

Islamic Value-Based Reward and Punishment System Implementation in Enhancing Work Motivation in an Islamic Educational Foundation

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Abstract. This study aims to describe the implementation of a reward and punishment system and its implications for employee work motivation at the Ar-Rifqi Educational Foundation, Bandung City, from the perspective of Islamic Education Management. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and documentation involving foundation leaders, school unit heads, teachers, and educational staff (n = 13). Data analysis followed the interactive model data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing supported by source and technique triangulation. Findings reveal that the reward and punishment system is implemented gradually, transparently, and grounded in Islamic values such as justice (al-'adl), trustworthiness (amanah), and ethical conduct (adab). Rewards are provided in financial and non-financial forms, while punishments are applied through persuasive and educational approaches. The system contributes to improving employee discipline, responsibility, and work motivation (lateness decreased 68%, perfect attendance increased 83%, work motivation survey increased 28%). Communicative leadership and a religious work culture support implementation, whereas budget constraints and subjective performance assessment act as inhibiting factors. The study confirms that a reward and punishment system grounded in Islamic values can foster a professional and humanistic work culture in Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Reward and Punishment, Work Motivation, Islamic Education Management, *Tarhib Tarhib*, Islamic Educational Foundation

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan implementasi sistem reward dan punishment serta implikasinya terhadap motivasi kerja karyawan di Yayasan Pendidikan Ar-Rifqi Kota Bandung dalam perspektif Manajemen Pendidikan Islam. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semiterstruktur, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi terhadap pimpinan yayasan, kepala unit, guru, dan tenaga kependidikan (n = 13). Analisis data dilakukan melalui kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan dengan triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sistem reward dan punishment diterapkan secara bertahap, transparan, dan berlandaskan nilai Islam seperti keadilan, amanah, dan adab. Reward diberikan dalam bentuk finansial dan nonfinansial, sedangkan punishment dilakukan melalui pendekatan persuasif dan pembinaan. Implementasi sistem tersebut berimplikasi pada meningkatnya disiplin, tanggung jawab, dan motivasi kerja karyawan (keterlambatan turun 68%, presensi sempurna naik 83%, survei motivasi kerja naik 28%). Faktor pendukung utama meliputi kepemimpinan komunikatif dan budaya kerja religius, sedangkan keterbatasan anggaran serta subjektivitas penilaian menjadi faktor penghambat. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pengelolaan reward dan punishment berbasis nilai Islam dapat membangun budaya kerja yang profesional dan humanis di lembaga pendidikan Islam.

Kata kunci: Reward dan Punishment, Motivasi Kerja, Manajemen Pendidikan Islam, *Tarhib Tarhib*, Yayasan Pendidikan Islam

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INTRODUCTION

Human resource management represents a strategic pivot that determines the sustainability and institutional quality of educational organizations. Within the discourse of Islamic Educational Management (IEM), teachers and educational personnel are not merely positioned as production units or administrative workers; rather, they are conceptualized as the vicegerents of God on earth (*khalifatullah fil ardh*) who bear a sacred theological mandate to cultivate human civilization (Ramayulis, 2002). The logical consequence of this paradigm demands that Islamic educational institutions, particularly those operating under private foundations, establish a personnel governance framework that is not only rationally efficient but also inherently just and humanizing. In organizational mechanics, rewards and punishments function as essential instruments to enforce systemic justice and maintain workplace equilibrium.

However, empirical realities frequently expose a substantial gap between normative ideals and field practices within private Islamic educational entities. Many foundations grapple with acute fluctuations in employee discipline and chronic demotivation (Fathoni, 2018). This vulnerability typically stems from conventional human resource practices that lack measurable performance metrics, where high dedication goes unacknowledged and structural negligence is met with reactive, emotionally driven reprimands rather than systematic corrective coaching. Such systemic imbalances induce a distorted perception of organizational justice among staff, ultimately eroding institutional loyalty and performance. Theoretically, the modification of organizational behavior can be analyzed through B.F. Skinner's operant conditioning framework, which posits that behavior followed by reinforcing consequences tends to be repeated, while behavior followed by aversive consequences diminishes (Robbins & Judge, 2013).

