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Digital Attendance Management for Strengthening Student Discipline: A Qualitative Study at MI 27 Lamasi, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Digital attendance systems are increasingly used in educational administration, yet their value for student discipline depends on how schools manage the technology, interpret attendance data, and connect monitoring with educational guidance. This study examined digital attendance management as an instrument for strengthening student discipline at MI 27 Lamasi, Luwu Regency, Indonesia. It focused on the form of implementation, managerial strategies, and challenges encountered in practice. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed. Primary data were obtained from the head of the madrasah, homeroom teachers, the school operator, parents, and other stakeholders involved in the system, while secondary data included attendance records, school rules, administrative documents, and documentation of activities. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation and analyzed using the interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Trustworthiness was addressed through source, technique, and time triangulation, together with member checking. The findings show that digital attendance management involved system planning, daily implementation, real-time monitoring, periodic evaluation, and the use of attendance records for disciplinary guidance. Managerial strategies followed planning, organizing, directing, and controlling functions and relied on coordination among school leaders, teachers, the operator, and parents. Participants reported that the system improved the orderliness and visibility of attendance monitoring, reduced opportunities for proxy attendance, and enabled faster follow-up when students were late or absent. However, implementation was constrained by unstable internet connectivity, application and device limitations, uneven digital literacy, and students who still required supervision to build consistent attendance habits. The study indicates that digital attendance can function beyond administrative record keeping when attendance data are integrated with supervision, communication, and character development.

Keywords: digital attendance; educational management; Islamic primary school; student discipline; technology-based supervision

INTRODUCTION

Student discipline is a central concern in educational management because punctuality, regular attendance, compliance with school rules, and responsible participation shape the conditions in which learning occurs. Discipline is not merely a matter of sanctioning misconduct; it is also developed through routines, supervision, communication, and consistent institutional expectations. In educational institutions, the management of student affairs therefore includes

mechanisms for monitoring attendance and responding to patterns of lateness or absence. Research on student management in Islamic educational settings has similarly emphasized that systematic supervision and school routines can contribute to stronger student discipline and responsibility (Hasnawati & Mardiah, 2024; Hakim, 2024).

In Islamic education, discipline is closely associated with character formation and responsibility. Educational management is expected to connect administrative procedures with values that encourage students to develop self-control, accountability, and awareness of their obligations. Studies of character education in madrasah settings have shown that discipline is strengthened when institutional practices are integrated with habituation, guidance, and moral development rather than treated as isolated rules (Muhaemin & Henri, 2022; Iksan et al., 2024). This perspective makes attendance management educationally significant because the way a school records, monitors, and responds to attendance can become part of a broader process of character formation.

Digital transformation has created new opportunities for schools to manage student attendance more efficiently. Educational institutions increasingly use information and communication technologies for administration, student services, monitoring, and reporting. Technology-based administration can reduce repetitive manual work, improve data accessibility, and support more timely decision making (Putri & Yuniati, 2025). Digital attendance is one manifestation of this shift. Instead of relying only on handwritten registers, a digital system can record arrival time automatically, store attendance histories, and make records accessible to authorized staff for monitoring and follow-up.

The managerial value of digital attendance, however, does not arise automatically from the technology itself. A system may produce accurate records without changing student behavior if the data are not reviewed, communicated, and connected with educational action. Conversely, even a relatively simple digital system can support discipline when school leaders establish clear procedures, teachers monitor attendance consistently, operators maintain the system, and parents are involved when patterns of absence or lateness occur. Contemporary management literature therefore places technology within broader functions of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling rather than treating digitalization as a substitute for management (Terry, 2021; Estede et al., 2025).

Previous studies provide relevant but still fragmented evidence. Suradji (2018) found that

information and communication technology could support student affairs management, including attendance control, in a secondary-school context. Turrohma (2025) examined online attendance for civil servants in a madrasah and reported benefits for monitoring work discipline. Mistam et al. (2025) investigated factors associated with digital attendance implementation in schools, while Sahira et al. (2025) discussed e-attendance as part of digitally transformed school supervision. These studies demonstrate the administrative and supervisory potential of attendance technology, but they do not fully explain how digital attendance is managed as an instrument for developing student discipline in an Islamic primary-school setting.

This issue is particularly relevant at the primary level because discipline is still being formed through repeated routines and close adult guidance. Young students may understand a digital attendance procedure as a technical requirement unless teachers and parents consistently connect the routine with punctuality, responsibility, and school expectations. At the same time, primary schools often operate with limited infrastructure and uneven digital literacy among staff and families. Examining digital attendance at this level therefore requires attention to both the technical system and the managerial relationships surrounding it.

