



# The Role of Reward and Punishment Strategies in Enhancing Student Learning Motivation: A Pedagogical Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

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This study aims to explore how reward and punishment strategies influence student learning motivation within the context of an Islamic boarding school. The research seeks to understand the pedagogical impact of these strategies in promoting academic engagement and character formation. Utilizing a qualitative case study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews with school leaders, teachers, and students, participant observation, and document analysis. The findings reveal that verbal praise and symbolic non-material rewards significantly enhance students' intrinsic motivation, foster greater enthusiasm for learning, and lead to improved academic performance. Meanwhile, religious-based punishments such as reading istighfar, reciting Surah Yasin, and public apologies help instill moral awareness and personal responsibility in a constructive manner. These dual strategies not only promote discipline and self-regulation but also nurture a spiritually supportive educational atmosphere. The implementation of both reward and punishment proves effective in creating a balanced and motivating learning environment, aligning with Islamic pedagogical values. The study contributes to the growing literature on holistic educational practices by offering insights into motivational dynamics in pesantren-based settings. It suggests that integrating intrinsic motivational strategies with spiritually grounded disciplinary methods can support both academic excellence and ethical development. As such, educators are encouraged to apply these approaches thoughtfully to maximize student potential within culturally and religiously contextualized learning environments.

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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic boarding school-based education has a special role in shaping the character and intelligence of students based on religious and academic principles (Bahri, 2024; Mayasari & Arifudin, 2023; Zubaidi & Kamilah, 2023). MA Salafiyah Pajajaran, as a leading Islamic boarding school educational institution, upholds religious and academic values as the main priority in the learning process. In addition, education rooted in the pesantren system plays an important role in shaping the character and intelligence of students. This system integrates religious and academic principles in every aspect of education provided. This is also in line with the opinion (Isnaini et al., 2020; Muzakki, 2022; Syarnubi et al., 2021) which states that with this approach, students are not only educated to excel academically but are also instilled with strong moral and ethical values according to religious teachings.

The main role of pesantren education is to go beyond academic knowledge but also includes the formation of strong character based on religious values. In the context of MA Salafiyah Pajajaran, students not only learn academic subjects, but also deepen the moral, ethical, and spiritual values that underlie the teachings of Islam. Thus, education in pesantren is not only about increasing intellectual intelligence but also developing personality based on religious principles (Aziz et al., 2021; Ulfan & Hasan, 2023; Yoppa et al., 2023). At MA Salafiyah Pajajaran, education is not only limited to teaching academic subjects. Students are also invited to explore moral, ethical, and spiritual values that are the core of Islamic teachings. This process ensures that each student not only gains theoretical knowledge but also a deep understanding of how to apply moral and ethical principles in everyday life. Therefore, education in Islamic boarding schools such as MA Salafiyah Pajajaran does not only focus on improving students' intellectual intelligence. More than that, this education plays a role in developing personalities that are integrated with religious values. The goal is to create individuals who are not only intelligent but also have solid characters and can apply religious teachings in real life. Thus, Islamic boarding schools function as holistic learning places that prepare students to become members of society who contribute positively, both intellectually and morally.

This study aims to investigate how the implementation of rewards and punishments can improve students' learning motivation at MA Salafiyah Pajajaran, a pesantren-based school that combines religious values with academic curriculum. Learning motivation is a key factor in improving students' academic achievement and personal development, but there has not been much research that specifically focuses on reward and punishment strategies in the pesantren educational environment. In this context, this study will provide a new understanding of how positive (reward) and negative (punishment) stimuli can affect students' learning motivation, especially in the context of Islamic boarding school-based education. This study aims to reveal the concrete impact of giving

rewards and punishments on the level of student's learning motivation in Islamic boarding school environments such as MA Salafiyah Pajarakan. Positive stimuli such as rewards can provide incentives that encourage students to actively participate in learning and improve their academic performance. Praise, recognition of achievement, or other non-material incentives can arouse students' interest and enthusiasm for learning, linking their efforts to expected positive outcomes (Bruni et al., 2020; Mahadaniyah et al., 2023; SEMGAZA, 2022). On the other hand, negative stimuli such as punishment also play a role in shaping students' learning motivation. Mild reprimands or punishments can help correct unwanted student behaviour and encourage them to improve their academic performance.