This modern behavioral psychology paradigm resonates profoundly with the long-established epistemological concepts of *targhib* (the promise of reward) and *tarhib* (the threat of sanction) in Islamic educational philosophy. The Qur'an systematically utilizes this dualistic reinforcement mechanism to shape human behavior and accountability, as explicitly articulated in Surah Al-Baqarah verses 81–82, which balance the warning of divine retribution with the absolute promise of eternal reward for righteous deeds.

بَلَىٰ مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ . وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

"But no! Those who commit evil and are engrossed in sin will be the residents of the Fire. They will be there forever. And those who believe and do good will be the residents of Paradise. They will be there forever." (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

While general literature on organizational compensation is vast, a distinctive *research gap* persists. Prior studies on reward-punishment dynamics are overwhelmingly dominated by profit-centric corporate structures, such as manufacturing or commercial banking sectors, which utilize purely materialist and financial indicators. Conversely, existing research within the sector of Islamic education remains heavily insulated within theoretical, normative-theological descriptions without rigorous empirical field verification.

This study addresses this void by providing an empirical and critical analysis of the Islamic value-based reward and punishment system at the Ar-Rifqi Educational Foundation, Bandung City. The primary *novelty* of this research lies in its empirical formulation of Islamic Managerial Theology, demonstrating how a private educational institution operationalizes modern behavioral modifications (Skinner's operant conditioning and Herzberg's motivators) without sacrificing spiritual ethics. In this framework, punishment is radically re-centered not as an act of institutional

retribution, but as an objective instrument of character cultivation (*tadzkiroh*) that preserves human dignity.

METHOD

This study implemented a qualitative approach embedded within a descriptive case study design to capture a holistic, naturalistic, and contextual understanding of human resource policies (Sugiyono, 2020). The empirical locus was restricted to the Ar-Rifqi Educational Foundation in Bandung City, an institution currently undergoing a strategic structural migration toward modernized administrative governance.

A purposive sampling strategy was utilized to select thirteen key informants ($n = 13$), comprising the Foundation Chairman, Educational Unit Heads (Principals), senior and junior teachers, and administrative support staff. This deliberate selection ensured a multi-tiered institutional perspective on the equity and execution of the policy.

Data collection was operationalized through three triangulated techniques (Arikunto, 2019): semi-structured in-depth interviews guided by a validated thematic protocol; continuous participatory observation of workplace interactions, punctuality habits, and leadership-subordinate communication; and an extensive documentation audit of internal employment guidelines, official attendance logs, performance evaluation sheets, and formal reprimand archives.

The collected data were processed using the interactive qualitative analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which transitions through systematic stages of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data trustworthiness and analytical validity were rigidly guarded by enforcing source triangulation (cross-checking leadership assertions against field staff testimonies) and technical triangulation (confronting interview narrative data with physical regulatory documentation proofs).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Formalization of the Reward and Punishment System: From Traditional to Transparent

The Ar-Rifqi Foundation has moved away from a fully verbal and traditional management pattern. The reward and punishment system at this foundation has been codified in the form of a Foundation Personnel Guidelines document, which is openly disseminated to all academic members of the institution. This is consistent with the principle of managerial transparency, which emphasizes that every employee has the right to know the indicators by which their performance is assessed (Sulistiyani & Rosidah, 2009). This finding is consistent with the systematic literature review conducted by Ihya et al. (2024), which concluded that an effective reward and punishment system must be implemented appropriately and consistently within a clear framework. When rules are not codified and remain merely verbal, perceptions of fairness become distorted and may potentially trigger social jealousy. As stated by one staff member: "At first, I was afraid of receiving a warning letter if I arrived late. But after the written rules were socialized, I realized that this applies to everyone, and no one gets special treatment. Even the treasurer receives a salary deduction if he is late." (Interview with Mr. R, March 22, 2025)

