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## Efforts to Improve Students' Disciplinary Character by Implementing Morning Assembly: Action Research at MIS AL-Fatah Siiyang

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**Abstract:** This study aims to improve students' disciplinary character through the implementation of morning assemblies at MIS AL-Fatah Siiyang. Discipline is a fundamental aspect of character education that significantly influences students' academic and social development. However, observations in the initial stages of this research revealed that many students lacked punctuality, failed to follow school rules consistently, and showed limited engagement in morning routines. Therefore, a classroom action research (CAR) design was employed, consisting of two cycles with stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The participants in this study were 25 students in the fifth grade during the 2024/2025 academic year. Data were collected using observation sheets, field notes, interviews, and documentation, and were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The findings indicate that the implementation of morning assemblies significantly improved students' disciplinary behaviors. In the first cycle, students began to show improvements in punctuality and participation, but inconsistencies were still noted. After adjustments and enhancements in the second cycle including more structured routines, motivational messages, and active student involvement the number of students arriving on time increased from 56% to 88%, while adherence to school rules rose from 62% to 91%. In addition, teachers reported improved student attitudes, such as respect, responsibility, and cooperation. These results suggest that morning assemblies, when implemented consistently and meaningfully, can serve as an effective strategy to foster discipline among elementary school students. In conclusion, this study emphasizes the importance of integrating character education into daily school routines. The morning assembly, as a simple yet impactful practice, offers a strategic platform to shape students' behavior and instill positive values from an early age. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on character development in Islamic elementary schools and offers practical insights for educators seeking to enhance student discipline through school-wide initiatives.

**Keywords:** Disciplinary character, morning assembly, character education.

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### INTRODUCTION

Discipline is one of the core pillars of character education that shapes not only students' academic performance but also their overall behavior and personality development. In the context of primary education, instilling discipline from an early age is essential to foster

responsible, respectful, and self-regulated learners (Lickona, 2014). Schools play a vital role in supporting this process by integrating disciplinary values into the daily routines of students.

Over the last decade, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of character education in formal education settings, particularly in elementary schools. According to Berkowitz and Bier (2017), effective character education must be intentionally designed and embedded in school culture and daily activities. However, many schools still face challenges in operationalizing such values in practical and sustainable ways, especially in low-resource or rural contexts.

One approach that has gained renewed attention is the implementation of structured morning assemblies. Morning assemblies are daily school-wide gatherings that serve as platforms for delivering announcements, moral messages, and setting the tone for the day (Jones & Bouffard, 2015). Despite their common use, little research has empirically examined their role in promoting students' disciplinary behavior, particularly in Islamic educational contexts.

In Indonesia, particularly in *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (Islamic elementary schools), morning assemblies are often treated as ceremonial routines with limited pedagogical intent. While they offer potential for character development, their implementation frequently lacks consistency, structure, and integration with broader educational goals (Setiawan, 2020). This has resulted in a gap between the intended function of the assembly and its actual impact on students' behavior.

A preliminary observation at MIS AL-Fatah Siiyang revealed that students frequently arrived late, failed to wear proper uniforms, and often disregarded school rules. These behaviors indicated a lack of internalized discipline and called for a systematic intervention that could align daily routines with character development objectives. The morning assembly was identified as a promising, low-cost strategy to address this issue.

Existing studies have explored various strategies to instill discipline in students, including rule reinforcement, positive behavior support, and teacher modeling (Sugai & Simonsen, 2015). However, few studies have examined school-wide rituals, such as morning assemblies, as platforms for promoting character values. Moreover, there is a scarcity of classroom action research focusing on how the transformation of these daily routines can foster student discipline in Islamic school settings.

The current study seeks to fill this gap by systematically investigating the impact of structured morning assemblies on students' disciplinary behavior. Unlike prior research that often isolates discipline as an outcome of classroom management or teacher authority (Bear et al., 2017), this study considers a more communal, participatory approach grounded in daily school culture.

The novelty of this research lies in its integration of morning assemblies as a pedagogical tool, not merely as a school ritual. By designing structured activities, motivational messages, student-led segments, and value-based reflections, the study repositions the assembly as an intentional space for behavioral transformation. This perspective aligns with the idea of "every moment in school as a teachable moment" (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2014).

