

Transforming Challenges into Opportunities: Strategic Classroom Management in Islamic History Learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah

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Abstract

This study investigates strategic classroom management in the context of Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam (SKI) learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, with the aim of transforming behavioral challenges into opportunities for character formation. Using a qualitative case study approach at MI Miftahul Ulum 02 Klompangan, data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and documentation analysis. Findings reveal that current classroom management in SKI is largely teacher-centered, reactive, and disconnected from the values embedded in historical content. Teachers often rely on verbal control methods and show limited use of participatory or reflective strategies. Students tend to be passive and disengaged, with documentation practices focusing more on behavioral violations than positive reinforcement. This study argues that effective SKI learning requires a shift toward student-centered, value-integrated management strategies that promote moral reflection, collaborative learning, and behavioral ownership. When classroom management aligns with the ethical and narrative nature of Islamic history, it becomes a powerful tool for both discipline and spiritual development. The research highlights the need for teacher training, positive documentation systems, and interactive pedagogical models to create learning environments where SKI not only informs but transforms. These insights offer practical frameworks for managing Islamic classrooms more ethically and effectively in the 21st century.

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INTRODUCTION

The urgency to strengthen classroom management in Islamic History learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah arises from shifting student behavior patterns and increasing disengagement with historical content. In today's classrooms, teachers face challenges such as declining discipline, passive student attitudes, and a general lack of interest in Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam (SKI) (Fadila & Arifin, 2022). This condition is exacerbated by the growing influence of digital culture and shortened attention spans (Alghamdi, 2021), which reduce students' motivation to explore historical narratives in depth. Moreover, SKI is often perceived as monotonous or irrelevant to students' daily lives (Rahman & Yusuf, 2023), resulting in chaotic classroom atmospheres. These

challenges directly affect the quality of interaction, comprehension, and values transmission in Islamic History learning. Therefore, this research is crucial not only to identify the roots of these classroom disruptions but also to explore transformative strategies that can restore order, engagement, and moral reflection turning discipline problems into learning opportunities.

Previous studies have addressed classroom management broadly, emphasizing behavior control, teacher authority, and effective discipline (Suryani & Hamid, 2020). In Islamic education, research has focused on the teacher's role as a moral model and the importance of adab in maintaining classroom order (Ismail & Lubis, 2021). Meanwhile, studies on Islamic history teaching suggest that contextual and narrative approaches can enhance students' understanding (Alkhateeb, 2021). However, little research exists at the intersection of classroom management and SKI learning, especially in elementary Islamic schools. There remains a gap in understanding how history education can support classroom harmony and character development simultaneously. Moreover, few studies examine how SKI teachers adapt their strategies to 21st-century behavioral trends. This study addresses that gap by examining how classroom management in SKI can be transformed to be both effective and ethically grounded in the realities of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

This study aims to explore the classroom management strategies employed by Islamic elementary school teachers in delivering SKI lessons, particularly in the face of discipline-related challenges. It seeks to answer the question: How can classroom management in SKI learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah be transformed from a reactive to a strategic and value-oriented practice? The research investigates the underlying causes of classroom disruption, the methods currently used, and how these practices support or contradict the moral objectives of SKI education (Rahman & Yusuf, 2023). It also explores how teachers reinterpret their role not just as disciplinarians but as facilitators of cultural and character formation (Ismail & Lubis, 2021). This study thus positions SKI not only as a subject of historical knowledge but also as a moral compass within Islamic education one that should be managed with care, strategy, and spiritual purpose.

This study argues that classroom management in SKI learning must be reframed as a tool for ethical cultivation rather than mere behavioral control. Unlike technical subjects, SKI naturally carries moral and spiritual narratives that can guide behavior if taught meaningfully (Alkhateeb, 2021). However, rigid, lecture-based delivery often undermines the transformative potential of these narratives, leading to disengagement and behavioral resistance (Fadila & Arifin, 2022). The preliminary assumption is that when teachers apply student-centered, reflective, and value-integrated strategies, discipline improves, and students internalize lessons more deeply (Alghamdi, 2021). This implies that SKI, taught through strategic management, can create a learning space where order and ethics coexist—allowing students to not only understand Islamic civilization but embody its values within their classroom behavior and beyond (Suryani & Hamid, 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted at MI Miftahul Ulum 02 Klompangan, a public Islamic elementary school located in a rural setting, with students coming from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The school was purposively selected due to the unique dynamics observed in its classrooms, particularly in the subject of *Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam* (Islamic Cultural History), which plays a key role in character education but often encounters challenges in classroom management, such as low student participation and discipline issues. The unit of analysis in this study is the classroom management strategies employed by teachers during SKI lessons. A qualitative approach with a case study design was used to explore and understand the phenomenon in depth within its real-life educational context. The case study method allows for a flexible and comprehensive exploration of social and cultural complexities that shape classroom practices in Islamic primary education.

