

EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTS OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT ON STUDENT PSYCHOLOGY IN EDUCATION

AVALIAÇÃO DOS EFEITOS DA RECOMPENSA E DA PUNIÇÃO NA PSICOLOGIA DO ALUNO NA EDUCAÇÃO

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Abstract. The aim of this research was conducted to evaluate the impact of reward and punishment on student psychology. This research is a qualitative research and document analysis was used. For this purpose, the literature was scanned and also document analysis method was used. According to findings, the student's motivation can be increased by rewards. However, if the reward method is overly used, students can always look for that kind of treatment to become motivated in their studies. Although punishment appears to be effective in preventing inappropriate behavior, it can cause long-lasting anxiety, stress, and lack of confidence. In addition, the study examined the effects of reward and punishment on teacher-student relationships and academic performance. To conclude, using the right amount of reward and punishment also positively affects student behavior. The correct way of using reward and punishment methods is emphasized. It is suggested that teachers need to develop strategies and apply alternative techniques other than reward and punishment methods by taking into consideration students' interests. The development of educators through pedagogical and psychological training is stated.

Keywords: Punishment, Reward, Psychology

Resumo. O objetivo desta pesquisa foi conduzido para avaliar o impacto da recompensa e punição na psicologia do aluno. Esta pesquisa é uma pesquisa qualitativa e a análise de documentos foi usada. Para este propósito, a literatura foi escaneada e também o método de análise de documentos foi usado. De acordo com as descobertas, a motivação do aluno pode ser aumentada por recompensas. No entanto, se o método de recompensa for usado excessivamente, os alunos sempre podem procurar esse tipo de tratamento para se motivarem em seus estudos. Embora a punição pareça ser eficaz na prevenção de comportamentos inadequados, ela pode causar ansiedade, estresse e falta de confiança duradouros. Além disso, o estudo examinou os efeitos da recompensa e punição nas relações professor-aluno e no desempenho acadêmico. Para concluir, usar a quantidade certa de recompensa e punição também afeta positivamente o comportamento do aluno. A maneira correta de usar métodos de recompensa e punição é enfatizada. É sugerido que os professores precisam desenvolver estratégias e aplicar técnicas alternativas além dos métodos de recompensa e punição, levando em consideração os interesses dos alunos. O desenvolvimento de educadores por meio de treinamento pedagógico e psicológico é declarado.

Palavras-chave: Punição, Recompensa, Psicologia



1. INTRODUCTION

It is possible to understand that education primarily works on children and human beings because it aims to bring about desired behavioral changes in individuals through their own experiences. Based on various branches of psychology, teaching-learning processes, which are prepared by taking into account the developmental periods and areas that students have different from each other, improve the interaction of students with these processes. To achieve the desired behavioral changes in education, these processes should be designed following the developmental areas of students. For example, a five-year-old kindergarten student may be rewarded by his/her teachers, whereas a fourteen-year-old student's appreciation and rewards from his/her peers are more important and valuable to him/her (Emin, 2017).

When different sources are considered, we come across many different definitions of psychology. Psychology is the science that studies mental states, processes, and behaviors in humans and animals (Mischel, 2024). According to another definition, psychology is a multifaceted discipline that includes fields of study such as human development, health, and social behavior (McLeod, 2024).

When various sources are examined, it is seen that there are many definitions of the word 'reward'. In the most general sense, reward is a form of reinforcement used to increase the likelihood of a behavior being repeated (Babayiğit & Erkuş, 2016). Reward can be considered as objects that are attractive to people that are given in return for a certain condition (Köçer & Çınar, 2021). In another sense, a reward is defined as a reward or gift given as a result of outstanding achievement by individuals. It is the benefit arising as a result of overcoming the desired task (Çapan & Özmutaf, 2018).

Similarly, when we look at the literature, the concept of 'punishment' is interpreted in different ways. It is defined as aggressive and painful attitudes that can be shown against children to ensure behavioral change in children (Köçer & Çınar, 2021). Although punishment is stated as a reaction to unwanted behavior, it is also emphasized as a method used to eliminate behavioral disorders in children and to create desired behavior (Keleş & Kahraman, 2022).

In a study conducted by Ardiç and Temiz with 12 primary school classroom teachers working in the city center of Düzce, teachers' solutions to students' undesirable behaviors were examined. Since the structured interview technique was applied, it was qualitative research. The teachers were asked about the types of undesirable behaviors seen in the classroom and what techniques they used as a solution to these behaviors. Indifference, wandering around the classroom due to hyperactivity, violence, belligerence, swearing, jealousy, and disrespectful behaviors were some of the types of undesirable behaviors identified as a result of the research. The reasons for such undesirable behaviors are thought to be due to factors such as broken families, students' characteristics, and the environment. As a result of the research, it was revealed that reward and punishment were among the strategies used by the teachers participating in the research against unwanted behaviors (Ardıç & Temiz, 2020).

