



The Relationship Between the Implementation of Reward and Punishment and the Learning Motivation in Christian Religious Education and Character Formation among Seventh-Grade Students of SMP Negeri 4 Laguboti

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to determine whether there is a positive relationship between the implementation of reward and punishment and students' learning motivation in Christian Religious Education and Character Education among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Laguboti in the 2024/2025 academic year. This study employed a quantitative method using both descriptive and inferential approaches. The population consisted of all seventh-grade Christian students at SMP Negeri 4 Laguboti in the 2024/2025 academic year, totaling 196 individuals. A sample of 36 students was selected using purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire comprising 35 positive items, with 19 items measuring variable Y (learning motivation) and 16 items measuring variable X (reward and punishment). The results of data analysis indicate a positive and significant relationship between the implementation of reward and punishment and students' motivation to learn Christian Religious Education and Character Education. This finding is supported by the following statistical analyses: 1) The test for a positive relationship yielded a correlation coefficient of $r_{xy} = 0.537$, which is greater than the critical value of $r_{table} (\alpha = 0.05, n = 36) = 0.329$. This result confirms the existence of a positive relationship between variable X and variable Y. 2) The test for a significant relationship resulted in a t-value of $t_{count} = 3.711$, which exceeds the critical value of $t_{table} (\alpha = 0.05, df = n - 2 = 34) = 2.042$. This indicates a statistically significant relationship between variable X and variable Y. Based on these findings, the alternative hypothesis (H_a), which posits that there is a positive and significant relationship between the implementation of reward and punishment and learning motivation in Christian Religious Education and Character Education among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Laguboti in the 2024/2025 academic year, is accepted. Conversely, the null hypothesis (H_0), which posits no such relationship, is rejected.

Keywords: Giving rewards, giving punishment, learning motivation, Christian religious education, character.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a systematically designed means to develop the full potential of individuals. The essence of education lies in the effort to enhance human dignity and worth. This aligns with the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which defines education as a conscious and deliberate effort to create a learning environment that enables students to actively develop their abilities, character, intelligence, noble morals, and the skills required for life as members of society and the nation. To realize these educational goals, the presence of professional and competent educators is crucial. A teacher is not only responsible for transferring knowledge but also plays a vital role in shaping students' character and personality, guiding them to become individuals who contribute positively to national and societal life. In this context, educators carry a significant responsibility to prepare a quality generation capable of contributing to national development. The duties and roles of teachers are emphasized in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers, which stipulates that teachers are professional educators with primary responsibilities to teach, educate, guide, and evaluate students across various levels of formal education. Learning, therefore, becomes a collaborative activity between teachers and students, not only emphasizing mastery of subject matter but also fostering the development of critical thinking, creativity, and intellectual abilities. One of the most important aspects of the learning process is students' learning motivation. Teachers are expected to build and sustain students' enthusiasm for learning, as motivation serves as the primary driving force in education. Motivation itself refers to internal and external impulses that direct a person to act—in this case, to learn. Such impulses may arise from within the students themselves or from their environment, including school and family. When students' learning motivation is high, they tend to be more active, enthusiastic, and achievement-oriented in pursuing academic goals. Hence, teachers, parents, and the school environment play an important role in creating supportive learning conditions. Several factors influence learning motivation, including needs, interests, goals, and the learning environment. Within this framework, the use of reward and punishment strategies is one of the most widely applied approaches in education. Rewards are intended to stimulate positive behaviors and increase enthusiasm for learning, while punishments are designed to correct inappropriate behaviors. According to Asmawati, the implementation of reward and punishment has a significant effect on students' learning motivation. This view is also supported by W.S. Winkel and Hamalik, who emphasize the importance of these strategies in fostering learning spirit and discipline. However, it is important to note that reward and punishment must be applied fairly and proportionally. Educators should ensure that rewards and punishments are aligned with students' behaviors or achievements. Moreover, this approach should not only focus on final outcomes but also take into account the learning process students undergo. In this way, reward and punishment can serve as effective tools for enhancing both learning motivation and students' overall academic performance. Teachers play a substantial role in rekindling students' learning spirit in the classroom. Through appropriate strategies, such as the implementation of rewards, teachers can create a more enjoyable learning atmosphere and encourage students to achieve more. Meanwhile, punishment functions as a disciplinary measure intended to guide students in correcting mistakes during the