This study involved key informants who were directly engaged in the teaching and management of classrooms at MI Miftahul Ulum 02 Klompangan. Informants included the Principal, the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, homeroom teachers who deliver SKI lessons, and students from all grade levels, from grade I to VI. The principal and vice principal provided insights into school policies, disciplinary approaches, and the institution's vision for character-based education through SKI. Teachers shared practical information regarding classroom management strategies, instructional approaches, and their reflections on student behavior and engagement. Meanwhile, students from all grades contributed their perspectives on classroom atmosphere, rules and routines, teacher-student relationships, and their experiences in learning Islamic history. This inclusive, participatory approach allowed the researcher to gather data from different institutional levels structural, pedagogical, and experiential yielding a holistic view of classroom management practices.

To obtain rich and reliable data, this research employed three primary data collection techniques: direct observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observations were carried out in SKI classrooms to closely examine teacher and student behavior, interaction patterns, classroom climate, and how management strategies were applied in practice. In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing informants to share their thoughts and experiences reflectively while remaining aligned with the study's thematic focus. These interviews explored themes such as classroom routines, behavior management techniques, teacher values, and pedagogical challenges. Document analysis included the review of lesson plans (RPP), student attendance records, disciplinary logs, and character education activity sheets. Data triangulation across these three techniques ensured validity and helped the researcher cross-check findings from multiple perspectives and sources, thus enhancing the credibility and depth of the study.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three key stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In

the data reduction phase, information obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation was sorted, selected, and categorized according to thematic focuses such as discipline strategies, student participation, and SKI value integration. The data display stage involved organizing information into descriptive narratives, thematic tables, and direct quotes from participants to support interpretive clarity. The final stage, verification, was carried out throughout the research process, allowing for constant comparison between sources and reflective validation of emerging findings. This analytical process provided a structured yet flexible approach to capturing the real-world complexity of classroom practices while allowing space for discovery and iterative refinement.

To deepen the interpretation of the data, the study employed three complementary analytical approaches: content analysis, discourse analysis, and interpretive analysis. Content analysis was used to identify explicit and implicit messages found in lesson plans, interview transcripts, and classroom materials, such as the moral and instructional intentions embedded in teacher strategies. Discourse analysis examined how meaning is constructed through language in teacher-student communication, particularly in the way discipline, Islamic history, and classroom relationships are framed. Lastly, interpretive analysis aimed to understand the cultural, spiritual, and pedagogical contexts that influence classroom management practices. Together, these three analytical approaches enabled a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics within SKI classrooms, moving beyond description to offer reflective and applicable insights for improving classroom environments in Islamic elementary education.

RESULT

Interviews were conducted with the school principal, vice principal of curriculum, classroom teachers, and students from all grade levels. The data revealed that SKI teachers often face challenges such as lack of student focus, minor disruptions during lessons, and minimal active participation in discussions. Teachers typically rely on verbal approaches advice, light warnings, and verbal praise to maintain order. The principal stated that classroom management still leans toward a traditional model, focusing more on control than empowerment. The vice principal emphasized the importance of integrating historical values with character development. Students expressed enjoyment when given space to speak and take part, but they tend to be passive during lecture-based sessions. Overall, this data suggests a disconnect between the teachers classroom management approaches and the current students learning needs, which are more active, participatory, and responsive to value-based and interactive teaching models.

The interview data illustrate a recurring pattern of teacher-centered classroom interaction. Teachers predominantly act as the main source of information and behavior control, while students have little involvement in rule-setting or reflective activities. Classroom management strategies

mainly consist of verbal instructions and minor punishments, such as standing in front of the class or receiving a warning. Positive reinforcement is applied only in exceptional cases and lacks structure. The principal noted that Islamic values in SKI are emphasized in content but not consistently modeled in classroom management. Students shared that they felt more motivated and behaved better when teachers engaged them in discussion and shared stories in an engaging way. This pattern indicates that the lack of student involvement in classroom regulation contributes to a diminished sense of ownership over classroom rules and reduces intrinsic motivation to behave positively and learn responsibly.

Analytically, this pattern reveals that classroom management issues in SKI lessons stem from non-transformative approaches. Teachers have not yet redefined the classroom as a collaborative and reflective space, even though SKI has great potential for this. The persistent use of authoritative approaches is misaligned with the needs of modern learners, who require space for expression, dialogue, and recognition. A lack of teacher training in character-based and participatory classroom management contributes to this gap. Furthermore, the absence of structured integration between SKI values and behavioral development results in lessons that are cognitive rather than formative. Therefore, a paradigm shift is needed teachers should serve as facilitators of values and culture, not merely as content deliverers. When students feel they are part of the classroom system, they are more likely to take responsibility and feel intrinsically motivated to act with discipline and character.