The experience at the Ar-Rifqi Foundation confirms Mulyaningsih's (2023) findings in the public sector, which showed that rule transparency is a major determinant of perceived fairness. However, there is a fundamental difference: in Mulyaningsih's study, transparency was oriented primarily toward administrative compliance, whereas at the Ar-Rifqi Foundation transparency is also interpreted as a form of trustworthiness and spiritual responsibility, meaning that employees are aware that every strength and every violation will be accounted for before Allah. In terms of reward, the foundation classifies recognition into two main dimensions: financial and non-financial. Interviews with the foundation leadership revealed that financial rewards are not measured solely through base salary but also through performance allowances and achievement bonuses. For

example, employees or teachers who succeed in guiding students to win competitions at the city or provincial level, or those who maintain perfect attendance for one semester, receive special incentives.

Meanwhile, non-financial rewards occupy an equally important position, especially given the liquidity constraints commonly faced by private educational foundations. These rewards include the conferral of titles such as Outstanding Employee or Inspirational Teacher during annual work meetings, certificates of appreciation, public praise from leadership, and priority access to training and competency certification. One teacher stated: "I feel more valued now. In the past, my achievements were never recognized, but now when my students win competitions, I receive a bonus and public praise during meetings. That motivates me to work harder. The 'Inspirational Teacher' certificate I received last year was even more meaningful to me than the bonus money." (Teacher A, March 12, 2025)

This is consistent with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which states that motivator factors such as recognition, achievement, and responsibility have a greater impact on long-term job satisfaction than hygiene factors such as base salary and working conditions. Herzberg divides the determinants of motivation into:

1. Hygiene factors: base salary, working conditions, and social relations, which only prevent dissatisfaction when fulfilled, but do not automatically motivate.
2. Motivator factors: recognition, achievement, responsibility, and self-development, which genuinely foster satisfaction and intrinsic motivation.

At the Ar-Rifqi Foundation, praise from leaders and appreciation certificates function as motivators that generate inner satisfaction and encourage employees to innovate rather than merely fulfill routine obligations. This is in line with a study on the motivation of Islamic Education teachers in Malaysia, which found that the dominant dimensions influencing motivation were the work itself, opportunities for advancement, and recognition, with an average score of 4.40 on a 5-point scale. The study concluded that motivator factors significantly influenced the motivational level of secondary Islamic Education teachers. However, an interesting nuance emerges at the Ar-Rifqi Foundation: non-financial rewards do not function merely as worldly recognition, but also carry a spiritual dimension. Teachers feel that their achievements are not simply institutional metrics, but rather a form of worship and trust from parents and the wider community. As stated by the Foundation Chairman: "We do not intend to commercialize teachers' labor. This system is an effort to build an organizational culture grounded in divinity. Every reward we give is a trust from Allah that must be accounted for." (Interview with Mr. Y, March 15, 2025)

This differs from Mulyaningsih's (2023) study in the public sector, which found that financial incentives were more dominant in motivating employees. This difference can be explained by the Islamic value context, which internalizes work as an act of worship. Irfansyah et al. (2024), in their study on reward and punishment in Islamic education, found that rewards in the form of verbal praise, certificates, and symbolic gifts were positively received as a form of guidance rather than as material transactions. These findings confirm that reward and punishment designed in a humanistic and proportional manner do not only function as motivational tools, but also as instruments for shaping religious character and discipline. Budget limitations remain a real challenge, yet they do not diminish the effectiveness of the system.

As one teacher explained: "We understand that the foundation has limited funds. Sometimes we are happier to receive a certificate or praise than money. But if possible, the cash incentives should be increased a little, because we also need them for living expenses." (Teacher B, March 25, 2025). This reliance on non-financial rewards is consistent with Ihya et al.'s (2024) recommendation that in institutions with financial constraints, non-financial rewards such as certificates, public announcements, and promotion opportunities can serve as effective substitutes.

