

When Caring Is Not Enough: The Promise and Limits of Socio-Emotional Classroom Management in Islamic Education

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Abstract

Background: Although socio-emotional approaches are widely recognized as important for classroom management, limited research has examined how teacher-student relationships, emotional support, and behavioural regulation are enacted in everyday classroom practices. This gap is particularly relevant in Indonesian Islamic Education, where teachers are expected to foster not only academic achievement but also students' moral and socio-emotional development. Therefore, this study explores the implementation of socio-emotional classroom management and its role in supporting effective learning environments.

Purpose: This study aims to explore the implementation of socio-emotional approaches in classroom management within Islamic Education learning at Indonesian junior high schools and to identify their contributions and challenges in fostering effective learning environments.

Method: This study employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through non-participant classroom observations conducted in four seventh-grade Islamic Education classes and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and practices related to socio-emotional classroom management.

Findings: The findings revealed four major themes: positive teacher-student relationship building, teachers' emotional responsiveness in creating a supportive classroom climate, adaptive instructional practices that enhance student engagement, and challenges in managing student behavior through socio-emotional approaches alone. The study found that socio-emotional practices promoted student participation, emotional safety, and positive classroom interactions. Nevertheless, the absence of a structured behavior management system reduced the effectiveness of classroom discipline. These findings suggest that effective classroom management in Islamic Education requires the integration of socio-emotional support with systematic behavioral and instructional strategies.

Keyword: Socio-emotional approach; classroom management; social-emotional learning; Islamic education; student engagement.

INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged that classroom management plays a crucial role in determining both student learning outcomes and instructional effectiveness. Contemporary perspectives define classroom management not merely as maintaining discipline and order but as creating a learning environment that supports students' intellectual, behavioral, emotional, and motivational development. A meta-analysis by Korpershoek et al. (2016) demonstrated that effective classroom management



practices positively influence students' behavior, academic achievement, emotional well-being, and learning motivation. Similarly, classroom management has been identified as one of the key determinants of learning achievement in Islamic education, alongside students' attitudes and perceptions toward learning (Nugraha et al., 2025).

The significance of social and emotional aspects in the teaching-learning process is being emphasized more and more in recent educational studies. The focus of education has evolved from simply cognitive outcomes to students' holistic development with the advent of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). SEL fosters abilities that are critical for both academic performance and personal growth, including self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, and responsible decision-making (Mahoney et al., 2021). According to a thorough meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2011), school-based SEL interventions greatly enhance kids' behavior, social-emotional skills, attitudes toward learning, and academic achievement. In a more recent study, Cipriano et al. (2023) confirmed the efficacy of SEL interventions in a variety of educational contexts, emphasizing its role in favorable educational and developmental outcomes.

The importance of emotional intelligence in academic success is directly related to the increasing focus on socio-emotional approaches. Students' academic achievement and adjustment are regularly linked to emotional intelligence. Through a comprehensive meta-analysis, MacCann et al. (2020) discovered that academic achievement at all educational levels is significantly predicted by emotional intelligence. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that emotional intelligence interventions improve students' academic engagement, self-motivation, self-regulation, and empathy (Dev, Lababidi, et al., 2025; Dev, Varghese, et al., 2025). Teachers' emotional intelligence is equally crucial in the classroom. According to Valente et al. (2019), teachers who possess greater emotional intelligence typically exhibit better classroom discipline management, suggesting that emotional competence is a direct factor in classroom efficacy.

In Islamic education, the socio-emotional approach becomes even more pertinent. Islamic education seeks to promote intellectual, moral, emotional, spiritual, and social development all at once, in contrast to many educational fields that prioritize cognitive development. Islamic education places a strong emphasis on the integration of knowledge, values, character, and spirituality in order to promote holistic individual development (Abdalla, 2025). As a result, Islamic educators are supposed to promote students' moral and emotional growth through meaningful interactions and values-based learning opportunities in addition to imparting academic knowledge.