Observations were conducted during four SKI learning sessions in grades III to VI. In each session, teachers typically began with a prayer and lesson overview, followed by 30 minutes of lecture. Classrooms were orderly at the beginning, but gradually became noisy mid-session. Some students lost focus, talked among themselves, or distracted peers. Few students asked questions or responded to the historical narratives being presented. Teachers tried to regain attention by calling names, giving verbal warnings, or asking students to be quiet. There were no signs of visual aids, educational games, or explicit praise for good behavior. The entire lesson focused on content delivery rather than behavior shaping. This data shows that while basic order was maintained, student engagement was low, and the classroom environment lacked meaningful connections between historical values and discipline.

The observed pattern shows that classroom management was more control-oriented than empowerment-focused. Teachers maintained order primarily through verbal strategies, but did not engage students in creative or participatory activities. There was little variation in instructional techniques no role plays, group discussions, or simulations to bring history to life. Students sat quietly but were passive. When the teacher spoke monotonously or failed to relate the lesson to students' lives, attention declined quickly. A lack of feedback or reinforcement for positive behavior was also evident; students who participated respectfully or responded accurately were not acknowledged. This suggests that classroom management lacked an emotional and character-

building dimension. Managing classrooms solely for order, without fostering meaning, results in students following rules out of obligation, not personal awareness or responsibility.

Analytically, the observation data suggest that SKI learning may fail to internalize moral values if not paired with reflective and creative management strategies. When teachers focus solely on content delivery and fail to relate historical values to students' current realities, the lesson becomes morally irrelevant. A lack of participatory strategies leads to student detachment they follow instructions without understanding the importance of order, responsibility, or Islamic values. This indicates the need for classroom management approaches that integrate historical narratives with character reflection. The classroom should serve as a social and educational space where Islamic history is not just taught but embodied. Without this integration, students remain passive recipients of knowledge rather than active agents in their moral development. Documentation analyzed includes student behavior logs, attendance records, and teacher journals over a three-month period. The data were categorized by behavior type, frequency, and teacher response. The table below summarizes the results:

BEHAVIOR TYPE	FREQUENCY	TEACHER RESPONSE
Active Participation	15 times	Praise and verbal encouragement
Disruptive Behavior	27 times	Warnings and seat relocation
Respectful Communication	12 times	Public appreciation in class
Late Attendance	18 times	Noted in parent-teacher communication book
Group Collaboration	9 times	Extra points awarded to group

The data show that negative behaviors were recorded more frequently than positive ones. Only two out of five behavior types consistently received positive reinforcement. Documentation served more as administrative record-keeping than as a developmental tool.

The documentation pattern indicates that teachers were more diligent in recording violations than acknowledging positive behaviors. Infractions like tardiness and classroom disruption were systematically documented, while cooperative and respectful behaviors were seldom recognized. There was no structured rubric for character assessment, and positive reinforcement was applied inconsistently. The communication book mainly recorded warnings rather than student achievements. This suggests that the documentation system focused more on control than on nurturing growth. As a result, documentation failed to serve as a reflective tool for students to understand and track their behavioral development. With a more strategic approach,

documentation could become a medium for motivating intrinsic growth and reinforcing positive behaviors through affirming and personalized feedback.

Analytically, this documentation pattern reveals that classroom management in SKI is still rooted in reactive approaches. Teachers are quicker to document misbehavior than to establish systems that cultivate and reinforce positive conduct. When documentation lacks a formative function, it becomes a formal report rather than a moral development tool. This contradicts the purpose of SKI, which should serve as a platform for integrating history and ethical values. Without documentation that encourages self-improvement and growth, SKI loses its formative impact. Therefore, the documentation system must be restructured to function as a moral and reflective tool supporting students in recognizing their strengths, correcting weaknesses, and connecting classroom behavior to the values of Islamic civilization.

DISCUSSION

The interview findings highlight a significant gap in classroom management strategies within the Islamic Cultural History (SKI) curriculum at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. This gap manifests as reduced student engagement and suboptimal character development, undermining the educational objectives of SKI. Effective classroom management is crucial for fostering a conducive learning environment that promotes both academic and moral growth. Studies have shown that well-structured classroom management enhances student discipline and participation, leading to improved learning outcomes (Effective Strategies in Classroom Management for Islamic Religious Education, 2023). The current reliance on traditional, teacher-centered approaches may limit opportunities for students to actively engage and internalize Islamic values. Therefore, addressing these management challenges is imperative to transform the classroom into a dynamic space that.

