

## The Impact of the Reward System on Junior High School Students' Learning Motivation at Tiga Bahasa Mitra Harapan in Madiun

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### ABSTRACT

Learning motivation is a crucial factor in students' academic success. This study aims to analyze the effect of reward systems on learning motivation among junior high school students at Tiga Bahasa Mitra Harapan Madiun. This quantitative survey research involved 50 students using total sampling technique. The instrument consisted of a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire (27 items) tested for validity ( $r > 0.361$ ) and reliability ( $\alpha = 0.919$ ). Data analysis using SPSS 19.0 included prerequisite tests, descriptive analysis, and simple regression. Results showed that reward implementation was in the moderate category ( $M = 119.00$ ;  $SD = 8.47$ ), while students' learning motivation was in the high category ( $M = 65.31$ ;  $SD = 6.91$ ). Regression analysis yielded a correlation coefficient  $r = 0.446$  with determination  $r^2 = 0.199$  ( $p = 0.000$ ), indicating rewards contributed 19.9% to learning motivation. The regression equation  $\hat{Y} = 31.745 + 0.348X$  shows that each one-unit increase in rewards enhances motivation by 0.348 points. The reward system demonstrably exerts a positive and significant influence on learning motivation, although in the moderate category. High student motivation despite moderate reward implementation indicates the dominant role of intrinsic factors (80.1%). This study recommends optimizing reward systems through diversification, consistency, and integration with pedagogical strategies that cultivate intrinsic motivation.

**Keywords:** reward; learning motivation; intrinsic motivation; academic achievement; junior high school students

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### INTRODUCTION

This study examines students' learning motivation, in which such motivation encourages them to learn actively and continuously. Learning motivation plays an essential role in determining how well students understand and master the learning material. Several factors influence learning motivation, including students' interest in the subject, a conducive learning environment, support from teachers and parents, and appreciation or recognition for their achievements. Low learning motivation can have serious impacts on students' academic and personal development. Students with low motivation tend to achieve lower grades. A lack of interest in learning may cause students to become increasingly disengaged. Those with low motivation often skip classes and tend to

be inactive in discussions or classroom activities. They may procrastinate on homework or other assignments. Poor performance can reduce students' self-confidence, and parental disappointment may lead to conflicts at home. Low motivation can also trigger stress or anxiety, and in some cases, students may seek unhealthy social environments as an escape. Ultimately, low motivation can affect future careers and life opportunities.

Students who possess strong learning motivation will continuously strive to improve and be seen as successful individuals in their environment. Conversely, students who lack learning motivation will not demonstrate seriousness in studying, resulting in unsatisfactory learning outcomes. The higher the students' motivation, the higher their academic achievement tends to be, and vice versa (Maryam, 2016).

Many students are not enthusiastic about learning, leading to suboptimal comprehension, which ultimately affects their academic performance. Thus far, the teaching methods used have not been innovative and have not incorporated creative approaches that could make the classroom more dynamic and encourage students' active participation in the learning process. Therefore, there is a need to explore new ways of delivering the material.

Students who lack enthusiasm for learning may be experiencing various problems or challenges. They often display signs such as low enthusiasm, difficulty concentrating, and easily feeling fatigued. The causes may vary, ranging from a lack of interest in the subject matter, physical or mental fatigue, to personal issues that disrupt their focus. Teaching methods that are monotonous or lack variation can also contribute to boredom.

A significant decline in students' academic performance may result from several interconnected factors that influence their motivation and ability to learn. One major cause is the lack of motivation, where students feel they have no clear goals or are uninterested in the learning material. This leads to poor discipline in completing assignments, lack of focus during learning activities, and ultimately, decreased academic achievement. Additionally, environmental factors such as unsupportive family conditions or personal issues affecting students' emotional and psychological state can contribute to declining performance. Stress, anxiety, and social pressure may hinder students' ability to learn effectively.

