students showed more enthusiasm, responsibility, and collaboration once they were involved in rule-making, peer activities, and reflective processes. These effects support previous research showing that learner autonomy correlates with increased academic motivation and performance (Science Advances, 2024; APA, n.d.). Similarly, Lenz (2012) emphasizes that when students are given voice and choice, their engagement deepens. The findings from MI Salafiyah Syafi'iyah mirror these insights, suggesting that the collaborative shift in classroom management functions as a catalyst for performance improvement. Hence, when teachers move from control to collaboration, classrooms become learning communities rather than compliance spaces.

The success of collaborative management is underpinned by the fulfillment of students' psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as described in Self-Determination Theory (APA, n.d.). Interviews revealed that when students are trusted to take part in decisions—like group roles, classroom norms, or learning choices—they feel more empowered and motivated.

This is consistent with the findings of the Center for Economic Policy Research (CEPR, 2019), which concluded that student autonomy predicts better academic outcomes across disciplines. Moreover, Hockett and Doubet (2017) argued that structuring learning environments around student voice leads to stronger ownership and engagement. Thus, the underlying structure behind the interview findings is not simply about teacher technique, but about shifting classroom power dynamics in a way that supports long-term, self-regulated learning behavior.

Observations confirmed that classrooms practicing student-centered management experienced fewer behavioral problems and more productive academic behavior. Teachers facilitated peer collaboration, formative feedback, and dialogue-based interactions. This aligns with Yilmaz & Yilmaz (2021), who found that active learning and cooperative management strategies significantly improve classroom dynamics. Similarly, KnowledgeWorks (2021) describes how shared classroom ownership results in students holding each other accountable, leading to a more functional learning space. These findings highlight the practical, observable benefits of collaborative management: fewer conflicts, smoother transitions, and a more focused academic atmosphere. Thus, the shift from discipline enforcement to collaborative engagement is not just ideologically preferable—it is functionally effective in day-to-day classroom learning.

The reduction in behavioral issues and the rise in engagement observed in collaborative classrooms are rooted in the cultivation of self-regulated learning (SRL). As Wikipedia (2025) outlines, SRL involves goal-setting, self-monitoring, and reflective practices—many of which were visible during class observations. Students took leadership roles, evaluated group performance, and modified plans with teacher guidance. These practices are grounded in the social constructivist approach, where knowledge is co-constructed, and the classroom becomes a site of shared inquiry (APA, n.d.). The structure of such classrooms promotes autonomy and reflection, replacing external discipline with internal accountability. Therefore, the underlying structure is not just pedagogical but psychological it activates internal motivation systems in students, making them co-creators of classroom culture.

Documentation analysis revealed a direct correlation between collaborative strategies and academic improvement, especially in Qurdis (Qur'an Hadith) subjects. Students who participated actively in group discussions and peer mentoring also showed higher test performance. For example, documentation recorded a 75% increase in independent task completion following the implementation of autonomy-based learning tasks. These patterns echo research by Michigan Virtual Learning Institute (2021), which found that student-centered classrooms consistently outperform traditional models in both retention and understanding. Edutopia (2017) supports this, noting that autonomy and responsibility must be practiced, not preached. Therefore, documentation validates that collaborative management is not only functional—it measurably enhances learning outcomes.

The structural cause of improved student outcomes documented in Qurdis lessons lies in the systemic integration of feedback, peer support, and student agency. When students were given

meaningful roles and formative assessment opportunities, their engagement and comprehension improved. This reflects the mechanisms discussed by CEPR (2019) and Hockett & Doubet (2017), who argue that intrinsic motivation flourishes when learners feel a sense of control and purpose. Additionally, Fatimah & Rahman (2021) highlighted the moral and emotional dimensions of student-centered pedagogy in Islamic contexts—students thrive when learning environments are relational and respectful. Thus, the structure behind these results is not just about methods, but about building emotionally safe, intellectually rigorous classrooms that prepare students for lifelong learning.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the transformative power of student-centered classroom management in improving academic performance and student behavior in Islamic elementary schools. The transition from rigid, teacher-controlled environments to collaborative, student-driven approaches fosters greater engagement, autonomy, and motivation. The research revealed that when students are actively involved in rule-setting, task management, and classroom routines, they demonstrate stronger self-regulation, deeper understanding, and higher academic achievement. Teachers also evolve from enforcers to facilitators of learning, enabling more respectful, inclusive, and productive classroom cultures. The key lesson is clear: collaborative management not only functions as a discipline strategy but also serves as a vehicle for holistic student growth.

This research offers a significant scholarly contribution by integrating student-centered classroom management with measurable academic outcomes in the context of Islamic education. It advances pedagogical discourse by linking classroom structure to self-regulated learning and autonomy-based motivation theories. Methodologically, the study triangulates interviews, observations, and documentation to build a robust understanding of classroom dynamics. Thematically, it expands the conversation beyond moral education—commonly emphasized in madrasah literature—into practical, academic innovation. The research also contextualizes global best practices within a culturally grounded framework, affirming that collaborative education models can thrive in faith-based environments when adapted thoughtfully.

Despite its strengths, this study has limitations. It focuses on a single madrasah with a relatively small sample size, which may limit generalizability. The study also centers on upper-grade students, excluding younger learners whose developmental needs may differ. The qualitative approach, while rich in depth, does not track longitudinal academic progress. Future research should explore similar themes across diverse Islamic schools using mixed methods to measure long-term academic and behavioral outcomes. Studies that include different age groups, geographic regions, and cultural contexts would also enrich understanding and validate the scalability of student-centered management in broader educational settings.

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