

THE EFFECT OF REWARDS ON STUDENTS' LEARNING MOTIVATION IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES FOR 7TH GRADE STUDENTS AT PITUMPANUA WAJO PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL NO. 3

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of rewards on students' learning motivation in Islamic Religious Education among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Pitumpanua Wajo. The study employed a quantitative approach with a field research design. The population consisted of 219 students, while the sample included 52 seventh-grade students from classes VII A, VII B, and VII C selected using a sampling technique relevant to the research objectives. Data were collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and questionnaires measuring reward and learning motivation variables. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis through simple linear regression. The findings show that reward implementation was in the high category with a percentage of 48.08%, while students' learning motivation was in the moderate category with a percentage of 48.08%. The regression analysis produced the equation $Y = 6.900 + 0.677X$, indicating that every increase in reward is followed by an increase in learning motivation. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.404 shows that rewards contribute 40.4% to students' learning motivation, while the remaining 59.6% is influenced by other factors. This study concludes that rewards have a positive and significant effect on students' learning motivation in Islamic Religious Education

Keywords: Reward, Learning Motivation, Islamic Religious Education, Students

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh reward terhadap motivasi belajar peserta didik pada mata pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam kelas VII di SMP Negeri 3 Pitumpanua Wajo. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain penelitian lapangan. Populasi penelitian berjumlah 219 peserta didik, sedangkan sampel penelitian berjumlah 52 peserta didik kelas VII A, VII B, dan VII C yang dipilih melalui teknik sampling yang sesuai dengan kebutuhan penelitian. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dokumentasi, dan angket untuk mengukur variabel reward dan motivasi belajar. Data dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan analisis inferensial melalui regresi linear sederhana. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemberian reward berada pada kategori tinggi dengan persentase 48,08%, sedangkan motivasi belajar peserta didik berada pada kategori sedang dengan persentase 48,08%. Hasil analisis regresi menunjukkan persamaan $Y = 6,900 + 0,677X$, yang berarti setiap peningkatan reward diikuti peningkatan motivasi belajar. Nilai Adjusted R Square

sebesar 0,404 menunjukkan bahwa reward memberikan kontribusi sebesar 40,4% terhadap motivasi belajar peserta didik, sedangkan 59,6% dipengaruhi oleh faktor lain. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa reward berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap motivasi belajar peserta didik pada mata pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam.

Kata kunci: Reward, Motivasi Belajar, Pendidikan Agama Islam, Peserta Didik

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in shaping students' intellectual capacity, character, social competencies, and readiness to face the increasingly complex changes in life. From the perspective of Indonesia's national education system, learning success is not determined solely by academic achievement but also by the development of students' character, independence, responsibility, creativity, and ability to actively engage in the learning process (Republic of Indonesia, 2018; Chasanatin, 2022). This perspective positions learning motivation as a key determinant of educational success because motivation is linked to students' willingness to initiate, sustain, and direct their learning behavior toward specific goals. Thus, effective learning requires more than just providing content and instruction; it must also create psychological and pedagogical conditions that encourage students to engage continuously in learning activities.

At the junior high school level, the issue of motivation becomes increasingly important because students are in a developmental phase characterized by cognitive, emotional, and social changes, as well as a growing need for recognition and autonomy. During this phase, students' engagement in learning may fluctuate when learning activities are perceived as irrelevant, monotonous, or failing to provide meaningful experiences of success. Learning motivation, therefore, needs to be understood not only as an internal drive but as a construct that can be influenced by the learning environment, teacher–student interactions, experiences of success, and the forms of reinforcement provided during the learning process (Ardiansyah, 2020; Uno, 2025). Students with relatively strong learning motivation tend to demonstrate greater persistence in completing tasks, more active participation, and better preparedness in facing academic challenges.

This issue takes on a more complex dimension in Islamic Religious Education (IRE). IRE instruction is not only oriented toward mastering religious knowledge but is also aimed at the internalization of values, the development of moral character, the cultivation of responsibility, and the application of Islamic principles in daily life. Therefore, learning motivation in PAI needs to be understood as a driving force that connects the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Students with strong motivation ideally not only strive to achieve good academic results but also demonstrate an interest in understanding, internalizing, and applying Islamic values. This situation requires PAI teachers to develop pedagogical strategies that not only convey knowledge but also create learning experiences capable of increasing students' engagement and willingness to learn actively (Syahid et al., 2025; Mustamin et al., 2025).