Ineffective learning styles also play a major role, as some students may not have discovered a method that suits their needs, causing difficulties in understanding lessons. A lack of support from parents and teachers, as well as inadequate learning facilities or resources, can further worsen the situation. In some cases, changes in the education system such as the shift from face-to-face learning to online learning create adaptation challenges for students who may not be fully prepared. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers, parents, and students themselves to work together in identifying the specific causes of declining academic performance and finding effective solutions to help students improve their achievement.

Students who frequently skip classes or arrive late represent a serious issue that can affect their academic performance and personal development. This habit is often caused by various internal and external factors. One major factor is the lack of learning motivation, where students feel uninterested in the subject matter or perceive school as irrelevant to their life goals. In addition, personal discipline issues such as poor time management, staying up late, or a lack of responsibility also contribute to frequent absences or tardiness. Environmental factors, including unstable family conditions, responsibilities outside of school, or transportation problems, may also hinder students from arriving on time. Psychological conditions such as stress, anxiety, or even bullying at school can further discourage students from attending classes. Frequent tardiness and absenteeism not only lead to declining academic performance but also reduce students' opportunities to engage in social and extracurricular activities that are essential for developing socio-emotional skills. Therefore, it is important to identify the causes

of these issues and involve all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and school counselors, in finding appropriate solutions so that students can return to learning with discipline and enthusiasm.

Students who rarely or are unwilling to participate in classroom discussions or group activities are often influenced by various internal and external factors that affect their confidence and engagement in learning. One major factor is low self-confidence. Some students may feel embarrassed or afraid of making mistakes when speaking in front of their classmates, leading them to remain silent. The fear of receiving negative judgment from peers or teachers can also be a barrier, especially if they have had negative experiences in the past. Another contributing factor is a lack of understanding of the material being discussed. Students who do not fully comprehend the lesson are more likely to hesitate, worrying that what they say may be incorrect or irrelevant. Additionally, students may feel that classroom discussions or group activities are uninteresting or unimportant particularly if the topic does not match their interests or if the teacher's delivery method is not engaging. Environmental factors, such as a competitive classroom atmosphere or lack of support from peers, may also hinder participation. In some cases, psychological issues such as social anxiety or pressure from home may cause students to avoid active engagement in class. Therefore, it is crucial to create an inclusive and supportive classroom environment in which every student feels safe to participate without fear of being judged.

Students who frequently break school rules or fail to pay attention during lessons typically show signs that they are not interested in engaging with the learning process. This lack of interest may arise from various internal and external factors. Internally, students may feel that the material being taught is irrelevant or too difficult to understand, causing them to lose motivation to participate actively. In addition, a teacher's instructional style that is monotonous or lacks interaction may bore students, leading them to ignore instructions and focus on unrelated activities. Externally, social environmental influences such as peer pressure or distractions from technology, including social media and gadgets can make it easy for students to lose focus. Other contributing factors include emotional or personal issues, such as stress, anxiety, or family problems, which reduce students' ability to concentrate in class. When students do not have a positive relationship with their teachers or feel that they are not receiving adequate attention, they may feel neglected, which then affects their behavior at school. Therefore, it is important to create an engaging and supportive learning environment, which includes more innovative teaching methods and better communication between teachers and students, so that students feel motivated and more disciplined in following lessons.

The indicators of learning motivation problems among students at SMP Tiga Bahasa Mitra Harapan can be seen in several conditions: students show a lack of enthusiasm during the learning process, they experience a significant decline in academic performance, they frequently skip classes or arrive late, they rarely or are unwilling to participate in classroom discussions or group activities, and they often violate school rules or pay little attention to the teacher during lessons due to a lack of interest in learning.

To narrow the scope of this study, clear boundaries must be established. Among the five identified problems, this research focuses specifically on the second issue, namely the significant decline in students' academic performance.

The formulation of the research problem is closely connected to the research topic, which is deliberately limited to ensure that the issue can be effectively examined. Based on the considerations above, the research questions are as follows: Is there an effect of rewards on students' learning motivation at SMP Tiga Bahasa Mitra Harapan in Madiun? How significant is the effect of rewards on students' learning motivation at the same school?