Recent evidence suggests that the integration of spiritual, social, and humanistic values represents a key component of effective Islamic education. Learning experiences grounded in reflection and value internalization have been shown to enhance students' personal development and learning engagement (Suhartini et al., 2025). Likewise, integrating religious dimensions with humanistic educational principles contributes to the development of positive personality traits and meaningful educational experiences among students (Rohmadani & Achadi, 2026). These findings highlight the importance of socio-emotional interactions as practical mechanisms through which Islamic educational values can be translated into classroom practice.

The significance of emotional and social aspects in the framework of Islamic education has been emphasized by a number of research. According to Alimni et al. (2022), Islamic education instructors are essential in helping students develop their emotional intelligence through constructive interpersonal interactions and helpful teaching methods. In a similar vein, Aliyah et al. (2024) presented an Islamic paradigm of social-emotional learning that supports Muslim students' growth by fusing religious principles with social-emotional skills. The significance of emotional, moral, and prosocial development in forming students' character and behavior is becoming more and more evident in research conducted in Islamic schools and Islamic boarding schools (Astuti et al., 2024; Hady et al., 2025; Yusuf & Muchsin, 2025). Additionally, Nasser and El-Bilawi (2022) contend that socio-emotional education is an essential basis for establishing inclusive, peaceful, and encouraging learning environments in Muslim schools.

Recent studies have expanded the discussion of Islamic education beyond character formation and emotional intelligence toward more comprehensive models of holistic student development. Social-emotional learning has been found to mediate the relationship between emotional intelligence and students' self-confidence, suggesting that socio-emotional competencies play a critical role in supporting students' academic and personal growth (Sarea et al., 2026). Furthermore, Islamic education has increasingly been viewed as a framework for integrating cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and social dimensions of learning, thereby promoting balanced learner development and meaningful educational experiences (Kurniawan, Bakti, et al., 2025; Kurniawan, Bulan, et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the view that socio-emotional development constitutes a central objective of contemporary Islamic education.

Empirical research on socio-emotional approaches in classroom management techniques is still scarce, despite the expanding corpus of literature on Islamic education, emotional intelligence, and social-emotional learning. Few studies examine

how socio-emotional interactions are implemented through classroom management strategies in regular Islamic education classes; the majority of existing research focuses on emotional intelligence, character education, religious beliefs, or academic outcomes. This disparity is especially noticeable in Indonesian secondary school, where teachers frequently deal with issues pertaining to classroom discipline, behavior control, student participation, and a variety of student traits.

Furthermore, previous studies have predominantly employed survey-based or intervention-based designs, providing limited insight into naturally occurring teacher-student interactions during classroom instruction. Consequently, there is still insufficient understanding of how socio-emotional classroom management functions in authentic learning environments and how it influences student engagement, classroom climate, and behavioral regulation. Addressing this gap is important for extending theoretical discussions on socio-emotional classroom management, particularly within faith-based educational contexts such as Islamic Education.

The novelty of this study lies in its examination of socio-emotional classroom management as it is enacted in real Islamic Education classrooms through direct classroom observation. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on emotional intelligence, character development, or learning outcomes, this study investigates how teachers build socio-emotional relationships, regulate student behavior, encourage participation, and create positive learning environments through everyday classroom management practices. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) How are socio-emotional approaches implemented in classroom management during Islamic Education instruction? (2) How do these approaches influence student engagement and classroom climate? and (3) What challenges do teachers encounter when applying socio-emotional classroom management strategies?

Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate socio-emotional strategies for classroom management in junior high school Islamic education instruction. Therefore, this study aims to investigate socio-emotional classroom management strategies in junior high school Islamic Education. Specifically, it examines how teachers foster socio-emotional relationships, regulate student behavior, encourage student participation, and create positive learning environments. By doing so, this study contributes to the growing literature on classroom management, social-emotional learning, and Islamic Education while providing practical implications for teachers and teacher education programs.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative single-case study design to investigate socio-emotional strategies in classroom management within Islamic education learning. A single-case study is considered appropriate because the research focuses intensively on one bounded system, namely classroom management practices within a specific Islamic junior high school context. The purpose is to generate an in-depth, holistic understanding of how socio-emotional interactions are constructed and implemented by teachers in real instructional settings.