One pedagogical strategy that has the potential to strengthen this motivation is rewards as a form of positive reinforcement. Rewards can be given in response to students'

achievements, efforts, discipline, participation, or positive behavior. They need not always be material in nature but can include praise, recognition, attention, respect, expressions of appreciation, or the presentation of symbolic awards. Pedagogically, rewards serve to inform students that certain behaviors or efforts elicit a positive response from the learning environment. When given appropriately, proportionally, and consistently, rewards can increase the likelihood of the desired learning behaviors recurring and create experiences of success that can foster student engagement (Purwanto, 2024; Rosyid & Abdullah, 2024).

In the context of Islamic Education (PAI), the use of rewards is also relevant to the orientation of Islamic education, which values good deeds. The principle that every action carries moral consequences—as emphasized in Quranic Surah Al-Zalzalah, verses 7–8—can serve as a foundational value in understanding the importance of recognizing positive behavior. However, the application of rewards in Islamic education must be implemented proportionally. Rewards should not be reduced to a simple exchange mechanism between learning behavior and gifts, because PAI learning is ultimately aimed at fostering awareness, responsibility, and intrinsic value in doing good. Thus, rewards are more appropriately positioned as pedagogical reinforcement that helps students build positive habits, rather than as the sole reason for students to learn (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018; Shoimin, 2023).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of rewards in motivating learning cannot be assumed to be universal. The impact of rewards is highly likely to be influenced by the form of the reward, the frequency of its distribution, perceptions of fairness, learner characteristics, and how teachers integrate them into the learning process. Rewards given appropriately can increase engagement and motivation, but excessive use has the potential to make students overly focused on external rewards. Therefore, the academic question is not merely whether rewards can increase learning motivation, but rather under what pedagogical conditions rewards can function as an effective reinforcement mechanism in PAI learning. This perspective is important so that research on rewards does not stop at a simple relationship between the provision of rewards and increased motivation, but rather considers the learning context in which these mechanisms take place.

A number of previous studies provide empirical evidence regarding the relationship between rewards and learning motivation. Supinta (2021), for example, demonstrated the influence of rewards on students' learning motivation in economics education. These findings provide a basis for the notion that rewards can serve as one of the external stimuli associated with increased motivation. Other studies also indicate that reward systems can contribute to increased engagement, the drive to achieve, and performance when implemented appropriately (Mintawati, 2024). Meanwhile, research on Islamic Education (PAI) learning strategies indicates that strengthening student engagement is a crucial aspect in creating religious education that goes beyond mere knowledge transfer and also supports the development of positive attitudes and behaviors (Syahid et al., 2025; Mustamin et al., 2025).

However, the available literature still leaves contextual and empirical gaps. First, some studies on rewards and learning motivation have been conducted in different subjects or educational contexts, so they do not fully explain how reward mechanisms function in PAI instruction, which has multidimensional objectives—namely, academic achievement as well as the development of values and character. Second, research specifically examining the relationship between rewards and student learning motivation at the junior high school level in the context of madrasahs or public schools in specific regions remains relatively limited. Third, empirical evidence regarding reward practices in PAI instruction at State Junior High School 3 Pitumpanua Wajo has not been adequately documented. This gap is significant because the effectiveness of a learning strategy is highly likely to be influenced by student characteristics, school culture, teacher–student interaction patterns, and local learning conditions.

The need to examine this issue has become increasingly clear based on initial observations at Pitumpanua Wajo State Junior High School No. 3. Several indicators suggest that students face issues with motivation during learning, including low engagement in the learning process, a lack of enthusiasm for lessons, low drive to achieve optimal academic results, limited confidence in expressing opinions, and disruptive behavior that interferes with the learning process. These symptoms indicate that the issue of motivation is not only related to students’ academic abilities but also to their level of engagement during the learning process (Rosilawati, 2024; Kompri, 2020). Under such conditions, pedagogical strategies are needed that can provide positive reinforcement while creating a more appreciative learning environment.