The objectives of this research reflect the researcher's intention to collect data through appropriate methods in order to answer the research questions. This study aims to determine whether rewards influence students' learning motivation at SMP Tiga Bahasa Mitra Harapan in Madiun and to identify how significant that influence is. This research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the fields of Educational Psychology and Christian Religious Education. In practical terms, the findings of this study will benefit the school by helping improve and enhance several important aspects related to the teaching and learning process. The results may offer insights and empirical evidence that can be used to refine instructional methods, thereby elevating the overall quality of education and creating a more effective and efficient learning environment. The study will also benefit teachers by providing strategies or methods proven effective in improving the quality of classroom instruction, enabling them to foster a more conducive and impactful learning atmosphere. In addition, students will benefit through new insights or solutions to learning challenges, helping them deepen their understanding of concepts and learning materials, which ultimately makes the learning process more meaningful and effective.

### **Literature Review**

Motivation in learning plays a crucial role in improving students' academic outcomes. When students possess strong motivation, they tend to understand and master learning materials more effectively and are able to retain them for a longer period of time (Peterria & Suryani, 2016). McNeil (1974) explains that motivation arises from needs and drives that underlie an individual's engagement in an activity, resulting from a complex interaction between perceived needs, internal drives that push individuals to act, and situational factors that influence their behavior. Uno (2019) defines motivation as a driving force that encourages a person to achieve predetermined goals. In the context of education, this motivation is essential for achieving learning objectives and functions as an internal engine that compels individuals to persist and remain committed to the learning process. Sardiman (2004) explains that motivation is generally categorized into two main types: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to internal drives that arise without external stimulation, while extrinsic motivation is triggered by external factors such as environmental influence or specific situational stimuli.

Nasution (1982) states that motivation has three primary functions: (1) serving as a driving force that prompts an individual to act, (2) helping determine the direction of one's actions toward desired goals, and (3) functioning as a selective tool for determining which actions need to be taken. Learning motivation is not constant and may fluctuate. Slameto (2010) identifies several strategies to enhance students' learning motivation, including creating an engaging and enjoyable learning atmosphere, providing realistic expectations, offering incentives, and giving clear guidance. Uno (2006) identifies several main indicators of learning motivation: (1) the desire and will to achieve success, (2) internal drives and needs in learning, (3) future expectations and aspirations, (4) recognition received during the learning process, (5) engaging learning activities, and (6) a conducive learning environment.

According to Sardiman (2006), students who possess strong learning motivation exhibit characteristics such as persistence in completing tasks, resilience in facing difficulties, independence from external encouragement to perform well, interest in various problems, preference for working independently, the ability to maintain their viewpoints, and enjoyment in seeking and solving problems. Purwanto (2006) states that a reward is one of the easiest educational tools to apply and provides enjoyment for learners. In the educational context, rewards are essential because they function as a means to increase students' learning motivation. Educators give rewards to encourage students to work harder in improving and enhancing their achievements in the future.

Selart et al. (2008) explain that providing rewards has the potential to stimulate students' learning motivation. Rewards not only encourage greater enthusiasm for learning but also positively influence students' behavior in their daily lives.

*Ivancevich et al. (2006) divide rewards into two types.*

**a. Extrinsic Rewards:** Rewards that come from outside the individual, consisting of (1) financial rewards such as salary, wages, allowances, and bonuses/incentives, and (2) non-financial rewards such as interpersonal recognition, status, acknowledgment, and promotion.

**b. Intrinsic Rewards:** Rewards regulated internally by the individual, including (1) completion, (2) achievement, and (3) autonomy. Febianti (2018) notes that rewards have three important functions: (1) they provide educational value by teaching expected behaviors, (2) they motivate students to repeat those desired behaviors, and (3) they reinforce socially approved behaviors. Hadi (2003) adds that reward and punishment share a similar goal, which is to act as reinforcement to help students achieve independent learning, develop self-confidence, and build responsibility.

Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory explains that human behavior is influenced by the consequences that follow it (Ernata, 2017). When a behavior is followed by a pleasant consequence (reward), it is more likely to be repeated in the future. Conversely, if followed by an unpleasant consequence (punishment), the behavior is less likely to recur. Andriani (2013) concludes that rewards play a major role in increasing students' motivation and active participation, including asking questions, answering, working on problems at the front of the class, completing practice tasks, and doing homework. Djamarah (2008) argues that rewards can motivate students to continue learning, maintain their achievements, and encourage others to engage in healthy academic competition. When students receive rewards for their accomplishments, they not only feel appreciated but are also motivated to continue sustaining and improving their performance.

The influence of rewards on learning motivation among students at SMP Tiga Bahasa Mitra Harapan in Madiun focuses on the relationship between rewards as an external factor and learning motivation as the expected outcome. Rewards, in the form of gifts or recognition, can serve as positive stimuli that affect students' learning behavior. According to reinforcement theory, rewards given after certain efforts or achievements can strengthen positive behaviors and encourage students to continue performing well. In this framework, rewards are considered an independent variable that may influence students' learning motivation as the dependent variable. Through well-planned and targeted implementation of rewards, it is expected that students' motivation to be active and committed in the learning process will increase. Based on the theoretical framework and conceptual analysis, the hypotheses of this study are as follows: The tendency of reward influence at SMP Tiga Bahasa Mitra Harapan Madiun is moderate. The tendency of learning motivation among students at SMP Tiga Bahasa Mitra Harapan in Madiun is moderate. There is a significant influence of rewards on students' learning motivation, with a moderate tendency.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a survey method to examine the effect of rewards on students' learning motivation. A positivist approach was chosen because the study focuses on collecting and analyzing numerical data to test predetermined hypotheses. The research design utilized a simple correlational

analysis with the reward variable (X) as the independent variable and students' learning motivation (Y) as the dependent variable.

The research was conducted at SMP Tiga Bahasa Mitra Harapan Madiun from August to September 2024. The population consisted of all 50 students enrolled at the school. Given that the population size is relatively small (fewer than 100), this study used a total sampling or saturated sampling technique, in which all population members were included as research participants. Thus, the sample comprised 50 students, representing the entire population. This technique was selected to avoid sampling bias and to obtain a comprehensive representation of the population.

The research instrument consisted of a questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree), containing 27 statement items. Fifteen items measured the reward variable, and twelve items measured the learning motivation variable. Prior to use in the main study, the instrument was piloted among 30 respondents to test its validity and reliability. Validity testing was conducted using the orthogonal iteration technique with a critical r-value of 0.361 ( $df = 28, \alpha = 0.05$ ). The pilot results indicated that all items were valid because their calculated r-values exceeded the critical value. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha produced a coefficient of 0.919 for both variables, indicating that the instrument demonstrated excellent reliability ( $> 0.8$ ).

Data analysis was conducted in several stages using SPSS version 19.0. First, prerequisite tests were performed, including a normality test using the Skewness and Kurtosis Test and a linearity test using the deviation from linearity. Second, the first and second hypotheses were tested using Confidence Intervals at a 5% significance level to determine the tendencies of each variable. Third, the third hypothesis was tested using simple regression analysis to determine the effect of rewards on learning motivation, which included calculating the correlation coefficient, coefficient of determination, significance testing of the correlation using the t-test, and deriving the linear regression equation. The interpretation of correlation strength followed these categories: 0.00–0.199 (very low), 0.20–0.399 (low), 0.40–0.599 (moderate), 0.60–0.799 (high), and 0.80–1.000 (very high).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Descriptive Statistics

This study involved 50 students from Tiga Bahasa Mitra Harapan Junior High School in Madiun as respondents. Descriptive analysis revealed that the Reward variable (X) demonstrated a minimum score of 102 and a maximum score of 135, with a mean of 119.00 and a standard deviation of 8.47. The median value of 119.50 indicated a stable distribution approximating the mean. The Learning Motivation variable (Y) exhibited a score range of 30–75, with a mean of 65.31 and a standard deviation of 6.91. The relatively high mean and median of 66.00 suggested that the majority of students possessed strong levels of learning motivation. From a descriptive statistical perspective, both variables demonstrated data tendencies that were not extreme, yet exhibited sufficient characteristics to represent internal variations in the reward system and learning motivation within the school context.