The selected case is treated as a representative and revelatory case, as it reflects common challenges in Islamic education classrooms in Indonesia, particularly related to student engagement, emotional interaction, and behavior management in heterogeneous classroom environments. Through this design, the study aims to capture the complexity of teacher–student interactions that are embedded in daily instructional practices and cannot be adequately explained through surface-level observation or quantitative measurement alone.

This research was conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Yogyakarta, Indonesia, during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The school was selected as the research site based on several considerations. First, it is an Islamic-based junior secondary school that actively integrates character education and socio-emotional values within Islamic Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) learning. Second, preliminary observation indicated variation in student engagement levels and classroom behavioral dynamics, making it a relevant context for examining socio-emotional classroom management practices. Third, the school is accessible for sustained classroom observation, allowing in-depth qualitative data collection.

The participants in this study consisted of two Islamic Education (PAI) teachers and seventh-grade students involved in classroom learning activities. The teachers were selected based on the following criteria: (1) having at least two years of teaching experience in PAI, (2) actively implementing interactive or student-centered teaching strategies, and (3) being willing to be observed during classroom instruction. These criteria were used to ensure that the participants had sufficient pedagogical experience and demonstrated relevant instructional practices for analyzing socio-emotional classroom management.

The student participants were drawn from four seventh-grade classes, namely VII B, VII C, VII F, and VII H. The selection of these classes followed purposive sampling with specific criteria, including: (1) variation in student academic ability (high, medium, and low achievement levels based on teacher records), (2) differences in classroom interaction patterns observed during

preliminary visits, and (3) diversity in behavioral and engagement characteristics during PAI lessons. The inclusion of these varied classroom contexts was intended to capture a broader spectrum of socio-emotional interaction patterns across different learning environments.

The unit of analysis in this study focuses on socio-emotional classroom management practices implemented by PAI teachers during instructional processes. These include teacher–student communication patterns, emotional support strategies, classroom climate development, student engagement facilitation, behavioral regulation approaches, and interpersonal interactions occurring throughout the learning process.

Data were collected through non-participant classroom observations conducted during regular Islamic Education lessons. Observations were conducted on several occasions between May 2 and May 8, 2025. The researchers observed naturally occurring classroom activities without intervening in the instructional process.

The observation protocol was developed based on classroom management and socio-emotional learning literature. Observations focused on five dimensions: (1) Teacher-student interpersonal communication; (2) Emotional and responsive support; (3) Student engagement and participation; (4) Classroom behavior management; (5) Classroom climate and learning environment.

The main source of data was field notes. Detailed notes about teacher behavior, student reactions, classroom interactions, educational activities, and noteworthy incidents pertaining to socio-emotional classroom management techniques were taken during each observation session. Several classes with various learning environments were observed in order to bolster the findings' reliability. By using this method, researchers were able to find consistent socio-emotional management techniques across contexts and compare recurrent patterns.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021). The analysis involved several stages. To become comfortable with the data, all field notes were first examined several times. Second, significant sections pertaining to socio-emotional classroom management were found and first coded. Third, comparable codes were categorized into more general groups that represented common classroom management techniques and interaction styles. Fourth, these categories were expanded into broad themes that reflected the socio-emotional strategies teachers employed in the classroom.

Building teacher-student relationships, emotional responses, adaptive educational approaches, classroom behavior management, and student involvement are some of the major topics that emerged from the investigation. A thorough

comprehension of the observed events was produced by interpreting these themes in light of social-emotional learning theory and classroom management.

This study used the criteria of credibility, dependability, and confirmation to guarantee the validity of the results. Long-term fieldwork and repeated observations in several classes increase credibility. Throughout the research process, reliability is addressed by keeping thorough observation records and recording analytical techniques. Reflective note-taking and methodical coding techniques that reduce researcher bias during data interpretation increase confirmation.