learning process. A lack of learning motivation often contributes to students' low academic performance. Therefore, the use of reward and punishment emerges as a strategy worth considering to stimulate motivation and improve learning outcomes. From the results of observations and interviews conducted by the researcher at SMP Negeri 4 Laguboti, it was found that students tend to demonstrate low learning motivation, particularly in the subject of Christian Religious Education and Character Formation. This is reflected in students' low active participation during lessons, lack of enthusiasm in completing assignments, and boredom during teachers' explanations. Such conditions highlight the necessity for more optimal motivational strategies, including the effective and wise application of reward and punishment. This study aims to contribute to the development of learning strategies that can enhance students' learning motivation, particularly in the context of Christian Religious Education. In carrying out this research, the author identified several problems, including: (1) students' lack of enthusiasm in completing assignments and low participation in learning activities; (2) suboptimal motivation in Christian Religious Education and Character Formation; and (3) various factors that distract students' concentration during the learning process. To narrow the focus and adjust to the limitations of time and resources, this research is restricted to two main variables: (1) the implementation of reward and punishment as the independent variable (X) and (2) learning motivation in Christian Religious Education and Character Formation as the dependent variable (Y). The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a positive and significant relationship between the strategy of implementing reward and punishment and the improvement of students' learning motivation in Christian Religious Education and Character Formation at SMP Negeri 4 Laguboti. This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, the results may serve as a reference for future researchers in developing theories related to reward and punishment in education. For students, this study may function as an additional resource for understanding the concept of learning motivation. Practically, teachers can use the findings to enhance teaching strategies through the application of reward and punishment, while schools may develop policies to foster a more motivating learning environment. Moreover, the results of this research can enrich the academic collection of IAKN Tarutung as a scholarly reference.

METHODS

The research method employed in this study is the inferential quantitative method. According to Sugiyono, quantitative research is a method based on the philosophy of positivism, applied to study specific populations or samples, with data collection using research instruments and data analysis conducted quantitatively or statistically to test predetermined hypotheses. In this context, the study adopts an inferential approach, which, as explained by Sugiyono, refers to statistics used to analyze sample data and generalize the results to the population. This study was conducted at SMP Negeri 4 Laguboti, Laguboti Sub-district, Toba Regency. The location was chosen because the researcher identified relevant issues that needed to be examined, particularly concerning students' learning motivation at the school. The research was carried out from April to May 2025. The population of this study consisted of all seventh-grade Protestant Christian students at SMP Negeri 4 Laguboti, totaling 196 students. The population is defined as the entire group of objects or subjects of research that serve as data sources for the