### Prerequisite Tests

#### *Normality Test*

The normality test based on Skewness and Kurtosis values indicated that both variables fell within the acceptable range of -2 to +2 (Sunjoyo et al., 2013). The Reward variable showed a skewness of -0.488 and kurtosis

of -0.093, while Learning Motivation exhibited a skewness of -0.882 and kurtosis of 1.971. These results confirmed that the data were normally distributed and met the assumptions required for parametric analysis.

### ***Linearity Test***

The linearity test yielded an F-value of 55.609 with a significance level of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating a significant linear relationship between Reward and Learning Motivation (Priyatno, 2010). This finding confirmed the methodological foundation for proceeding with regression analysis.

## **Hypothesis Testing**

### ***Hypothesis 1: Reward Tendency***

Based on the classification intervals (102–114 low, 115–127 moderate, 128–140 high) and the 95% confidence interval (116.59–121.41), the Reward variable was categorized as moderate. Consequently, the first hypothesis was supported, indicating that while the reward system was operational, it had not yet reached an optimal level of implementation.

### ***Hypothesis 2: Learning Motivation Tendency***

Although the initial hypothesis assumed a moderate category, the 95% confidence interval (64.41–66.21) revealed that students' learning motivation fell within the high category rather than moderate. Therefore, the second hypothesis was not supported. This finding opens the possibility that learning motivation does not depend entirely on external rewards.

### ***Hypothesis 3: Effect of Reward on Learning Motivation***

Simple regression analysis yielded the following results:

- Correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) = 0.446 (moderate category)
- Coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) = 0.199 or 19.9%
- F-statistic = 56.562,  $p = 0.000$
- t-statistic = 7.521,  $p = 0.000$
- Regression equation:  $\hat{Y} = 31.745 + 0.348X$

These results indicated that rewards exerted a significant influence on motivation; however, they contributed only 19.9% to the variance, while 80.1% was attributed to other factors.

## **Discussion**

### ***Discussion of Hypothesis 1***

The moderate categorization of the Reward variable suggests that the reward system remains incompletely implemented. Several factors may account for this finding:

1. **Monotonous reward forms:** The lack of variety in reward types may diminish their perceived value and effectiveness.
2. **Inconsistent reward administration:** Irregular distribution patterns may reduce the predictability and reinforcing power of rewards.

3. **Misalignment between reward types and student preferences:** Generic rewards may fail to resonate with diverse student motivations and interests.

Purwanto (1995) emphasized that rewards function as effective educational tools "when administered appropriately and commensurate with student achievement." In other words, well-designed rewards can serve as positive behavior reinforcers; however, reward systems that fail to consider learner characteristics may actually undermine their intended function.

These findings suggest that while a reward system exists, it has not been strategically managed or optimized for maximum pedagogical impact.

### *Discussion of Hypothesis 2*

The finding that learning motivation remained high despite moderate reward levels reveals an important pedagogical phenomenon: learning motivation is not solely derived from extrinsic factors. This observation supports Uno's (2019) theory that learning motivation is influenced by both intrinsic factors (learning interest, aspirations, self-awareness) and extrinsic factors (rewards, social environment, family support). The dominance of intrinsic motivation explains why students remained motivated despite suboptimal reward implementation.

Saputra et al. (2018) further confirmed that the learning environment, teacher quality, and family involvement significantly strengthen learning motivation. This indicates that:

- Rewards retain their function but do not serve as the sole motivational driver.
- The moderate reward system actually provides an opportunity to observe the strength of other motivational factors.

This constitutes a significant finding: student learning motivation is sustained by a more complex structure than external recognition alone. The high motivation levels observed suggest that students at this institution possess strong internal drives for learning, including personal interest in subjects, academic aspirations, and self-directed learning behaviors. This intrinsic motivation appears to compensate for the limitations in the external reward system.

