



The Effectiveness of Giving Rewards on Student Learning Motivation in Mathematics Subject for Grade III at MI Nurul Hakim Academic Year 2023/2024

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Abstract

A reward is anything given by a teacher in the form of appreciation to please students' feelings based on good achievements. This research aims to determine the process of giving rewards on student learning motivation in mathematics subject for grade III at MI Nurul Hakim, and to determine the effectiveness of giving rewards on student learning motivation in the same subject and grade. This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method with a psychological approach and a pedagogical approach. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The data obtained were analyzed through several stages: data reduction, data display, and data verification. The findings reveal that: 1) The process of giving rewards at MI Nurul Hakim has been implemented well by teachers during the learning process, starting from the beginning of the lesson to build student enthusiasm and focus, in the middle of the lesson through question-and-answer sessions such as quizzes to encourage interaction, and at the end of the lesson during evaluation by giving assignments or homework, thus creating a pleasant and engaging classroom atmosphere and increasing student learning motivation; 2) The effectiveness of giving rewards in mathematics subject at MI Nurul Hakim is indeed effective, as grade III students appear sufficiently motivated. This is evidenced by student enthusiasm and spirit, a conducive classroom environment, the presence of appreciation, and each student having their own desired aspirations. Therefore, the use of rewards truly demonstrates success and prevents students from experiencing boredom during mathematics lessons.

Keywords: *Effectiveness of Giving Rewards, Learning Motivation, Grade III Students*

A. Introduction

Education is essentially a lifelong activity. Since a person is born, educational efforts occur to provide the ability to live in society and their environment. Educational development is an effort to realize the mandate of the Indonesian nation as stated in the preamble of the 1945 Constitution, which declares that education is the right of every Indonesian citizen. Its implementation is regulated by Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system. In facing the era of globalization, the education sector is fundamental in addressing various challenges.

Thus, education is both a means and a way to build human beings both as individuals and as development resources. Building a resilient Indonesia is inseparable from the role of schools as providers of formal education. Teachers as educators in schools must be able to create active and enjoyable teaching and learning activities so that expected outcomes are achieved well.

The researcher conducted observations regarding learning activities at MI Nurul Hakim for grade III students. Observations were made by observing student behavior during mathematics lessons. The researcher found that most students lacked learning motivation. This was evident from student behaviors such as not focusing on the information conveyed by the teacher, walking around, chatting, playing, arriving late to class, and submitting assignments past the agreed time.

Moreover, almost all students felt afraid of learning mathematics; mathematics was considered a difficult subject because it involves numbers and calculations. The difficulty lies in the formulas used to solve mathematical problems (Susanto, 2013). As a result of these difficulties, students become less interested in mathematics and tend to avoid it, leading to less than optimal learning outcomes.

Suboptimal mathematics learning outcomes are caused by two factors: teachers and students. Teacher factors include monotonous and boring learning processes, lack of appreciation for students when they complete tasks or do something good. Student factors include lack of interest

in mathematics, lack of motivation, and lack of active participation in learning.

Therefore, teachers need to improve skills that can attract students' interest in mathematics and encourage them to be actively involved. One way is by providing motivation to students. Motivation in the teaching and learning process is a drive that arises from stimuli inside or outside the student, leading to a willingness to change behavior for the better (Fazli, 2017).

One thing that can be done to increase extrinsic learning motivation is by giving rewards. A reward is anything given by a teacher in the form of appreciation to please students' feelings based on good achievements in the educational process, with the aim of motivating the student (Widia, 2019). Rewards can further motivate students to learn freely and express themselves according to their potential. Rewards are applied by teachers in schools so that students feel happy because their actions or work receive recognition.

B. Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design. The psychological approach is used to analyze student behavior and actions, while the pedagogical approach is used to analyze the research object using relevant educational themes. This design is suitable for understanding the process and effectiveness of reward-giving in its natural classroom context.

The research was conducted at MI Nurul Hakim, focusing on grade III students during the 2023/2024 academic year. Participants included one grade III teacher (class III B) and approximately 25–30 students. Data sources were selected purposively to gain in-depth information about reward practices and their impact on learning motivation.

