



Challenges and Strategies of Classroom Management in Teaching and Learning at Elementary School

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-04-22 Revised: 2026-05-04 Accepted: 2026-06-16 Keywords: classroom management, challenges, strategies, student attitudes, teaching and learning. DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.10270 Corresponding Author: Munisa Imamah munisaimamah.2023@student.uny.ac.id Master of English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Languages, Arts and Cultures, Yogyakarta State University, Yogyakarta	<i>Classroom management is essential to ensure effective teaching and learning, especially at the elementary level where students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive development are still evolving. Although numerous studies have discussed classroom management techniques in general, limited research has focused on how elementary school teachers in post-pandemic contexts manage behavioral, motivational, and environmental challenges within diverse classroom settings. This gap highlights the need for deeper understanding of teachers' real experiences and adaptive strategies in managing classrooms effectively. This study aims to identify the main challenges of classroom management and the strategies teachers use to address them. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were gathered from elementary school teachers through interviews, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's framework. The results show that challenges arise from student factors (low motivation, disruptive behavior), teacher factors (limited training, workload), and environmental conditions (large classes, lack of facilities). Teachers responded with proactive strategies such as clear rules, positive reinforcement, engaging activities, and effective communication. The study concludes that successful classroom management requires adaptive, preventive, and responsive approaches aligned with students' developmental needs, offering both theoretical and practical contributions for improving learning environments.</i>

1. Introduction

Classroom management in elementary schools is one of the most fundamental aspects in ensuring the success of the learning process. Teachers not only serve as conveyors of material but also as managers of an effective and conducive learning environment (Jumao-as 2025). A good learning environment encourages student engagement, improves discipline, and supports the achievement of academic and social goals. According to Evertson & Weinstein (2006), classroom management encompasses a set of strategies and activities that teachers use to control student behavior and create a positive learning atmosphere. In elementary schools, teachers' ability to manage classrooms becomes even more important due to the dynamic nature of young children, who are easily distracted and require different guidance and pedagogical approaches compared to other levels of education.

Research findings in Indonesia indicate that effective classroom management has a positive correlation with student learning outcomes. Safitri & Ratnasari (2025) found that implementing effective classroom management strategies significantly improved student learning outcomes in English at As-Sunniyyah Kencong Elementary School, particularly in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. Similar findings were reported by Wijaya, Marini, and Zulela (2023), who demonstrated that implementing interactive and enjoyable classroom management at SD Mesjid Priyai, Serang, directly increased student motivation to learn. However, many teachers still face challenges in maintaining classroom order, managing student behavior, and adjusting teaching methods to the needs and differences in student characteristics. Limited facilities and infrastructure, cramped classrooms, and high administrative burdens often exacerbate these challenges.

The main problem in this context is the difficulty teachers face in balancing student behavior management with meaningful learning. Many teachers report that their teaching time is reduced because they have to deal with disruptive student behavior (Putra and Yanto 2025). Differences in student character, abilities, and backgrounds also require the application of flexible and adaptive management strategies. In addition, there is still a gap in previous research, as most studies focus solely on the effectiveness of classroom management strategies, without delving deeply into teachers' subjective experiences in dealing with classroom dynamics in elementary schools. Thus, this research is important to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the fundamental challenges faced by teachers in the field.

The urgency of this research is even greater given the paradigm shift in education after the COVID-19 pandemic, which requires teachers to adapt to new learning models, such as blended learning and the use of digital technology. These changes have an impact on student interaction patterns, learning attention, and overall classroom dynamics (Adsız and Dinçer 2025). In addition, efforts to improve the quality of basic education in Indonesia require teachers to have high competence in classroom management, as classroom management has been proven to be a key factor that influences learning effectiveness (Marzano, 2011).

Theoretically, this study refers to Kounin's (1970) concept of classroom management, which emphasizes the importance of with-it-ness, overlapping, and ripple effect, as well as Evertson & Weinstein (2006) theory, which combines preventive, supportive, and corrective strategies in managing classroom dynamics. This approach is also reinforced by the effective learning model of Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1993), which states that classroom management is the most direct factor influencing student learning outcomes in schools.

Classroom management itself encompasses three main dimensions, namely preventive, supportive, and corrective strategies. Preventive strategies include planning classroom rules and procedures before learning begins. Supportive strategies focus on positive relationships between teachers and students, providing motivation, and reinforcing good behavior. Corrective strategies are used to deal with deviant behavior effectively. Research by Hasanah et al (2024) shows that the use of positive reinforcement and systematic learning environment management can significantly reduce disruptive behavior and increase student participation in class. However, the implementation of these theories is greatly influenced by local contexts such as school culture, student character, learning facilities, and teacher workload, so strategies that are effective in one school may not necessarily be successful in another school.

This study uses the conceptual framework of Evertson & Weinstein (2006), which emphasizes the importance of planning, prevention, and handling in classroom management, as well as the school learning model of Wang et al (1993), which places classroom management as a dominant factor in the learning process. Using a qualitative approach, this study will explore in depth the experiences of teachers in facing classroom management challenges during the learning process in elementary schools. Through interviews, observations, and document analysis, this study aims to identify the types of challenges that arise, their causes, and the adaptive strategies applied by teachers in creating a conducive learning atmosphere.