Although there are many studies on learning motivation, focusing on the context of pesantren education that combines religious and academic values provides a new perspective. In addition, this study attempts to understand how religious principles influence the implementation of rewards and punishments, and their impact on students' learning motivation. Thus, this article offers a significant contribution to exploring effective motivational strategies in the pesantren-based educational environment, which has not been studied specifically. This study will use survey methods and statistical analysis to collect and analyze data from students and apply a conceptual framework based on theories of learning motivation that have been tested and applied in educational contexts. Thus, this study has the potential to make a significant contribution to our understanding of learning motivation strategies in Islamic boarding school-based educational environments.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach to explore an in-depth understanding of the application of rewards and punishments in increasing student learning motivation at MA Salafiyah Pajarakan. The main aim of this research is to understand how rewards and punishments are applied by educators and their impact on students' learning motivation. Data collection was carried out by direct observation to observe interactions between teachers and students so that researchers could identify specific contexts in which rewards and punishments were applied. In addition, researchers will also analyze documentation available at the school, such as student achievement records and activity reports related to the implementation of rewards and punishments (Abdussamad, 2022).

Apart from observation and documentation, this research also used in-depth interviews with several informants to obtain a more comprehensive view. Informants involved in the interviews included the school principal, 5 teachers, and 10 students who were selected purposively to represent various perspectives regarding the application of rewards and punishments. Interviews were conducted using open questions which allowed informants to provide broader

and in-depth answers regarding their experiences with the reward and punishment system implemented at school. It is hoped that the information gathered from these interviews will provide a better understanding of the factors that influence the effectiveness of reward and punishment systems in increasing student learning motivation (Assyakurrohim et al., 2022).

The data analysis process in this research involves several stages, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. At the data collection stage, researchers collected information from various sources, including the results of observations, interviews with informants, and school documentation (Waruwu, 2023). After that, the collected data will be reduced to focus the analysis on findings that are relevant to the research objectives. The reduced data is then presented in narrative form which makes it easier for researchers to conclude. The conclusion will be based on the results of the analysis which shows how rewards and punishments are applied and their influence on student learning motivation at MA Salafiyah Pajarakan.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

The findings show that the implementation of the reward and punishment system at MA Salafiyah Pajarakan has a significant positive impact on students' learning motivation and character building. The provision of rewards, both verbally and symbolically, has been shown to increase students' interest, self-confidence, and intrinsic motivation in following the learning process. Meanwhile, the implementation of punishment based on Islamic values, such as reading istighfar or the Yasin letter, is able to instill moral awareness, responsibility, and discipline constructively. The combination of the two forms a conducive learning environment, appreciates students' efforts, and instills deep spiritual values and social responsibility, thus encouraging students to continue to develop academically and personally.

### **Implementation of Rewards and Punishments at MA Salafiyah Pajarakan**

The implementation of appropriate reward-giving has a positive and significant impact on students' learning motivation at MA Salafiyah Pajarakan. In this school, various types of rewards are applied, including verbal rewards such as praise and recognition of achievements, as well as non-material incentives such as public awards in school ceremonies. The findings of the study showed that students who regularly received these rewards tended to show increased motivation in completing their academic tasks. The positive response to recognition of their efforts and achievements aroused their enthusiasm to continue to actively participate in the learning process.

