

The Influence Of Reward And Punishment Systems On Teacher Work Motivation: A Study Of Senior And Vocational High Schools In Parung District, Bogor Regency

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Abstract:

This study explores the implementation of reward and punishment systems and their influence on teacher motivation in Senior and Vocational High Schools (SMA/SMK) in Parung District, Bogor Regency. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings reveal that fair and transparent reward systems significantly enhance teacher motivation, while punishment, when applied objectively, supports discipline without reducing morale. However, inconsistencies, lack of flexibility, and limited transparency in implementation remain key challenges. SWOT and TOWS analyses further highlight strategic priorities, such as optimizing reward mechanisms, improving leadership communication, and minimizing non-pedagogical burdens. The study concludes that teacher motivation is shaped not only by institutional policies but also by leadership behavior, organizational culture, and contextual support. Strengthening these systems through adaptive and human-centered approaches is essential to foster sustainable performance and commitment among teachers. These insights offer valuable implications for school management and education policymakers in improving teaching quality.

Keywords: Reward, Punishment, Teacher Motivation, Qualitative Study, Educational Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Educational activities are not merely confined to luxurious and monumental buildings; rather, they encompass a range of interconnected elements that must work in harmony. The learning process itself is a sacred endeavor, involving not only methodology and facilities but also the human resources that shape the quality of education. Among these, the role of teachers is fundamental in determining the educational outcomes achieved by a particular institution. A school's success is therefore highly dependent on the motivation, competence, and performance of its teaching staff (Hasibuan, 2016).

At the senior secondary level in Indonesia, education is divided into two major streams: Senior High School (SMA) and Vocational High School (SMK). Both serve as post-junior high education but with distinct objectives and operational characteristics. These differences extend to the roles and expectations placed upon teachers and students. SMA focuses on academic preparation for higher education, while SMK emphasizes practical skills for immediate employment. This distinction necessitates tailored approaches to teacher motivation in both streams to ensure optimal student outcomes (Uno, 2011).

One strategic management tool that has gained attention for enhancing teacher performance is the implementation of reward and punishment systems. Reward mechanisms are designed to acknowledge and reinforce positive contributions and achievements, while punishments are meant to discourage undesirable behavior and align individual actions with institutional standards. When applied effectively, such systems can foster a work culture that is disciplined, professional, and motivational, supporting teachers in delivering their best performance (Handoko, 2001).

Teacher motivation is a crucial driver of educational quality, particularly in SMA and SMK settings. Teachers who are well-motivated are more likely to be productive, innovative, and committed to their pedagogical responsibilities. This, in turn, positively influences student engagement, learning outcomes, and the overall classroom climate. However, in various regions, including Parung District in Bogor Regency, sustaining teacher motivation remains an ongoing challenge. In many cases, teachers face limited recognition for their efforts, minimal institutional appreciation, and weak enforcement of accountability measures (Uno, 2011).

In Parung, the local educational environment reflects a need for further study on the practical impact of reward and punishment strategies. Factors such as the socio-cultural background of teachers, existing school management practices, and the level of institutional support significantly affect the success of such motivational frameworks. Understanding how these systems operate in real-world educational settings, including their limitations and potential, can inform more effective approaches to teacher development and school management.

Moreover, this research is expected to shed light on the broader implications of teacher motivation, not only for improving teaching quality but also for enhancing student outcomes. Motivated teachers contribute to shaping students' cognitive and non-cognitive skills, fostering both academic achievement and personal development. In vocational settings, where employability skills are paramount, the teacher's role in delivering relevant and engaging instruction becomes even more critical (Hasibuan, 2016).

The study is conducted using a qualitative descriptive method, supported by in-depth observation of teachers as the central subjects. The focus is narrowed to examine how motivation influences teacher performance, without diverting the analysis toward student behavior or institutional policy. This methodological approach is consistent with the view of Sugiyono (2019), who emphasizes that descriptive research should align with actual phenomena and be directed toward variables that are contextually relevant and measurable.

It is also important to acknowledge that both teachers and students encounter distinct yet interrelated challenges in the learning process. Teachers are often required to adapt to varying student learning styles, fast-changing curricula, insufficient teaching facilities, and the pressure to keep pace with technological advancement. At the same time, students face academic stress, psychosocial development issues, information overload from technology, and socio-environmental pressures, all of which can affect learning motivation and outcomes (Uno, 2011).