Data were collected through three techniques; Direct observation of teaching and learning activities in mathematics classes to record student behavior, teacher reward practices, and classroom atmosphere; Semi-structured interviews with the grade III B teacher to obtain direct

information about reward-giving procedures, criteria, and perceived effectiveness; Photographs and written records to support and strengthen research findings.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of three stages: data reduction (selecting relevant data), data display (organizing findings into descriptive narratives), and data verification (drawing conclusions and cross-checking with evidence) (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

This study involved human participants (teacher and students). Permission was obtained from the school principal and the classroom teacher. Parents or guardians of students were informed about the observational nature of the study, and student identities were kept confidential. No intervention or experimental treatment was applied; only natural classroom practices were observed.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Results

The Results section must present the research findings in a clear, structured manner that reflects an appropriate level of analysis, consistent with the approach and data collection techniques previously outlined in the Methods section.

The Process of Giving Rewards at MI Nurul Hakim

Based on observations and interviews with the grade III B teacher, the process of giving rewards follows several systematic steps:

The teacher distinguishes between behavior and the person. Rewards are given based on specific behaviors exhibited by students, not on the student's identity or label. For example, the teacher rewards students who make an effort to try solving problems or understanding the material, regardless of who they are, as long as they deserve it. The teacher also advises students to strive

independently, without cheating or copying others' work (Nurhidayah, 2023).

Rewards must have limits. Once sufficient, reward-giving should be concluded. The teacher explains the reasons for giving a reward to avoid jealousy among students. The teacher never uses harsh words such as "stupid" but instead guides students with kind language, such as "please re-read the question" or providing directions on the correct steps.

Rewards are not only material gifts but also attention, praise, and even hugs. The teacher consistently gives attention and praise to motivate students. For instance, when a student bravely comes forward to complete an assignment, the teacher gives applause as appreciation.

The teacher seeks to understand what kind of reward students need or want. If the desired reward is reasonable, the teacher provides it; if it exceeds reasonable limits, the teacher explains why. The teacher conveys warmth and enthusiasm through voice, facial expression, and body language.

The teacher values the learning process more than the final result. Even if a student has not achieved a perfect score, if they have tried hard, the teacher gives encouragement and appreciation for their effort and persistence.

In addition, the teacher gives rewards at three key moments: at the beginning of the lesson to build enthusiasm and focus; in the middle of the lesson through quizzes or question-and-answer sessions to create interaction; and at the end of the lesson during evaluation by giving assignments or homework.

Effectiveness of Giving Rewards on Student Learning Motivation

The effectiveness of reward-giving is measured against six characteristics of learning motivation (Fazli, 2017; Widia, 2019):

Characteristic	Evidence from the Classroom
1. Desire and will to succeed	Students strive to get good grades; many aim for perfect scores.
2. Drive and need to learn	Students become more enthusiastic about learning because of rewards.
3. Hope and future aspirations	Each student in grade III B has aspirations (e.g., to become a teacher, doctor, etc.).
4. Appreciation in learning	Students receive praise, attention, applause, stamps, food, or small gifts.
5. Interesting learning activities	The classroom atmosphere becomes more enjoyable and engaging.
6. Conducive learning environment	The class becomes orderly because students are focused and not bored.

The researcher found that giving rewards is indeed effective in increasing student learning motivation in mathematics. Evidence includes student enthusiasm and spirit during lessons, a pleasant and engaging classroom atmosphere, focused attention, and a conducive environment. The teacher provides various types of rewards (praise,

attention, picture stamps, food, small items) when students complete assignments well and strive diligently based on their own desire.

2. Discussion

The Discussion section is the core of a scientific manuscript, serving to develop an in-depth analysis of the research findings previously presented. Authors are expected to construct sharp and focused arguments that clearly articulate their stance on the issue under investigation. Each finding must be critically interpreted and logically connected to the theoretical or conceptual framework employed, ensuring that the discussion is structured, meaningful, and academically sound.