In the study conducted by Özlü in 2020; the reasons for the undesirable behaviors of students and teachers' coping strategies with these behaviors were investigated. The research group consists of 20 teachers working in the Denizli center. As a result of the research, it was determined that undesirable behaviors were behaviors such as lying, not doing homework, and speaking without speaking, but it was seen that the reasons for these undesirable behaviors were teachers' lack of classroom management, family indifference, and excessive use of technology. As a method of coping with undesirable behaviors, it was concluded that teachers can resort to different strategies such as imposing responsibility on the student, setting rules, and making eye contact, as well as punishment (Özlü, 2020).

Sevim and Karabulut (2024) conducted a study with secondary school teachers to determine teachers' views on reward and punishment. In this study, they aimed to determine the opinions of 39 middle school teachers about reward and punishment from reinforcers. According to the



findings of this study, it was found that most middle school teachers used rewards and punishments and they used rewards more than punishments. In addition, secondary school teachers stated that rewards are more effective than punishments in creating behavioral changes in students' behaviors in the desired direction and increasing students' motivation. As rewards, teachers give their students motivating words, symbolic rewards, or concrete rewards, such as collecting points. As punishments, they use verbal warnings, deducting points from a task, physical warnings, assigning homework, cleaning the garden or classroom, keeping one foot in the air in front of the students (Sevim & Karabulut, 2024).

Kusumawati, Fauziddin, and Ananda (2023) examined how reward and punishment affect the psychology of primary school students and their motivation to learn. When the findings of the study were examined, it was emphasized that when reward and punishment are used correctly and appropriately, they affect student motivation and achievement. Rewards are used when students exhibit positive and desired behaviors. This sets an example for other students and increases desirable behaviors in the classroom. However, when students exhibit undesirable behaviors, punishment is used to reduce the repetition of undesirable behaviors and to eliminate these behaviors. As a result, this study emphasized that if reward and punishment are used in the right way, they will have a positive effect on student motivation (Indrawati et al., 2021).

Considering the above studies, when the literature is examined, it is seen that there are studies such as the solutions followed by teachers in the face of unwanted student behaviors (Ardıç & Temiz, 2020), teachers' ways of coping with unwanted student behaviors (Özlu, 2020), secondary school teachers' views on reward and punishment (Sevim & Karabulut, 2024), the effect of reward and punishment on student discipline and achievement (Indrawati et al, 2021), the effect of reward and punishment on elementary school students' psychology and motivation towards learning (Kusumawati et al., 2023), but there are not enough resources on the effect of reward and punishment on student psychology. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate how reward and punishment affect student psychology. In this direction, the following questions were tried to be answered under the title of 'Evaluation of the effect of reward and punishment on student psychology'. These questions are as follows:

1. How should reward and punishment be used in education?
2. What is the effect of reward on student psychology?
3. What is the effect of punishment on student psychology?
4. How should the balance between reward and punishment be?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Model

This study aims to evaluate the effects of reward and punishment on student psychology. Therefore, document analysis design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in this study. Qualitative research is known as a research method in which data creation techniques such as document analysis, interview, and observation are used, and a qualitative process is followed to reveal events, understandings, and perceptions in a holistic and realistic way (Tekindal & Arsu, 2020). Document analysis, also known as document scanning, is the process of examining and evaluating written materials, articles, theses, and academic research and making inferences (Sak et al., 2021).

2.2. Research Group

The content of the research consists of selected written documents (articles, academic studies, theses, dissertations, books, etc.) on the subject. Within the scope of the research, a total of 20 written documents were used and data on the subject were obtained.

2.3. Data Collection and Data Collection Tool



The data were collected by analyzing and evaluating the documents. The data were obtained by reviewing the written documents on the internet, together with a review of the literature. Some steps were followed during the data collection phase. These steps are as follows;

1. Screening keywords appropriate to the objective of the study
2. Select written documents based on specific considerations and criteria (e.g. relevance to the topic, type of source, year of publication, etc.)

2.4.Data Analysis

Headings were allocated by the research question and the data obtained were placed under the headings. The data obtained were interpreted, summarized, and evaluated by interpretation.

3. RESULTS

3.1.The Use of Reward and Punishment Reinforcers in Education

Looking at the past, it is seen that reward and punishment methods were frequently used in schools and other educational institutions from the Ottoman period to the Republican period. The aim was to ensure that students were disciplined. When we look at the reward practices, a system was determined in which a higher reward was given to the student who reached the targeted reward amount. Thus, students were motivated by providing competition among students. For example, it was found that in educational institutions opened in 1877, documents named “evrak-ı takdiriye” were used as rewards. There are many other examples such as the “well done” certificate, where the name of the student who studied was written on the document. Also rewards can be prizes or receiving positive feedback from teachers. In the penal system, it was made possible to pardon punishments by using the rewards earned. For this reason, earning rewards was made even more important. According to research, it has been stated that the use of punishment in the Turkish Education System is higher than reward (Öztabak, 2021).