Addressing these multidimensional challenges requires cohesive efforts among all stakeholders—teachers, students, school leaders, and parents. The reward and punishment system is just one component within a broader motivational framework that must be complemented by supportive policies, conducive learning environments, and consistent professional development opportunities. Creating such conditions will not only strengthen teacher motivation but also enhance the overall quality of education in the region (Handoko, 2001; Hasibuan, 2016).

Based on these considerations, this study seeks to investigate how the implementation of reward and punishment systems affects teacher motivation in SMA and SMK in Parung District, Bogor Regency. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights into the development of educational policy and school-level strategies aimed at building a more dynamic, responsive, and high-performing teaching workforce—one that is capable of fostering student success in alignment with the national vision for human capital excellence.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a phenomenological design, aiming to explore and understand the lived experiences of teachers in relation to the implementation of reward and punishment systems in their workplace. Rather than testing predetermined hypotheses, this approach focuses on how individuals perceive and interpret a specific phenomenon within their social environment (Creswell, 2013)—in this case, the impact of managerial reinforcement strategies on teacher motivation.

The research was conducted across several public Senior High Schools (SMA) and Vocational High Schools (SMK) located in Parung District, Bogor Regency, over a period of five months, from September 2024 to February 2025. During this time, the researcher carried out a series of activities including

instrument preparation, data collection, interpretation, and report writing, in line with the stages outlined by Sugiyono (2019) in qualitative research.

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher serves as the key instrument (Merriam, 2009), supported by various data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to guide conversations while providing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their lived experiences. Observations were conducted in authentic school settings to capture real-time behaviors, and school records and internal documentation were utilized to enrich contextual understanding.

The unit of analysis consisted of both individuals—specifically teachers directly involved in or affected by the reward and punishment practices—and institutions, particularly the SMA and SMK schools, which were examined as educational entities within broader social systems (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Data collection was carried out using source triangulation, combining results from interviews, observations, and documentation to enhance data richness and validity (Patton, 2002). The data analysis process followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of four interconnected steps: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This iterative process enabled the researcher to uncover patterns, classify emergent themes, and construct meaning from the collected data.

To ensure trustworthiness, the research applied four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through member checking and triangulation, transferability was ensured by providing thick descriptions of the research context, dependability was maintained through a transparent audit trail, and confirmability was achieved by grounding all interpretations in the empirical data.

Overall, this phenomenological qualitative approach provided a robust framework for examining the complexity of teacher motivation in relation to institutional reward and punishment systems. It enabled the researcher to capture not only the outcomes of such systems but also the deeper perceptions and responses of teachers embedded in the cultural and managerial contexts of Indonesian secondary education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Research Setting

This study was conducted in the administrative region of Parung District, which is one of the subdistricts within Bogor Regency, West Java Province, Indonesia. Parung District is located in the western part of Bogor and shares borders with several strategic areas, including Depok City and South Tangerang, placing it in a transitional zone between rural and urban landscapes. As a result, the area presents unique socio-educational dynamics influenced by both traditional and modern educational needs.

Parung District is comprised of several villages and sub-villages and is known for its rapidly developing residential areas, educational institutions, and small-to-medium enterprises. In the context of secondary education, Parung hosts a number of public and private Senior High Schools (SMA) and Vocational High Schools (SMK), making it a suitable and relevant setting for examining teacher motivation and school management practices.

The schools involved in this study vary in terms of infrastructure, teacher qualifications, student demographics, and leadership systems. These variations provided a rich and diverse field for observing the implementation of reward and punishment systems and how such mechanisms influence teacher motivation. Some schools have adopted structured performance evaluation and incentive systems, while others rely on more informal or traditional forms of recognition and discipline.

Given these contextual differences, the research sought to capture a comprehensive picture of how school-level management practices interact with teacher performance and engagement. The selected SMA and SMK schools represent a cross-section of institutions in Parung District, reflecting both the challenges and potentials of educational development in semi-urban regions.

In this study, the researcher focused on understanding the lived experiences of teachers within their organizational environment, particularly how they perceive the fairness, consistency, and impact of rewards and sanctions applied by school leadership. By grounding the research in this specific geographical and educational context, the study aims to contribute localized insights to the broader discourse on educational management and teacher motivation in Indonesia.

Interview Findings with Teachers

To gain a deeper understanding of how the reward and punishment system is experienced in the school setting, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers from various SMA and SMK schools in Parung District, Bogor Regency. These interviews reveal the personal perspectives of educators regarding the implementation and impact of reward and punishment policies on their motivation, work discipline, and job satisfaction.