The research was conducted with adherence to ethical norms. Prior to data collection, school administrators and classroom teachers granted permission to perform observations in the classroom. To maintain secrecy, the identities of the instructors and students were made anonymous. All information gathered was used solely for scholarly research, and participation in the observed learning activities remained optional.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of observations made in four Islamic Religious Education classrooms show that classroom management is significantly influenced by the socio-emotional approach. A good learning environment, increased student engagement, and support for students' emotional needs were all facilitated by the many forms of interpersonal interaction between teachers and students that were revealed by the observed teaching methods. The observations did, however, also highlight a number of difficulties teachers encounter in upholding discipline and regularly controlling student behavior. Four major themes that reflect socio-emotional classroom management strategies in Islamic Religious Education were found through a thematic analysis technique.

Table 1. Summary of Findings on the Socio-Emotional Approach in Classroom Management

Theme	Description	Evidence from Observation
Building Positive Teacher-Student Relationships	Teachers engage in friendly and mutually respectful interactions with students.	In Classes VII C, VII B, and VII F, teachers regularly invited students to answer questions, express opinions, and participate in learning activities. Teachers also monitored students individually during assignments and provided guidance when difficulties emerged.

Theme	Description	Evidence from Observation
Emotional Responsiveness and a Supportive Classroom Climate	Teachers demonstrate empathy and emotional awareness of students' learning needs.	Teachers provided individual assistance when students experienced difficulties and repeatedly checked students' understanding. In Class VII F, students who had not completed homework were guided to finish the task rather than receiving punitive consequences.
Adaptive Instructional Practices for Student Engagement	Teachers adapt their instructional approaches to the classroom situation.	Teachers combined lectures with questioning, reading activities, dialogue practice, Qur'anic recitation exercises, and icebreakers. These strategies were used to regain students' attention when engagement decreased.
Challenges in Managing Student Behavior Through a Socio-Emotional Approach	Teachers struggle to maintain discipline despite positive relationships.	In Class VII C, many students engaged in side conversations and unrelated activities. In Class VII B, classroom disruptions occurred when students disturbed classmates. In Class VII H, several students frequently left the classroom and showed limited attention to instruction. Teachers mainly relied on verbal reminders and warnings.

Building Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

One of the most noteworthy findings was teachers' ability to establish positive interpersonal relationships with students. Across all observed classrooms, teachers demonstrated friendly communication styles and maintained respectful interactions throughout learning activities. Students were regularly encouraged to ask questions, contribute to classroom discussions, and express their opinions regarding the lesson content.

Classroom observations revealed several practices that reflected these positive relationships. In Classes VII B, VII C, and VII F, teachers frequently invited students to answer questions and participate in discussions without fear of making mistakes. During individual and group assignments, teachers moved around the classroom to monitor students' progress, provided assistance when difficulties emerged, and offered encouragement to less active students. Teachers also addressed students politely and responded positively to their contributions during classroom interactions.

Additionally, teachers demonstrated attentiveness to students' concerns and learning challenges. Rather than adopting an authoritarian approach, they positioned themselves as facilitators who guided students throughout the learning process. This was evident when teachers provided individual explanations to students who

struggled to understand the material and offered additional support during classroom activities.

Observations further indicated that students generally responded positively to these interactions. Students appeared more willing to participate in classroom discussions, answer teachers' questions, and seek assistance when encountering learning difficulties. Such interactions contributed to a supportive learning atmosphere and encouraged greater student involvement during Islamic Education lessons.

Emotional Responsiveness and a Supportive Classroom Climate

Teachers' emotional responsiveness emerged as another important theme from the classroom observations. Across the observed classes, teachers consistently attempted to create a friendly and emotionally supportive learning environment. For example, in Class VII F, the teacher provided individual guidance to students who experienced difficulties completing learning tasks and repeatedly checked their understanding during classroom activities. Similarly, in Class VII C, the teacher approached students who appeared confused, offered additional explanations, and encouraged them to continue participating in the lesson. These practices demonstrate teachers' efforts to provide emotional and academic support during the learning process.