The context of SMP Negeri 3 Pitumpanua Wajo provides a relevant empirical setting to examine this issue. The use of rewards in Islamic Education (PAI) instruction can be analyzed not merely as a practice of giving prizes but as a pedagogical strategy that seeks to link teacher appreciation with students’ learning behaviors. By examining the impact of rewards on learning motivation, this study can provide empirical evidence regarding the extent to which reward strategies are associated with changes in student motivation in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) instruction. This approach also enables the study to offer practical contributions to teachers in designing forms of reinforcement that are more targeted, fair, and aligned with students’ characteristics.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze the effect of rewards on students’ learning motivation in the Islamic Religious Education subject for 7th-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Pitumpanua Wajo. Theoretically, this study seeks to expand the discussion on reinforcement strategies in learning by placing rewards within the context of religious education that integrates academic achievement with character and values development. Empirically, this study provides contextual evidence regarding the relationship between the practice of rewards and learning motivation among junior high school students. Practically, the research findings are expected to help Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers and schools design appreciation strategies that are not merely oriented toward

prizes but are used as pedagogical tools to enhance students' participation, perseverance, and engagement in the learning process.

Thus, the novelty of this study lies in the empirical testing of reward practices in PAI learning within the context of seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Pitumpanua Wajo, with learning motivation as the primary outcome. This study does not view rewards as the goal of learning but rather as a reinforcement mechanism that teachers can use to create more positive learning experiences and encourage student engagement. This perspective is important for developing a more contextual understanding of how reward strategies can be used in Islamic Education instruction without compromising the primary focus of Islamic education on fostering students' awareness, character, and responsibility.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach using field research. The quantitative approach was chosen because the study aims to examine the effect of the reward variable on students' learning motivation through the processing of numerical data and statistical analysis. The research design was aimed at determining the functional relationship between the independent variable—reward—and the dependent variable—students' learning motivation in the subject of Islamic Religious Education (Sugiyono, 2021; Djaali, 2020). The study was conducted at Pitumpanua Wajo Public Junior High School No. 3 during the 2024/2026 academic year. The study population consisted of 219 students, while the sample comprised 52 students from grades VII A, VII B, and VII C. The sample was determined by considering the characteristics of the population and the research needs so that the data obtained could represent the conditions of seventh-grade students as the primary subjects of the study (Arikunto, 2020; Roflin & Andriyani, 2021).

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, documentation, and a questionnaire. Observation was used to assess learning conditions and students' learning behaviors; interviews were conducted with Islamic Religious Education teachers to obtain preliminary information; documentation was used to support school data; and the questionnaire was used to measure the variables of rewards and learning motivation. The questionnaire was designed using a Likert scale with response options that allowed respondents to indicate their level of agreement with each statement (Nurdin, 2021; Edi & Sarwo, 2024). The research instrument consisted of 10 items measuring the reward variable and 10 items measuring the learning motivation variable. The instrument underwent validity and reliability testing before being used in the main data collection. Validity testing was conducted to ensure that each item was capable of measuring the construct under study, while reliability testing was used to determine the instrument's internal consistency. The instrument was deemed suitable for use because the items were valid and the reliability scores met the specified criteria (Djaali, 2020; Priyanto, 2023). Data analysis techniques included descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the categories of rewards and students' learning motivation, while inferential analysis was used to test the effect of rewards on learning motivation through normality tests, simple linear regression tests, t-tests, and the

coefficient of determination. Data processing was conducted using the SPSS program so that the analysis results could be presented objectively and systematically (Sugiyono, 2022; Priyanto, 2023).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Use of Rewards in Islamic Religious Education

The results of the descriptive analysis show that the practice of giving *rewards* in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Pitumpanua Wajo generally falls into the high category. Of the 52 students who served as respondents, 25 students (48.08%) fell into the high category, 20 students (38.46%) fell into the moderate category, and 7 students (13.46%) fell into the low category. Thus, 86.54% of the students fell into the moderate to high categories. This distribution indicates that the appreciation practices provided by teachers have become a fairly prominent part of the students' learning experiences. This finding suggests that *rewards* in the context of this study are not merely in the form of material rewards. Based on the indicators used, rewards can be manifested through praise, attention, recognition of effort, respect, or other forms of non-material appreciation. This pattern suggests that the function of *reward* in Islamic Education (PAI) learning is more appropriately understood as positive reinforcement—that is, a pedagogical response provided by teachers to strengthen desired learning behaviors. Offering appreciation for participation, discipline, effort, and achievement allows students to receive the social message that their engagement in learning is valued by their teachers (Purwanto, 2024; Rosyid & Abdullah, 2024).