When we look at traditional approaches, it can be seen that different techniques such as the use of punishment or harsh behavior are used to ensure discipline. Therefore, the concept of discipline is perceived negatively. It can be said that one of the most commonly used methods to ensure discipline in schools is the use of reward and punishment. It is necessary to be careful with the punishment method used to deal with the undesirable behaviors of students in the classroom. Although it prevents unwanted behaviors, it can have negative effects on students. When it comes to the use of punishment, it should be ensured that it is used in line with pedagogical principles. For this reason, it is appropriate to carefully choose the type of punishment to be used. Examples of punishments used by teachers in schools include suspension, expulsion from lessons or games, and making students do things they do not like (Han & Altunhan, 2022).

Although rewards and punishments vary according to the teachers who use them, in the end, every teacher uses rewards and punishments to inspire students to learn. Reward is used to increase students' interest and motivation, to encourage them, to give them a sense of responsibility, and to increase their class participation. Punishment, on the other hand, is used to prevent disciplinary deficiencies, so discipline must be established before punishment can be avoided. Both punishment and reward are used to make learning more effective. This practice aims to increase students' success (Sidin S. A., 2021).

Table 1. Examples of rewards and punishments using in education

Examples of rewards	Examples of punishments
‘Well done’ certificate	Suspensions
Prizes	Expulsion from lessons and games
Positive feedback	Forcing students to do what they dislike



According to table 1, well done certificates, prizes and positive feedbacks can be given as an example of types of rewards. Suspensions, expulsion from lessons and games and forcing students to do what they dislike can be given as an example for punishments.

3.2. The Effects of Reward on Student Psychology

Looking at the Montessori Principles, Maria Montessori argued that children's work is not influenced by reward and punishment. She emphasized that the main purpose of children's work is to fulfill some needs that they have. In the education system developed by Maria Montessori, children realize goals independently of reward and punishment. Montessori even stated that when children are given external rewards, their concentration is disrupted (Gündüz et al., 2024).

Montessori entered a classroom for observation purposes. There was a child in the classroom who had to sit on a chair as a punishment. This child was examining the ribbons that were used as rewards in the classrooms and was looking around meaninglessly without any expression of discomfort. As a result of this incident, Montessori observed that reward and punishment were not effective in the education of children (Akyol & Taştepe, 2021).

Skinner, one of the leading names in the field of psychology, mentioned the use of reward and punishment in management. It is still known as a more effective method today. Reinforcement plays a role in learning. Reinforcement is defined as stimuli that increase the probability of repetition of the desired behavior. Reinforcements are divided into positive and negative reinforcements. Positive reinforcers are used in the same sense as reward. Opportunities that bring pleasure to the person financially can be given as an example of a reward. For rewards to be effective, they are chosen under the characteristics of the people to whom they will be applied. Psychologically, rewards can reinforce students towards the goal. Rewards such as encouragement, appreciation, and confidence are known as psychological rewards. In addition, rewards such as gaining privileges and being applauded are social rewards. Children think that they receive rewards for doing what they are told rather than for performing the desired behavior. For this reason, they cannot grasp the importance of the desired behavior. In addition, the constant use of rewards may have an addictive effect on the child. Children who develop this type of addiction may perceive the situation as punishment when rewards are not given (Öztabak, 2021).

Albert Bandura is a psychologist who links Behaviorism and Cognitive Psychology with social learning theory. Burrhus Frederic Skinner, one of the important names that come to mind when it comes to the behavioral approach, is one of the thinkers who influenced Bandura the most. Although Skinner emphasized the importance of reinforcers including reward and punishment, Bandura found them insufficient and developed these ideas. He argued that people learn behaviors by interacting with other people. According to him, the use of reward and punishment to increase the frequency of a behavior is insufficient (Tathioğlu, 2021).

The responsibility for restoring students' lost zeal and desire to learn lies with the instructors. Motivation is said to be linked to learning. This is because motivation is seen as a condition for performance. In classrooms with motivated students, problems related to classroom management decrease and students' satisfaction increases. According to a study, students' motivation is related to their goals and activities. In the aforementioned study, although it was accepted that students were equally motivated, it was emphasized that the sources of motivation of each of them could be different. It was stated that not only the sense of curiosity, satisfaction after success, and the desire to present the results of the performances can be the source of motivation, but sometimes some students continue their activities with external factors such as reward and punishment (Mutdoğan & Mutdoğan, 2022).