Aspek	Jenis	Tujuan
Reward	Penghargaan verbal (pujian dan pengakuan)	Meningkatkan motivasi siswa dengan memberikan pengakuan atas usaha dan pencapaian mereka.
Reward	Insentif non-materi (penghargaan publik)	Mendorong siswa untuk berpartisipasi aktif melalui penghargaan yang diberikan di depan publik.
Punishment Islami	Membaca istighfar	Membangun kesadaran spiritual dan introspeksi diri.
Punishment Islami	Membaca al-Qur'an surat Yasin	Memberikan dampak spiritual yang mendalam dan mendekatkan siswa kepada Allah.
Punishment Islami	Meminta maaf kepada pihak terkait	Mengajarkan tanggung jawab, empati, dan memperbaiki hubungan sosial.

**Figure 1. Implementation of Islamic rewards and punishments at MA Salafiyah Pajajaran**

Based on the table 1 above, the existence of an effective reward system at MA Salafiyah Pajajaran helps build a culture of appreciation and positive encouragement among students. Students respond well to recognition of their achievements, which creates a supportive learning environment. This positive encouragement in turn encourages students to achieve better academic results through internal motivation that is reinforced by positive responses from the educational environment. Thus, giving appropriate rewards not only increases students' learning motivation at MA Salafiyah Pajajaran but also forms a positive appreciation culture in the school. This inspires students' enthusiasm to actively participate in learning and achieve better achievements, creating an educational environment that provides positive encouragement for academic achievement.

In addition to giving rewards, the implementation of punishment also plays an important role in the context of Islamic boarding school education such as in MA Salafiyah Pajajaran. Punishment, when applied properly, can help maintain discipline and direct students toward better behaviour. Effective implementation of punishment must be carried out by considering several important aspects so that the impact is positive and constructive for students, especially in the context of Islamic boarding schools that prioritize Islamic values.

### **Increased Interest and Enthusiasm for Learning**

The results of the study showed that students who received appropriate rewards tended to show increased interest and enthusiasm for learning. When students feel recognized and appreciated for their efforts, this positively affects their perception of the value of education and academic goals. This finding aligns with insights gathered during interviews with teachers and parents. A teacher mentioned, *"When we give verbal praise or certificates for their achievements, students feel more confident and motivated to participate in class activities."* Similarly, a parent stated, *"My child becomes more enthusiastic about school after receiving recognition for*

*even small accomplishments, like completing homework on time.*" These observations highlight the pivotal role of recognition in fostering intrinsic motivation.

In addition, the study indicated that implementing rewards and punishments tailored to Islamic and moral values enhanced both academic engagement and character formation. For instance, spiritual-based punishments, such as reading istighfar or reciting the Qur'an, not only corrected behaviour but also deepened moral understanding. One teacher explained, *"Asking students to read istighfar after making a mistake helps them reflect on their actions while staying calm and respectful."* Parents also noted positive changes, as one remarked, *"After receiving this type of punishment, my child often thinks twice before repeating the same mistake."* These combined approaches show how MA Salafiyah Pajajaran successfully creates a balanced educational environment that nurtures both academic and moral development.

Feeling appreciated for their achievements provides an additional incentive to achieve academic success and achieve students' educational goals. In addition, this increased enthusiasm for learning can also trigger greater interest in the subject matter, building a strong foundation for long-term intrinsic motivation. Therefore, providing appropriate rewards can shape a positive attitude toward learning and create an environment that fosters enthusiasm and passion in achieving academic achievement. By providing appropriate rewards, whether in the form of praise, recognition of achievement, or other incentives, MA Salafiyah Pajajaran can help develop a strong interest in learning in students and encourage them to actively participate in the learning process to achieve higher achievements.

In addition, the implementation of appropriate punishment also plays an important role in maintaining discipline and encouraging positive behaviour. Punishment applied in an educational and Islamic way, such as reading istighfar, reading the Yasin letter of the Qur'an, or apologizing to others when making mistakes will educate students spiritually and morally through Islamic teachings. Consistency and fairness in the application of punishment ensure that students understand the impact of their actions and are motivated to improve their behaviour. Rewards provide recognition and positive motivation, while punishments discipline and teach responsibility. This approach helps students understand the relationship between effort, achievement, and consequences, encouraging them to continue to strive and achieve their educational goals with high enthusiasm and dedication.