Overall, the main objective of this study is to identify and describe the challenges teachers face in managing classrooms during the learning process in elementary schools, and reveal the strategies teachers use to overcome them. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the study of classroom management in the context of basic education while testing the relevance of classical classroom management theory to practice in the field. Practically, the results of this study are expected to provide concrete recommendations for teachers on applying effective classroom management strategies, for principals on developing professional training, and for education policymakers on designing policies that support improving learning quality in elementary schools.

2. Method

The research method used in this article is a descriptive qualitative approach, which aims to explore in depth the real experiences of elementary school teachers in managing classrooms. This approach was carried out by exploring the meanings, perceptions, and strategies of teachers through interactions in their natural environment (Miles and Huberman 1994). The research subjects consisted of three English teachers at a public elementary school in Jember, with the criterion of having at least two years of teaching experience. Purposive sampling was used to select informants relevant to the research objectives—namely, teachers who actively managed classrooms and had experience teaching English at the elementary level. Primary data sources were obtained from semi-structured in-depth interviews that explored the challenges, contributing factors, and strategies of teachers (Merriam and Tisdell 2016).

Data collection techniques consisted of semi-structured interviews, which allowed researchers to obtain detailed narratives based on prepared interview guidelines, as well as secondary data in the form of literature and related education policies. After data collection, analysis was conducted using the Miles & Huberman (1994) interactive model—covering reduction (selecting and summarizing raw data), display (presenting data in tables, narratives, and thematic matrices), and conclusion drawing/verification (drawing preliminary conclusions and conducting verification through triangulation of sources and techniques (Miles and Huberman 1994; Siregar, et al 2023). With this procedure, this study

seeks to achieve valid and reliable findings through a systematic process that enhances the credibility, dependability, and transferability of the findings (Bradshaw and Hadfield 2016).

The following table describes the data collection techniques applied in this research:

Data Collection Techniques	Data Sources	Type of Data/Focus of Collection	Implementation Details
Semi-structured interview	Elementary school teachers (3 people)	Perceptions of experiences, challenges, and strategies in classroom management	Conducted online, recorded, and transcribed verbatim.
Document and literature studies	School policies, books, scientific articles	Policy context, classroom management practices, and theoretical support.	As secondary data and triangulation sources

Table 1: Data Collection Technique

Research Focus	Main Findings	Brief Descriptions
Teachers' challenges	Students' active behaviour and difficulty in maintaining discipline and Low socio-economic background of students' families. High administrative workload and limited school facilities. Younger students are easily distracted.	Teachers struggle to maintain learning focus and class order due to the playful nature of young learners and heavy administrative tasks. Family support and school resources significantly influence students' motivation and behaviour in class.
Teachers's strategies	Interactive learning (games, songs, drawing). Reward system (praise, stars, small gifts). Ice-breaking and emotional engagement activities. Personal approach to students.	Teachers apply preventive and creative strategies to maintain a positive and engaging classroom environment.

3. Result

The Table 2: Research Findings on Elementary School Teachers' Classroom Management.

This study aims to identify and describe the challenges teachers face in classroom management, analyze the contributing factors, and reveal the strategies used by elementary school teachers to overcome these challenges. Data were obtained through in-depth

interviews with three elementary school English teachers (Ms. V, Mr. T, and Ms. N) in the Jember region with more than two years of teaching experience. The analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

Teachers' Challenges in Classroom Management

The results of the study show that all participants faced relatively similar challenges, particularly in terms of student behavior, administrative burdens, and external support from families. In terms of behavior, teachers revealed that elementary school students are active, easily bored, and often lose focus. Teacher T said that minor arguments occur in the classroom almost every week, while Teacher N explained that lower grade students are often distracted by trivial things such as broken pencils or friends talking loudly. This shows that elementary school students are still in the stage of learning through concrete experiences (learning by doing). They need a more visual, active, and fun approach so that they do not lose focus. If the methods used are monotonous, students easily lose focus and cause a commotion.

These findings indicate that behavioral and concentration problems are common characteristics of early childhood development. This is in line with Kounin's (1970) view, which emphasizes the importance of teachers' withitness or situational awareness of classroom dynamics to prevent disturbances before they develop into serious problems. Effective teachers not only reprimand, but are also able to read the early signs of disturbance and intervene in a timely manner.

In addition to student behavior, administrative burdens were a challenge mentioned by all participants. Teacher V highlighted that excessive administrative work made it difficult for her to focus on her students. This finding reinforces the results of Evertson and Weinstein's (2006) research, which explains that classroom management is not only about student behavior but also includes balancing bureaucratic demands and pedagogical practices. Heavy administrative burdens can reduce the time teachers have for reflection and interaction with students. Institutional factors such as the availability of facilities also affect the effectiveness of classroom management. Teacher V faced limitations in digital resources, while Teacher Nurul, who taught at a school with projectors and Chromebooks, was able to create interactive learning through videos and online quizzes. This difference shows that technology can be an important supporting factor in overcoming student boredom while improving classroom management.