Several teachers indicated that rewards served as important motivational tools, especially when aligned with clear performance metrics. One teacher from an SMK school stated, *"When our hard work is appreciated, even with just a certificate or verbal praise, it really boosts our morale. It makes us feel seen and respected."* Another teacher noted that incentives like additional teaching hours, participation in professional training, or recognition during flag ceremonies made them feel proud of their efforts.

However, inconsistencies in the application of rewards were a source of dissatisfaction. A respondent shared, *"Sometimes I feel demotivated when I see colleagues who are rewarded not because of performance, but because of closeness with the principal. This makes the system feel unfair."* Such concerns highlight the importance of transparency and fairness in reward allocation to prevent negative perceptions among staff.

Regarding punishment, most teachers acknowledged that disciplinary measures were necessary, particularly for maintaining punctuality and professionalism. One teacher explained, *"Punishment is important. Without it, some staff may take their duties lightly. But it has to be done with proper communication, not just written warnings or public embarrassment."* Another respondent suggested that punishments should be followed by dialogue and mentoring, stating, *"Rather than penalizing us outright, it's better if school leaders explain the consequences and give us a chance to improve."*

In addition, the leadership approach of the principal was repeatedly mentioned as a determining factor in the effectiveness of these systems. A teacher noted, *"Our headmaster listens to us. When we do well, he praises us openly. When there's a problem, he talks to us first before taking action. That kind of approach motivates us to stay committed."* Conversely, in schools where leadership was more authoritarian, teachers felt less engaged. One teacher remarked, *"We're often told what to do, but rarely asked how we feel. That creates distance and fear, not motivation."*

Contextual challenges also emerged in the interviews. Some teachers mentioned limited school budgets, making it difficult to provide meaningful rewards, while others pointed to unclear criteria for evaluation, which hindered motivation. Nevertheless, the desire to be part of a supportive and appreciative environment remained strong. As one teacher summarized, *"We don't need expensive rewards. Just being acknowledged sincerely is already enough to keep us going."*

From these interviews, it becomes clear that both reward and punishment systems can shape teacher motivation when implemented with fairness, consistency, and empathy. Teachers respond positively to recognition and constructive feedback, while punitive measures are accepted when accompanied by transparent communication and opportunities for growth.

These narratives reflect the lived experiences of educators and underscore the need for leadership practices that go beyond administrative enforcement, emphasizing emotional intelligence, professional appreciation, and meaningful engagement within school communities.

Analysis of Interview Findings

The interview data collected from teachers across several SMA and SMK institutions in Parung District were analyzed thematically to uncover patterns and meanings related to the implementation of reward and punishment systems and their effects on teacher motivation. The analysis reveals three key dimensions

that are central to understanding the motivational dynamics within these educational institutions: perceived fairness, leadership behavior, and institutional consistency.

First, the perceived fairness of reward and punishment mechanisms emerged as a dominant theme. Teachers consistently emphasized that their motivation was positively influenced when rewards were distributed transparently and based on clear performance criteria. Conversely, when the system was perceived as biased or based on favoritism, it often led to feelings of discouragement and disengagement. Teachers were particularly sensitive to unequal treatment in recognition, which they believed undermined their commitment to professional standards.

Second, the role of leadership and communication was found to be critical in shaping how teachers responded to both reward and punishment. Schools with principals who maintained open, respectful, and empathetic communication channels were more likely to foster a positive work environment. Teachers in such settings reported a greater sense of belonging and accountability. On the other hand, schools characterized by rigid or authoritarian leadership styles often generated stress, fear of punishment, and reduced teacher enthusiasm. The presence of dialogic leadership, that is, leaders who listen, explain, and provide feedback, was consistently associated with stronger teacher motivation.

Third, the analysis highlighted concerns regarding inconsistencies in implementation. Although most teachers acknowledged the importance of discipline and reinforcement, they pointed out that rules and consequences were not always applied uniformly. This inconsistency contributed to perceptions of injustice and eroded trust in school leadership. Some teachers mentioned that disciplinary actions were sometimes enforced without prior warning or without offering opportunities for correction, which was demotivating and perceived as punitive rather than developmental.

Additionally, contextual limitations such as financial constraints, lack of structured performance evaluation systems, and minimal institutional support were identified as barriers to the optimal application of reward and punishment systems. Teachers believed that even simple gestures of recognition could be effective if implemented sincerely and consistently. However, these efforts often depended on the initiative and values of school leaders rather than systemic policies.