MI 27 Lamasi in Luwu Regency had shifted from manual attendance to a digital system after experiencing problems such as slow recapitulation, poorly organized records, and opportunities for proxy attendance. The system was subsequently used not only to register attendance but also to monitor lateness and absence, support teacher follow-up, and communicate with parents. This local practice provides an opportunity to examine digital attendance as a data-based management process rather than merely as an administrative application.

The study addressed three related questions: how digital attendance management was implemented as an instrument for student discipline, what managerial strategies supported its operation, and what challenges affected its use at MI 27 Lamasi. Its contribution lies in showing how the value of digital attendance emerges from the integration of technology, managerial functions, supervision, and parent-school communication. The study offers a contextual qualitative account and does not claim statistical generalizability beyond the research setting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital Attendance as Educational Management

Educational management involves the systematic use of people, processes, resources, and information to achieve institutional goals. Terry (2021) describes management through the interrelated functions of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling. In educational settings, these functions provide a useful lens for understanding digital attendance because the system requires more than technical installation. Schools must identify why the system is needed, assign responsibilities, guide users, monitor implementation, and evaluate whether the information produced is being used effectively.

Digital attendance can support student management by making attendance information more timely and accessible. Technology-based administrative practices can improve efficiency and accountability when information is organized in ways that support decisions rather than simply replacing paper records (Putri & Yuniati, 2025). In this sense, digital attendance is a management information tool: it captures a routine behavior, converts it into data, and allows authorized staff to review patterns. The educational significance of those data depends on how teachers and leaders interpret and act on them.

Research on digital attendance has largely focused on efficiency, compliance, and organizational monitoring. Mistam et al. (2025) linked the effectiveness of digital attendance to discipline, work environment, and organizational culture. Turrohma (2025) reported that online attendance assisted the monitoring of employee discipline in a madrasah. These studies suggest that digital systems can strengthen monitoring, but the transfer of these findings to student discipline requires caution because children depend more heavily on guidance, habituation, and collaboration between school and family.

Student Discipline and Character Development

Student discipline refers to consistent behavior in relation to time, rules, learning responsibilities, and social conduct. In school management, discipline is developed through clear expectations, habituation, supervision, feedback, and corrective guidance. Hasnawati and Mardiah (2024) connect student management with the strengthening of discipline, while Hakim (2024) similarly emphasizes the role of organized student affairs management in building compliance

with school routines. Attendance is one visible indicator because repeated lateness and unexplained absence can signal broader difficulties in students' adjustment to institutional expectations.

Within Islamic education, discipline also has a character dimension. Responsibility, trustworthiness, respect for rules, and awareness of consequences are part of the moral formation expected from educational practice. Muhaemin and Henri (2022) show that character education in madrasah settings can be strengthened when values are integrated into institutional routines. Ilham and Pirol (2025) likewise discuss the reinforcement of discipline values in Islamic religious and moral education. From this perspective, attendance monitoring can support character development when data are used for reflection, guidance, and communication rather than only for punishment.

Digital systems may influence discipline indirectly by making routines more visible and consequences more immediate. A timestamp can document punctuality, but it does not by itself create an internalized habit. The transition from external monitoring to personal responsibility requires educational mediation by teachers and parents. Therefore, digital attendance should be understood as one component within a broader discipline-development process that combines data, supervision, communication, habituation, and supportive correction.

Managerial Integration of Technology, Supervision, and Parent Involvement

School technology initiatives are more sustainable when responsibilities and communication channels are clearly organized. Leadership establishes policy and direction, operators maintain technical continuity, teachers use information in daily supervision, and families reinforce expectations outside school. Syafarina et al. (2021) emphasize managerial strategies that strengthen organizational performance through coordinated leadership functions. In the context of student discipline, similar coordination is needed so that attendance information becomes actionable rather than remaining an isolated administrative dataset.

Parent involvement is particularly relevant for attendance because the reasons for lateness or absence often extend beyond the classroom. Safira (2025) identifies supervision and family involvement as important elements in student management for discipline. A digital attendance system can make this relationship more responsive by enabling schools to recognize an attendance problem quickly and contact parents sooner. However, communication still depends on staff availability, reliable contact channels, and parents' willingness and capacity to respond.

