

## Theoretical Review of Behavioristic Approaches in Education: The Role of Reward and Punishment in Increasing Learning Motivation

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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to theoretically examine the application of behavioristic approaches in education, especially the role of reward and punishment in shaping student learning motivation. This study uses a qualitative method through a literature review from various national and international scientific sources. The results of the synthesis showed that rewards effectively increased external motivation, while educational punishment helped reduce deviant behavior. This approach is relevant in designing behavioral-based learning strategies, although it needs to be combined with other approaches for holistic outcomes. The implications of this study provide practical insights for educators in managing the classroom more strategically and responsively.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Learning motivation is one of the crucial aspects in the educational process. Education is easier to reach when the class size is small (Deak, *Learning Strategies and Applications in Learning Achievements*, 2021). If there is not enough motivation, then students will tend to have difficulty understanding the material and maintaining focus on learning activities. In daily educational activities, many educators experience various obstacles in maintaining the students' enthusiasm for learning in a stable manner. Therefore, psychological approaches to learning behavior are important to be examined and also applied strategically.

One of the approach processes that has a great impact in the world of education is the behavioristic approach. As we also know that Education is an important part of a life, and must be in line with development (Deak, *Implementation of Independent Campus Learning in Improving the Quality of Higher Education*, 2022). This approach focuses on the observable and reachable aspects of behavior, and believes that any behavior can be formed from stimuli and responses. In this condition, behavior is known as an individual's response to the environment that can be studied and changed through experiential value. This behavior approach concludes that the learning process can be described through behavioral forms formed as a result of relationships with the learning environment.

In the world of education, a behavioristic approach is applied in teaching strategies that focus on repetition, reinforcement, and impact on student behavior. The application of these behavioristic principles aims to form the expected learning behavior through the use of positive reinforcement (reward) and negative reinforcement or punishment (punishment). Reinforcement by reward serves to strengthen the desired action, while reinforcement by punishment aims to reduce or eliminate bad behavior.

This study aims to examine the behavioristic approach theoretically and analyze how the reinforcement of reward and punishment can affect students' motivation to learn. The discussion will include the definition of behavior in the context of psychology, the theoretical basis of the behavioristic approach, its application in education, and the effectiveness of the use of rewards and punishments in increasing learning motivation. It is hoped that this study can make an abstract contribution for educators in designing a learning strategy that is more effective and responsive to the needs of students.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Theory Behaviorism***

Behavioristic theory is a learning theory that focuses on behavior changes as a result of the relationship between stimulus and response. The main figures in this theory are Ivan Pavlov (with classical conditioning), Edward L. Thorndike (with the theory of connectionism), and B.F. Skinner (with operant conditioning). This theory emphasizes the importance of reinforcement and punishment in shaping behavior. In the context of education, this theory is applied to shape learning behavior through providing rewards as positive reinforcement and punishment to reduce negative behavior.

Research by (Kusumawati, 2023) shows that the appropriate use of rewards and punishments can increase students' extrinsic motivation. (Maulida, 2022) also stated that this strategy is effective in enforcing student discipline. However, Wibowo (2021) reminded that dependence on external motivations such as rewards can hinder the development of students' intrinsic motivation.

H1: Giving rewards has a positive effect on students' motivation to learn.

H2: The provision of punishment has a negative effect on students' deviant behavior.

H3: Reward and punishment simultaneously affect students' learning motivation.

### *Motivation Theory in Learning*

Motivation theory in learning emphasizes the importance of internal and external drives that influence learning behavior. In the behavioristic approach, motivation is better understood as the result of the influence of external stimuli such as reward and punishment. However, learning motivation should ideally be intrinsic so that students can have the motivation from within to achieve learning goals.

Study by (Chen, 2022) states that learning motivation can be increased through a structured reinforcement system. However, if it is not accompanied by an understanding of the meaning of the learning process, students can become too dependent on external rewards and lose the spirit of learning that comes from within.

H4: Learning motivation acts as a mediator between rewards and improved student learning outcomes.

H5: Learning motivation acts as a mediator between punishment and the reduction of students' deviant behavior.



Figure 1. Framework of Behavioristic Approaches in Education

## **METHODOLOGY**

The method used is a qualitative method that delves deeper into a certain case in more depth by involving the collection of various sources of information. This research uses a literature approach (library research) with a qualitative

descriptive method. Data were obtained from various secondary sources, namely from national and international scientific journal articles, as well as the results of previous research relevant to the topics of behaviorism, reward-punishment, and learning motivation. Data is also collected through journals, books, or other sources related to the research theme.