The findings show that the reward-giving process at MI Nurul Hakim aligns with recommended educational practices. The teacher's emphasis on rewarding behavior rather than the person prevents favoritism and encourages all students to participate. This is consistent with Nurhidayah (2023), who states that educators must instill honesty so that students strive for rewards through their own work, avoiding plagiarism. The teacher's use of positive language and avoidance of insults supports a safe learning environment where students are not afraid to try (Handayani, 2020).

The finding that rewards must have limits and be agreed upon through discussion (*musyawarah*) reflects a democratic classroom management style. This prevents excessive reward-giving that might reduce intrinsic motivation. According to Najiha (2020), rewards should be given when necessary, not every day, and should be based on genuine achievement.

The finding that the teacher standardizes rewards based on process rather than results is particularly important. Many students who struggle with mathematics may not achieve high scores, but if they show effort, they receive recognition. This builds a growth mindset and reduces fear of failure (Susanto, 2013). This practice directly addresses the initial problem where students felt afraid of mathematics because of its difficulty.

The six characteristics of learning motivation observed in grade III B students confirm that reward-giving is effective. Students demonstrate

desire to succeed, drive to learn, future aspirations, appreciation, interest in activities, and a conducive environment. These findings support Fazli (2017), who argues that extrinsic motivation through rewards can be an effective short-term strategy, especially for younger elementary students who still respond strongly to immediate recognition.

However, it is important to note that rewards are not given every day but only when needed. This prevents students from becoming dependent on rewards. The teacher's approach of also giving verbal praise and attention helps maintain intrinsic motivation while using external rewards as occasional boosts.

This research confirms Widia's (2019) findings that reward-giving increases learning motivation in social studies for grade III students. It also aligns with Najiha (2020), who found that rewards and punishments, when balanced, effectively discipline young children. The current study adds that in mathematics—a subject many students fear—rewards serve to reduce anxiety and increase willingness to engage with difficult material.

This study has several limitations. First, it was conducted at a single madrasah with one teacher and one class, so the findings may not be generalizable to other schools or grade levels. Second, the study is descriptive and qualitative; it does not measure the quantitative effect of rewards on test scores or long-term motivation. Third, student perspectives were gathered through observation rather than direct interviews, limiting the depth of student voice. Fourth, the study did not compare reward-giving with other motivational strategies such as punishment or gamification.

For classroom teachers, this study provides a clear, step-by-step guide on how to give rewards effectively: base rewards on behavior, limit their frequency, use both material and non-material rewards, involve students in deciding rewards, and focus on process over results. For school administrators, the findings support professional development on positive reinforcement techniques. For future researchers, a mixed-methods study with pre- and post-tests could measure the actual impact of reward-giving on mathematics achievement.

D. Conclusion

This research addressed the process and effectiveness of giving rewards on student learning motivation in mathematics for grade III at MI Nurul Hakim. The findings demonstrate that the teacher has implemented reward-giving in accordance with proper educational principles: assessing behavior not the person, limiting rewards, giving attention-based rewards, reaching agreements through discussion, and standardizing based on process rather than only results. The process occurs at three key moments – beginning, middle, and end of lessons – creating a pleasant and engaging classroom atmosphere.

The effectiveness of reward-giving is confirmed. Grade III students show clear signs of motivation: enthusiasm, focus, a conducive classroom, appreciation, and having future aspirations. Rewards reduce the fear of mathematics and prevent boredom. Therefore, giving rewards is an effective strategy for increasing learning motivation in elementary mathematics education.

Future research should explore comparative studies between reward-giving and other motivational strategies, longitudinal studies to measure long-term effects, and quantitative research linking rewards to actual mathematics performance. Practitioners should continue using varied rewards while ensuring they do not become a crutch that replaces intrinsic motivation.

In conclusion, well-implemented reward systems are a valuable tool for elementary teachers, especially in challenging subjects like mathematics, helping to create a positive learning environment where students feel appreciated and motivated to try their best.

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