Furthermore, this study applies a classroom action research (CAR) methodology, which enables iterative reflection and improvement across cycles of intervention. This participatory model empowers teachers and school leaders to assess, adjust, and refine practices in response to real-time observations and student feedback (Mertler, 2016). It also ensures that the intervention is contextually grounded and responsive to the specific challenges faced at MIS AL-Fatah Siiyang.

By emphasizing student involvement during morning assemblies—such as role playing, leading prayers, or sharing personal reflections—the study promotes student agency and engagement. This participatory approach is consistent with recent findings suggesting that student-led initiatives are more likely to sustain positive behavioral outcomes (Waters & Loton, 2019).

The cultural and religious setting of the school also adds an important dimension to this study. Islamic values, which are deeply embedded in the curriculum of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, provide a rich framework for reinforcing discipline through moral teachings and religious observances. Thus, the morning assembly becomes not only a secular space but also a spiritual one, reinforcing both civic and religious dimensions of discipline.

This study also responds to the increasing need for evidence-based practices in character education. As global education systems grapple with moral and behavioral issues among youth, there is a demand for interventions that are practical, scalable, and rooted in everyday school practices (UNESCO, 2021). The findings of this study aim to contribute to that discourse by offering a feasible model that can be replicated in similar educational settings.

Another unique contribution of this research is its focus on a rural Islamic school in Indonesia, a context often underrepresented in international literature. By documenting the processes and outcomes in this specific setting, the study adds diversity to the global understanding of character education implementation across varied educational systems.

In summary, this research addresses a clear gap in the literature by exploring the role of morning assemblies in improving students' disciplinary behavior, using a classroom action research approach in an Islamic school context. The study offers both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of character education.

This research aims not only to improve student behavior but also to strengthen the overall learning environment at MIS AL-Fatah Siiyang. A disciplined, respectful student body sets the foundation for academic success, social harmony, and long-term character development.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a classroom action research (CAR) design to investigate the effectiveness of morning assemblies in improving students' disciplinary behavior at MIS AL-Fatah Siiyang. CAR is a qualitative-quantitative research method that allows for practical, iterative improvement of educational practices through cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection (Mertler, 2016). This method was chosen because it emphasizes active participation and reflection from both the teacher and the students, enabling continuous refinement of interventions.

The study was conducted at MIS AL-Fatah Siiyang, an Islamic elementary school located in a rural area of Indonesia. The school has a student population of approximately 200 students, with diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The participants of this study were 25 fifth-grade students (aged 10–11) from one class. These students were selected based on their observed need for improvement in disciplinary behavior, such as frequent tardiness, non-compliance with school rules, and lack of involvement in school activities. The sample size was purposively chosen to ensure a manageable group for detailed observation and intervention.

The research was carried out in two cycles, each consisting of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The first cycle focused on introducing the morning assembly as a structured activity with specific objectives aimed at improving punctuality, adherence to school rules, and active participation. The second cycle involved refining the strategies based on the findings from the first cycle and incorporating more student-centered activities.

During the planning stage, the morning assembly routine was designed to include activities such as daily announcements, motivational speeches, Islamic values-based reflections, and student participation through role-playing or sharing personal stories. The primary focus was to create an environment where students felt engaged and motivated to adhere to school rules. In the action stage, the planned morning assembly activities were implemented daily for a period of six weeks in each cycle. Each assembly lasted approximately 30 minutes, and students were encouraged to actively participate in

various segments, including reciting prayers, giving short speeches, and leading discussions on topics such as respect, responsibility, and cooperation.

The observation stage involved closely monitoring students' behavior during the morning assemblies and throughout the school day. Observation tools such as checklists and field notes were used to record students' punctuality, adherence to school rules, and participation in the assembly activities. Teachers also noted any changes in students' attitudes and behavior during classroom interactions. After each cycle, teachers and researchers conducted reflective discussions to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. Feedback was gathered from students through informal interviews and surveys, allowing for an understanding of their perspectives on the morning assembly and its impact on their behavior. Based on this reflection, adjustments were made to improve the activities in the subsequent cycle.

Data for this study were collected through both qualitative and quantitative methods. The primary data sources included observation sheets, field notes, interviews, surveys, and documentation. The observation sheets were used to record the students' behavior during the morning assemblies and throughout the school day, focusing on punctuality, adherence to rules, and active engagement. Teachers and researchers maintained detailed field notes on the implementation of the morning assembly activities, including any challenges faced and students' responses to different activities. At the end of each cycle, students were interviewed, and surveys were administered to gather their feedback on the morning assembly activities. Questions focused on their perceived impact of the assemblies on their discipline and behavior. Additional data were collected through school records, such as attendance logs and reports on disciplinary incidents, to assess changes in punctuality and rule adherence.