Instructors also show awareness of the emotional dynamics and atmosphere of the classroom. In certain circumstances, they modify their communication style to ease stress and preserve students' comfort while engaging in educational activities. Key elements of socio-emotional classroom management, in which emotional support is an essential component of the teaching process, are reflected in these practices.

When professors give constructive criticism and recognize students' efforts, the classroom environment is clearly favorable. These exchanges help students feel emotionally secure and like they belong, which motivates them to continue participating in class activities.

Adaptive Instructional Practices for Student Engagement

Additional observations revealed that teachers employed adaptive instructional strategies to maintain student engagement throughout the learning process. When students showed signs of distraction or declining attention, teachers adjusted their instructional approaches by shifting from lecture-based explanations to questioning activities, guided reading tasks, or classroom discussions. For example, in Class VII B, the teacher invited students to respond to questions related to the lesson after noticing reduced participation. Similarly, in Class VII F, the teacher alternated between explanation and interactive activities to encourage students to remain actively involved in learning.

In order to refocus students' attention and increase classroom excitement, one teacher demonstrated the usage of icebreaker exercises. In a different class, the teacher gave pupils rapid feedback while they practiced reciting the Qur'an aloud. Teachers' efforts to meet students' emotional and cognitive demands during learning are reflected in these instructional modifications. These adaptive strategies help sustain class involvement and lower disengagement, even if the overall teaching strategy is still teacher-centered. When educational activities entail direct connection and active engagement, students tend to pay more attention.

Observations also indicated that students responded positively to these adaptive instructional practices. When teachers incorporated questioning activities, discussions, or interactive exercises, students appeared more attentive and willing to participate in classroom learning. In several observations, previously passive students became involved in classroom interactions after teachers modified the learning activities. These patterns suggest that instructional flexibility contributed to maintaining students' engagement and reducing disengagement during Islamic Education lessons.

Challenges in Managing Student Behavior Through a Socio-Emotional Approach

Classroom behavior management is still a major concern, even with the positive interpersonal relationships that have been observed. Students who talk to their peers, lose focus, or engage in activities unrelated to learning commonly cause disturbances in some classrooms. Students occasionally enter and leave the classroom without authorization. For example, in Class VII C, some students continued talking to their peers while the teacher was explaining the material, whereas in Class VII H several students left their seats or entered and exited the classroom during the lesson.

Teachers mainly use verbal reminders and cautions to deal with this behavior. Nevertheless, no behavior contracts, formal classroom agreements, or organized methods of reinforcement were seen. As a result, student behavior is frequently only momentarily improved by disciplinary actions.

Observations further indicated that maintaining classroom discipline became more difficult in classes conducted during the final period of the school day. Students appeared more fatigued and less attentive, resulting in increased off-task behavior and reduced participation. Although teachers attempted to redirect students through verbal encouragement and reminders, classroom order was not always maintained consistently throughout the lesson.

Cross-Thematic Synthesis

The socio-emotional approach emerged consistently across the four observed classrooms as an important component of classroom management in Islamic Education. Teachers demonstrated understanding, kindness, and attentiveness to students' needs through supportive interactions and responsive communication. These practices contributed to the development of positive teacher–student relationships, a supportive classroom climate, and greater opportunities for student participation during learning activities.

At the same time, the observations indicated that socio-emotional practices were not consistently accompanied by structured behavior management strategies. Teachers primarily relied on verbal reminders and warnings when responding to disruptive behaviors. In several classrooms, students continued to engage in side conversations, display off-task behaviors, or show limited adherence to classroom expectations. Thus, the findings across themes highlight the coexistence of supportive socio-emotional interactions and ongoing challenges related to maintaining classroom discipline.

The findings collectively address the three research questions. The first research question is reflected in the identification of socio-emotional classroom management practices through relationship building, emotional responsiveness, and adaptive instruction. The second research question is addressed through evidence showing increased student participation and supportive classroom climates. The third research question is answered by the persistent difficulties teachers encountered in regulating student behavior despite positive socio-emotional interactions. Together, these findings suggest that socio-emotional classroom management contributes positively to Islamic Education learning environments yet requires complementary behavioral structures to sustain effective classroom discipline.