Externally, low family support is also a significant obstacle. Teacher Taufiq stated that some passive students come from families that do not pay enough attention to learning at home. Teacher N, who teaches in a rural area, expressed a similar view, saying that some parents do not yet understand the importance of involvement in their children's education. This phenomenon supports the theory of Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1993), which states that success in learning at school is greatly influenced by social environment and family support factors. Students from harmonious families with strong parental support show better motivation and discipline than students who receive less attention at home. These findings are in line with the results of research by Wang et al. (1993), which emphasizes that family variables have a strong correlation with motivation and learning outcomes.

Teacher Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

All three teachers demonstrated adaptive and creative strategies for managing their classrooms. Key strategies included interactive learning, strengthening motivation through a reward system, ice-breaking activities, and a personalized approach.

Teachers V and T integrated games, drawing, and singing into English lessons so that students felt they were learning while playing. This strategy was effective in maintaining student engagement and enthusiasm, as well as supporting the principles of momentum and group focus proposed by Kounin (1970)—namely, maintaining continuity in learning activities and group focus so that they are not easily disrupted.

Meanwhile, Teacher N implements a reward system in the form of stars and small gifts to increase students' intrinsic motivation. This approach is in line with the theory of positive reinforcement in social learning psychology, where rewarded behavior tends to be repeated. Giving praise and symbols of achievement has been proven effective in building discipline without creating pressure.

In addition, teachers also implement ice-breaking activities such as singing or light games when students begin to lose focus. This strategy not only maintains a conducive classroom atmosphere, but also serves as a form of prevention against potential learning distractions.

N emphasized the importance of a personal approach to students with problems. She prefers to talk to them one-on-one so that they feel valued and not humiliated. This humanistic approach strengthens the social-emotional relationship between teachers and students and reflects the principles of proactive classroom management as described by Evertson and Weinstein (2006).

4. Discussion

Overall, the results of this study indicate that effective classroom management in elementary schools requires a combination of prevention, personal attention, and pedagogical innovation. Student behavior challenges cannot be resolved solely through rules or punishments, but rather by creating meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences.

These findings reinforce Kounin's (1970) theory that good classroom management focuses on prevention through situational awareness and smooth activity management. In addition, these findings confirm Evertson and Weinstein's (2006) idea that the social-emotional relationship between teachers and students is at the core of effective classroom management. Support from families and the school environment, as described by Wang et al. (1993), has also been shown to influence the success of teachers' strategies in maintaining order and student motivation.

From a practical perspective, the results of this study indicate the need for ongoing training for elementary school teachers in classroom management, particularly in interactive approaches and positive reinforcement strategies. Schools are also advised to reduce teachers' administrative burdens so that teaching time and interaction with students can be optimized. In addition, improvements in digital learning facilities will support innovation in classroom management that is appropriate for the characteristics of elementary school children.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This study has limitations because it only involved three participants and used interview techniques without direct observation. Therefore, future studies are recommended to increase the number of participants from various regions and conduct classroom observations to strengthen the validity of the results. Further studies can also examine the long-term effectiveness of reward and ice-breaking strategies on behavioral changes in elementary school students.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the main challenges in classroom management in elementary schools include active and uncontrollable student behavior, high administrative workload for teachers, and low family support for children's learning processes. The main contributing factors stem from the developmental characteristics of early childhood students, the socioeconomic background of families, and limited school facilities. Through adaptive strategies such as interactive learning, reward systems, ice-breaking activities, and personal approaches, teachers are able to create a conducive and enjoyable learning atmosphere and strengthen social-emotional relationships with students. These findings expand the understanding of classroom management theories by Kounin (1970), Evertson & Weinstein (2006), and Wang et al. (1993) by emphasizing the importance of preventive, humanistic, and contextual dimensions in classroom management at the elementary school level.

Socially and culturally, these results emphasize that successful classroom management is not only determined by the role of teachers, but also by family support and a collaborative learning environment. This study has limitations in terms of the number of participants and the narrow scope of the context, so further studies are recommended to expand the sample, conduct direct observations, and examine the long-term effectiveness of classroom management strategies in various educational settings.

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that elementary school teachers strengthen their classroom management competencies through ongoing training that emphasizes preventive strategies, interactive learning, and strengthening student motivation based on a humanistic approach. Schools and education policymakers need to reduce teachers' administrative burdens and improve digital learning facilities to support the implementation of creative methods that are appropriate for the characteristics of early childhood students.

For academics, this research can be used as a basis for developing a contextual and field practice-based classroom management training model. Future researchers are advised to expand the number of participants, involve classroom observation, and use data triangulation methods to ensure more valid and comprehensive results. A more in-depth exploration of the relationship between family support, social environment, and teacher strategies is also needed to enrich the understanding of classroom management dynamics in various elementary education contexts.

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