The proportion of students in the high category also indicates that the classroom learning environment has provided appreciative experiences for the majority of students. Pedagogically, this is important because appreciation can serve as a form of feedback that links student behavior to positive consequences. In the context of Islamic Education (PAI), this relationship has specific characteristics because appreciation for learning behavior can also be directed toward reinforcing the values of discipline, responsibility, perseverance, and moral character. However, these descriptive data show the prevalence of reward practices; they do not, in and of themselves, prove causal effectiveness—such effectiveness can only be assessed through inferential analysis.

Students' Learning Motivation

In contrast to the *reward* variable, the results of the descriptive analysis show that students' learning motivation falls into the moderate category. Of the 52 students, 20 (38.46%) were in the high category, 25 (48.08%) were in the moderate category, and 7 (13.46%) were in the low category. Thus, the moderate category represents the largest group in the distribution of learning motivation. Although 86.54% of students fall into the moderate to high categories, nearly half of the respondents still exhibit moderate levels of motivation. These findings indicate that learning motivation has been established but is not yet uniformly at an optimal level. Learning motivation in this study is reflected through several aspects, including the desire to succeed, the need to learn, expectations

for the future, rewards in learning activities, and interest in learning. Conceptually, these indicators describe motivation as a multidimensional construct related to the direction, intensity, and persistence of learning behavior. Students with stronger motivation tend to have a greater willingness to engage in academic activities and to persevere when facing difficulties. Conversely, low motivation can be reflected in passivity, low persistence, limited participation, and a lack of attention to learning activities (Ardiansyah, 2020; Uno, 2025). The predominance of the “moderate” category is a significant finding because it indicates that the presence of relatively high *rewards* does not automatically result in an equally high distribution of motivation among all students. In other words, *rewards* are one component of the learning environment, whereas learning motivation is a construct formed through the interaction of various personal and contextual factors. This finding serves as an important basis for further testing whether variations in the provision of *rewards* are statistically associated with variations in learning motivation.

The Effect of Rewards on Learning Motivation

A simple linear regression analysis revealed a positive relationship between *rewards* and students’ learning motivation. The resulting regression model is:

This equation indicates that the regression coefficient for *rewards*, 0.677, is positive. Substantively, a one-unit increase in the *reward* score is associated with a 0.677-unit increase in the learning motivation score in the estimated model. This finding indicates that the more positive students’ experiences with rewards in learning are, the higher their learning motivation scores tend to be.

The results of the *t*-test further show that the effect of *reward* on learning motivation is positive and statistically significant. Thus, the research hypothesis stating that *reward* influences students’ learning motivation receives empirical support. This finding is important because it demonstrates that teachers’ practices of recognition are not merely a pedagogical phenomenon perceived by students but have a statistical correlation with variations in learning motivation within the research sample.

The magnitude of the model’s contribution is indicated by the Adjusted R-Square value of 0.404. This means that the *reward* model explains approximately 40.4% of the variation in learning motivation, while approximately 59.6% of the remaining variation lies outside the research model. This value indicates that *rewards* are a substantial predictor but not the sole determinant of learning motivation. Because the analysis used simple regression, the 59.6% proportion cannot be specifically attributed to any single factor. Factors such as student characteristics, interest in learning, teaching methods, teacher–student relationships, family support, peer support, classroom climate, and psychological conditions are possible contributing factors; however, the specific contribution of each cannot be determined from this research model.

These findings also call for a more cautious interpretation of the role of *rewards* in learning. A high level of *rewards* and their 40.4% contribution to motivation do not mean that an unlimited linear increase in *rewards* will result in a corresponding increase in

motivation. *Rewards* are better understood as one of the reinforcement mechanisms in a learning environment. Their effectiveness depends on how teachers define the behaviors to be rewarded, the form of rewards used, the timing of their distribution, as well as the consistency and fairness in their application (Purwanto, 2024; Rosyid & Abdullah, 2024).