In summary, the analysis of the interview data suggests that the success of reward and punishment systems in enhancing teacher motivation hinges on three interconnected factors: equity in implementation, leadership quality, and institutional commitment. A motivational environment is cultivated not merely through tangible rewards or formal sanctions but through the consistent practice of transparent, empathetic, and just educational leadership. These findings reinforce the argument that motivation in educational settings is not solely a matter of policy but also of culture, communication, and shared values within the school community.

Discussion

The findings of this study align with well-established theories of work motivation, which suggest that a fair and well-structured reward system can significantly enhance both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among teachers. Likewise, punishment—when implemented objectively and proportionally—can play a role in maintaining discipline without reducing morale. However, if punitive measures are applied inconsistently or perceived as overly harsh, they may have the opposite effect by demotivating teachers and fostering resentment. Therefore, schools must establish policies that ensure greater transparency and flexibility in administering rewards and punishments, enabling these mechanisms to function effectively in enhancing teacher performance.

To support this interpretation, an Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS) was conducted. The IFAS analysis identified three primary strengths: the presence of a reward system that positively influences teacher motivation (score 0.80), the role of punishment in maintaining discipline (score 0.45), and the use of non-financial recognition to increase job satisfaction (score 0.40). On the other hand, the weaknesses included inconsistency in punishment application (score 0.50), lack of flexibility (score 0.30), and insufficient transparency in the overall reward and punishment system (score 0.30). The total internal score reached 2.75, indicating a moderately strong internal position, but with clear areas for improvement.

The External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS) further reinforced the findings by identifying supportive external conditions. Opportunities included management support (score 1.00), career development

opportunities through training and seminars (score 0.80), and a work culture increasingly oriented toward innovation (score 0.45). However, there were also notable threats, such as changing educational policies (score 0.50) and heavy administrative burdens on teachers (score 0.30). The total external score of 3.05 indicates a favorable environment, provided that internal weaknesses can be addressed.

From the SWOT analysis, several strategic insights emerged. Among the strengths were the effectiveness of the reward system in boosting morale, the availability of non-monetary appreciation mechanisms, and the role of punishment in ensuring discipline. Weaknesses were identified as inconsistent enforcement, lack of flexibility in assessing teacher conditions, and limited transparency. Meanwhile, external opportunities such as supportive leadership, professional development access, and a collaborative work culture offer pathways for institutional growth. Conversely, external threats include national policy shifts and workload-related stressors that could hinder motivation.

To translate these insights into action, a TOWS matrix was constructed. The SO strategy (Strength-Opportunity) is given the highest priority: optimizing the use of rewards to cultivate an innovative work culture while expanding professional development opportunities for teachers. The WO strategy (Weakness-Opportunity) is prioritized next, which involves increasing transparency and adapting the reward-punishment system to be more flexible and empathetic. The ST strategy (Strength-Threat) focuses on reinforcing reward mechanisms to help teachers adapt to policy changes while maintaining discipline. Lastly, the WT strategy (Weakness-Threat) proposes revising punitive procedures to be more humane and reducing non-teaching burdens that impact motivation.

In conclusion, a clear, supportive, and fair implementation of reward and punishment systems—combined with institutional backing and teacher-centered policies—can foster a healthier professional climate and promote sustainable motivation among educators. These strategies should be contextually adapted and continuously evaluated to align with both teacher expectations and broader educational objectives.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of reward and punishment systems plays a significant role in shaping teacher motivation within SMA and SMK institutions in Parung District, Bogor Regency. When applied fairly, transparently, and consistently, rewards can boost both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, while appropriate punishments help maintain professional discipline. Teachers respond positively to recognition, both monetary and non-monetary, when it aligns with clear performance standards. Conversely, the inconsistent or biased application of sanctions tends to decrease morale and erode trust in school leadership.

Qualitative findings show that leadership style, institutional communication, and contextual constraints significantly influence the effectiveness of these systems. The SWOT and TOWS analyses further reveal strategic priorities, highlighting the need for adaptive, empathetic, and development-focused implementation. Strengthening motivational systems through transparency, flexibility, and institutional support is essential to foster a healthy and productive teaching environment. This study emphasizes that motivation is not only a matter of policy but of culture, fairness, and continuous dialogue. Schools must commit to leadership practices that recognize the human dimension of teachers, aiming not just for compliance, but for long-term engagement and excellence in teaching and learning outcomes.

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