Gradual and Persuasive Punishment: From Repressive Sanction to Educational Guidance

In the realm of sanctions, the Ar-Rifqi Foundation adopts a gradual disciplinary approach. The leadership does not immediately impose administrative punishment for a violation, but begins with a persuasive approach. The standard procedures applied include:

1. Private verbal clarification, in which the employee who committed the violation is called in privately to explore the root of the problem, an approach designed to preserve the employee’s dignity.
2. Written warning, in the form of Warning Letter (SP) 1 to SP 3, issued if the violation continues repeatedly without any indication of improvement.
3. Proportional financial sanctions, such as deductions from attendance allowances or postponement of periodic salary increases.
4. Termination of Employment (PHK), which is the final measure and is only applied to serious violations such as defamation of the institution, immoral conduct, or fund embezzlement.

“We must not scold teachers in public. Punishment is meant to educate, not to take revenge. We begin with private clarification, and only if it happens again do we issue an SP. The aim is so that the person being sanctioned does not lose their dignity.”(Mr. I, March 18, 2025). This approach is very different from Wibowo’s (2016) punishment practice, which is often applied emotionally without clarification procedures, so that instead of fostering discipline, it actually triggers demotivation, fear, and latent resistance from employees. Wibowo emphasizes the importance of clear and gradual punishment procedures to avoid negative psychological effects.

The findings at the Ar-Rifqi Foundation confirm the study conducted at MI Ma’arif NU Insan Cendekia Kota Kediri, which found that effective punishment should begin with mild sanctions (verbal warning), then moderate sanctions (written warning, postponement of promotion), and finally severe sanctions (dismissal), with a positive impact on improving teacher performance. The study concluded that punishment should be given as a logical consequence of a violation, not as institutional revenge. The Islamic nuance that distinguishes the Ar-Rifqi Foundation is that punishment is understood not only as an administrative sanction, but also as ta’zir (educational punishment in Islam), intended to re-educate and prevent the repetition of mistakes. This concept is rooted in the principle of tarhib in Islam, which is not merely meant to frighten, but also to provide constructive warning.

Table 2. Teacher Tardiness and Absence Levels Before and After System Implementation

Indicator	Before (2024)	After (2025)	Change
Teacher tardiness (monthly average)	28%	9%	↓ 68%
Unexcused absence	15%	4%	↓ 73%
Teachers with perfect attendance per semester	12%	34%	↑ 183%
Average punctuality at lesson start	72%	91%	↑ 26%

Source: Attendance Data and Internal Evaluation of the Ar-Rifqi Foundation, 2024–2025

The 68% decrease in tardiness (from 28% to 9%) and the 73% decrease in unexcused absence (from 15% to 4%) indicate that the gradual punishment approach, accompanied by initial clarification, succeeded in forming new habits without weakening the spirit of dedication. This finding is consistent with Alam & Kamal (2024), who concluded that fair and effective reward and punishment can improve employee performance, with motivation and job satisfaction as key determinants.

Islamic Values as Distinguishing Pillars: Justice, Trustworthiness, and Excellence

The main distinction between human resource management at the Ar-Rifqi Foundation and conventional corporations lies in its theological foundation. The Foundation Chairman explicitly stated that the system is not intended to capitalize on teachers' labor, but rather as an effort to build an organizational culture grounded in divinity. The evaluation of this policy is always based on three fundamental values:

Justice (al-'adl)

In the distribution of rewards and sanctions, the foundation strives to avoid discrimination. Sanctions apply to anyone who violates the rules, whether junior staff or senior teachers. This eliminates privileges that often destroy team morale. Justice in Islam does not mean equal treatment in a simplistic sense, but rather placing things in their proper proportion according to the burden of responsibility. In Islamic educational human resource management, values such as justice, trustworthiness, cooperation, and responsibility serve as the foundation of human resource governance. The study concludes that the Islamic perspective adds spiritual and ethical dimensions aimed not only at improving productivity, but also at building individual character aligned with Islamic principles.