The root causes of these classroom management challenges can be traced to several interrelated factors. Firstly, a lack of professional development opportunities for teachers in modern pedagogical techniques hinders the adoption of student-centered learning approaches. Research indicates that teachers equipped with contemporary classroom management skills are better prepared to handle diverse student behaviors and learning needs (Teaching Management Strategies on 21st Century Islamic Education, 2021). Secondly, the existing curriculum may not provide sufficient guidance on integrating character education within the SKI lessons, leading to a disconnection between content delivery and value inculcation. Furthermore, cultural norms that emphasize rote learning over critical thinking and discussion contribute to passive learning environments. Addressing these underlying issues requires a comprehensive strategy that includes teacher training, curriculum reform, and a shift towards interactive teaching methodologies.

Observations reveal that the current classroom dynamics in SKI lessons are predominantly teacher-centered, resulting in limited student participation and engagement. This instructional style may impede the development of critical thinking and the internalization of Islamic values among students. Effective classroom management strategies that encourage active learning have been linked to improved student outcomes and a more positive classroom atmosphere (Effective Classroom Management as a Quick Solution to Improve Student Participation and Motivation, 2023). The absence of interactive elements such as group discussions, role-playing, and problem-solving activities in SKI lessons suggests a missed opportunity to make learning more relevant and engaging for students. Implementing these strategies could transform the learning experience, making it more effective in achieving both educational and character-building goals.

The observed teacher-centered approach in SKI classrooms is influenced by several factors. Traditional educational practices in some Islamic educational institutions prioritize content delivery over student engagement, leading to passive learning environments. Additionally, teachers may lack training in contemporary pedagogical methods that promote active learning and critical thinking. A study on classroom management in Islamic educational institutions highlighted that many educators continue to use conventional methods due to limited exposure to innovative teaching strategies (Classroom Management in Enhancing the Effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education Learning, 2023). Moreover, large class sizes and inadequate resources can constrain teachers' ability to implement interactive activities. Addressing these challenges necessitates targeted professional development, curriculum adjustments, and improved resource allocation to support more dynamic teaching approaches.

The analysis of documentation, including student behavior logs and attendance records, indicates a higher frequency of negative behaviors compared to positive ones. This trend suggests that current classroom management practices may be more reactive than proactive, focusing on correcting misbehavior rather than promoting positive conduct. Effective classroom management involves not only addressing negative behaviors but also reinforcing positive ones to create a supportive learning environment (Effective Classroom Management Strategies to Improve Student Discipline and Engagement in Islamic Education Lessons, 2023). The lack of structured positive reinforcement mechanisms may contribute to a classroom atmosphere where students are not sufficiently motivated to exhibit desirable behaviors, potentially hindering both academic performance and character development.

The predominance of negative behavior documentation can be attributed to several structural factors. Teachers may be more attuned to identifying and recording misbehaviors due to institutional policies that emphasize discipline and order. Additionally, there may be a lack of training on the importance of positive reinforcement and how to effectively implement it within the classroom setting. Research has shown that teachers who employ positive reinforcement strategies can significantly improve student behavior and engagement (Better Learning with

Positive Classroom Management, 2021). Furthermore, cultural expectations that prioritize corrective over affirmative feedback may influence teachers documentation practices. To shift this paradigm, it is essential to provide professional development that highlights the benefits of positive reinforcement and to create a school culture that celebrates positive student behaviors alongside academic achievements.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that classroom management in Islamic History (SKI) learning at *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* is still predominantly teacher-centered and reactive, often relying on verbal warnings and minimal student engagement. The findings highlight the mismatch between traditional discipline strategies and the needs of today's learners who demand participatory and value-integrated learning environments. A key lesson from this research is that Islamic history has the potential to be a transformative tool for character building when classroom management is designed to be reflective, inclusive, and dialogical. Therefore, rethinking classroom strategies is not merely about control but about fostering moral consciousness and student agency.

The strength of this research lies in its ability to bridge pedagogical theory with practical application by using a qualitative case study to explore classroom dynamics in a real educational context. It contributes new perspectives to Islamic education discourse by reframing classroom management as a character-building mechanism within the SKI (Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam) curriculum. By integrating content analysis, discourse interpretation, and observational insights, the study introduces a holistic framework for understanding how history education can serve both cognitive and moral functions. It also enriches the discussion on student-centered learning in Islamic schools, emphasizing the role of interactive and value-oriented strategies in cultivating discipline, participation, and reflective thinking. Thus, the research contributes to the development of a transformative model for managing Islamic classrooms in the 21st century.

Despite its insights, this study has several limitations. It is focused on a single school with a specific sociocultural context, limiting its generalizability to other educational environments. The study also concentrates solely on SKI subjects and classroom behavior, without analyzing long-term impacts on character formation. Furthermore, the data collection was qualitative, without the support of longitudinal or quantitative analysis to measure effectiveness over time. Future research is recommended to apply similar approaches in diverse school settings and age groups, using mixed methods to compare the efficacy of various classroom management models. Expanding the scope can help validate and refine the strategies proposed in this study.

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