Discussion

Four major themes emerge from this study's investigation of socio-emotional approaches to classroom management in Islamic education: obstacles in controlling student conduct, positive teacher-student interactions, emotional responsiveness, and adaptive teaching practices. All of these results point to the importance of the socio-emotional aspect of classroom management strategies in Islamic education classes. However, the results also imply that, in the absence of systematic behavioral regulation and established classroom processes, good interpersonal interactions are not enough to guarantee effective classroom management.

The first study emphasizes how crucial good teacher-student interactions are to fostering a conducive learning environment. Students were able to actively participate

and express their learning challenges because of teachers' constant friendliness, openness, and respect, according to observations. This result is also in line with Madjid, Sutoyo, dan Shodiq (2021) study, which discovered that social support significantly affects how students develop their religious character and resilience. Positive teacher-student interactions can be viewed in the context of Islamic education as a type of social support that helps students feel safe, confident, and prepared to participate in educational activities. This argument is further supported by Munadi (2023), who contends that student development is shaped not only by formal instruction but also by social interactions and developmental experiences that foster confidence, responsibility, and personal growth. In Islamic education, positive teacher-student relationships may therefore serve as an important mechanism for promoting both academic achievement and character development.

One of the main objectives of Islamic education is to enhance students' religious character while fostering intellectual resilience through kind and encouraging interactions. These results provide credence to the idea that a successful learning environment is built on socio-emotional connections. Prior research has also highlighted how social-emotional learning enhances students' academic engagement, emotional health, and interpersonal skills, all of which lead to positive educational experiences (Abuameerh et al., 2024; Mahoney et al., 2021). Such interactions are especially crucial in Islamic educational environments since the educational process attempts to foster character, morality, and emotional development in addition to imparting knowledge (Abdalla, 2025). The greater objectives of Islamic education, which place an emphasis on comprehensive human development, are thereby reflected in the observed teacher-student relationships.

These results also suggest that the development of a supportive classroom environment is facilitated by instructors' emotional reactivity. When pupils struggle, teachers often offer emotional support, one-on-one help, and encouragement. The findings of Shodiq (2024), which show that religious education has a strategic role in developing students' emotional intelligence and resilience, are supported by these research findings. In addition to facilitating the learning process, instructors also assist children in developing the capacity to identify, control, and constructively express their emotions through compassionate interactions, emotional support, and attention to each student's unique requirements. Therefore, it is possible to see the socio-emotional approach found in this study as a practical application of initiatives to enhance emotional intelligence in Islamic education. This observation is consistent with the findings of Alimni et al. (2022), who discovered that Islamic education teachers are essential in helping students develop their emotional intelligence through

emotionally sensitive teaching methods and supportive interactions. Sarea et al. (2026) similarly reported that learners who receive adequate socio-emotional support tend to demonstrate stronger self-confidence and greater participation in learning activities. These findings indicate that teachers' emotional responsiveness functions not only as a classroom management strategy but also as an educational intervention that supports students' personal and academic development. In a similar vein, Nasser and El-Bilawi (2022) contend that socioemotional education is crucial to establishing inclusive and tranquil learning environments in Muslim schools. By showing how emotional responsiveness is performed in regular classroom management techniques rather than just through official socio-emotional learning programs, this study builds on existing findings.

From a theoretical standpoint, these results support the idea that effective teaching practices depend heavily on emotional competency. According to the theory of emotional intelligence, those who are emotionally competent are more adept at handling social circumstances, comprehending the feelings of others, and managing interpersonal interactions (Bar-On, 2006). This skill is essential in educational settings since teachers must constantly negotiate challenging social situations in the classroom. These results corroborate earlier research showing that emotional intelligence enhances classroom and discipline management efficacy (Valente et al., 2019). Socio-emotional classroom management should therefore be seen as an essential part of pedagogical competency rather than as an extra teaching tactic.