Spiritual Responsibility (amanah)

The granting of rewards is framed as a trust from God that must be accounted for in order to improve the quality of worship through education. This system educates employees that their targets are not merely foundation metrics, but an amanah from parents and the wider community. This concept is strongly rooted in Islamic epistemology, which views work as an act of worship. As Ramayulis (2015) stated, Islamic education should integrate both worldly and otherworldly dimensions. This finding is also consistent with studies on human resource development strategies in Islamic educational institutions, which found that spiritual coaching is one of the effective strategies for human resource development.

Excellence and Professionalism (ihsan)

This principle of goodness is most clearly reflected in the method of imposing sanctions. The foundation strictly prohibits leaders from scolding subordinates in public or in work-related messaging groups. Punishment is conceptualized as an effort to re-educate, not as a form of institutional revenge. This value protects the psychological well-being of sanctioned employees, as they feel corrected without losing dignity, which in turn accelerates the recovery of work motivation after a violation. This approach is highly consistent with Irfansyah et al. (2025), who found that reward and punishment that are humanistic and proportional are positively received in Islamic education, with punishment in the form of additional tasks understood as guidance rather than a humiliating sanction.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors: Leadership, Culture, Budget, and Subjectivity

Based on data triangulation, the effectiveness of the reward and punishment system at the Ar-Rifqi Foundation is strongly supported by communicative leadership. The Foundation Chairman and Unit Heads possess strong interpersonal communication skills, regularly conduct field observations, and are able to position themselves both as parental figures and as professional managers. A culture of religious brotherhood also helps neutralize potential social jealousy when one employee receives greater appreciation than others. This is consistent with research on Islamic educational human resource management, which found that effective development strategies include training and development, mentorship programs, increasing human resource welfare,

spiritual coaching, and evaluating human resource performance. Communicative leadership and a religious culture are therefore key determinants supporting the implementation of the reward and punishment system.

Financial constraints remain a major challenge. As a private foundation relying on monthly student fees and government operational assistance, the budget for cash rewards is very limited. As a result, in some periods the leadership can only rely on non-financial rewards, which may lose their motivational effect if used too continuously, especially during economic pressure. Subjectivity in qualitative performance assessment is another obstacle. Although written instruments exist, assessments of initiative and dedication often become vulnerable to evaluator bias. This frequently creates latent dissatisfaction among staff who feel their efforts go unnoticed by leadership. These financial limitations are consistent with the challenges faced by Islamic educational institutions in general. Studies on Islamic educational human resource management have found that improving human resource welfare is one of the strategies that is often constrained by budget limitations. The recommended solution is the digitalization of the performance assessment system in order to minimize human bias. Ihya et al. (2024) recommend that technology implementation and innovation development are important strategies for human resource development in the digital era.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the reward and punishment system at the Ar-Rifqi Foundation has been carried out in a structured and effective manner to enhance employee motivation and discipline. This effectiveness is achieved through a harmonious combination of Skinner's behavior modification theory and the Islamic epistemology of *targhib-tarhib*. Rewards distributed transparently succeed in stimulating employees' psychological needs and self-actualization, shifting work orientation from mechanical compliance to a proactive work culture. Sanctions enforced in a graded manner, while respecting the ethics of initial clarification, successfully reduce indiscipline without extinguishing the spirit of dedication. The principles of proportional justice, spiritual responsibility, and ethical goodness become the distinguishing pillars that protect this compensation system from the trap of rigid materialism. To address budget constraints and assessment subjectivity, the Ar-Rifqi Foundation is recommended to develop a digital-based performance evaluation instrument to minimize subjective bias, expand the portfolio of affective rewards through employee involvement in strategic decision-making, conduct regular socialization of the Personnel Guidelines to maintain perceptions of fairness, allocate a special budget for cash rewards even if small to balance non-financial rewards, and provide training for trainers so that leaders can perform clarification and guidance consistently and empathically.

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