3.3. The Effects of Punishment on Student Psychology

For the most part, punishment and discipline are known to be the same. However, while punishment is a kind of reaction given when undesired behavior occurs, discipline is known as a practice to prevent the occurrence of undesired behavior. In addition, the concepts of punishment and negative reinforcement are also confused. While negative reinforcement is used to increase the likelihood of the desired behavior, punishment is used to eliminate this unwanted behavior. Introducing an unpleasant stimulus, such as yelling, is known as the first type of punishment. Removing a liked stimulus from the environment, such as not taking the student out for recess, is known as the second type of punishment. Some of the psychological punishments that can be given to students are mentioned in the literature as intimidation, reprimand, and warning (Öztabak, 2021).

Many educators agree that threats and punishments used in schools are inadequate. Research shows that they have negative consequences for students, such as mental health problems. It is stated that the bond between children and adults is damaged by punishment. Various studies in the fields of psychology and education have emphasized that the punishments used by teachers to maintain order in the classroom can cause behavioral disorders in students and lower academic achievement. Therefore, even if it is to be used, the importance of the correct use of reward and punishment has been expressed by research (Han & Altunhan, 2022).

The concept of punishment, which is mentioned together with reward, is an action generally used for deterrent purposes. According to some researchers, punishment is a reaction to negative behavior, while others argue that it has an important role in changing negative behaviors. It is seen that both reward and punishment are used for similar purposes. Both are used to bring about desired behavioral changes in individuals. It has been stated that students' motivation levels decrease as a result of a systematic that cannot be used correctly (Keleş & Kahraman, 2022).

Self-controlled children do not need to be regularly controlled with punishments and rewards. However, continuous punishment by teachers prevents a child from developing self-control skills. This is because rewards and punishments are external control methods. If students are guided by external control methods instead of developing their self-control skills, they cannot develop self-control skills. Children who are used to being controlled from the outside do not need to control themselves (Köçer & Çınar, 2021).

Table 2. The effects of rewards and punishments on student psychology

Effects of rewards	Effects of punishments
Increase motivation	Prevent the occurrence of undesired behaviors
Increase students' satisfaction	Increase amount of desired behaviors
Decrease classroom management problems	Increase discipline

Table 2 demonstrates rewards increase motivation, students' satisfaction and decrease classroom managements problems. On the other hand, punishments prevent the occurrence of undesired behaviors, increase amount of desired behaviors and increase discipline.

4. DISCUSSION

Research reveals that teachers widely use reward and punishment methods in the educational process and that these practices have a long history. It has been emphasized that reward is generally used as a tool to increase students' motivation, while punishment is mostly used for classroom management and discipline. The perceptions of teachers about reward and punishment can be changed. For example Sevim and Karabulut (2024) researched teachers' views on reward and punishment. One group of teachers said that rewards have more benefits than punishments believing that rewards can increase students' motivation but some believed opposite idea. While the effective application of reward and punishment can contribute

positively to students' learning processes, its misuse can have undesirable consequences. Reward can contribute to students' positive attitudes towards learning. For example, Kusumawati, Fauzittin and Ananda studied how reward and punishment affect the psychology of primary school students and their motivation to learn in 2023. They found that, if rewards use correctly and appropriately, they affect student motivation and achievement. However, continuous rewards may lead to a decrease in intrinsic motivation. Excessive or improper use of punishment can cause stress and anxiety in students, negatively affecting both their psychological and academic development. Teachers' conscious application of these methods following pedagogical purposes will be effective both in the individual development of students and in positively shaping the classroom environment.

5. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted to evaluate the effects of reward and punishment on student psychology. In the literature, it has been observed that the use of rewards and punishments affects students' academic achievement as well as their behaviors. Although the use of rewards increases students' motivation, excessive use of rewards may cause students to become dependent on an external source of motivation. In addition, punishments, although controlling undesirable behaviors in the short term, may cause stress, anxiety, and lack of self-confidence in students in the long term. Moreover, both reward and punishment have a direct impact on the student-teacher relationship.

Since articles from the last five years were used in this study, there is no information from earlier periods. Also, since only academic articles and research were used, there may be a risk that the selected documents may not be representative of the entire population. In addition, in the study, only the findings obtained through document analysis were analyzed.

Educators should pay attention to the use of rewards and punishments, and instead of using rewards and punishments regularly, they should analyze the individual needs of students and develop an appropriate approach. Teachers should take into account that every student is different. In addition, instead of using direct punishment, the reason behind the misbehavior should be investigated and efforts should be made to find solutions to the problem. Alternative methods should be tried instead of using not only punishment but also rewards. For example, students' intrinsic motivation can be increased by gamifying learning, using group work and finally giving positive feedback. For all this to happen, teachers should be provided with the necessary training. Teachers can develop more accurate learning strategies by understanding the psychological effects of the techniques they apply. Finally, teachers should inform parents about students' behaviors and encourage parents to support students' education.

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