

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Learning motivation has long been recognized as one of the key factors in educational success. In the context of junior high school—especially for ninth-grade students—motivation acts as a central driving force that underlies students' desire, sincerity, and consistency in undergoing the learning process. The use of reward as a pedagogical strategy has been widely recognized as an effective way to enhance students' motivation, as it functions to stimulate enthusiasm and encourage learners to repeat positive behaviors in the learning process (Nur et al., 2022). Furthermore, literature research on learning motivation shows that highly motivated students tend to be more persistent, diligent, and resilient in the face of obstacles—reading more, working harder, and not giving up easily. This indicates that motivation is not merely a temporary desire but rather the foundation for long-term commitment to learning (Elvira Z et al., 2022).

Various empirical studies on the impact of reward and punishment on learning motivation show generally positive findings, although their effectiveness remains influenced by the context in which they are applied. A quantitative study conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Pandaan revealed that the systematic application of reward and punishment strategies was able to explain 44.7% of the variation in student learning motivation in music lessons, indicating that both strategies have a significant contribution even in the context of learning that is specific to a particular field of study (Prawirahati, H. S., Octavianingrum, D., & Heldisari, 2023). In addition, the implementation of rewards in the form of praise, appreciation, and tangible incentives has been shown to stimulate students' enthusiasm and encourage them to repeat positive learning behaviours, while punishment, when applied appropriately, functions as a corrective mechanism to guide students toward expected behavioural norms (Fernando et al., 2024).

1.2. Problem Identification

Although the role of motivation in determining academic achievement is increasingly widely recognised, the motivational conditions of ninth-grade students in Indonesian junior high schools have not been adequately discussed in empirical

studies. This reduction is typically seen in unengaged classroom behavior, shallow learning approaches, and study practices focused mainly on official evaluation times (Viana et al., 2023). In such situations, the use of pedagogical strategies in the form of rewards and punishments is still commonly found in learning practices. However, their application is often reactive and inconsistent, and is more directed at producing short-term behavioural compliance, rather than encouraging the development of deep, independent, and intrinsically sustainable learning motivation.

Various studies have reported significant associations between the implementation of reward and punishment strategies and students' motivation to learn at the junior high level; nevertheless, the majority of this research relies heavily on quantitative indicators and offers limited insight into students' lived experiences, personal meanings, and subjective interpretations of these practices (Febrianto & Priyana, 2025).

One of the main weaknesses in existing research lies in the lack of comprehensive integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence in explaining the effect of the application of reward and punishment strategies on the motivation and learning behaviour of ninth grades students at secondary school level. Previous studies have tended to rely on a single methodological approach, resulting in an incomplete picture of the phenomenon. A recent quantitative study also found that reward and punishment explain 61.4% of students' learning discipline variance, yet the study did not explore emotional interpretation or long-term behavioral adaptation among students (Damanik et al., 2023). Quantitative studies do show a significant relationship between reward and punishment practices and student learning motivation, but this approach rarely describes how students interpret and perceive the application of these strategies in their learning experiences (Fitri & Ain, 2022).

Therefore, the application of a mixed methods approach in this study was not merely chosen as a methodological preference, but was consciously designed based on epistemological considerations to address gaps that cannot be adequately explained when each approach is used separately (Costa, 2024). Through the

integration of quantitative analysis aimed at mapping students' learning motivation patterns with qualitative exploration that provides space for students' experiences and views in interpreting and internalising these strategies, this study seeks to present a more complete, honest, and pedagogically relevant understanding of the dynamics of motivation that influence the learning behaviour of ninth-grade students.

1.3. Research Question

This research was conducted to investigate comprehensively how the application of reward and disciplinary consequence strategies influences the learning motivation and behavioral responses of ninth-grade students in junior secondary education. Drawing upon the previously discussed background and the identified research issues, the study formulates the following research questions:

1. how the implementation of rewards and punishments can enhance the learning behavior of ninth-grade junior high school students?
2. To what extent does the implementation of reward and punishment influence students' learning behaviour in classroom activities?
3. How do students interpret and respond to the implementation of reward and punishment strategies in relation to their learning motivation and behaviour?