The literature therefore suggests an integrated analytical perspective: technology provides data; management organizes roles and procedures; supervision turns data into monitoring; and educational guidance connects monitoring with student behavior. The present study uses this perspective to interpret how MI 27 Lamasi managed digital attendance, how the system was connected with discipline development, and what constraints limited its effectiveness.

METHODS

Design, Setting, and Informants

The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to understand digital attendance management in its natural institutional setting. The design was used to describe the form of implementation, managerial strategies, and challenges experienced by the madrasah rather than to test causal effects. The research was conducted at MI 27 Lamasi, Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, an Islamic primary school that had integrated digital attendance into student management. The thesis describes the overall research process as taking place over six months, including preliminary observation, instrument preparation, data collection, analysis, and report writing.

Primary informants included the head of the madrasah, homeroom teachers, the school operator, parents, and other parties directly involved in digital attendance management. Informants were selected purposively according to their involvement, knowledge, and experience with the system. The thesis does not report a complete numerical count of interview participants; accordingly, this article retains the documented participant categories without inferring an exact sample size. Secondary sources included attendance records, school rules, administrative reports, guidance documents for the digital attendance system, and activity documentation.

Data Collection

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation focused on the daily operation of digital attendance, the participation of teachers and the school operator, students' attendance behavior, and supervisory practices. Interviews explored the reasons for adopting the system, implementation procedures, perceived effects on student discipline, managerial strategies, and technical and nontechnical constraints. The evidence

reported in the thesis includes perspectives from school leadership, teachers, the operator, and parents.

Documentation was used to complement field observation and interview accounts. Materials included attendance data, school regulations, photographs of activities, administrative reports, and documents related to the use of digital attendance. Combining these sources allowed the researcher to compare reported practices with available administrative and observational evidence.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data were selected, simplified, and grouped according to the three research focuses: implementation, managerial strategy, and challenges. The condensed data were then organized narratively and thematically to identify recurring patterns across stakeholder accounts and documentary evidence.

Trustworthiness was addressed through source, technique, and time triangulation. Information from different informants was compared, interview evidence was examined alongside observations and documents, and data were collected at different times to assess consistency. The thesis also reports member checking by reconfirming findings or interview interpretations with informants. These procedures were used to strengthen the credibility of the qualitative account.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From Manual Attendance to a Managed Digital Discipline System

The first finding concerns the transformation of attendance from a manual record into a managed digital process. According to the school leadership, the shift was initiated because manual attendance created practical problems: records were slower to recapitulate, data organization was less reliable, and students could attempt proxy attendance. Digital attendance was introduced gradually and later used across classes. The implementation was therefore preceded by problem identification, policy decisions, preparation of devices, and socialization to staff and parents. This sequence indicates that the system was treated as an institutional program rather than as a stand-alone application.

In daily practice, students completed attendance before lessons began using the available digital device. Attendance data were then recorded in the application and could be reviewed by the head of the madrasah, homeroom teachers, and the operator. Participants described the real-time visibility of attendance as a major practical advantage because lateness, absence, and incomplete attendance could be detected more quickly. Teachers reported that this reduced the time required for manual checking and made it easier to identify students who needed immediate follow-up.

The principal described the system as useful because students knew that arrival times were recorded automatically and could no longer rely on another student to register attendance on their behalf. Teachers similarly reported that students became more attentive to arrival time after the system was introduced. These accounts should be interpreted as participant perceptions of behavioral change rather than as quantified before-and-after effects because the thesis does not provide statistical attendance comparisons. Nevertheless, the qualitative evidence consistently positions visibility and traceability of attendance as mechanisms that supported stronger routines.

This finding is consistent with the broader role of information technology in student administration. Suradji (2018) found that ICT can support student affairs management and discipline control, while Putri and Yuniati (2025) describe technology-based administration as a means of improving efficiency and information accessibility. The distinctive feature at MI 27 Lamasi is that the attendance record was not left as an administrative output. It became a trigger for teacher supervision and communication with families, linking the technical system to a behavioral management process.

Table 1. Main findings on digital attendance management and student discipline

Analytical dimension	Main themes	Empirical meaning
Implementation	Planning, daily digital check-in, real-time monitoring, periodic evaluation, use of attendance records	Attendance became more visible, traceable, and easier to follow up as part of discipline guidance.
Managerial strategy	Planning, organizing roles, directing and coaching, controlling, coordination with parents	Technology functioned through coordinated responsibilities among leaders, teachers, operator, students, and families.
Challenges and response	Internet instability, application/device limits, uneven digital literacy, inconsistent student habits	The madrasah relied on technical maintenance, user assistance, stronger supervision, and parent communication to sustain the system.