The data collection technique is carried out through documentation studies, namely searching for reliable sources from scientific databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, and accredited national journals. Data analysis is also carried out using a content analysis approach by focusing on identifying key themes, synthesis of theories, and interpretation of relationships between concepts.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### *Steps of Theoretical Synthesis*

In this study, we authors conducted a literature review of 20 relevant scientific sources regarding behavioristic approaches, reward-punishment, and learning motivation. The synthesis process is carried out through stages:

1. Collection of sources from accredited journals (DOAJ, Google Scholar).
2. Classification of themes: behaviorism, reward, punishment, learning motivation, and Christian perspective.
3. Content and thematic analysis of the relationship between reward-punishment and increased learning motivation.
4. Preparation of findings in the form of tables and descriptive narratives.

Table 1. ThreeiBoxiMethod (Table in good quality and easy to understand)

Effectiveness Score (0-150)	Criterion
50,00 - 100,00	Low
100,01 - 130,00	Medium
130,01 - 150,00	Tinggi (High)

*Note: Scores are compiled based on the intensity of reward/punishment effectiveness reported in the literature (frequency + theoretical relevance).*

### *Evaluation Synthesis Formula*

To compile the weight of the effectiveness of the reward and punishment, the formula is used:

$$Y = G + C + I + N_x$$

Information:

- G = Reinforcement score (reward)
- C = Punishment
- I = Teacher behavior intervention
- $N_x$  = Student's cultural/contextual values

### Key Findings

1. Rewards have been shown to be effective in encouraging students' external motivation, but their use needs to be balanced so as not to dull intrinsic motivation.
2. Educational punishment (e.g. reflective tasks) tends to be more constructive than physical punishment.
3. The token and point system as a behavioristic-based classroom management tool has been proven to increase student active participation.
4. The Christian perspective provides a critique of behaviorism that ignores human free will and the value of spirituality.

## DISCUSSION

### *Fundamentals of the Behavioristic Approach*

Educational institutions are organizations that manage human resources that are appropriate and correct (Deak, Implementation of Independent Campus Learning in Improving the Quality of Higher Education, 2022). The behavioristic approach is a learning theory that developed in the early 20th century through the contributions of figures such as Ivan Pavlov, Edward L. Thorndike, and B.F. Skinner (Marzano, 2003). According to Ivan Pavlov himself, learning is a behavioral change that occurs through the association between stimulus and response. He also went through his theory of classical conditioning, which explains how behavior can be learned through the association between stimulus and response. Edward L. Thorndike also said that learning is the process of interaction between stimulus and response, with a focus on forming associations (connections) between the two. Edward also had a theory of learning connectionism and the laws of learning that he developed.

B.F. Skinner argues that learning is a process of behavior change that occurs through the interaction between stimulus and response, with reinforcement as the main key. Skinner also had theories about operant conditioning and verbal behavior. Behavioristic in terms of psychology and education is a theory of learning that emphasizes attitudes that can be studied and learned through the relationship between stimulus and response. Behaviorism theories that focus on stimulus and responses, to cognitivism that focuses more on intellectual processes, each approach provides good insights to be able to improve the quality of learning (Deak, 2024). The behavioristic approach is a psychological approach that focuses on actions that can be observed and measured, to prioritize behaviors that can be learned through relationships with the environment through processes such as reinforcement, punishment, and modeling. One of the figures, Skinner, developed a principle of operant conditioning which states that learning will occur when behavior is reinforced with certain consequences (Lickona, 1991). If the wrong behavior gets positive action (Reward), then the attitude to repeat it again will continue to increase. However, if the wrong behavior gets a negative action (Punishment), then the behavior tends to decrease.

### *Exemplary in the Perspective of a Behavioristic Approach*

Exemplification is also one of the educational strategies that does not directly affect student behavior through the process of observation and duplication. One of the exemplary figures that can be taken from the Bible is the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul (Tatang J., 2022). Although exemplarity is more often associated with social learning theory, behavioristic approaches also enter space for this mechanism within the framework of stimulus-response (Bandura, 2017). In the behavioristic approach, behavior can be studied through reinforcement that arises from an action, including actions observed from others. Educators who show good behavior such as discipline, responsibility, and empathy indirectly become a stimulus for students. When students observe that the behavior is getting a positive response from the environment, such as an appreciation from school, praise from peers, or a satisfactory result of work, they are encouraged to imitate it. This is in line with the principle of vicarious reinforcement in behaviorism, which is the process of learning through consequences experienced by others.

### ***Rewards and Punishments in Education***

Reward is one of the words in English that means "Gift" (Aflizah, 2024). Rewards are also given in the form of replies, both in positive and negative meanings. Gifts can be interpreted as souvenir gifts or for memorable moments. The giving of this reward is a form of appreciation for something good or an achievement for what the person has done. Reward can also make quality students, rewards can improve and develop students' character, so that students can experience renewal and be able to become a generation of the nation (Simanjuntak, 2021). Punishment is one of the actions that are prepared to negatively impact the behavior of students that are inappropriate or violate a applicable rule or norm. One of the punishments in education that aims to accompany learning activities in order to create goals in education that have been expected (Fauzi, 2016). We must also avoid punishments that do not make students good but rather worsen their situation (Napitupulu, 2022).