The collected data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative data from field notes and interviews were analyzed thematically to identify common patterns in students' perceptions and experiences. Quantitative data, such as attendance rates and rule adherence, were analyzed using descriptive statistics to compare pre- and post-intervention behavior. To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, multiple data sources were used, including direct observation, student surveys, and teacher reflections. Triangulation was employed to cross-check findings and ensure consistency across different data sources (Cohen et al., 2017). Additionally, the researcher maintained a reflective journal throughout the study to track personal biases and enhance the transparency of the research process.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the school administration, and informed consent was secured from all participants and their parents. Students were assured of confidentiality, and their participation was voluntary. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. The study adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving minors, ensuring that students' rights and well-being were prioritized.

## **RESULTS**

The results of this study reveal a significant improvement in students' disciplinary behavior following the implementation of structured morning assemblies. Data were collected over two cycles, and the results are presented through qualitative observations and quantitative measures of punctuality, adherence to school rules, and student participation during the morning assemblies.

At the onset of the study, the baseline data indicated that 40% of the students were frequently late to school, with an average tardiness rate of 3–5 times per week. Additionally, 35% of the students had inconsistent adherence to the school's dress code and other behavioral expectations, such as following instructions during class and morning assemblies. Teachers noted that student participation during morning assemblies was minimal, with most students showing passive involvement. Only 20% of students



actively participated in discussions or led activities. These initial observations served as the benchmark against which changes in student behavior were measured.

In Cycle 1, the morning assemblies were structured with a clear focus on promoting punctuality, adherence to school rules, and encouraging active student involvement. Each assembly was planned to include motivational speeches, group activities that emphasized Islamic values, and student-led segments, such as prayer recitations and short presentations on character development. Teachers observed a gradual increase in punctuality in the first cycle, with tardiness rates reducing from an average of 3–5 times per week to 1–2 times per week. This reduction in tardiness was accompanied by a noticeable improvement in students' adherence to the school's dress code, with only 15% of students failing to comply with the dress requirements by the end of Cycle 1. The improvement in punctuality and dress code adherence indicated a positive shift in student discipline.

The students' active participation in the morning assemblies also showed a marked increase. By the end of Cycle 1, 60% of students were actively involved in various aspects of the morning assembly, such as leading prayers, giving speeches, and participating in group discussions. This engagement was measured by both teacher observation and student self-report surveys conducted after each assembly. A survey administered to students at the end of Cycle 1 revealed that 75% of them felt more motivated to adhere to the school's behavioral expectations because of their participation in the morning assemblies. This sense of responsibility was reinforced by their roles in leading segments of the assembly and contributing to discussions on values such as respect, responsibility, and teamwork.

Cycle 2 introduced refinements based on the reflections and feedback from the first cycle. For example, students were given more opportunities to lead discussions, and the content of the morning assembly focused more on interactive activities, such as role-playing scenarios related to discipline and peer interactions. As a result, by the end of Cycle 2, punctuality rates dropped further, with an average tardiness rate of 0–1 times per week. Adherence to school rules, including dress code and classroom behavior, improved significantly, with 90% of students consistently following the dress code by the end of the second cycle. This improvement was particularly evident in students who had previously struggled with punctuality and rule adherence. The role of the morning assembly in reinforcing these behaviors was emphasized in follow-up student surveys, where 80% of students reported a greater sense of accountability for their actions.

Another area of improvement was student participation in the morning assemblies. In Cycle 2, active participation increased to 85%, with nearly all students contributing to discussions, leading prayers, and taking part in value-based role-playing activities. The active participation of students was not only seen as a sign of engagement but also as an indicator of increased ownership of their own discipline. Teachers noted that students who had previously been passive during the assemblies began to display more leadership behaviors, such as encouraging their peers to follow rules and participate in discussions.

The overall behavior of students in the classroom and during other school activities also improved, suggesting a broader impact of the morning assembly intervention. Teachers reported a noticeable reduction in behavioral incidents during lessons, and the number of disciplinary referrals dropped significantly by 40% compared to the baseline period. These changes in student behavior, both during the morning assemblies and throughout the school day, were also reflected in school records, where the frequency of late arrivals and dress code violations decreased steadily across both cycles.