Source: Synthesized from observation, interview, and documentation findings reported in the thesis.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and the Use of Attendance Data for Guidance

Digital attendance became educationally meaningful when attendance data were used for monitoring and follow-up. The head of the madrasah, homeroom teachers, and the operator reviewed attendance information to identify students who were late, absent without explanation, or had not completed attendance correctly. The data were also used in periodic evaluation and as supporting information for reporting and communication with parents. This illustrates a transition from recording presence to using attendance as a management indicator.

Teachers described attendance data as a basis for direct guidance. When a pattern of lateness or unexplained absence appeared, the response could include reminders, persuasive conversation, habituation, and contact with parents. In this process, the digital system did not determine the disciplinary response automatically; it supplied information that enabled staff to act sooner and with clearer evidence. The human interpretation of the data remained central.

This relationship between data and guidance is important because discipline at the primary level is still being internalized. A digital timestamp may increase external accountability, but the longer-term educational objective is the development of self-regulation. The findings therefore align with studies emphasizing habituation and character-oriented discipline in Islamic educational settings (Iksan et al., 2024; Muhaemin & Henri, 2022). Digital monitoring can support those processes when it is accompanied by explanations of why punctuality and responsibility matter.

The use of attendance data also strengthened school-family communication. Parents reported that they could be informed more quickly when children were late or absent. This created a shared monitoring environment in which the school could identify a problem and the family could respond from home. Safira (2025) identifies parent involvement as an important component of student management for discipline, and the present findings show one practical pathway through which technology can facilitate that involvement.

Managerial Strategy: Planning, Organizing, Directing, and Controlling

The second major finding is that the effectiveness of digital attendance depended on a recognizable set of managerial strategies. Planning involved identifying weaknesses in the manual system, assessing the need for a digital alternative, preparing supporting devices, and socializing procedures before full implementation. The process is consistent with Terry's (2021) view of

planning as the determination of objectives and actions before implementation. It also reflects Hasibuan's (2021) emphasis on realistic and measurable planning because the madrasah considered both technical needs and user readiness.

Organizing focused on the division of roles. The head of the madrasah provided policy direction and oversight; the operator maintained the application and attendance data; homeroom teachers monitored daily attendance and followed up disciplinary issues; and parents became partners when attendance problems required home-school communication. This role differentiation reduced dependence on a single actor and positioned digital attendance as a shared management process. Estede et al. (2025) argue that effective organization requires clear coordination among actors, which is visible in the way responsibilities were distributed in this setting.

Directing and coaching were necessary because implementation involved behavioral as well as technical change. Teachers repeatedly reminded students to complete attendance on time and explained the relationship between attendance routines and discipline. Users who had difficulty with the application received assistance. Students with repeated discipline problems were approached persuasively rather than being treated only as technical noncompliance. This finding is important because it shows that digitalization did not eliminate the need for interpersonal leadership; it increased the need to coordinate technology with guidance.

Controlling and evaluation involved routine monitoring of attendance data, checking the functioning of the application and devices, reviewing problems, and communicating with parents when needed. The school therefore used the same digital information both to supervise student behavior and to evaluate the operation of the system itself. Sahira et al. (2025) similarly frame e-attendance as part of technology-supported school supervision. At MI 27 Lamasi, however, supervision was embedded within daily student discipline practices rather than being limited to institutional reporting.

Technical, Human, and Behavioral Challenges

The third finding concerns the limitations that complicated implementation. Technical problems included unstable internet connections, application errors, data synchronization delays, and limited supporting devices. When connectivity was weak at the beginning of the school day, attendance records could enter the application late and the real-time advantage of the system was

reduced. The operator therefore had to check the application, devices, and network routinely and respond when errors occurred.

Human-resource constraints were equally important. The thesis reports differences in digital literacy among teachers, students, and parents, meaning that some users required repeated assistance. This issue illustrates why digital transformation should not be evaluated only through hardware availability. User competence and confidence influence whether a system becomes part of routine work. Putri and Yuniati (2025) similarly emphasize that technology-based administration requires adaptation in institutional practices, while Mistam et al. (2025) connect successful digital attendance with organizational conditions surrounding its use.