Rewards are a way of positive reinforcement given to students to reinforce desired behaviors. The forms of a reward are as follows:

1. Verbal Reinforcement: Usually in the form of kind words such as "good work", "good job", or "I'm proud of your efforts", which provide direct recognition of the positive behavior of the student.
2. High grades or scores: as a quantitative description of a student's achievement that will increase motivation to excel.
3. Material prizes: these rewards are usually in the form of goods or objects such as stickers, stationery, or other small items that are given as a form of concrete appreciation for the student's efforts.
4. Privilege: the existence of more access such as the opportunity to choose a game, be a group leader, or get additional time off, which provides emotional and social satisfaction.

Punishment is one of the impacts given when students make mistakes, with the aim of reducing or eliminating these actions or behaviors. Punishment is usually used with caution because although it can be effective in the short term, if

used inappropriately, it will have a negative psychological impact and there may be resistance from students.

The following are some forms of punishment that are often used in the world of education, namely:

1. Reprimand: a verbal warning that is usually given directly with the aim of correcting deviant behavior.
2. Assigned additional assignments: The teacher will assign more assignments as a consequence of a student's disobedience or lack of responsibility.
3. Lack of privilege: Usually a student is excluded from fun activities as a consequence of inappropriate behavior.

The use of rewards and punishments must pay attention to the learning context, individual characteristics of students, and culturally applicable values. The effectiveness of these two approaches is greatly influenced by the student's age, cultural background, gender, and students' perception of fairness and consistency in rewarding and punishment. Educators need to observe and reflect on students' responses to ensure that the strategies implemented are not only behaviorally effective, but also support their psychosocial and emotional development positively.

### ***A Christian Perspective On Behavioristic Approaches***

The behavioristic approach in education basically starts from psychological experiments conducted on animals, such as those carried out by Pavlov with dogs and Skinner with mice (Zaini, 2014). This method focuses on strengthening behavior through the provision of rewards and punishments as the main stimulus. However, from the point of view of Christian education, this approach is considered inappropriate to be fully applied in the context of human learning.

According to the Christian view, it is emphasized that the ability to think critically and creatively is an important aspect in Christian education, which aims to develop the potential of students as individuals created by God with the ability to think and free will (Pardede, 2016). Therefore, Christian education emphasizes the formation of character and motivation that grows from within the individual, not just through the manipulation of behavior through reward and punishment.

Thus, although reward and punishment can be used as tools in classroom management, behavioristic theory is not entirely appropriate if applied without considering Christian values that prioritize students' free will, reason, and moral responsibility.

### ***Learning Motivation and Its Relation to Behavioristic Approaches***

Learning motivation is one of the key factors in the success of the educational process. In a behavioristic context, motivation is not seen as an internal process alone, but also as a result of external stimuli assigned to each individual. Behavioristic theories pioneered by figures such as B.F. Skinner and Ivan Pavlov emphasized that there are behaviors that can be formed through conditioning processes, both classical and operant. In this approach, learning motivation is also seen as the result of a stimulus that elicits a specific response (Chen, 2022).

In educational practice, the application of rewards and punishments will be the main instruments in shaping the expected learning behavior. There are

rewards, such as praise, high grades, or awards, given when students show positive learning behavior. This can reinforce the likelihood that such behavior will occur in the future. But instead, punishment is given to reduce or eliminate inappropriate behavior, for example through reprimands, point reductions, or privilege restrictions (Maulida, 2022).

The behavioristic approach also places the position of the teacher as the main controller in the learning environment. A teacher is a person who has the ability and experience whose role is as an educator (Lestari, 2023). Through this, teachers are tasked with designing an effective reward and punishment system to modify student behavior. For example, there is additional value for students who actively ask questions or complete assignments on time so that they can increase participation and discipline in the learning process (Rizqiyah, 2022).

Previous studies have also shown that giving rewards firmly can increase students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, especially in the early stages of learning (Kusumawati, 2023). However, some critics of this approach state that reliance on external rewards can hinder the development of intrinsic motivation if it is not accompanied by a deep understanding of learning objectives.

In relation to learning motivation, behavioristic approaches are relevant, especially to form good learning habits in students, especially at the elementary school education level. The existence of a method of repetition, reinforcement, and consequences of each action is an important element in creating a conducive learning environment. Therefore, although this approach has limitations in reaching in terms of cognitive and affective aspects of students in depth, it still has a strategic role in designing measurable and systematic behavior-based learning strategies.