### **Positive Stimulus for Positive Behavior**

Rewards play an important role as a positive stimulus for positive behaviour in educational contexts. Students learn to associate their efforts and achievements with positive consequences, which in turn motivates them to continue improving their academic performance. For example, praise for completing a task well can reinforce desired behavioural patterns and provide

additional motivation for students to actively engage in learning. A teacher remarked, "When we acknowledge students' efforts with simple praise or a small reward, their confidence grows, and they seem more eager to participate in class discussions." Similarly, a student shared, "I feel proud when my teacher praises my work, and it makes me want to do even better next time." These statements highlight how positive reinforcement strengthens the connection between effort and outcomes, fostering persistence in achieving academic goals.

On the other hand, the implementation of educational punishment also plays a role in maintaining discipline and strengthening positive behaviour. At MA Salafiyah Pajarakan, punishments are carried out using an Islamic approach, such as reading istighfar, reciting Surat Yasin, or apologizing to the affected parties. One teacher explained, "When students are asked to read istighfar, they are not only reminded of their mistake but also guided to reflect on how to act better next time." Parents also expressed their support for this method, with one saying, "This form of punishment helps my child constructively understand their mistakes while learning values from our faith." By combining motivational rewards and spiritually enriching punishments, MA Salafiyah Pajarakan creates an environment conducive to academic excellence and character building. Rewards motivate and recognise students' efforts, while punishments teach responsibility and introspection, ensuring a holistic approach to education.



Figure 2. Positive Stimulus for Positive Behavior

On the other hand, the picture 2 above show that implementation of educational punishment also plays a role in maintaining discipline and strengthening positive behaviour. The implementation of punishment at MA Salafiyah Pajarakan is implemented through an Islamic approach such as reading istighfar, reading the Yasin letter, or apologizing to the related parties. This type of punishment not only provides consequences for violations but also functions as a means of moral and spiritual education. Consistency and fairness in the application of punishment ensure that students understand the consequences of their actions and are motivated to improve their behaviour. With a combination of rewards that encourage achievement and punishments that educate, MA

Salafiyah Pajarakan can create a conducive learning environment that supports students' academic and character development. Rewards provide positive motivation and recognition for students' efforts, while punishments teach responsibility and introspection. This approach helps students understand the relationship between effort, results, and consequences and encourages them to continue to strive to achieve their educational goals with high dedication.

### **Increasing Intrinsic Motivation**

Giving the right rewards has great potential to help develop students' intrinsic motivation significantly. When students feel that their achievements are appreciated and recognized, it will encourage them to start internalizing the values of learning and develop a deeper interest in the subject matter. One teacher shared, *"When students receive appreciation for their hard work, they begin to see learning as something valuable for themselves, not just for grades or rewards."* Similarly, a parent noted, *"I noticed my child became more interested in learning math after the teacher praised their effort in solving a difficult problem, even though the solution was not perfect."* These insights reflect how recognition helps students build internal motivation that drives meaningful learning.

When motivation comes from within themselves, students tend to feel more excited and involved in the learning process, not just to meet the expectations of others or to obtain external rewards. Receiving positive rewards can help students create a more positive learning environment where they feel encouraged to explore and understand the material in more depth. A student remarked, *"When my teacher praises me for trying hard, I feel like I want to learn more, not because I have to, but because I enjoy it."* Thus, giving rewards that build intrinsic motivation forms a strong foundation for sustainable learning motivation, which does not only depend on external rewards but also on the internal desire to grow and develop in the field of education.

This process allows students to develop a more meaningful relationship with their learning and encourages them to reach their full potential in a supportive and motivating educational environment. Thus, appropriate rewards not only increase students' motivation to learn in general but also form the basis for strong intrinsic motivation, which is key to sustained and meaningful learning in educational contexts. Through an in-depth analysis of the results of this study, practical recommendations can be produced that have the potential to improve the implementation of rewards and punishments in the context of Islamic boarding school education such as in MA Salafiyah Pajarakan.