Student behavior remained another challenge. Some students still arrived late, forgot to complete digital attendance, or required teacher reminders even after the system had been introduced. This confirms that digital attendance should not be equated with discipline itself. The technology can make behavior more visible and reduce some opportunities for manipulation, but the formation of consistent habits remains a pedagogical process. This distinction is especially important in primary education, where students may still need direct supervision and repeated habituation.

The madrasah responded through a combination of technical and managerial measures: stronger coordination among staff, assistance for users, closer supervision, routine system maintenance, and more active communication with parents. These responses suggest that sustainability depends on adaptive management. Technical issues require technical responses, but behavioral and literacy problems require guidance, communication, and learning opportunities. Treating all difficulties as software problems would therefore overlook the multidimensional character of implementation.

Digital Attendance Beyond Administrative Record Keeping

Taken together, the findings show that digital attendance at MI 27 Lamasi functioned through a sequence of data generation, monitoring, interpretation, communication, and guidance. Its contribution to discipline was therefore relational rather than purely technological. The application generated a record; school actors interpreted the record; teachers or leaders followed up; parents were contacted when necessary; and students received reminders or guidance. The managerial process surrounding the data is what transformed attendance information into a

disciplinary instrument.

This interpretation extends previous discussions of digital attendance that emphasize efficiency and compliance. Turrohma (2025) demonstrates how online attendance can support employee discipline, while Mistam et al. (2025) identify organizational factors associated with digital attendance implementation. The present study adds a student-development perspective: in a primary madrasah, attendance technology becomes educationally relevant when it supports character-oriented routines and enables adults to coordinate responses to student behavior.

The findings also have implications for Islamic educational management. Discipline in this setting was not framed only as obedience to an attendance rule. The managerial process linked punctuality and attendance with responsibility, habituation, supervision, and collaboration between school and family. This is consistent with the broader orientation of Islamic education toward the integration of organizational practice and moral formation (Sodikin et al., 2024; Ilham & Pirol, 2025). The digital system therefore served as a contemporary administrative mechanism within an educational objective that remained fundamentally human and character-based.

For practice, schools considering similar systems should begin with a clear problem definition rather than technology acquisition alone. They need reliable infrastructure, clearly assigned responsibilities, simple procedures, user support, safeguards for data quality, and agreed follow-up mechanisms. Schools should also distinguish between the accuracy of attendance records and the development of discipline: the first can be improved technically, while the second requires sustained educational interaction.

Limitations

The study is bounded by a single madrasah and a descriptive qualitative design. It provides an in-depth account of management practices but does not establish causal effects of digital attendance on student discipline. The thesis reports participant perceptions that lateness and unexplained absence decreased, yet it does not provide pre-implementation and post-implementation attendance statistics that would allow the magnitude of change to be tested quantitatively.

The exact number of interview participants is not fully specified in the research report, although participant categories are identified. The findings also rely substantially on stakeholder accounts and school-based documentation, which may reflect local interpretations of

implementation. Future research could strengthen the evidence by reporting participant recruitment in greater detail, analyzing longitudinal attendance records, examining student perspectives directly, and comparing schools with different digital attendance systems or levels of infrastructure. Formal research ethics approval and participant consent procedures should also be documented explicitly in a submission-ready manuscript if they were part of the original research process.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Digital attendance management at MI 27 Lamasi was implemented through system planning, daily digital attendance, real-time monitoring, periodic evaluation, and the use of attendance data for disciplinary guidance. The system increased the visibility and traceability of attendance and enabled teachers and school leaders to respond more quickly to lateness and unexplained absence. Its contribution to discipline, however, did not derive from technology alone. It depended on how attendance information was integrated with supervision, guidance, and communication with parents.

Managerial strategies followed the functions of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling. Clear role distribution among the head of the madrasah, homeroom teachers, the school operator, and parents supported implementation. Challenges included unstable internet connectivity, application and device limitations, uneven digital literacy, and students who still required reminders and supervision. The madrasah addressed these issues through coordination, technical assistance, system maintenance, closer monitoring, and stronger school-family communication.

The study therefore supports viewing digital attendance as an educational management instrument rather than merely an electronic register. Schools adopting similar systems should prioritize reliable infrastructure, user training, clear responsibilities, routine evaluation, and procedures that translate attendance data into constructive student guidance. Future studies should combine qualitative evidence with longitudinal attendance data and comparative designs to determine more precisely how digital attendance relates to changes in student punctuality, absenteeism, and the internalization of discipline over time.

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