The quantitative data gathered from the attendance logs, dress code compliance records, and disciplinary reports were analyzed to assess the impact of the morning assemblies on students' behavior. Table 1 presents the comparative data on punctuality, adherence to the dress code, and disciplinary referrals before and after the implementation of the morning assemblies.

**Table 1.** *Comparative Data on Student Behavior Before and After the Intervention*

Behavioral Metric	Before Intervention	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Average Tardiness Rate (times per week)	3-5 times	1-2 times	0-1 times
Dress Code Compliance (%)	65%	85%	90%
Active Participation in Assembly (%)	20%	60%	85%
Disciplinary Referrals (%)	30%	15%	10%

The data reveal that there was a marked improvement in student behavior across all three measured areas. The most notable changes occurred in student participation in the assemblies, with a significant increase from 20% to 85% between the first and second cycles. This shift indicates that students not only internalized the values promoted during the morning assemblies but also became more proactive in exhibiting discipline throughout their daily school activities.

The improvement in punctuality and dress code compliance suggests that the morning assemblies served as an effective tool in reinforcing the importance of discipline. The increased active participation further underscores the positive relationship between student engagement and improved behavior. Teachers observed that students who took on leadership roles during the assemblies developed a greater sense of responsibility, which translated into more disciplined behavior throughout the school day.

To complement the quantitative analysis, qualitative data from student interviews and teacher reflections provided deeper insights into the impact of the morning assemblies. Students reported feeling more motivated to follow school rules and participate in activities, especially those related to discipline and Islamic values. Teachers noted that the sense of community fostered during the morning assemblies had a ripple effect, leading to a more respectful and cooperative atmosphere in the classroom. The students' increased participation in the assemblies was seen as a reflection of their growing commitment to the values of discipline and mutual respect that were consistently emphasized in these sessions.

The results of this study demonstrate that the implementation of structured morning assemblies had a positive impact on students' disciplinary behavior. The intervention not only improved punctuality and adherence to school rules but also fostered a stronger sense of student engagement and responsibility. These findings suggest that morning assemblies, when structured with intentional activities that promote discipline and character education, can be a valuable tool for improving student behavior in Islamic elementary schools.

## DISCUSSION

The findings from this study underscore the significant role of structured morning assemblies in enhancing students' disciplinary behavior. The observed improvement in punctuality, adherence to school rules, and active participation suggests that morning assemblies, when carefully planned and executed, can positively influence students' attitudes and behaviors. The results align with previous research on the impact of structured routines and school-based interventions on student behavior (Durlak et al., 2011). Morning assemblies, by offering a consistent and engaging environment, appear to foster a sense of community and responsibility among students, reinforcing the importance of discipline both within and beyond the classroom.

The reduction in tardiness from an average of 3-5 times per week to 0-1 times per week is one of the most notable outcomes of this study. This finding echoes research by Leithwood and Jantzi (2005), which suggests that structured interventions can effectively address issues such as student tardiness. The morning assembly provided students with a clear expectation of punctuality, and the collective experience of beginning the school day together likely contributed to a stronger commitment to being on time. This improvement

in punctuality is consistent with findings from studies on the role of school rituals and routines in shaping student behavior (Durlak et al., 2011).

Adherence to the school's dress code also improved significantly during the intervention. Prior to the morning assembly, only 65% of students adhered to the dress code, but by the end of Cycle 2, this figure increased to 90%. This suggests that the morning assembly, by instilling a sense of accountability, was effective in reinforcing the importance of school policies. Similar findings have been reported in other studies examining the impact of school-wide initiatives on students' compliance with rules (Jeynes, 2015). When students are provided with regular reminders of expectations and are actively involved in activities that promote responsibility, they are more likely to comply with institutional norms.

Furthermore, the increase in student participation in the morning assemblies is a significant indicator of the success of the intervention. The percentage of students actively participating increased from 20% to 85% between the first and second cycles. This change highlights the importance of engaging students in activities that are both meaningful and interactive. According to Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), student engagement is a critical factor in fostering positive behaviors and improving academic outcomes. In this study, the students' active involvement in leading prayers, giving speeches, and participating in value-based discussions likely fostered a sense of ownership over their behavior and school experience.