### *Discussion of Hypothesis 3*

The significant positive effect of rewards on motivation was confirmed by the correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.446$ ) and significance level ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, the modest contribution of 19.9% to the variance indicates that the influence of rewards is partial and not dominant. This finding aligns with Skinner's Operant Conditioning theory, which posits that "behavior followed by positive consequences will be repeated" (Ernata, 2017). The regression equation demonstrates that each one-unit increase in reward implementation corresponds to a 0.348-point increase in learning motivation scores, indicating a positive but modest relationship.

Nevertheless, the substantial unexplained variance of 80.1% suggests the presence of other influential factors, consistent with Sulfemi's (2018) research on learning environment, student characteristics, parental support, and teaching methods. Several factors may limit reward effectiveness:

1. Reward type appropriateness: Akmal and Susanti (2019) demonstrated that mismatches between reward types and student characteristics diminish their impact. Students with different learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and personal values may respond differently to various reward modalities.

2. Frequency and consistency: Unpredictable reward schedules reduce reinforcement effects. When students cannot anticipate or rely on rewards, the motivational impact weakens, and the system may even create frustration or perceived inequity.

3. Emphasis on extrinsic motivation: Hamalik (2017) cautioned that intrinsic motivation demonstrates greater sustainability compared to reward-based motivation. Over-reliance on external rewards may inadvertently undermine the development of self-regulated learning and autonomous motivation.

These findings suggest that:

- Rewards remain important but insufficient as standalone motivators, particularly when not integrated with instructional strategies that cultivate intrinsic motivation.
- The reward system should be reconceptualized as one component within a comprehensive motivational framework rather than as the primary driver of student engagement.

### ***Critical Synthesis***

This study yields several important implications for educational practice:

1. Multi-factorial nature of motivation: Rewards do not constitute the sole factor in building learning motivation. The high motivation levels observed despite moderate reward implementation indicate that students draw upon multiple motivational sources, with intrinsic factors playing a particularly prominent role.

2. Strength of intrinsic motivation: Students at Tiga Bahasa Mitra Harapan Junior High School demonstrate robust intrinsic motivation, suggesting that the school's educational approach successfully cultivates internal drives for learning beyond external incentives.

3. Need for reward system redesign: The moderate effectiveness of the current reward system suggests opportunities for improvement through more varied, personalized, and consistent implementation strategies. Educators should consider student preferences, developmental needs, and cultural contexts when designing reward mechanisms.

4. Integration with pedagogical strategies: Rewards will prove most effective when integrated with broader pedagogical strategies that foster learning awareness, autonomy, and internal interest. This includes creating engaging learning experiences, providing meaningful choice, supporting competence development, and building positive relationships.

In conclusion, rewards function effectively only as part of a holistic, reflective, and character-oriented educational system rather than as isolated incentive mechanisms. The findings suggest that educators should prioritize the development of intrinsic motivation while strategically employing rewards as supplementary tools within a comprehensive motivational framework. Future research should investigate the specific intrinsic factors contributing to the high motivation levels observed and explore optimal integration strategies between extrinsic and intrinsic motivational approaches in diverse educational contexts.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that reward has a significant influence on students' learning motivation at SMP Tiga Bahasa Mitra Harapan. The first hypothesis test indicates that the tendency of reward influence falls into the moderate category, with a mean score of 119. The data analysis shows that the implementation of reward in the school has a moderate impact on increasing students' learning motivation.

In the second hypothesis, students' learning motivation is found to be in the high category, although the initial hypothesis assumed it would be moderate. The mean score for students' learning motivation is 65.31, with confidence intervals suggesting that the level of motivation is higher than expected.

The third hypothesis confirms a positive and significant relationship between reward and learning motivation, with a correlation coefficient of 0.446, indicating that reward contributes 19.9% to students' learning motivation. Although this relationship falls within the moderate category, it remains significant, and improvements in the reward system are expected to further enhance students' motivation. The influence of reward on learning motivation among students at SMP Tiga Bahasa Mitra Harapan is categorized as moderate, while overall student motivation is in the high category. These findings indicate that reward does positively affect learning motivation, although there are other dominant factors that contribute more substantially.

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