### ***Application of Reward and Punishment in Educational Practice***

The behavioristic approach also emphasizes the importance of reinforcement and punishment in shaping student behavior. In the context of learning, there is a role of teachers as environmental managers who can design strategies to strengthen positive behavior and negative behavior. Several applicative strategies reflect the application of rewards and punishments in everyday educational situations:

#### *Token Economy System*

An economic token system is a method in which students earn certain points or symbols (tokens) as a form of reinforcement for expected behavior. These tokens can also be redeemed for rewards that are useful to students, such as stationery, extra playtime, or other privileges. This strategy is good in forming positive habits through periodic reinforcement. Research shows that economic tokens can increase class participation and discipline, especially at the primary and secondary education levels (Wulandari, 2021). In addition, this method can encourage extrinsic motivation which can develop into intrinsic motivation if accompanied by an opinion of the value behind the behavior carried out.

### *Point System Engineering in Classroom Management*

Point system is a behavior assessment method that is used to control the atmosphere in the classroom. Each student is given points based on their attitude during the learning process. Points can be awarded if there is an active attitude, discipline, and cooperation, or points can be deducted if there is disruptive behavior.

This method also facilitates transparency and provides direct evaluation, in accordance with the reinforcement principle in behavioristic theory. The long-term effects of this technique can help students build awareness of the effects of each action.

### *Interesting Assignments as a Form of Reward for Outstanding Students*

In addition to basic forms of rewards such as physical gifts or praise, giving challenging and creative assignments can also be a form of reward for excellent students. For example, students are given the opportunity to be leaders in group discussions, create mini-projects, or show their work in front of the class. Rewards like this not only reinforce positive behavior, but can also build students' confidence and responsibility, so that they become educational incentives that are in line with the development of their potential.

### *Educational Punishment: Written Reflection as a Consequences of Violations*

This punishment is not identical to corporal punishment or other forms of punishment. One form of effective educational punishment is to give reflective tasks, such as writing notes about the consequences of the behavior committed. This form of punishment not only suppresses negative behavior, but can also invite students to think and understand the impact of their actions, so that it has learning value. Thus, punishment is not only a corrective tool, but also a means in shaping the character of a student. Character education is one of the important things to overcome the moral deterioration of society (Simanjuntak, 2021). However, it is also worth remembering that a behavioristic approach is not always suitable for all circumstances. In the long run, reliance on rewards can reduce intrinsic motivation. Therefore, this approach should be combined with cognitive and humanistic strategies to get better results.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***Conclusion***

Behavioristic approaches in education, especially through the application of reward (reinforcement) and punishment (punishment), have an important contribution in shaping student behavior in a targeted and consistent manner. Its advantage lies in its ability to build positive habits, increase discipline, and motivate students to achieve short-term learning goals. However, this approach also has weaknesses, especially its tendency to foster dependence on external motivation and reduce the intrinsic motivation of learners.

As a solution, the use of reward and punishment needs to be balanced with other approaches such as cognitive and humanistic, and adapted to the learning context. Rewards should not only be material, but also social and emotional, while

punishment should be educational and educational, not oppressive or psychologically detrimental to students.

The implementation of this approach is most effectively applied to early childhood education to the elementary level, in a learning context that emphasizes the formation of behavioural and procedural skills. On the other hand, for more complex and in-depth learning objectives, this approach has limitations and needs to be combined with a learning strategy that encourages reflection, understanding, and overall development of one's potential.

Thus, rewards and punishments remain relevant in the world of education if used wisely, contextually, and integrally within the framework of a more holistic approach.

### ***Recommendations***

- Educators need to design a reward and punishment system that is not only material, but also social and emotional.
- Punishment should be educational and educational, not physical punishment or psychological distress.
- The use of rewards and punishments must take into account the individual characteristics of students as well as local cultural values.
- Behavioristic approaches should be combined with cognitive and humanistic learning strategies for more holistic outcomes.
- It is necessary to conduct training for teachers to implement strengthening strategies and consequences appropriately and consistently in classroom management.

### **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

This research is theoretical and literature-based, so its scope is limited to conceptual analysis and synthesis of findings from secondary sources. Therefore, further research is highly recommended to develop this study in the direction of field research with quantitative and qualitative approaches. Empirical research can be conducted to directly measure the effectiveness of rewards and punishments in increasing learning motivation at various levels of education.

Further research can also expand the context into inclusive education, Christian faith-based character education, as well as exploration of the combination of behavioristic approaches with digital technology-based learning models in the 5.0 era.

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Hopefully, the results of this research can make a positive contribution to the world of education, especially in the development of more effective learning strategies in accordance with Christian values.

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