1.4. Objectives of Study

To identify and analyse the application of rewards and punishments in the learning process as an effort to increase student motivation, by examining the forms and mechanisms of giving rewards and punishments and their influence on student motivation in general. This objective refers to the findings of Amiruddin et al., who stated that rewards and punishments function as a form of reinforcement that significantly affects student learning motivation when applied consistently in the learning process (Sarah et al., 2022) In line with these findings, research by Purba, Siagian, and Winarto shows that the simultaneous application of rewards and punishments has a positive effect on student learning motivation, particularly in increasing student engagement and diligence in participating in the learning process (Purba, 2023).

To analyze changes in student learning behaviour after the implementation of rewards and punishments through a mixed methods approach, with the aim of gaining a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of student learning behaviour before and after the implementation of this strategy. This analysis covers changes in student learning behaviour in terms of discipline, compliance with learning rules, active participation in learning activities, responsibility in completing academic tasks, and student attitudes towards the learning process as a whole. This objective is based on Julaeha's findings, which indicate that the application of rewards and punishments contributes to an increase in discipline and regularity in student learning behaviour in the context of formal learning (Julaeha et al., 2024)

Using quantitative and qualitative results to explain the relationship between increased learning motivation and changes in student learning behaviour after the implementation of rewards and punishments. The aim is to gain a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of the causal relationships and transformative processes that occur within students. The mixed methods approach was chosen in this context because it combines the strengths of quantitative analysis—which provides a measurable picture of patterns of change—with qualitative insights that explore the context, meaning, and narratives of students' experiences directly, resulting in a comprehensive interpretation of complex educational phenomena (Costa, 2024). Therefore, this objective reflects efforts to link statistical data on motivation and learning behaviour with participants' subjective experiences, thereby producing a richer and scientifically valid understanding, as well as contributing to the development of an integrative and meaningful learning evaluation model.

1.5. Scope of the Study

This study specifically highlights ninth-grade students in junior high schools in Indonesia. Classroom management literature further suggests that the effectiveness of behavioral reinforcement is highly influenced by consistency, fairness, and students' perceptions of teacher credibility during implementation (Iskandar et al., 2024). Meanwhile, other factors such as family conditions, peer influence, and socio-economic background are recognised as having contextual relevance, but are

not included in the scope of this study's analysis and are therefore not systematically examined.

Thematically, this study limits its focus to the relationship between deliberately designed reward and punishment strategies and two main areas of outcome, namely learning motivation and observable learning behaviour. In this study, learning behaviour is operationalised through five main dimensions, which include academic discipline, compliance with rules, active involvement in class activities, responsibility for tasks, and students' attitudes towards the learning process. Meanwhile, broader instructional factors, such as school culture, teacher characteristics, and curriculum design, are positioned only as supporting contexts and are not treated as independent variables analysed directly in this study (Viana et al., 2023).

1.6. Significance of the Study

Research on the motivational dynamics of reward and punishment in learning behaviour contributes significantly to the development of theoretical frameworks in educational psychology and contemporary behavioural science. Fundamentally, this study enriches our understanding of the mechanisms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which have long been debated in academic achievement, particularly in the context of Self-Determination Theory proposed by Ryan and Deci, as well as operant conditioning theory, which continues to undergo conceptual evolution.

(Fauziddin et al., 2023) emphasized that external rewards may effectively increase short-term participation, but excessive dependency on tangible rewards may weaken students' intrinsic motivation if not balanced with reflective learning strategies. In line with developments in contemporary motivation theory, recent research shows that the effectiveness of rewards and punishments is largely determined by how learners interpret the consequences. Rewards that are perceived as recognition of effort and competence tend to strengthen intrinsic motivation, while rewards that are overly external in nature can actually weaken students' learning autonomy. This confirms that learning motivation is not solely triggered by external consequences, but by the process of internalising the values and goals of learning that learners consciously experience (Ryan & Deci, 2020).