These results show that pedagogical abilities, which allow teachers to continuously assess and respond to students' learning requirements, are just as important to a teacher's capacity to make instructional modifications as subject matter competence. According to research by Shodiq and Najib (2023), teachers can make better instructional decisions to increase student engagement and the quality of the learning process by improving their formative assessment competencies. These methods demonstrate an understanding of the emotional and cognitive demands of students while they are learning. Khanif (2023) emphasizes that Islamic Religious Education teachers need to employ flexible and student-centered instructional strategies that respond to the characteristics of contemporary learners. Likewise, faith-driven collaborative learning has been shown to enhance participation, strengthen social interaction, and foster meaningful engagement with learning materials (Usman, 2025). These studies reinforce the present findings by suggesting that instructional flexibility plays an important role in sustaining students' emotional and cognitive involvement during classroom learning. Additionally, prior research has shown that emotional intelligence interventions enhance students' motivation, self-control, and

engagement (Dev, Lababidi, et al., 2025; Dev, Varghese, et al., 2025). Additionally, via the development of self-awareness and self-regulation skills, social-emotional learning has been demonstrated to enhance students' academic achievement and learning involvement (Cipriano et al., 2023; Durlak et al., 2011). These results imply that even very straightforward instructional modifications can act as socio-emotional support to maintain students' focus and engagement.

Notwithstanding these encouraging results, this study also revealed significant behavior management difficulties. In some of the observed classes, maintaining classroom discipline remained challenging even when teachers were effective in building strong relationships with kids. It was common to see students disrupting class, not paying attention, and not always following the rules. In the absence of formal behavior control mechanisms, teachers mostly depended on verbal cues and warnings. These results are especially important since they imply that complex classroom management issues may require more than just a socio-emotional approach.

These findings are somewhat at odds with earlier studies that demonstrate how social-emotional learning interventions can enhance student conduct and lessen disruptive behavior (Cipriano et al., 2023; Durlak et al., 2011). The fact that the socio-emotional behaviors seen in this study were carried out informally as opposed to using a methodical, institutionally supported SEL framework could be one explanation. As a result, children did not always absorb behavioral expectations or acquire consistent self-regulation abilities, even when they had favorable interpersonal encounters with teachers. This interpretation is consistent with the findings of Korpershoek et al. (2016), who concluded that rather than depending on a single strategy, effective classroom management necessitates the integration of preventive, instructional, behavioral, and relational techniques.

Research conducted in various Islamic educational contexts further demonstrates that religious culture and value internalization significantly contribute to students' behavioral and moral development. Pratama et al. (2025) found that religious culture strengthens the implementation of Islamic educational values in everyday life, while Irfani et al. (2025) highlighted the importance of educators in nurturing ethical behavior through moral education practices. Similarly, Suherman et al. (2026) reported that Islamic education teachers play a central role in developing students' *akhlakul karimah* through continuous guidance, exemplary behavior, and supportive interactions. These findings support the argument that socio-emotional classroom management should be understood within the broader framework of character and moral development in Islamic education.

These findings also reveal an important contextual dimension of Islamic education classrooms. Previous research has emphasized the integration of Islamic values, emotional development, and character formation as important educational goals (Aliyah et al., 2024; Hady et al., 2025; Ismail et al., 2024; Yusuf & Muchsin, 2025). However, current findings suggest that translating these values into effective classroom management practices remains a practical challenge. While teachers demonstrate affection, empathy, and moral guidance, these strengths are not always accompanied by systematic classroom structures that support behavioral consistency. This observation points to a potential gap between educational ideals and classroom implementation.

By showing that socio-emotional approaches serve as relational mechanisms that enhance classroom engagement and emotional safety, this study theoretically adds to the expanding body of research on socio-emotional classroom management. These results, however, also suggest that the integration of socio-emotional techniques with behavioral management systems and instructional planning is necessary for their efficacy. Consequently, it is more realistic to think of the relationship between socio-emotional learning and classroom management as complementing rather than substitutive.