researcher. According to Sugiyono, a population is the generalization area consisting of objects or subjects possessing certain characteristics determined by the researcher to be studied and from which conclusions are drawn. Similarly, Arikunto states that a population is the entire object of research, which includes subjects that can serve as data sources. Yusuf further emphasizes that the population is an essential element that must be carefully considered to ensure research results are reliable and useful for the studied area. A well-defined population helps researchers carry out the study in an optimal and directed manner. The details of the population distribution by class are as follows: Class VII-A = 33 students, VII-B = 33 students, VII-C = 33 students, VII-D = 33 students, VII-E = 33 students, and VII-F = 33 students, making a total of 196 students. The sample in this study represents a subset of the population selected to reflect the whole. Sugiyono defines a sample as part of the number and characteristics possessed by the population. When the population is too large and researchers face limitations such as time, resources, and energy, a sample can be drawn from the population. This study employed purposive sampling, as defined by Sugiyono, which is a sampling technique based on specific considerations. The rationale for using this technique is that it allows the researcher to determine respondents who meet the characteristics relevant to the focus of the research. Through this purposive approach, the data obtained is expected to be more relevant and in-depth, accurately reflecting reality. Consequently, the sample in this study comprised 36 students deemed to meet the research criteria. Operational definitions were developed to ensure that each variable could be measured objectively based on observable indicators. This study consists of two variables: the independent variable (X), the implementation of reward and punishment, and the dependent variable (Y), students' learning motivation. The independent variable (X), reward and punishment, is understood as a form of external motivation provided to students, both in the form of rewards and punishments. Rewards serve as positive reinforcement for appropriate behaviors, aiming to shape character and improve positive actions. Conversely, punishment, if applied wisely, can function as a form of negative reinforcement and an effective motivational tool. The effectiveness of rewards and punishments can be observed through changes in students' behavior toward more positive actions, increased learning motivation, and the growth of personal responsibility. Indicators of rewards in this study refer to the forms suggested by Amir Daien Indrakusuma: (1) praise, (2) respect, (3) gifts, and (4) recognition. Meanwhile, indicators of punishment are adapted from Rosyid and include: (1) advising and giving guidance, (2) showing disapproval (frowning), and (3) scolding. The dependent variable (Y), students' learning motivation, is defined as the driving force that leads individuals to willingly and consciously exert their abilities, energy, time, and thoughts in learning activities to achieve specific goals. Learning motivation plays a significant role in determining the extent of students' active participation in the learning process. Highly motivated students tend to demonstrate active engagement, curiosity, persistence, and perseverance in facing academic challenges. To identify learning motivation, the indicators applied are based on the characteristics of learning motivation described by Sardiman, namely: (1) persistence in completing tasks, (2) resilience in facing difficulties, (3) interest in various issues, (4) preference for independent work, (5) quick boredom with routine tasks, (6) ability to defend one's opinions, (7) unwillingness to easily abandon personal beliefs, and (8) enjoyment in seeking and solving problems. The research instrument used in this study was a closed-ended questionnaire with four answer options

(a, b, c, and d) to collect data on variables X and Y. Before the questionnaire was constructed, a blueprint (grid) was prepared based on the established indicators to ensure each item corresponded to the research focus. The questionnaire was then distributed to the students selected as samples. The use of a closed-ended questionnaire was considered more effective and practical for reaching respondents, enabling data collection within a limited time, and simplifying data interpretation and analysis. Additionally, respondents were not required to construct their own answers; instead, they simply selected from the provided options that best represented their opinions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the study conducted among seventh-grade students of SMP Negeri 4 Laguboti in the 2024/2025 academic year, the distribution of responses regarding students' learning motivation in Christian Religious Education and Character Formation (variable Y) was obtained. The responses to options a, b, c, and d were weighted according to the type of statement used in the questionnaire. Since the statements for variable Y were positive, option a was assigned a weight of 4, option b a weight of 3, option c a weight of 2, and option d a weight of 1. The item with the highest weighted score among the 19 items related to learning motivation was item number 16, with a total score of 118 and an average of 3.28. This indicates that most students often adhered to advice they believed to be good. In contrast, the lowest weighted score was found in item number 2, with a total score of 73 and an average of 2.03, showing that most students only sometimes completed school assignments independently without waiting for the teacher's instruction. Among the indicators of learning motivation, the highest weighted average was found in indicator number 7 ($M = 3.14$), namely, "not easily abandoning what is believed." This included behaviors such as refusing harmful peer influence, not giving up on goals or aspirations despite obstacles, and holding firmly to values or advice believed to be good. Conversely, the lowest average was indicator number 6 ($M = 2.38$), namely, "being able to defend one's opinion," which involved students explaining their reasoning and expressing opinions with confidence. The overall mean score of students' learning motivation was 2.71. Thus, it can be concluded that the learning motivation of seventh-grade students in Christian Religious Education and Character Formation at SMP Negeri 4 Laguboti in the 2024/2025 academic year was categorized as good, as most students frequently selected the "often" response option to statements related to their learning motivation.