Pedagogical Interpretation of the Findings

The research findings provide empirical support for the understanding that external reinforcement can play a role in building students' learning motivation. When students receive praise, recognition, or other forms of appreciation for their effort and participation, these experiences can provide positive *feedback* regarding their learning behavior. In the context of the 7th-grade class at SMP Negeri 3 Pitumpanua Wajo, this mechanism can help create the experience that learning effort has value and is recognized by the class's social environment. However, the research results also indicate the need to distinguish between motivation triggered by rewards and internalized learning motivation. Awarding recognition that is overly focused on external outcomes risks leading students to associate learning primarily with receiving rewards. Therefore, the practice of *rewards* in Islamic Education (PAI) instruction should be gradually shifted from rewarding outcomes to rewarding effort, process, perseverance, improvement, discipline, and positive behavior. This strategy allows *rewards* to serve as a gateway to fostering learning habits and personal responsibility, rather than as the ultimate goal of learning (Shoimin, 2023; Mintawati, 2024). These findings also hold particular relevance for PAI instruction. In a subject aimed at integrating religious knowledge with the development of attitudes and behavior, teachers' recognition can be used to reinforce behavior with educational value, such as discipline in following lessons, the courage to express opinions, diligence in completing assignments, cooperation, respect for peers, and consistency in applying the values learned. Thus, *rewards* can be situated within a broader pedagogical framework—as a form of reinforcement that supports both character development and academic engagement.

Comparison with Previous Research

The results of this study are consistent with Supinta's (2021) findings, which demonstrated the influence of *rewards* on students' learning motivation. This consistency strengthens the argument that teacher recognition can serve as one of the strategies related to enhancing motivation across different learning contexts. However, this study expands upon those findings by examining the relationship between *rewards* and motivation in Islamic Education (PAI) instruction at the junior high school level, thereby providing an empirical context distinct from previous research. Another contribution of this study lies in the extent to which *rewards* explain the variation in motivation. The *Adjusted R*² value of 0.404 indicates that this variable makes a significant contribution, while also underscoring that learning motivation is a complex phenomenon. With 59.6% of the variation remaining unexplained, future research should develop models that incorporate additional variables and test for potentially more complex relationships. Thus, the study's

findings do not support the deterministic view that *rewards* are the sole strategy for enhancing motivation; rather, they position rewards as one component within a broader pedagogical ecosystem.

Implications of the Study's Findings

In practical terms, the findings suggest that Islamic Education teachers need to develop a *reward* system that is structured, proportional, transparent, and educational. Rewards should not be given solely to students with the highest academic scores but also to those who demonstrate improvement, perseverance, discipline, participation, the courage to ask questions, and positive behavioral changes. This approach can expand students' opportunities to experience success and reduce the risk that *rewards* are enjoyed only by students with high academic ability. Furthermore, *rewards* should be combined with other pedagogical strategies, such as constructive feedback, teacher role modeling, active learning, individual support, and the creation of a positive classroom climate. This is important because the *Adjusted R*² value of 0.404 indicates that most of the variation in motivation is still influenced by factors other than *rewards*. Thus, the main implication of this study is not that teachers need to give out more rewards, but that they need to use rewards more strategically as part of a learning reinforcement system.

Overall, the results indicate that *rewards* are a factor that contributes positively and significantly to the learning motivation of seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Pitumpanua Wajo. Descriptive findings indicate that the practice of *rewards* falls into the high category, while learning motivation remains predominantly in the moderate category. The regression results further show that *rewards* have a positive coefficient of 0.677 and account for 40.4% of the variation in learning motivation based on the *Adjusted R*². These findings provide evidence that teacher recognition plays a crucial role in fostering learning motivation; however, its effectiveness must be integrated into a more comprehensive pedagogical approach. In Islamic Education (PAI) instruction, the use of *rewards* focused on effort, process, character, and the internalization of values has the potential to transform reward strategies from mere external motivational tools into integral components of fostering a positive and sustainable learning culture.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the use of rewards in the Islamic Religious Education course for 7th-grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Pitumpanua Wajo falls into the high category, with a percentage of 48.08%. Students' learning motivation falls into the moderate category, with a percentage of 48.08%; therefore, there is still a need to strengthen learning strategies that can encourage students to be more active, diligent, and confident in participating in the learning process.

The results of the regression analysis show that rewards have a positive and significant effect on students' learning motivation, as indicated by the equation $Y = 6.900 + 0.677X$. The Adjusted R-Square value of 0.404 indicates that rewards contribute 40.4% to learning motivation, while 59.6% is influenced by other factors. Thus, rewards can serve as an

effective learning strategy if administered appropriately, fairly, proportionally, and directed toward fostering students' intrinsic motivation in Islamic Religious Education. The implications of this study are that Islamic Religious Education teachers need to optimize rewards in the form of praise, awards, recognition, and positive reinforcement that are educational in nature. Future research is recommended to examine other factors influencing learning motivation, such as teaching methods, family support, interest in learning, the peer environment, and students' learning styles, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how to enhance motivation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI).

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