### **Discussion**

The main findings of this research indicate that providing appropriate rewards can be an effective strategy for building students' intrinsic motivation, which ultimately encourages them to be more involved in the learning process. This is in line with the intrinsic motivation theory of Deci and Ryan, which

emphasizes that motivation that comes from within the individual has a more lasting impact than extrinsic motivation (Baharun, 2023; Putri, 2024; Sain, 2025). In this context, awards given not only function as recognition of student achievements but also as a catalyst for building more meaningful relationships between students and the learning process itself (Rahmani & Muradi, 2023; Sulaiman, 2021). This approach supports the concept of self-determination, where students are motivated to learn not because of external pressure, but because of an internal drive to develop.

Furthermore, this research also found that punishments that are applied educationally, such as reading *istighfar* or *Surah Yasin*, contribute to the formation of students' moral and spiritual awareness (Abdullah, 2024; Haddade, 2024; Moulai et al., 2023). This approach is relevant to the character education theory introduced by Setiawan Putri (2024), which states that education must integrate moral and spiritual dimensions in the learning process. By combining rewards that build intrinsic motivation and punishments that educate, MA Salafiyah Pajarakan creates a learning environment that not only supports academic achievement but also the formation of student character (Hechler et al., 2022; Kiefer et al., 2020).

The implications of these findings support B.F.'s Behavioral Conditioning theory. Skinner, where positive reinforcement (rewards) and negative reinforcement (educational punishment) are used to encourage desired behaviour (Herlina, 2024; Heru & Bali, 2024; Hidayah, 2024). In the context of MA Salafiyah Pajarakan, rewards encourage student involvement in learning, while punishments based on Islamic values help students understand the consequences of their actions while strengthening spiritual values (Harahap, 2020; Sulistiyo, 2023). This approach is in line with the goals of holistic education, where learning is not only aimed at academic achievement but also at forming morally and socially responsible individuals.

These findings show that the application of appropriate rewards and punishments can create a balance between motivational encouragement and discipline-oriented character building. With this integrated strategy, MA Salafiyah Pajarakan is not only able to improve student learning outcomes but also create an educational environment that supports long-term development, both academically and morally. This supports the concept of sustainable education which places ethical values and intrinsic motivation as the main elements in developing student potential.

This study provides a significant contribution to the development of learning motivation strategies in the context of Islamic boarding school-based education. By integrating rewards and punishments that are in accordance with Islamic values, this study offers a holistic pedagogical approach in forming intrinsic motivation as well as students' moral character. The findings enrich the discourse on contemporary Islamic education with empirical evidence that appreciative and corrective strategies can work synergistically in improving

academic achievement and discipline. This study also opens up space for the development of a classroom management model based on spirituality and local culture of Islamic boarding schools in a contextual and sustainable manner.

## CONCLUSION

Reward and punishment strategies that are applied appropriately and in accordance with Islamic values can increase students' intrinsic learning motivation while forming moral characters. The most important finding of this study is that non-material rewards such as praise and recognition, as well as educational punishments such as reading istighfar and Surah Yasin, can create a learning environment that is balanced between appreciation and discipline. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of the role of contextual and religious pedagogical approaches in classroom management in Islamic boarding school-based educational institutions. The scientific contribution of this study lies in enriching the literature on learning motivation in the context of Islamic education, while its practical contribution encourages educators to apply motivational strategies based on spirituality and moral values. The strength of this study lies in the in-depth qualitative approach and the unique context of Islamic boarding school education, but its limitations include a scope that is limited to one educational institution so that the generalization of the results is still limited. Therefore, it is recommended that further research be conducted with a wider scope, quantitative or mixed approaches, and exploration of differences in social and cultural backgrounds in the application of reward and punishment strategies.

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