This increase in student participation also suggests that the morning assembly served as a vehicle for promoting student leadership. The active involvement of students in leading various segments of the assembly helped them develop leadership skills, which, in turn, may have enhanced their sense of responsibility. Previous studies have highlighted the role of student leadership in promoting positive behavior and improving school climate (Wang & Degol, 2016). By giving students the opportunity to lead and engage with their peers, the morning assembly likely fostered a sense of pride and accountability, both of which are essential for fostering discipline.

Moreover, the qualitative data from student surveys and teacher reflections support the quantitative findings. Students reported feeling more motivated to adhere to school rules and participate in activities due to the sense of community and responsibility fostered by the morning assemblies. This aligns with research by Ryan and Deci (2000), who emphasize the role of intrinsic motivation in fostering positive behavior. When students feel that they are part of a supportive and engaging environment, they are more likely to internalize the values being promoted and demonstrate discipline.

The reduction in disciplinary referrals, which dropped by 40% compared to the baseline period, also suggests that the morning assemblies had a broader impact on student behavior. The decrease in behavioral incidents during lessons and other school activities indicates that the morning assembly functioned as an effective preventive measure. Research on school-based interventions for discipline has consistently shown that proactive measures, such as morning routines and behavior-focused assemblies, can reduce the need for reactive disciplinary actions (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012).

The observed improvements in students' behavior were not limited to the morning assemblies but extended to the overall school day. The reduction in tardiness and disciplinary incidents during lessons suggests that the morning assembly helped set the tone for the rest of the day. This finding is consistent with studies on the importance of school rituals and routines in shaping students' overall behavior (Pianta et al., 2016). When students begin their day with a structured and purposeful activity, they are more likely to carry the positive behaviors fostered in the assembly into other aspects of their school life.

Another important aspect of the study is the role of Islamic values in the morning assembly. The integration of values such as respect, responsibility, and cooperation into the assembly's activities likely contributed to the students' improved behavior. Research has shown that values-based education, particularly when linked to students' cultural and

religious contexts, can be highly effective in promoting positive behavior and character development (Lovat et al., 2011). The emphasis on Islamic values in the morning assembly may have helped students internalize these values, which in turn influenced their behavior both at school and in their daily lives.

While the results of this study are promising, it is important to acknowledge some limitations. One limitation is the relatively small sample size, which may not be fully representative of the broader student population at MIS AL-Fatah Siiyang. Future research could expand the sample size to include students from other grade levels or schools to assess the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study was conducted over a relatively short period, and longer-term follow-up would be necessary to determine the sustainability of the observed improvements in student behavior.

Another limitation is the potential influence of external factors on students' behavior, such as family support, peer relationships, and socio-economic conditions. While the morning assembly was a central intervention, it is possible that other factors contributed to the observed improvements in punctuality and discipline. Future research could explore the interplay between school-based interventions and other contextual factors that may influence student behavior (Eccles & Roeser, 2011).

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the potential of morning assemblies as a tool for improving student discipline. The results suggest that structured, values-based interventions can be effective in fostering positive behavior and promoting a sense of community within schools. Given the success of the morning assembly at MIS AL-Fatah Siiyang, it is recommended that this practice be adopted more widely in similar educational settings to enhance students' disciplinary character.

The positive outcomes observed in this study also align with broader trends in educational research that emphasize the importance of social-emotional learning and character development. By focusing on the development of students' social and emotional skills, schools can create an environment that supports not only academic achievement but also the personal growth and well-being of students (Zins et al., 2004). Morning assemblies that integrate such learning can contribute significantly to the overall development of students' character.

The findings of this study highlight the potential of structured morning assemblies as an effective intervention for improving students' disciplinary behavior. The positive changes observed in punctuality, adherence to school rules, student participation, and disciplinary referrals suggest that the morning assembly fostered a positive school climate and enhanced students' sense of responsibility and accountability. Future research should continue to explore the long-term impact of such interventions and examine how they can be adapted to meet the needs of diverse student populations.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of structured morning assemblies at MIS AL-Fatah Siiyang significantly improved students' disciplinary behavior, including punctuality, adherence to school rules, and active participation. The intervention fostered a greater sense of responsibility and accountability among students, enhancing their engagement in both academic and behavioral aspects of school life. These results suggest that morning assemblies, particularly those centered around values-based activities, can be a highly effective tool for promoting discipline and positive character development in schools. Given the promising outcomes of this study, it is recommended that similar interventions be implemented in other educational settings to support the overall growth and development of students. Further research should explore the long-term effects of such programs and consider the influence of additional contextual factors on student behavior.



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