These findings have a number of practical ramifications for Islamic education instructors and teacher preparation programs. Socio-emotional capabilities, such as empathy, interpersonal communication, emotional control, and relationship-building abilities, must first be strengthened in teacher training programs. Second, the combination of formal classroom management strategies, such as class agreements, behavioral expectations, and positive reinforcement systems, with socio-emotional methods should be emphasized in professional development programs. Third, Islamic education instructors must be motivated to employ instructional techniques that foster students' emotional and social growth while actively involving them. Such initiatives can help establish a behaviorally structured and emotionally supportive learning environment.

In addition, effective classroom management requires teachers to possess strong interpersonal communication skills. Studies have shown that classroom communication quality significantly influences student participation, learning motivation, and classroom climate (Deji-Afuye & Zhou, 2025). Therefore, teacher professional development programs should not only strengthen pedagogical competencies but also enhance teachers' socio-emotional communication skills. Schools should simultaneously provide learning environments that accommodate students' diverse individual characteristics and learning needs, particularly in Islamic

educational institutions where emotional, spiritual, and academic development are closely interconnected (Ratnawulan et al., 2026).

School administrators and education policymakers should also take note of these findings. Prior research has emphasized the significance of leadership and emotional control in creating a pleasant school environment (Toprak & Karakus, 2023). In order to support teachers, schools must implement institutional policies that foster healthy classroom cultures, teacher well-being, and social-emotional learning. Socio-emotional approaches might not become sustainable teaching methods without organizational support; instead, they might continue to rely on the efforts of individual teachers.

There are a few restrictions to be aware of. This study was limited to classroom observations and was carried out in a single school setting. As a result, these results could not accurately reflect socio-emotional classroom management strategies in different Islamic educational settings. Furthermore, the lack of teacher or student interviews in this study limited the investigation of participants' viewpoints on socio-emotional relationships and classroom experiences.

Future studies should examine socio-emotional classroom management in a variety of Islamic educational contexts, such as public schools, pesantrens, and madrasahs. Deeper understanding of how institutional culture affects socio-emotional behaviors can be gained through comparative research. In order to investigate the connections between socio-emotional strategies, classroom management efficacy, student engagement, and academic success, future researchers may also utilize mixed-methods designs. Longitudinal research is also required to investigate the long-term effects of prolonged socio-emotional treatments on kids' behavioral growth, self-control, and academic performance. A more thorough grasp of socio-emotional classroom management in the context of Islamic education will result from such studies.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that effective classroom management in Islamic Education cannot rely solely on socio-emotional support but should be understood as the integration of socio-emotional relationships, instructional adaptability, and systematic behavioral regulation. Through caring interactions, emotional responsiveness, and adaptive instructional practices, socio-emotional approaches contribute to the creation of supportive learning environments that foster students' engagement, emotional safety, and participation; however, their effectiveness in addressing behavioral challenges remains limited in the absence of structured classroom

procedures and clear behavioral expectations. These findings contribute to the development of socio-emotional classroom management literature by demonstrating that caring relationships function not merely as interpersonal strategies but as pedagogical mechanisms embedded within faith-based educational contexts where academic achievement, character formation, emotional development, and spiritual values are pursued simultaneously. Accordingly, Islamic Education teachers are encouraged to strengthen socio-emotional competencies alongside evidence-based behavior management practices, while teacher education institutions and professional development programs should integrate both domains in preparing teachers for increasingly complex classroom environments. Schools and educational policymakers should also provide institutional support that enables the implementation of integrated socio-emotional classroom management approaches. Nevertheless, this study was limited to a single Islamic junior high school context and relied primarily on classroom observations, which may restrict the transferability of the findings to other settings. Future research is therefore recommended to investigate socio-emotional classroom management across diverse Islamic educational contexts, including madrasahs, pesantrens, and public schools, through comparative, mixed-methods, or longitudinal designs to further refine integrated classroom management models that are both theoretically robust and practically relevant to the advancement of Islamic Education.

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