Implementation of Reward and Punishment

Based on the study conducted among seventh-grade students of SMP Negeri 4 Laguboti in the 2024/2025 academic year, the distribution of responses regarding the implementation of reward and punishment (variable X) was obtained. The responses to options a, b, c, and d were weighted similarly, where option a = 4, b = 3, c = 2, and d = 1. The item with the highest weighted score among the 16 items was item number 29, with a total score of 114 and an average of 3.17. Most students indicated that teachers often provided praise when students demonstrated honesty, discipline, and responsibility in class. Conversely, the lowest score was item number 24, with a total score of 70 and an average of 1.94. This showed that most students responded that teachers only sometimes

gave rewards in the form of stationery when students demonstrated discipline in the learning process.

At the indicator level, the highest weighted average was indicator number 4 (M = 3.10), "recognition," which included acknowledging students' efforts even if results were imperfect and rewarding not only high academic achievement but also good attitudes. The lowest average was indicator number 2 (M = 2.42), "gifts," which included rewards such as adding points to assignments or providing stationery (pens, pencils, and books). The overall mean score for reward and punishment was 2.78. Therefore, it can be concluded that the implementation of reward and punishment at SMP Negeri 4 Laguboti was in the "good" category, as most students often selected "often" in their responses. To determine whether there was a positive relationship between variable X (reward and punishment) and variable Y (students' learning motivation in Christian Religious Education and Character Formation), the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation formula was applied, following Arikunto (2013:213):

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N\sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{(N\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2)(N\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2)}}$$

Based on the calculation:

$$r_{xy}=0.537 \quad r_{\{xy\}} = 0.537 \quad r_{xy}=0.537$$

The calculated correlation coefficient ($r = 0.537$) was compared with the critical value (r_{table}) at $\alpha = 0.05$, $df = 36$, which was 0.329. Since $r_{\text{count}} > r_{\text{table}}$ ($0.537 > 0.329$), it was concluded that there was a positive relationship between reward and punishment and students' learning motivation.

Significance Test (t-test)

According to Sugiyono (2017:184), to test the significance of the correlation—that is, whether the relationship can be generalized to the population—the following formula is used:

$$\begin{aligned} t &= \frac{r\sqrt{n-2}}{\sqrt{1-r^2}} \\ &= \frac{0.537 \times \sqrt{36-2}}{\sqrt{1-(0.537)^2}} \\ &= \frac{0.537 \times \sqrt{34}}{\sqrt{1-0.288}} \\ &= \frac{0.537 \times 5.831}{\sqrt{1-0.288}} \\ &= \frac{3.131}{\sqrt{0.712}} \\ &= \frac{3.131}{0.844} \\ &= 3.711 \end{aligned}$$

The obtained t-value (3.711) was compared with the critical value t-table at $\alpha = 0.05$, $df = n-2 = 34$, which was 2.042. Since $t_{\text{calculated}} > t_{\text{table}}$ ($3.711 > 2.042$), it was concluded that the relationship between reward and punishment and learning motivation was significant.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypotheses were formulated as follows:

$H_0: \beta = 0$ (There is no positive and significant relationship between reward and punishment and students' learning motivation in Christian Religious Education and Character Formation).

$H_a: \beta \neq 0$ (There is a positive and significant relationship between reward and punishment and students' learning motivation in Christian Religious Education and Character Formation).

Since $t_{count} > t_{table}$ ($3.711 > 2.042$), H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted. Thus, there is a positive and significant relationship between the implementation of reward and punishment and students' learning motivation in Christian Religious Education and Character Formation at SMP Negeri 4 Laguboti in the 2024/2025 academic year.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it is evident that the hypothesis testing yielded a value of $t_{count} > t_{table}$, namely $3.711 > 2.042$; therefore, the research hypothesis is accepted. It can thus be concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between the implementation of reward and punishment and the learning motivation in Christian Religious Education and Character Formation among seventh-grade students of SMP Negeri 4 Laguboti in the 2024/2025 academic year. Based on theoretical perspectives and empirical results, it can be inferred that the application of reward and punishment is positively related to students' learning motivation in Christian Religious Education and Character Formation in the same context

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